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**Town Youth Participation Strategies Project:
Applying Participatory Action Research in Small Town Canada**

by

Les Voakes, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
July 2001
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acceptance of the thesis

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Department of Sociology and Anthropology

John Cove, Supervisor

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
September 6, 2001

Abstract

This thesis examines youth programmes in six rural communities all linked by an initiative known as Town Youth Participation Strategies (T.Y.P.S.), a participatory action research (PAR) project seeking innovative alcohol and drug prevention approaches . The initiative was conceived as a multi-community plan. An important part of the planning was the declaration of ten PAR principles which guided and informed the researcher/facilitator, participants, and the funders as to the methods, expectations, and ethical conduct expected. Multiple PAR techniques were incorporated throughout the project, including: workshops, participant-led training, participatory video, involvement with news media, participant observation, questionnaires, and collaborative partnerships. Ongoing participatory evaluation tools were designed to specifically monitor project activities and associated changes within the communities involved. The experiences and lessons learned were found to be transferable and applicable to other small towns through the capacity building resources and methodologies developed during the project.

Acknowledgements

There were many people who extended both support and patience while I endeavoured to complete the T.Y.P.S. project and this thesis.

Firstly, for all the support and encouragement, I wish to thank my supervisor John Cove for keeping me clear upon the goal and for the many opportunities to ‘think out loud.’ Somehow, he was able to help me put it all in perspective and keep on track. Secondly, I’m also appreciative of the many meetings and discussions offered by Scott Clark and Elizabeth Whitmore over the past years. Both have offered their experience and expertise about participatory (action) research long before they became my committee members. They also invited me to meet with many of the best authorities concerning participatory research and provided the opportunity to meet and learn from the best.

The staff and Board of Directors at TriCounty Addiction Services (TriCAS) deserve special acknowledgment for the years of putting up with numerous phone calls about the project, the drop-in visits by T.Y.P.S. participants, and the many administrative inconveniences few non-profit agencies would tolerate. Every staff meeting, the TriCAS team would listen about the project, offer advice, and express their support and encouragement. Nancy Ronan, our office manager, deserves special credit for sorting out the bookkeeping and thereby keeping the T.Y.P.S. project solvent. David North, TriCAS’s executive director, has always believed that community health promotion was the key to addictions prevention and supported this belief through his steadfast, personal commitment to the project.

The funders of the T.Y.P.S. project, Health Canada, deserve special recognition. Their staff and offices were, and continue to be, supporters of a methodology which has now been proven applicable across Ontario. The money was important, but it was the commitment and interest by their staff, especially Henriette Déry, which ensured the lessons learned in this project would be shared with other communities.

My family deserves more credit and thanks than most readers would understand. My two sons, Kaven and Tallis, were often conscripted into helping with car washes, youth dances, and even dressed as elves to help a youth group during a Christmas event. Robin, my partner of more than twenty years, eventually gave up trying to remember what town I would be in or the hour I might get home. Their willingness to go along with the odd routines and schedules made it possible to do the work and enjoy it.

Finally, I want to thank all the participants involved with the T.Y.P.S. project, both youths and adults. Together we learned more than any of us thought possible and we created changes which will affect our towns, our region, and ourselves for many years to come. Everyone deserves to be credited here by name, but there are just too darn many of you. So, I extend my best regards to you all and thank you for the privilege of sharing the experience.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This thesis examines youth programmes in six rural communities located in the Ottawa Valley, Canada.¹ These programmes were linked by an initiative known as Town Youth Participation Strategies (T.Y.P.S.), a project designed to explore new approaches for addressing the issues of alcohol and drug abuse among the youth population. T.Y.P.S. received funding for three years and I was hired as the coordinator. It was, therefore, my responsibility to initiate a multi-community plan which would be innovative, yet draw from the experiences and recommendations gained from another project I had completed a year before. In my judgement, the best approach for this new endeavour was to incorporate participatory action research (PAR) methodology into every aspect including: a) the earliest planning and conceptualizing of the intended goals; b) during the implementation of each activity; c) as an ongoing evaluative process; and, d) in the final reports and materials to be produced. The idea of integrating PAR into all stages of a project, from the beginning to the final evaluation, was highly unorthodox, if not unique: thus deserving special attention and examination.

In my past experiences of designing programmes for high-risk populations, I had learned that the greater the participant's involvement in the design and implementation of a project, the more likely it would succeed. From a personal perspective, I wanted to

¹

This thesis is written with a break from the convention of using pseudonym for places and institutions as most of the project and its activities were widely published in reports and through the news media. However, wherever specific identification may cause any level of discomfort for the community or a specific group/organization pseudonyms or other means to mask identities will be inserted. All individual's names are pseudonyms, consistent with anthropological case studies.

examine a methodology which worked toward aiding a group, or a community, to manage its own problems while satisfying my own anthropological curiosity about the cultural transitions faced within our technological society. My first academic investigations found the early writings of applied anthropology had blazed many of the first trails to the path I sought and I was soon led to PAR. The more I learned about PAR, the greater was my personal appreciation for a methodology which encompasses the multiple interests of encouraging citizen activism, participant and group education, community-based problem-solving, and respecting of local knowledge and local wisdom. Additionally, while working through a process which supports these aspects, a PAR project is expected to produce research and new knowledge, constructed through a group of participants for the benefit of their community. However, if the participants agree, that new knowledge can be shared with anyone, including academics.

The experience in attempting to manage a PAR project, with all the ambitious intentions mentioned above, provided for me a field position to examine several questions which may inform future PAR projects. The first of my concerns was with the overall conceptualizing of the project, as the funders viewed a multiple-community approach as both more productive and cost effective. Were there advantages in using a multi-community PAR project, rather than concentrating efforts and resources within a single community? Was it possible for a large, multi-community project to retain the integrity of PAR principles? What would the challenges be in maintaining those principles? Would differences occur among communities, despite the application of the same methods and agreement on the same goals? If so, how would those differences manifest themselves

and what might cause them? How, and who, would monitor the changes experienced by each community or evaluate the project's effectiveness?

Intriguing as the above questions were, I was particularly interested in having PAR involved with communities which were, from all outward appearances, average Canadian rural towns. Although, PAR is a process usually associated with aiding groups who are oppressed and disempowered, I was especially interested in the application of PAR methods with participants who have a familiarity and potential access to technologies not usually available in poorer settings (i.e., developing countries or remote aboriginal communities). Are there PAR opportunities which are uniquely applicable within industrial/literate societies?

Finally, I was also interested in learning about the effects of PAR upon the personal and interpersonal lives of the participants. Was participation in the project a transformative experience? Did individual participants change and effect change, or was it a widespread community mobilization which caused changes?

These above noted questions will be explored throughout this thesis, as they were during the project. However, we must first review the use of PAR as a methodology within the anthropological context.

1.1 PAR as an Anthropological Methodology

Anthropology has spent the past few decades wrestling with the need for adapting its methodologies and ethical guidelines (Bonte 1991; Clark and Cove 1998; Cove 1995), particularly in community development projects, whether directly involved in the design and implementation of the field or as at-a-distance interpreters of development projects.

David C. Pitt (1976: 7-19) wrote about the need to understand development from the grassroots, the level “down below” from the outside agents of government and social scientists who are interested in change. He warns that social scientists need to ensure a ...

much more careful interpretation of the data that does exist because local people will increasingly become involved in studying, reporting, and implementing development” and predicted “very few Western social scientists will be able to make the transition needed to become part of the world below (Pitt 1976:17).

Participatory action research (P.A.R.) has evolved as a methodological approach sourced from a variety of disciplines, including applied anthropology. As mentioned above, the use of P.A.R. in community development projects within industrial countries has also been a recent phenomenon (Hall 1993: xiii-xvi), particularly for communities which appear ‘mainstream.’² P.A.R. is better known in developing countries or in fourth world settings (Graburn 1976:1). Most concerning is that, although funders have increasingly required projects to be “participatory,” there remains considerable variation as to the meaning of participatory community involvement.

Participatory action research requires the researcher to be directly accountable to both the community and to the individuals who are the focus of the project. Paulo Freire (1970) concluded that in order to change the status quo, there must first be a phase of community and individual awareness of a need to change. Social awareness and consciousness-raising develops a “conscientizacao,” a term referring to “learning to

²

The use of the word mainstream, in the context of this thesis, is aligned with the writing of Jim Anderson (1993), who recognizes Canadian society as operating along a continuum of lifestyles which place a person in an accepted or unaccepted position of socially accepted behaviours. Anderson describes those (at the opposite end of the mainstream position on that continuum’s scale) whose lifestyles risk their health or “social well-being” as being “out-of-the-mainstream.”

perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive element of reality"(Freire 1970:19). Briefly described, as a more detailed examination of PAR is discussed below, proponents of participatory action research agree that community must be involved in a multi-levelled process to understand the social context of an issue or problem and contribute to its solution with the researcher/facilitator (Hall 1979; Park 1993; Susman and Evered 1978; Swantz 1982; and Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes 1991) with community education being a prerequisite for any participatory research project (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy 1993; Hall 1975,1979; Park 1993; and Swantz 1982).

The aims and methodological parameters of participatory action research do not appear too distant to the principles and guidelines endorsed by applied anthropologists, summarized by Ward Hunt Goodenough (1963:22) as:

- 1) Development proposals and procedures should be mutually consistent
- 2) Development agents must have a thorough knowledge of the main values and principal features of the client community's culture.
- 3) Development must take the whole community into account.
- 4) The goals of development must be stated in terms that have positive value to the community's members . . . they must be something they, as well as the agent, want.
- 5) The community must be active partner in the development process.
- 6) Agents should start with what the community has in the way of material, organizational and leadership resources.
- 7) Development procedures must make sense to the community's members at each step.
- 8) The agent must earn the respect of the community's members for himself as a person.
- 9) The agent should try to avoid making himself the indispensable man in the development situation.
- 10) Where there are several agents at work, good communication and coordination between them and their respective agencies is essential.

Sol Tax (1958) reviewed the role of anthropologists in development, and commented on the need to protect the self-determination of any project's participants. Goodenough's statement of principles(1963) caused further reflection by the discipline. Anthropology continued to examine and re-examine its role and obligation to the communities in which field work is conducted. George Foster (1969) further examined the responsibilities of anthropologists and expanded upon many of the above points listed by Goodenough. The American Anthropological Association (1970) and the Society of Applied Anthropology (1973) each produced their own set of professional ethical responsibilities which reflect many of the same concerns addressed in PAR methodology. Considering the dates listed above, substantial evidence shows there have been many anthropologists working a PAR- like methodology long before the term participatory (action) research was devised by other disciplines.

1.2 Principles of Participatory Action Research

As shown above, participatory action research methods , have deep roots in anthropology, particularly in applied anthropology. However, it is also associated with post modernism, critical theory, transformative research, feminist research perspectives, community-based research, adult education, organizational development, the new sociology and several other social research perspectives (Beder 1991:4; Hall 1992). PAR researchers have been particularly concerned about the process of acquiring information; the exploitation of the host communities or groups of people; and, who would be the final beneficiaries of the knowledge derived from a social research investigation. Participatory

action research or participatory research³ evolved as a response and means of ensuring the focus of social research was holistic in approach, multi-disciplined, and enabled empowerment to the participants who were the foci of any study/project.

In 1993, in an earlier investigation of PAR and in preparation for the T.Y.P.S. project, I drafted a set of guiding principles which were supported in the literature and in conversations I've had with several leading PAR practitioners. In reviewing these principles, in 2001, I have been unable to find new literature which contradicts the original list which informs of the values, the ethics, and the methodology required for any project professing to be PAR. The following are my guiding principles, with references:

1) The purpose of any PAR project is for the improvement or resolution of social problems with a particular concern for local issues (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy 1993:176; Hall 1979; Susman and Evered 1978). This principle is a direct challenge to 'arm chair' social science and that survey-based research "does not provided easy links to possible subsequent actions" (Hall 1975:27).

2) A learning/educative component involving all participants, the researchers and the researched, will be in each PAR Project. This is in keeping with the philosophy and pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970). Swantz (1982:124) expressed views that not only are projects to be educational, but projects' planning recognize education as a goal.

Similar positions are made by Chisholm and Elden (1993) and (Greenwood, Whyte and

³Although there are debates among some theorists about whether *participatory research* or *participatory action research* are different in methodology or goals, both terms are frequently used synonymously by practitioners. This paper will use participatory action research or PAR.. Although I also view both terms as equivalent in their intent, the insistence of including the word "action" is important, from my own viewpoint. Without the direct enunciation of expecting change, as a result of any project, the funders, community, associated institutions and the researchers themselves may all too easily be "let off the hook."

Harkavy 1993:177; Hall 1979:406-407; Park 1993:3).

3) All PAR projects must provoke a critical-consciousness development, a conscientization. Freire (1970) was the first to clearly articulate this concept which is now considered, by many practitioners, the core purpose of any PAR initiative. Peter Park (1993) has been particularly eloquent in examining this concept while Hall (1979:407); and Swantz (1982:123) specifically cite critical-consciousness as fundamental to PAR.

4) PAR must be integrative and interdisciplinary, which includes local knowledge-keepers as part of the interdisciplinary team. This view was specifically advocated by (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy 1993:177) and Swantz (1982:125) and is the basis for Reason (1993) viewing PAR as a “new paradigm.” This principle is important for it is this ‘team’ which ensures the PAR process is participatory, collaborative, and actively involves the members of the community concerned with the project, wherever possible (Hall 1979:407; Park 1993:10; Rapoport 1970:499; Susman and Evered 1978; Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes (1991:20).

5) PAR projects are to be empowering to the participants. The concept of empowerment is increasingly supported in a variety of social sciences, but most PAR practitioners (Hall 1979:407; Park 1993:3) trace their influence to Freire (1970).

6) PAR projects are emergent, often time-consuming enterprises. Therefore, significant latitude must be allowed by planners, participants, and funding supporters. The PAR approach requires adaptability, eclecticism and diversity (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy 1993:179; Susman and Evered 1978). General acknowledgement of these points surface through the descriptions of case studies where the researchers express

project successes occurred because of the project's willingness to experiment and be flexible. Conversely, a project's failures are usually attributed to the lack of adapting to new circumstances or not having the time needed to fully nurture the process. (Horton 1981; Kanhare 1982; Maguire 1993:176).

7) PAR accepts local knowledge as valuable and necessary to conduct meaningful research. This principle is well supported (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy 1993:178; Hall 1979:407; Park 1993:17) in the literature, with an emphasis that without the inclusion of local knowledge, any interpretation should be suspect.

8) PAR must create new and useful knowledge. This statement is self-explanatory, however there has been considerable debate upon PAR's need to adapt traditional social science methodologies (Eldon and Chishom 1993:124; Mangham 1993) or whether PAR is the start of an entirely new paradigm of social inquiry (Hall 1979:407; Rapoport 1970:506; Reason 1993).

9) Participant Observation is a required first stage for doing PAR. (Fourdham, Pulton & Randle 1982:133; Maguire 1987:46) have clearly written upon the need for the researcher to live within the site of the project for at least a brief period prior to any PAR initiative. Mustafa (1982:33) and Swantz (1982:123) question the ability to do PAR without the researcher residing within the participant's area, throughout the project.

10) PAR is a process which is as important as its product. The need to be more concerned with the participants and their community's well-being throughout the research period, and after, is perhaps one of the more unique aspects of the PAR methodology. (Reason 1993:1259, Whitmore 1991).

These ten principles were adopted and incorporated into the T.Y.P.S. project from the start, as touchstones to guide and advise the facilitator (myself), the funders, and the sponsors, on questions of project management. The qualities of each of these principles were also expected to provide a basis for evaluating the project, the benefits realized for the participants, and the maintaining of PAR methodology.

The question of how to conduct PAR, in a manner to realize its full potential, is a challenge for any practitioner/researcher when embarking on the expansive intentions of its methodology. The researcher's first role should be that of a facilitator, aiding the community to define its issues/problems and then to assist in strategizing methods of investigation and action. The principles listed earlier provide some guidance by which to reflect and evaluate PAR activities, both in planning or assessment, but there are no clear procedural methods stated other than the use of participant observation and ensuring the participants have an active role in planning and writing about their experiences. Case studies of past PAR projects provide some specific activities that can be recommended to the groups involved. Although the case studies include excellent descriptions on the project dynamics from a group-action perspective, that literature is almost silent about the individual participant's role within the project.

PAR is expected to be transformative, and although the goals may be for a community/political transformation, that process can only be accomplished by individuals following upon their own transformative experiences or as what is described as "conscientizacao"(Freire 1970). How does the individual begin and become receptive to a transformative process? What are the motivations for the individual to partake in this

process? PAR literature, to date, appears to be devoid of examining these specific questions which, from my perspective, are at the heart of all of PAR's goals. Although these questions are important, this thesis can only hope to scratch the surface within its investigation and examine, from the perspective of a few individuals, the events which led to their transformative experiences.

There was some guidance toward understanding individual transformation, most notably provided through the writings of Park on the work of Paulo Freire. The primary ingredient required in the transformative process is "critical knowledge", which described by Park (1993:6-7):

...is a kind of knowledge that comes from reflection and action, which makes it possible to deliberate questions of what is right and just.

whereas a necessary step in the process requires critical examination and that this:

... critical investigation helps to look at problems about the reality surrounding them in the light of what they wish to achieve as self-reliant and self-determining social beings.

The linking ingredient is the need for interactive knowledge (Park 1993:6), a concept credited to the feminist's contributions to PAR (Gergen 1988). It is primarily in the writings of feminist practitioners of PAR that we find the voices of participants commenting on how the project has changed some of their feelings and perceptions (Hall 1993 xvi; Maguire 1993:174). Interactive knowledge is what makes it possible for people to be a community. Park (1993:6) explains:

Without a common stock of knowledge of this kind, it is not possible to form social solidarity capable of mutual support and common action. Conversely, it is in community that we come to understand other human beings. It is by sharing, on a daily basis, mundane routines, lofty visions,

joys, anguish, conflicts, accords, struggles and successes, that we come to know one another as feeling beings. It is through talking to one another and doing things together that we get connected, and this connectedness gives us a kind of knowledge that is different from control-minded knowledge.

Therefore, it would appear that although the process of developing critical knowledge or conscientization is a personal journey, it must be taken upon the same road and alongside other travellers, or at the least, on nearby paths. The sharing of experiences through both discussion and action are necessary before, or in conjunction with, personal reflection can occur. As Park (1993:8) explains:

As action emerges from critical knowledge, so does knowledge issue from action. Critical consciousness is raised not by analyzing the problematic situation alone, but by engaging in actions in order to transform the situation. This is the meaning of *conscientization*, which Paulo Freire has helped popularize (Freire 1970). It refers to the cycle of reflection-action-reflection through which both consciousness and conscience develop.

Park's above points are resonant in the planning of the T.Y.P.S. Project. If change was to occur in each community, as a community, then there must be mechanisms and processes to aid individuals in acquiring critical knowledge and finding their own path to conscientization. Documenting the personal journeys of transformation by a few participants may add to a deeper understanding of the core workings of PAR.

1.3 Framework of Thesis

To understand the youth programs involved in the T.Y.P.S. Project and their impact upon each community, this thesis will examine all aspects of the participatory action research process as it was applied during the project. The utility of PAR will, thereby, be explored through its practical applications and its accord with the theoretical

writings of several of its previously mentioned advocates. Additionally, this thesis will routinely return to and consider whether the T.Y.P.S. Project remained in accordance to the ten PAR principles which I presented as the standard from which to judge.

Chapter II will first review the background and sources of the T.Y.P.S. Project and the process required to complete its original design. Discussion in these sections will include the necessity to provide flexibility and adaptability within the planning, as is required of PAR projects. The balance of the chapter presents the methodology of the PAR process through a series of actions undertaken during the T.Y.P.S. Project. Chapter III will first provide an overview of the specific results in respect of participation of all six communities as a whole. The following section provides a comparative review of the communities to consider the differences which occurred between the towns, as well as the indicators which express widespread success of the project's intentions. The last section in this chapter will examine the observed community reactions to the project's activities. Chapter IV concentrates on uncovering the dynamics required for a successful PAR project. This section examines the 'useful' information required by the funders and participants while providing points and may prove useful for other community workers. The importance of careful planning and monitoring will be shown in "best practices" while the section entitled "unanticipated outcomes" will demonstrate that there are consequences, both good and bad, for every action initiated.

The final sections in chapter V will be an account of my personal reflections upon the concerns and problems raised while doing the T.Y.P.S. Project specifically, and the implications which may have future relevance for the PAR process.

Chapter II

Methodology

2.1 Background

In 1991/92, Health and Welfare Canada funded an unique project under the Community Action Program of the National Drug Strategy. Through the sponsorship of the TriCounty Addictions Program, a non-profit agency providing addiction counselling, a streetworker ,sometimes called a street educator (W.H.O 1995:4), was employed to work in one small Eastern Ontario town. The streetworker's role was to investigate the issues, problems and needs of the local youth, with particular attention high-risk youth and to substance abuse patterns. A final report (Voakes 1998), with twenty major recommendations, was the result of that project, a report which has been widely distributed to other communities across Canada but was particularly requested by towns within Eastern Ontario.

The original funding proposal was written by a committee of local children services' providers, allowing considerable flexibility in project methodology provisional upon the final report's attaining the key goal of better understanding local youth issues. I was retained on contract to fulfill the position of Streetworker, primarily because of my past professional experience working with high-risk youth. The Small Town Streetworker Pilot Project was further developed using participatory action research principles.

The Streetworker (myself) first met a cross-section of people from the community primarily through a participant/observer role of interaction. As the project progressed, I spent increasing time with the adults of the community through committees, agency

meetings, or one-on-one interview/discussions. Youth, however, were engaged very differently, in settings ranging from large meetings at the town hall to exchanges over a pool table at local pool halls/arcades. In the last few months of the project, both adults and youths met in more formal meetings to plan change and action plans.

A variety of the issues and needs experienced by youth residing in the town and its surrounding area were clearly identified in these above discussions and meetings and later cited in the final report. Importantly, many of the recommendations and needs of the youth from the project's host community were recognized as being similar for most small communities. The project demonstrated that small town youth (13-20 year olds) represent a high-risk population as they have few local resources, outside of their families, to encourage healthy lifestyles. Because of the lack of resources, a significant portion of the town's youth develop a sense of alienation which manifests itself an array of high-risk activities which may include alcohol/drug abuse, leaving home, dropping-out of school, and/or becoming street kids.

In "The Small Town Streetworker Project Report (Voakes 1992) the summarized observations were that the town's most at-risk youth:

- 1) have few recreational and social opportunities in which to interact;
- 2) are often unaware of the services which are available ;
- 3) often express feelings of alienation from the larger community. They reported lacking any feelings of connectedness or involvement with the community, as they are effectively "shut out" of all decision-making processes which affect their lives;
- 4) consider substance abuse, particularly drinking alcohol, as a means to coping with their limited social/recreational opportunities; and
- 5) have unique problems and high-risk behaviours which are not addressed through projects and agencies planned by or managed by urban-based personnel

Lack of recreational/social options for youth became a recurring theme throughout the project. The lack of meaningful socialization opportunities and community involvement was cited by youth and adults as an important aspect leading to substance use/abuse, teenage violence, teen pregnancies, and vandalism. Effective alternatives to the traditional counselling and assessment offered by service providers had not been considered until the Streetworker project assisted youth and adult volunteers (with the blessing of the Town Council) to develop and open the local Youth Centre, later known as Midnight Junction. There were several youths who made public testimonials as to personal, positive lifestyle changes as a result of their involvement with Midnight Junction and numerous public statements of support by community leaders added to the legitimacy of the new youth centre. Regular coverage by the local newspaper and radio station informed not only local residents but those in nearby communities of the successes and challenges of the youth centre.

The response to The Small Town Streetworker Report from the surrounding communities, as well as towns across the province, validated many of the report's overall conclusions about the needs and issues of youth in small towns. Communities, both nearby and across the country, contacted the offices of both Health Canada and TriCounty Addictions Program requesting copies of the report and sought further information. A plan to develop a Phase II of the project was encouraged by Health Canada.

Phase II was drafted as a plan to work with six ⁴ towns with the goal of addressing the key concerns and recommendations of the Small Town Streetworker Report. Each community offered assistance in providing space and basic services in which to operate the project within their respective towns. Local service provider agencies offered similar assistance and co-operation. The commitment offered from both the towns and agencies was demonstrated by letters of support sent to TriCAP, the project's sponsor, prior to the project's full proposal submission.

The Phase II proposal was completed and submitted to Health Canada. The project was entitled Town Youth Participation Strategies (T.Y.P.S.) and its primary goals were to implement and expand upon the experiences and key recommendations of the Small Town Streetworker Project, as originally funded by the Community Action Program of Health and Welfare Canada's National Drug Strategy and to be sponsored by Tri County Addictions Program (TriCAP) in Smiths Falls. The T.Y.P.S. Project would continue the PAR methodological approach established in the Small Town Streetworker Pilot Project, but would concentrate on expanding the roles of youths, wherever possible while also engaging adults willing to be part of a new partnership with their community's youths. Furthermore, the purpose of the T.Y.P.S. Project was to provide six small-town communities (populations under 12,000) opportunities to develop initiatives using non-traditional approaches for involving youth in healthy, social/recreational activities. The actions undertaken to achieve these goals were to be designed, operated, and participated

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The original proposal was drafted to only involve five towns, but another town was later included to assist its youth centre in problems of organizational management. Therefore, for the balance of this paper, the project will refer to the original six towns of the project, for the sake of consistency.

in by local youths, but supported by local adult citizens in a form of partnership. As mentioned previously, the youth involvement in these activities was expected to result in reducing alcohol and drug use/abuse, school drop-out rates, teen pregnancies, runaways, teen violence and other youth issues.

The reason for planning the project in a multi-community approach was drawn from my past experience of learning a unique aspect about small town life in this region. Rural and small towns have clearly identifiable geographical boundaries which form zones of social interaction and information-disbursement. These zones are created partially through the establishment of commerce centres and through the locations of familial connections. However, these zones' boundaries are far more influenced by the arbitrary designations of school board student catchment areas, the local telephone service, and the town news media audience reach. It was important to recognize and understand these social-interaction zones and the influencing effect they might have upon the goals of this project. In this section, these zones of social influence are examined to understand their influence within the context of the project's design.

The existence of these social-interaction zones necessitated a project approach to work with several secondary schools, six town's news media, and six town councils as though there was no interaction among the nearby towns. Although all share larger mass media services (i.e., national television networks, city-centred radio stations, etc), little information about each small town's daily functions or events are 'covered' by those services. Secondary school students are particularly isolated in knowing only that which occurs among their immediate peers and at their own school, with little understanding or

information about the school or students in the next town. The only interactions between the different towns' youth was usually in competitive sports and in those situations, the opposing town was viewed as the enemy. Therefore, in an effort to gain a synergy and a supportive environment, T.Y.P.S. planned to work in all six towns but would encourage non-traditional interaction among communities, especially between the youths through activities which encouraged cooperation and non-competitive situations.

This project appealed to each community because the approach was planned as fully participatory, involving an assortment of community members of all ages while maintaining regular contact with municipal officials. The project expected each community to seek solutions and actions using their own resources and citizens and particularly by including youths throughout the process. From the start, everyone understood that the "S" in T.Y.P.S. was for the word strategies, an intentional pluralization, recognizing the potential for each community to develop their own, possibly unique, solutions to local issues, needs, and cultural interests.

2.2 T.Y.P.S. - Measurable Goals and Objectives

Succinctly, the Town Youth Participation Strategies Project was designed to involve six towns in reaching three specific goals: 1) establishment of local youth councils; 2) development of youth centres; and 3) production of a participatory video concerning the issues of local youth. Activities addressing these goals were expected to have multi-faceted effects upon the communities, through the participation of the local youths, adult citizens, community leaders, service clubs and agencies. A key component would be to inter-link the needs of the youths to the needs of their community. Through

this inter-linkage process ,each community and its youths, would mutually benefit from a reduction of at-risk behaviours, particularly substance abuse and other associated activities by addressing the feeling of youth alienation from the community.

Other specific objectives planned for the project to: 1) increase public awareness of problems facing small town youth (e.g., substance abuse, lack of housing, literacy, educational options, etc.) and promote community involvement in activities to resolve those issues; 2) promote awareness of existing services for youth and assist in the accessing of those services; 3) document behaviours, issues, and needs of local youth and assess potential for change through interventions; and 4) prepare interim and final reports assessing the activities, community participation, and long-term benefits of the project.

Special attention was to be directed toward the development of youth centres as social meeting points with youth advisory councils. Each youth advisory council was expected to provide input and advice for local recreation departments, school boards, social agencies and other groups involved in youth issues, as well as be directly involved with the management of the youth centre. The entrenching of youth councils and youth centres was seen as an important factor towards developing any long-term benefits resulting from the project. Too often, similar activities had been started within a community but soon failed due to a lack of establishing any forum or means for on-going

dialogue with the youths and providing basic support to ensure continuity . This project would focus on this important aspect of community development and healthy lifestyles through the involvement of youths.

As mentioned previously, but worth repeating, the T.Y.P.S. project proposals' goals, objectives and methodology were taken directly from the recommendations offered by youths and adults, during the Small Town Streetworker Project. Although youth representation from each town involved with T.Y.P.S. had only minimal input in the proposal, the recommendations originated from area youths and was generally accepted as representative. Importantly, there was intentional flexibility within the T.Y.P.S. design, consistent with PAR principles, to allow each town's youths to directly influence their respective project's designs, objectives and outcomes.

The proposal format required by the funder, Health Canada, required specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as a means of assessing the effectiveness of the project. The outline of planned activities, quarterly reports, and the regular assessment of each town achieving the three primary goals of the project fulfilled the requirements of the funders but were also to serve as regular points of reflection for myself, as project coordinator, and for the participants.

2.3 Methodology & Action

In the participatory action research model, as conducted in the T.Y.P.S. project,

methodological and ethical intentions were clearly stated, including: an enunciated set of guiding principles; a time-line overview of the project's expectations and activities; a financial management plan; and detailed job descriptions for paid staff. The project has provided the financial stability of funding⁵ for three years, allowing for the 'time' needed for communities to establish the programs and changes needed to support the long-term goals.

The "participatory" aspect of PAR required support and involvement from all sectors: the funder, each community's municipal leaders, non-profit service providers, parents, and local youths. All enunciated their recognition that the status quo, as it related to youth needs, was unacceptable and causing a variety of social problems within each respective community. The 'action' aspect was to be in the activities and efforts made toward achieving the proposal's goals and new goals, as established by the participants of each community. The 'research' aspect of the project, from the funder's position, was to be limited to monitoring the aspects of the projects which provided the information necessary for a clear evaluation of the project through its final report.

In a brief synopsis, the basic steps in the T.Y.P.S.'s participatory action research plan were described in the original project proposal (Voakes: 1993) as follows :

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Canadian federally funded projects are not completely financially guaranteed as there is a clause in every project contract which states the funding can be withdrawn with only two weeks notice. Although it is rare for a project to be suddenly ended without the reasons of extreme financial or organizational negligence, projects have been cancelled because of newly elected government's policy changes.

- 1) The Co-ordinator would first engage in a period of participant observation to become reasonably acquainted with each community's social dynamics. Prior to community interaction, the Co-ordinator was expected to gain a reasonable background understanding of the town. This step was accelerated through previous interaction in the Small Town Streetworker Project and in the preparation for developing the T.Y.P.S. proposal.
- 2) Each host community or sub-group of the community were required to be the subject(s) of the project. Community leaders were to be enlisted for their assistance, but the community groups and youths to be involved, in some collective group, must recognize and provide general support as to the presence and intentions of the T.Y.P.S. project.
- 3) Each host community was to be involved in as many opportunities as possible, to define the areas of need and assist in planning activities and actions. Open questionnaires and surveys (verbal and written), local media involvement, one-on-one interviews, informal discussions, etc. were all to be employed.
- 4) As data were collected, and preliminary conclusions made, the youths involved were consulted and encouraged to assist in interpretation. This does not imply that the final report was to be a writing product done by committee, but the participants of the project were to be given every opportunity to clarify points which may be otherwise misinterpreted.
- 5) The final draft of the report/published account of the project must be shared with the adults and the youths involved (whenever possible and provisions made to allow their discussion and questioning of any part of the findings).

In the acronym T.Y.P.S., the P is for participatory, a word which can mean many things to many people. For some social scientists, participatory appears to mean that subjects were involved in answering surveys or agreed to complete a closed-ended questions in an interview with little or no opportunity to assert opinions, and are given no

opportunity to review and comment on any analysis of the data. There are still community development programs which claim participatory inclusion but treat host groups only as recipients of aid from a project designed and approved by non-residents (Green, L.W., et al.1995:35). From the T.Y.P.S. perspective, simply participating would not suffice in the PAR methodology. In PAR, being participatory requires commitment, involvement, learning, and responsibility by those directly affected by a project. From the start, my job was to ensure all involved recognized these points as crucial to the success of the project.

2.3.1 Municipal declaration of support

To begin, each town wanting to become a host site was required to express its intentions through discussions and a clearly written declaration of commitment. The first step in this was to require each community's municipal government to pass of motion of support and commitment to the T.Y.P.S. project and its goals. This was done in all six towns. The importance of this simple declaration cannot be overstated in its effect. Firstly, the municipal government, through its declaration, makes a symbolic public statement supporting the need for changing the status quo. Secondly, this public statement provides an important conferring of legitimacy and credibility upon the project and its goals, a status which can take years to attain without the municipal leaders' support. Thirdly, the declaration creates a moral, almost fiduciary responsibility for the municipal

leaders and the municipal staff to cooperate and aid the project. Previous experience had demonstrated to me the importance of requiring local municipal staff to understand the community commitment for a project. Fourthly, municipal declarations are posted publicly and reported upon by local media. This publicity encourages other gate-keepers in the community to aid, or at least not hinder, the project.

2.3.2 Participant Observation - passive and active roles

Prior to each town's declaration of support, I was required to meet with council members, community committees, and service providers to both explain the project and to discuss local youth issues. These visits to the communities were valuable opportunities to complete some participant observation both while in the meetings or while visiting other sites within the community. Having resided in the tricounty area for several years and having previously visited all towns involved, I had a well-grounded sense of familiarity with the host communities. During my visits to each town during the initial phase of planning the project, I learned about the history, culture, and general demographics of the community from local newspapers, archives, library books, local historians, and government statistics. Local townspeople were usually open and willing to share their insights as to the issues and problems confronting the community. Youths were invited to attend several meetings and in each town there were always a few who were willing to provide me a town tour from the youth perspective and arrange

discussions with friends at the local hangouts.

The working relationships I had with each town's committee, the initial working group involved with T.Y.P.S., varied among the different project sites. Even though this was predicted as part of each community's unique circumstances, it nonetheless caused the most significant challenge for the project and myself. In some towns, the entrenched unwillingness to accept new ideas or any change of youth-adult roles was surprising, considering the initial public statements of support for the project and its goals. Notably, for two towns in particular, the doors were closed to youths for any type of decision-making position or even advisory capacities.

As the project coordinator of T.Y.P.S. , one of my roles was to serve as an advisor or facilitator to each committee/board and aid it to establish its own identity and operating procedures. Each town's committee, however, evolved very differently and my role differed for each, depending upon a variety of variables which often were influenced by an adult member's personality, community power struggles, or social environment. The effect of these variables cannot be understated as their impact can affect any project, but particularly PAR projects which advocate for social change. For example, one town became nationally associated with a large-scale criminal investigation and the subsequent multiple convictions of a group of men who sexually abused numerous children within their community; another town was devastated by the murder of a popular teenage girl by

a local, teenage boy; and in another town, the committee working with T.Y.P.S. was sponsored by an organization which had three executive directors in two years. These social-political influences had profound effects upon community leaders' willingness to try new approaches for youth. Caution and conservative attitudes were understandable considering their respective circumstances and although there appeared an authentic desire to proceed with T.Y.P.S., most of the towns were slow to embrace any meaningful change to the fundamental power-structures within the community.

To further complicate matters, the organizational structure of each community's committee was different and each had a variety of reporting responsibilities. Most groups were a mix of both adults and youths working together equally. In two towns, the immediate involvement of youths as the leading participants fit well with the plans of the project. However, each of the other three communities had only a few youths directly involved, and one town initially resisted allowing any youth a meaningful voice. It became one of my roles to serve as a youth advocate and remind each town's committee of their original commitment to allow youth an active, meaningful role,

Although two of the five towns had a youth centre intermittently operating from the beginning of the project, those youth centres were in serious jeopardy of permanently closing because of the lack of youth attendance and community support. When the youth centres were at their most vulnerable, my regular involvement and suggestions were

readily sought. But as the youth centres stabilized and operations improved, I was invited to meetings less often. This was viewed as progress from the PAR perspective, as each group developed its own sense of identity, skills, resources, and independence. My regular attendance was not required and T.Y.P.S. became one of many resources each group could access for specific needs or information.

The establishing of routine meeting times for the individual committees was important in providing some of the consistency needed for planning and involving the community, particularly youths. The adoption of a set of meeting protocols was the next stage, which was simplified by the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order. All committees in all towns independently agreed upon this basic method of managing their business and for the purposes of the project, it was an ideal means for maintaining records and evidence of activities related to the overall goals. My role, initially, and periodically thereafter, was to aid each group in learning the basics of Robert's Rules of Order without stifling the creative and energetic potential. All groups needed some assistance at one time or another in understanding and maintaining meeting protocols, however for those groups that were primarily operated by youths with only a few adult supporters, there was a need for a few meetings with direct instruction and practice.

We quickly discovered that the best means of learning meeting protocols was to conduct a mock meeting in an almost comic exercise. The group would then quickly

complete their actual meeting employing the skills learned. The fun and amusement in these experiential learning exercises were appreciated by youths and adults and provided a precedence that learning leadership skills didn't require onerous and didactic situations. As the youth became more relaxed in knowing meeting protocols and procedures, they accepted invitations to sit on other community boards and committees which now sought youth opinion. This further aided the youths' sense of empowerment and overall changes being sought by the youth.

2.3.3 Special Projects, Activities, and Events

Each youth group planned special projects, activities and events as part of their program or as a means of fund raising. These actions served an array of goals. For example, the simple action of planning and conducting a car wash as a fund-raiser became an opportunity for everyone to learn, in a fun session which I facilitated, the skills of organizing and planning, money management, public relations, and record-keeping. The session developed a system which incorporated the energies and a non-linear thought process the youths enjoyed. The result was a detailed time-line of duties and organizing requirements identifying those responsible and on which date each action was to be completed, including post-event actions. The youth planned the event well enough to have information brochures available to all car wash customers explaining their goals and how the money collected would be spent. The public awareness and good-will generated

through the car wash, and other subsequent fundraising events, was as important as the money, a point quickly recognized by the youth. The PAR aspects of the project ensured the group's participation increased its public status while gaining revenues, which was in itself empowering. The scrapbook record of the event documented the cohesive effect the activity had upon the participants.

2.3.4 Workshops- a standard tool in PAR

Despite the differences in committee/board structures, all towns recognized the benefits of meeting and working together toward specific common goals. A workshop series was agreed upon by the six communities of T.Y.P.S. and several topics of mutual interest were identified. The first series of workshops highlighted the topics of general youth centre development, funding and fund raising, volunteer recruitment and development, and program successes. All other area communities were invited to attend.

The T.Y.P.S. workshops provided an opportunity to enact many of the recommendations provided by the youth led committees. The requirements for attendance were simple but important to the youth who helped organize the first six workshops. The first requirement was that each town could send as many delegates to the workshop as they wished, provided that the delegates were a youth to adult ratio of 3:1. This ratio assured the youth that they would have a guaranteed majority and therefore their voices would be heard. Secondly, the workshops would rotate locations between the six towns. In this way each town had the opportunity to host a workshop and present its youth centre or efforts to open one. The third requirement was that each delegate was to

contribute two dollars towards the cost of lunch and refreshments, payable upon arrival.

A fourth condition of attendance was that all delegations were to contribute to the information and share their experiences and developed resources concerning the workshop's topic: Forms, writings, policies, and external resources were to be openly shared. The final requirement for each delegation was to make a presentation at the workshop about its recent activities, successes and experiences. The presentations became known as the "bragging sessions" and were the most enjoyed and anticipated item of the workshop's agenda.

Workshops are often the main methodological tool used in PAR projects but in T.Y.P.S. it was but one of many. However, it was the most efficient means of managing the multi-community aspect of the project. The opportunity to gather all the T.Y.P.S. groups under one roof to discuss one specific topic relevant for all provided an important mechanism for effecting action and change. The workshops became a means of introducing and establishing networking skills among the communities. As mentioned previously, small towns are isolated within their zones of social interaction. Most of the workshop delegates reported having no previous knowledge that a nearby town was working upon the same issues and problems as their community. Most importantly, as delegates learned they had allies with identical goals, they would return home with renewed confidence to inform their community that similar efforts were being supported in other towns.

The workshops were the best opportunity for all T.Y.P.S. communities to have

youth in control of discussions. For some of the communities, this was nothing new but for others it was an enlightening experience to learn the opinions and capabilities of the youths present. The bragging sessions belonged exclusively to the youths and this, coupled with their numerical majority, produced a positive sense of pride and empowerment. Although special expert guests were invited to address specific topics, the youths quickly took the leadership roles of the workshops and became the in-house experts on who best to manage specific topics and activities for future workshops.

In the second year, the value of the T.Y.P.S. workshops was fully realized in its capacity-building potential. In three workshops, delegates worked on one topic and one goal: to create a policy and procedure manual useful for all town youth centres/youth groups. Additional editing was required but most of the work was completed and the final result was what became the T.Y.P.S. Policy and Procedures Manual, which served as a template resource for many youth centres and youth groups.

2.3.5 Youth-led Training Sessions - learning from the experts

An innovative technique which developed during T.Y.P.S. was the youth-led training sessions for adult volunteers. As the youth required some adult volunteers for specific roles and duties, both adults and youths recognized the need to train the adults in understanding youth issues and youth cultures. Initially, the training was requested of me, as part of my role as a facilitator. I had achieved an insider-outsider role and therefore was viewed as neutral and trustworthy. However, after some discussion, all groups agreed that I should only provide some generalities and specific “academic” background

and that the youths would be better experts in relation to their local circumstances and youth culture. After a short planning session, the youths developed a process for informing adults about a variety of issues including drug and alcohol, teen sexuality, relationships between teens and their family and friends, school, and other topics.

Training sessions were organized by the youths using flip charts or chalkboards with pre-arranged categories about specific information about the topic. The adults were required to sit behind the youths, and the youths held a conversation about the topic as if the adults were not present. One youth served as both a recorder and a quasi-facilitator, although any youth might write information on the flipcharts or chalkboard, . The effect was that as the conversation progressed, the adults could listen in on the topic and key points would be recorded. At midway through the training session, the youths would stop and ask the adults if they had any questions. An open exchange by adults and youths would then ensue, with the group adding to the information being recorded. The training ended with a review of all information written on the flip charts. Clarifications, information to be added or omitted were discussed, and one youth would then volunteer to type and distribute the information to the adults.

This exercise provided a participatory experience for the youth and adults. The youths were unquestionably more knowledgeable about some local issues (drugs, street crime, etc.) and were able to impart that information through this process. There was one professional with expertise on the topic to be discussed, attended each meeting as a resource for dispelling any misinformation that both adults and youth may have had.

Unless the information was seriously in error, the professional agreed not to interfere in the overall process.

During these training sessions, a great deal of information was acquired about the local experience related to several topics listed above. The data were useful from an academic point of view, providing social and cultural context for understanding the community and youth-subgroups. However, the experience and information was more important and immediately relevant for the volunteer adults who would now be working with the youths as partners.

2.3.6 Participatory Videos

In year two, the project began the process of developing participatory videos with each of the five core T.Y.P.S. groups and Smiths Falls. At that time, there were only a few individuals committed to developing a participatory video. Fortunately, Winter Films and SAW Video Gallery in Ottawa, a video artists cooperative, both had experience and were interested in aiding our project. The first step in this process was to provide some training for the youth in the technical skills of producing a video. Each town's youth committee selected those who were most interested and committed to attending a day-long workshop arranged with SAW Video. In that workshop, five professional video producers provided instruction on specific aspects of video production including storyboarding, editing, lighting, camera skills, and sound.

Included among the day's instructors was a retired Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television producer, Denis Faulkner. Denis had been residing in a small town

near the T.Y.P.S. communities and offered to continue supporting the project by working with each group during their video production process. Denis, as a SAW Video member also had access to SAW's equipment. The T.Y.P.S. project purchased a video camera to use as required and each town's youth group planned out a video storyboard and production schedule.

The video production experience was different for each youth group. Some were less organized and less willing to put in the time required and it was only through the prodding of both Denis Faulkner and myself, that some groups were able to finish. Other youth groups, Almonte in particular, immediately took the initiative and produced an excellent video which gained considerable attention within their community. Despite the challenges and problems created by the travel distance to SAW Video to access equipment, there were five videos produced, with four being of "broadcast quality." More importantly, the participatory video production process involved the youth in examining and presenting their community from their perspective and being able to present that perspective in an easily accessible and transportable form. Copies were made for all the youth involved, as well as for each town's council and library. In most of the communities, the videos were broadcast by the area's cable television service on their community access station.

2.3.7 Involving the News Media

The Streetworker Pilot Project had concluded that involvement of local media, particularly in small communities, is essential to the success of any local initiative. The

local news media in small communities was a genuine interest in local issues and will devote considerable time and energy to understand any project which may have an impact upon their readers.

There is very little written about purposely involving the news media within the literature on anthropological or PAR projects. Whitmore (1990) expressed concerns about involving the news media, as it may misinterpret the goals or disempower the group by insisting on only interviewing one participant. Whitmore's caution is worth remembering, however the selective inclusion of individual journalists may produce benefits which outweigh the risks. In the end, it is the participants who must assess the potential advantages of including local news media as opposed to attempting to exclude and possibly alienating this important community stakeholder.

In the T.Y.P.S. Project, the news media involvement became a vehicle to provide three important roles. Firstly, to inform the community about the project, its goals, and about the background of issues behind each project's development. Local news media are particularly well suited for this role as they inform the public in a language best understood by the community and they are particularly skilful in soliciting quotes and comments from a cross-section of residents and capturing the community's attitudes toward each initiative. Secondly, the media can provide regular updates to the community to keep the project fresh in everyone's mind. This updating ensures the community is prepared for meeting and exchanging opinions with the local youth group. Lastly, the local news media occasionally evoked controversy concerning the project, which resulted

in additional dialogue and an exchange of ideas. Although not always pleasant, that controversy can be useful in identifying opposing arguments and reasons for resistance to change and, most importantly, clarifying the sources of the opposition.

News releases were sent from the individual groups on a regular basis and particularly when a special activity or event was planned. In three towns, local reporters joined committees or the board of directors of the youth group. In two towns, the publisher and editor supported the group by publishing the youths' surveys and four newspapers provided space for regular columns written by the youths.. A few larger media outlets learned about the project through the smaller media reporting and each towns new youth groups were contacted by Ottawa newspapers, television and radio stations, which were extraordinary events as the Ottawa news media (with the exception of one television station) tend to ignore news from towns in the region unless there is a death involved.

T.Y.P.S. also promoted special news media campaigns within and among communities to address a variety of youth issues, particularly substance abuse. Service providers became allies in these media campaigns, which informed the public that there was professional support for the youth group's efforts but also educated of the available services for those requiring assistance. This opportunity also informed the public in different communities about the actions undertaken in nearby towns, with special attention to the different youth groups' activities. This further broadened the level of acceptance of the overall initiatives and changes being promoted by communities.

2.3.8 Questionnaires

T.Y.P.S. incorporated several surveys throughout its thirty-six months of operation. In accordance to the principles of PAR, questionnaires were designed, conducted, and assessed by the youth within each community. The youth's involvement and the analyses from the surveys were regularly presented to the community through presentations at local municipal council meetings or via the local news media. As previously mentioned, two different towns' local newspaper published the survey questions, invited its readers to answer the questions and mail the responses to the local youth committee.

Questionnaires are useful for their own means of collecting data for analysis and are standard methods in most sociological and anthropological studies. However, in the PAR methodology, the entire process of determining the questions, formatting the forms, asking the questions, compiling the data, and discussing the analysis takes on an entirely new meaning and effect. Participants themselves are involved in each step of the process, not simply as an academic exercise, but, because the answers are directly relevant for them and may have direct impact upon their future aspirations. A questionnaire constitutes "research" for the group and providing information needed for their own purposes, which may be useful for others. But, the immediate effect of this process is the invoking of a sense of "taking charge" and increasing the participants' sense of empowerment. The questionnaire becomes *their* questions, in *their* format, seeking answers that are important to *them*. The questionnaire becomes a political action.

Questionnaires also have an interesting effect for those surveyed. Questions can provoke thoughts, causing an awareness and contemplation about issues which otherwise may have remained buried within the clutter of day-to-day living and thereby completely neglected. Simply asking the questions causes awareness and can create a more receptive public to offers of possible action and suggested solutions.⁶ Therefore, whether the reader of the local newspaper completed and mailed his or her responses to the T.Y.P.S. surveys was not nearly as important as the potential effect caused by the reading of the questions.

Politicians are especially interested, and sometimes worried, about questionnaires. Questionnaires can, through its raising of public awareness, elevate expectations for action. That action is usually sought by the public through the leadership of politicians. As municipal politicians are the most accessible to the public, the local municipal governments of each T.Y.P.S. community became increasingly receptive to meeting with youth committees to discuss any questionnaire's findings and aid in expedient, preferably low-cost, responses.

2.3.9 Documenting the Project

Journals were kept by me throughout the project, to record observations and thoughts about the daily events, as is the standard practice in anthropology, and selected excerpts

⁶ Hall (1975:30) noted that Carr-Hill (1974) recognized this same awareness-raising potential of questionnaires and recommended that they only be used as a first step in a PAR process and that the interpretations should be done by more than one researcher.

were used in the monthly and quarterly reports required by both sponsor and funder. These reports however, were first discussed and often fully reviewed by the community groups involved. Added insights and differing opinions were noted and included in the official project's reports. All letters of correspondence, board and committee meetings minutes and news media reports (newspaper, radio or television) were copied, filed and routinely cited T.Y.P.S. reports, as part of the monitoring of progress toward the project's objectives and goals.

There were also many opportunities for one-to-one informal interviews with the participants. Most discussions occurred spontaneously with a small group of youths while they waited for a meeting to start, or a parent to arrive and drive them home, or after an event when everyone just wanted to talk. These were the times when I learned the most about the individuals involved, their motivations, and deep commitment toward the goals of the project. Conversations, for my part, were always kept private and confidential, regardless of the youth's willingness to share the same disclosures to others. The youth learned that I would listen and provide input or suggestions around other assistance as needed but would remain non-judgmental. This allowed most of the youths to feel comfortable in having me present during any event or activity. Their willingness to share aspects of youth culture which they rarely discussed with most adults, was an important indicator of their trust in me.

Chapter III

Evaluative Comparisons

3.1 Community Backgrounds

The T.Y.P.S. Project involved six towns within three counties of Eastern Ontario: Brockville and Prescott are located in the southern area of the Tri-Counties; with Smiths Falls and Perth in the central area; Kemptville is at a central east position and Almonte found in the northern quadrant. In keeping with ethnographic practice, a community description was compiled to serve as a reference and to provide context for the issues and developments which arose throughout the project. Readers are referred to Appendix # 1, which provides an abbreviated review of each community's description and project involvement.

3.2 An Overview of Project Results

As stated previously, the T.Y.P.S. Project had only planned to work with six small-town communities. By the end of the project, T.Y.P.S. had worked routinely with a dozen communities but had concentrated its primary resources to the six core towns. Additional communities who regularly connected with the T.Y.P.S. Project, received information, visited each other's programs, and participated in the workshop series. In total, no fewer than twenty communities were associated with T.Y.P.S., at one time or another, during the three years. This spreading of support for youth groups and youth centres throughout the region, appears to validate the purpose of designing the project as a multi-community initiative.

The project proposal simplified the main points for assessing successful completion of the project. The reader is reminded again of three specific goals set for all six communities to achieve: 1) establishment of a local youth council, 2) development of a youth centre, and 3) the production of a participatory video concerning the issues of local youth. These points were, for the most part, easily (quantitatively) evaluated by first recognizing the situation prior to the T.Y.P.S. Project.

At the start of the project there had only been two youth centres operating in the area, with both publicly admitting they were in jeopardy of permanently closing. There were no youth councils, other than student councils, and only two agencies in three counties had youth advisors. There had also never been any type of video produced by a group of local youths to present their views and issues. At the conclusion of the T.Y.P.S. Project, there were eight operating youth centres and three additional youth group programs. Five of the eight youth centres had a youth advisory council or similar means of youth providing their opinions concerning local issues and/or the operation of their youth centre. There were four high quality video productions and two additional videos completed for in-house use.

A conservative estimate of the number of youths involved with these youth groups and youth centres is calculated at between 1,600 and 1,800 over the three years of the project, from a total youth population base of approximately 3,600. The calculation of committed volunteer hours is, also conservatively estimated, at no fewer than 50,000 hours and more likely closer to 70,000 hours. These estimates are calculated by adding the total statistics provided from each of the youth groups and centres. Each group

maintained their own records, including: attendance records, volunteer hours, minutes of meetings, correspondence sent and received, donations of money or in-kind support, and their organizational financial statements. The reason for indicating the figures as conservative estimates is because all the groups were not equally attentive to maintaining records and because some records were lost or stolen.

The T.Y.P.S. Project spanned a three year period and was designed as a multi-tasked initiative. As a detailed evaluation of each aspect of the project is not possible within the confines of this paper, the reader is referred to three reports which, when combined, provide extensive documentation of activities and evaluates the achievements of each of the many objectives outlined in the original T.Y.P.S. proposal. The first document is the T.Y.P.S. Project Interim Report (Voakes 1995) which was compiled by me, as the project coordinator, but included direct input from each youth group involved. The second document, Town Youth Participation Strategies : Final Report (Voakes 1998) involved the same process as the interim report. The third mentioned document is Kim Sabo's (1999) Doctoral Dissertation. In the section (and pseudonym) entitled "Youth Hang-outs Project," Sabo reviewed and evaluated the T.Y.P.S. project. It is worth noting that within the T.Y.P.S.: Final Report there is a separate chapter containing an independent evaluation of the project by Dr. Rob Shields, Sociology/Anthropology Department of Carleton University, Ottawa. Dr. Shields' contribution was that of an independent observer and evaluator of the T.Y.P.S. Project.

The above reports are mentioned because of their collective importance in assuring the T.Y.P.S. Project's goals, objectives, methodologies, and activities were

diligently documented and evaluated by both participants and by independent professionals representing different disciplines. In addition, there were many partnerships made throughout the project with professional representatives from health, journalism, recreation, medicine, and social work, each adding their own perspectives. They also prepared internal reports for the use of their agencies and organizations to better serve each community. In the following evaluation of the project and its methods, I have included the more salient findings from the above mentioned reviews.

The next section presents tables with indicators of the changes and activities as the accomplishments each of the six towns involved with the T.Y.P.S. Project were able to achieve.

3.3 Measurable Results

The following tables are presented as a means of reviewing each community's actions and changes during the project. The indicators are grouped into sectors of stakeholders and each town is rated as to their level of involvement. These groupings reveal interesting patterns of involvement both by the sectors and by each respective community.

At the start of the T.Y.P.S. project, a variety of assessment surveys were completed to serve as a baseline which could be used for later comparisons. With only the four possible exceptions listed previously, all indicators were assessed as non-existent prior to the beginning of the project.

In the next section, there are additional comments about a few specific indicators as applicable to one or more communities. It is important to note that this table does not

include several nearby towns and villages who also became involved with the T.Y.P.S. Project, but were not part of the original proposal. More will be discussed about their experiences in a later chapters. However, the table represents a fair assessment of each community's actions and changes during the project. This assessment is particularly important as the evaluation was done with youths connected to the project.

As a means of respecting each community's differences, specific towns or organizations are not directly identified.. Instead, each town has been assigned an arbitrary letter. In any past, published reports about the project, only generalizations were made about each specific sectors' involvement and support.

In the following table of indicators please note the following:

1) that where the indicator states "youth" it refers to youths involved in the T.Y.P.S. project's goals; 2) X - denotes a statement recognized by the youths as valid for their respective community; 3) XX - denotes exceptional response/validity.

Table # 1						
MEASURABLE CHANGES & ACTION	A	B	C	D	E	F
Municipal						
Official declaration of support of project and its goals	xx	xx	xx	x	xx	xx
Town Council appointed liaison person or committee	xx		xx		x	xx
Invited youth to make presentations to Council or its committees	xx		x	x		xx
Provided or arranged free space for project	x		x		x	
Provided or arranged free space for youth centre					xx	
Provided special access/privileges for youth to fundraise	x		x		x	x
Recreation Department routinely involved & supportive	xx	x	x	x	x	xx
Recreation Department provided in-kind support or fee waivers	xx			x	xx	xx
Police						
Official enunciation of support to youth/project		x	x	x	x	xx
Provided personnel involvement (regularly or occasional)						
Media (local) town's newspaper, radio, cable TV						
Routinely reported on project/activities	xx	x	xx	xx	x	xx
Supportive editorials	x	x	x	x	x	x
Published "Letters to the Editor" about youth issues/project	xx	x	xx	x	x	xx
Supported initiatives (i.e., printed project's surveys, encouraged readers to attend events, etc.)	xx		x	xx		xx
Direct involvement in project development	xx		xx	x		xx

Table #2						
MEASURABLE CHANGES & ACTION	A	B	C	D	E	F
Service Clubs and Volunteer Associations⁷						
Invited youth to be on Board of Directors/committees	xx		x	x		xx
Invited youth groups to become part of their special events	xx	x	xx	x		xx
Invited youth to make presentations at their meetings	xx	x	xx	x		xx
Delegated or encouraged their members to become involved with youth group	x		xx	x		x
Regular donations of money or in-kind support	xx	x	xx	x	x	xx
Youth Service Providers						
Provided on-going personnel support		x	x		x	
Provided in-kind resources (space, equipment, services)	xx	x	x			x
Provided personnel for special training or support	x		xx			x
Invited youth advisory members to their Boards/committees	x		x			x
Invited youths to make presentations to their Board & staff	xx		x	x		xx
Youth Groups/Centres						
Opened youth centre	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx
Youth Advisory Council/Committee established	n/a		x	n/a	x	x
Youth directly involved in organization's governance	xx			xx		x
Adults directly involved in governance or as mentors	xx	x	x	xx	x	xx
Participatory Video Produced	xx	xx	x		xx	xx

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Service Clubs refers to social groups who provide local community services as a part of their mandate. Usually there are no paid employees involved. Ex: Lions Club; Rotary Club; Rural Women's Institute; Seniors Club, etc. Voluntary Organizations are groups of individuals with a common interest of public concern. These groups are primarily composed of volunteers but may have a few paid employees in administrative roles. Ex: Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Canadian Cancer Society, etc.

3.4 Community Reactions: Measurable Changes & Action Analysis

The final report of the project confirmed that each of the core six communities had developed its own responses to achieve the mutually agreed upon goals stated in the proposal. The level of youth participation, from a PAR perspective, varied appreciably among communities but it is important to remember that the entire community was expected to become involved with the project. One of the most important purposes of the project was to better connect the youth with their community, and inversely, connect the community to its youth. As evidenced by the Measurable Changes and Actions tables, each community responded to this objective differently but as a whole, all communities significantly increased their awareness and level of including youths in planning and decision-making.

In the previous pages, the Measurable Changes and Actions tables assessed level of involvement by the specific sectors who were included in the original planning of the project. The original planning recognized the need for those sectors, each with respected community roles in leadership and opinion, to be a part of any change process within the community. Although their roles aided to the legitimacy of the project's goals, indicators of the community internalizing new thinking were important to identify and recognize for the groups involved .

The support of the news media and municipal government were two of the most influencing factors. Their introduction of the project and goals, to the community, ensured a wide audience was informed and knew of the key sources of support. This, in

turn, prompted other organizations to become interested, and eventually supportive, of the project. Individual volunteers requesting involvement, both adults and youths, was the first indication of a positive community reaction . Each youth group gained, or for some towns regained, a core group of supporters who were willing to become directly involved. These new volunteers had their own network of other community contacts of friends, family and associations, whom also became included in the youth groups' efforts.

The spread of information about the project and the youth group, via the new volunteers and the regular news reports, encouraged service club involvement. Initially, the service clubs offered modest in-kind support. For example, in one town, the Royal Canadian Legion agreed to allow the youth group to use its fax machine and donated the surplus ice cubes made by their ice machine. This formed a long-term connection which later led to an invitation extended to the youth to speak at a Royal Canadian Legion membership meeting, annual financial donations to the youth group, and the inclusion of the youth group's taking part in the annual Memorial Day observances and laying a wreath at the cenotaph. This one illustration of a sequence of community reactions to the youth group was not unique. Each town had similar experiences with service clubs and service provider agencies, including some which had little or no mandate to serve youth.

The invitation of youth to be part of other committees and planning groups was one of the more striking indicators of change. In each town, the youth groups were increasingly contacted and invited to participate on special planning committees or asked to attend local service provider board meetings to contribute input on issues concerning

community youth. In one town, the youth group was sending representatives to six or seven committees or boards, every month. Other towns were less successful but each town made progress in having youth representation where previously there had been none. Eventually, the youth consultation role expanded as both the youth and the community became known by a growing circle of supporters. Requests for youth delegates and advice came from groups beyond the home communities, including invitations from the Premier's Council, federal government special health forums, and several academic research groups.

As the youth and youth groups became better known, community support further increased. In one town, the town council instituted the receiving of the youth group's board meeting minutes, as a standard agenda item of the town council meetings. The youth group's minutes were circulated and often discussed, including the youth group's discussions which may have disagreed with council policy or a town department's management of an issue. Two towns decided that the youth group's input and activities had become important enough that town councillors were delegated to become liaisons and required to attend youth group meetings to ensure communications.

During the three years of the project, there had been unprecedented changes in provincial and federal government funding for non-profit social services. The reduction or complete withdrawal of government funding for a variety of services resulted in the upsurge of fundraising by agencies attempting to maintain budgets. The competition for public donations was particularly intense during the second and third year of the project

and many non-profit organizations closed due to lack of funds. However, the youth groups involved with the T.Y.P.S. Project steadily increased their share of community financial support. Each group was accepted as affiliates of their area's United Way, which indicated a new level of legitimation for those youth groups/centres and the youth group movement in general. It was particularly interesting that the United Way openly acknowledged youth group affiliations as an opportunity for expanding their own fundraising base through those in the community who supported the local youth groups. This collaboration has remained mutually beneficial for the youth and the United Way.

The level of support for specific youth group initiatives was another indicator of community reaction, particularly in direct fundraising. As stated above, there was intense competition for the donated dollar across Ontario. Although the total dollars raised for any cause is partly a function of its organizing capabilities, it is also a gauge for measuring the support of the public. As the youth groups in each town developed grass-roots fund raising events (i.e., car washes, Bar-b-ques, etc), their success, both in public participation and donations, serve as indicators of community support. Another associated point, which was recognized as a qualitative rather than quantitative indicator, was that in several instances, community's traditional activities were being entrusted to the youth groups by the more established community groups, e.g. the Almonte Santa Claus Pancake Breakfast.

The Santa Claus Pancake Breakfast had been an annual tradition in one town for over thirty years. The event had been previously coordinated by a women's service club

during those years, but had ceased because of that club's aging membership. The youth group contacted the women's club and asked if they would allow the youth to take over and asked for the women's club to be advisors. Both groups worked together and the event was recognized by all involved, including the community, as a success. Most importantly, the youth were seen as instrumental in reviving a community tradition.

In a similar case, one municipality made a rare exception of policy and granted their youth group permission to conduct an annual fund-raising road toll. The most important aspect of this municipality's support, was that only two other groups were historically allowed this privilege and the council made it clear no other groups would be considered in the future. The town council's motion to allow the youth group this privilege passed with only one dissenting vote and the community has responded annually with donations ranging from \$1,200 to \$2,000, amounts considered exceptional in this small town.

Individual donations were another means of assessing support for the youth groups. Although most individuals did not donate money, the in-kind donations were particularly generous. Furniture, electronic equipment, building supplies, etc. were regularly donated, sometimes just dropped-off at the youth centre, by local citizens. Small businesses were also generous in contributing merchandise or services as door prizes or raffles, conducted at the youth group events. The above mentioned pancake breakfast rarely had less than two dozen items for raffle and several more as door prizes.

Although there were many other indicators which might be cited or further

discussed, one additional indicator not shown in the previous table requires special attention. The reader is reminded that many of the youths involved with this project represented socially marginal groups and/or were could be otherwise viewed as at-risk youth. This stated, one set of indicators was in the changes ascribed to their status and reputations within the community. Initially, the risk was in identifying the youths as part of the youth group, which could become a potentially stigmatizing status (Goffman 1963). However, as the project progressed, and particularly for the groups which allowed youths to take leadership roles, the youth involved were positively recognized within their towns. The youths were sought not only for volunteer committees, but by local businesses. Youth groups began losing some of their best leaders as they were offered jobs, previously identified by the youth themselves as an important need. Schools recognized the improvement in attitudes and school participation of the youth and one school presented special awards of community leadership to the youths involved in the youth group. Town volunteer recognition committees invited youths to receive certificates for their contributions to the community. In one town, a youth from the youth centre, who had previously been identified as a “gang-ringleader” was recognized with a citizenship award, presented by the mayor and town council. These type of qualitative indicators are difficult to express in a table or set of statistics, however the long-term effects upon the community and the youths affected should not be undervalued.

The T.Y.P.S. Project was expected to influence in the reduction of alcohol and drug use/abuse, school drop-out rates, runaways, teen violence and other youth issues.

The project had not been provided the resources, nor was it expected to quantitatively confirm a reduction of the risk behaviours. However, each town involved reported that there had been overall community benefits attributable to the project, and particularly for the youths directly involved. Shields (1998) assessed that there was substantive anecdotal and expert opinion (mayors, police chiefs, etc) which supported the project had achieved progress towards its stated goals. But, more importantly, Shields was able to document clear examples of community acceptance that positive changes had occurred overall, when discussing youth. The general community acceptance that positive changes had occurred, whether real or perceived, is also an indicator of positive community reaction- and may indeed be the most significant of all.

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Chapter IV

Dynamics of Success

4.1 Project Dynamics

There were many layers of dynamics at work during the T.Y.P.S. Project. I would be less than honest without the admission that I, and others connected to the project, were occasionally caught completely off-guard by some of the actions and directions which occurred. In the planning and facilitating of the project, some of these dynamics were anticipated and planned, while others were spontaneous and pleasant surprises. Other dynamics were present prior to the project and profoundly ingrained attitudes that were stubbornly resistant to influencing. Some dynamics were driven by sudden incidents which unexpectedly affected the entire community. Regardless of the sources, each dynamic required to be understood for what it was and, whenever possible, integrated into the project.

No participatory action research project can, or should, attempt to control all the dynamics occurring within its own group, let alone the community-at-large. However, by developing a project structure which incorporated the ten PAR principles outlined earlier, the T.Y.P.S. Project had a solid foundation to build upon while providing mechanisms for the flexibility required to encourage innovative additions.

In this project, and this thesis, three distinct categories of dynamics were recognized: environmental, designed, and emergent. Environmental dynamics include the historical, economic, and political influences on the communities' 'zeitgeist.' One type of environmental dynamic is referred to by Robert Paine (1992) as a "non-routine incident "

which can cause a sudden and community wide response. The second category is the designed dynamic which are those resulting from the catalyst actions planned within the project proposal. The third category, are the emergent dynamics which can be either the unanticipated results of a project's designed catalyst, or from an unanticipated external occurrence within the environment having repercussions on the project or its participants.

The non-routine incident type of environmental dynamic factor can profoundly affect not only individuals but the entire community. The earlier mentioned tragedy of the murder of a teenage girl by a classmate caused an urgency within that town to mobilize and to work toward many of the same goals as the T.Y.P.S. Project was endorsing. That community, when compared to all others involved with the project, had the largest cross-section of community support from service providers, municipal leaders, private citizens, business, and local youth. In another community, an entire community felt under-siege when it was revealed in national news media that more than a dozen adults were charged with sexually abusing community children over a long period of time. Although this town's response was to draw inward, it did work toward opening a youth centre managed by professionals from the community. The underlying effects (mostly of widespread shame and a suspicion of outsiders) manifested in a closedness , or resistance to trying new approaches to working with youth; and to interacting with other communities involved in the project.

Designed Dynamics are those which were specifically planned for the project. The designed dynamics are intended to serve as actions in themselves which promote interactive and critical learning (Park 1993:4-8). The participatory video was one

example of a designed dynamic, planned as more than just a technical skill development. The youths were required to think, discuss, research, discuss, and reflect upon the issues they wished to present, and thus each step in the process of creating that video prompted learning and critical thinking. The plan to have youth advisory councils was another example of a designed dynamic, as the councils were expected to promote discussion, controversy and change. The youth councils were designed to act as catalysts for action, encouraging new actions which would further engage the community into another cycle of reflecting and, hopefully, deriving some level of critical knowledge (Park 1993: 6-7).

The third category of dynamics is described as emergent and refers to unanticipated influences derived from either the project's designed dynamics or from external sources connected directly or indirectly to the project. Emergent dynamics are consistent with the principles of PAR, as shown in chapter I, and are natural consequences of the catalyst nature of designed dynamics. An example of this category is seen through the project proposal's goal (designed dynamic) to have six communities open and operating their own youth centres and for each community to have its own youth advisory council. As each town's more active youth were involved in both efforts, eventually the two goals combined to have youth serving in the role of decision-makers (Board or committee members) for each youth centres. Other community groups interested in the views of youth approached the youth centre board for either their input or to delegate a youth to speak on behalf of the youth centre. This new dynamic, providing youth with both a voice and real decision-making power was unanticipated but welcomed, and consistent with the overall project objectives.

The final type of emergent dynamic occurs when an unanticipated external occurrence within the environment has repercussions directed toward the project or its participants, intentionally or unintentionally. This type of dynamic can be seen in the situation, mentioned previously, created by an election of a new provincial government with a mandate to slash social spending. A key partner with the T.Y.P.S. Project was suddenly uncertain as to their ability to fulfill their original long-term commitment to sponsor that town's youth group. The new government and its policies may have been an overall environmental dynamic, but because it had a sudden, unanticipated, and direct effect upon our project, it is instead recognized as an emergent dynamic.

In the following section, I will further review activities which supported the goals of the project and demonstrated PAR principles. Each action can be considered within the three categories of dynamics listed above.

4.2 Best Practices

***Best Practices:** workshops, scrapbooks, town council declaration of support, developing policy and procedures, videos, parallel boards, youth on other committees, after school programs, car washes, haunted houses, Christmas Pancake Breakfast, central coordinator, T.Y.P.S. assistants, letting each group set their own pace, flexibility of T.Y.P.S. involvement, self-sustainability and capacity-building. (Voakes 1998)*

The T.Y.P.S. Project planned and prepared for change through a process which adapted itself as opportunities presented themselves. That ability, by the participants and the project, to recognize new possibilities and to realize each as having a potential value for the group, was in itself a "best practice." Perhaps this energy to experiment and try new ideas was because most of the participants were youth; or maybe it was because of

the design of the project; or probably a little of both. Regardless, of the reasons, there was a broad-based agreement that the process had worked well.

The best practices list quoted at the start of this section, was the consensus of the project participants as to the best practices developed during the project, and re-affirmed at the last workshop of the T.Y.P.S. Project. The following section will review only a small selection of the project's "best practices" and provide a brief analysis to contextualize each example within the framework of PAR.

The T.Y.P.S. Workshops, previously described in more detail in chapter II, were rated the most successful and useful activities by the participants and, for my purposes, from a PAR perspective. The workshops developed capacity-building opportunities and resources while providing a regular forum for both youths and adults from all T.Y.P.S. sites to come together to review their progress, share learned skills and insights, and discuss mutual concerns. Each workshop's topic or theme provided not only a focus or discussion but the opportunity to develop an agreed upon approach that all could use and benefit by, as in the previously mentioned policy and procedures manual.

The workshops were a designed dynamic for the project which spawned several emergent dynamics. The immediate value of the workshops, within the plans of the project was in its creating interactive and critical learning situations which would promote a 'networking' among the towns. The itinerary which included 'bragging sessions' added an on-going evaluative process for both individual youth groups, and the T.Y.P.S. Project as a whole, was only one of many unanticipated emergent dynamics generated by the workshop series.

As noted in chapter II, the T.Y.P.S. Project encouraged each group to maintain a record of its experiences and activities through formal (files, log books, etc.) and informal methods (scrapbooks, personal journals kept by the youth, etc). However the use of scrapbooks was expanded upon to provide a valuable tool of project on-going evaluation and a source for participant reflection. Scrapbooks were not an archival record (those materials were kept separate in a filing cabinet) but instead allowed the youths write in their comments; sign their names to attest to their involvement, paste in news articles, pictures, ticket stubs, etc. The idea of scrapbooks as an evaluative tool came from Prof. Shields during one of his early visits to a T.Y.P.S. workshop. One scrapbook, dubbed “Scrappy” by its youth group, was regarded as a mascot. The comments in Scrappy are illustrative of the assessment qualities their remarks could impart, including:

“It was fun and it helped us get started !”

“T.Y.P.S. is alive and well in Almonte - Take Young People Seriously”

“Dear Scrappy: The weekend went well. I had a Blast. Lets do it again.”
or the single entry on the page with a well-made flyer - “I made this !”

Later evaluations of the project by myself, Sabo (1999) and Shields (1998) each recognized the scrapbooks a meaningful resource of qualitatively assessing the youth’s interest and commitment to the project. Scrapbooks were also used as a readily available means of presenting each groups’ activities to the public, especially potential donors and funders. The multi-purpose role of these scrapbooks was the reason the youth groups and project evaluators all recommended their use.

During the evaluation discussions with participants, the youths stated, in a variety of descriptive examples, that one of the reasons they became involved with the project

was because they “got to do interesting things that were fun” and “learned a lot by being involved.” What they were describing was “experiential learning.”

Experiential learning was the *modus operandi* of the T.Y.P.S. Project and is consistent with interactive learning and the PAR principle that a project must have a learning/educative component (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy, 1993; Hall, 1979; and Park, 1993). The T.Y.P.S. Project planned and sought emerging opportunities to engage participants in actions which promoted learning new skills in formats different than they had previously experienced in other settings (i.e, school and jobs). The intention was always to have fun and social engagement during the process of completing each activity. This strategy found resonance with Sutton-Smith’s (1974:70) views that some games played by children revealed elements of social structure, including:

...models of power, by which we mean that they are buffered learning situations through which the child gains acquaintance and experience at the power stratagems relevant to some of the major parameters of influence within his own culture.

Although Sutton-Smith’s analysis related more to younger children than the youths involved our project, there is a parallel. The learning of power relationships by the children in Sutton Smith’s analysis was also learned in several of the T.Y.P.S. activities (board, parallel boards, community committees, etc). In the T.Y.P.S. activities, the “games” were methodically planned, researched, and managed by the youth, while they enjoyed their peers’ camaraderie. The final results may have appeared commonplace (organizing a car wash or a community barbeque) but the process to achieve the

goal was interactive, participatory, and skill developing and resulted in critical learning.

Many of the T.Y.P.S. activities were linked to fundraising for the youth group. In one T.Y.P.S. Workshop, everyone agreed on requiring five goals of every fundraising event:

1) the activity had to be able to sustain, if not improve, community support for the youth group ; 2) the activity had to be fun for the organizers; 3) the activity had to be appreciated by those who contributed as sponsors or customers; 4) the project had to realize a reasonable return of money relative to the effort 5) the activity had to be supported on its own right, by the community. (Voakes 1998:70)

An example of the linking using a fundraising activity to achieve several purposes can be examine in one youth group's decision to operate a haunted house during Hallowe'en. The haunted house was devised as both a fund raising activity and as the youths' solution to reducing the extreme vandalism and violence for which their town had earned a notoriety throughout the region.. The youth believed that with a haunted house, many of their friends would become involved in managing the activities and after they would hold a dance/party - further discouraging teens from roaming the streets. Applying some planning skills that we developed in earlier workshops, these teens took three months to systematically plan every detail. They involved local businesses as sponsors to cover the costs of decorating room, local schools brought their classes to visit, an entire building was loaned by a local service provider to serve as the haunted house, and several adults volunteered to help build or transport some of the more complicated or heavy props. Some of the adult volunteers had theatre backgrounds and provided advice and assistance in make-up for the monsters and the special effects for the displays. The effort

took about a dozen planning sessions and three construction days. The result was a building, with ten rooms, entirely converted into a haunted house. Over two hundred adults, teens and children visited the site (the town's population was only four thousand), many returning for repeat tours.

The police and Downtown Business Association reported that year's Halloween to be the quietest and most uneventful, in regards to vandalism and violence, in more than a decade. (Shields 1998; Voakes 1998). The twenty-five youths were involved directly as planners, monsters, and party organizers. Many of the youths involved with the haunted house were the same youths who would have been roaming the streets and causing the very problems for which the project sought to remedy: this was a point not missed by the youths themselves. They were successful because, through the process of setting up and managing a haunted house, they had the opportunities to socialize with their peers and share their thoughts and ambitions with many members of the community, including those who previously regarded these particular youths as problems. Both adults and youths realized they had common causes and reasons to work together. The results of this cooperation resulted in a new annual event which provided local youths an interactive learning experience. The event served as a useful community function to reduce vandalism; raised additional money for their youth centre; and gained widespread community respect for their effort - all done while having fun.

An empowering best practice which evolved during the project was in finding formal mechanisms which would assure youth to have a voice and role in decision-making. One town learned the value in listening to the youth through an interesting

scenario. The adult sponsors asked for an urgent meeting to visit an empty commercial property, which they believed would be an excellent site for a new youth centre. The youths and adults all inspected the site and asked the landlord a variety of questions. After thirty minutes, the adults suggested a lease should be drawn up, with a commitment of at least two years. The youths insisted they wished to first discuss the matter in another meeting, to be held immediately, back at their temporary offices. The adults were perplexed and somewhat annoyed. Everyone had been searching for a youth centre site for almost a full year and the adults were afraid they may lose this ideal spot, as there were few commercial sites available. The youths had to be politely assertive to get the adults to agree to their meeting. When everyone reconvened, the youths explained the location would not be appropriate, because the property interconnected to a number of apartments, most of which housed the more successful drug dealers of the region. The adults were stunned and had no idea of the site's proximity to drug dealers. The group's organizational rule requiring the youths' support had delayed the adults from acting quickly and proved valuable in the making of a better decision. That group's adults recognized, from that point on, that in certain matters, the expert knowledge resided with the youths.

An important mechanism for assuring youth were involved in decision making would be in the group's organizational structures for meetings and management of their group. The "parallel board" became a unique organizational/governance model and illustrates the full potential of employing PAR methods. The model was constructed through numerous discussions and workshops with the Almonte youth group, as they

sought for a self-management process. The youths did not like traditional organizational structures which relegated their role to being only advisory. The adults were supportive in developing a different structure, as they also felt the youths needed constitutional authority in the management of their quickly developing youth centre.

The Almonte group collaborated in the following description of this model, as printed in the T.Y.P.S. Policy and Procedures Development Manual (Sturgeon & Voakes 1996: 15-16), which explains:

The concept is to have both youth and adults working together while allowing an assured structuring for youth decision-making and involvement.

The parallel Board is best understood through its organizational chart.

Figure # 1 Youth Centre Parallel Board

The Board of Directors works as a management board with a Mentoring

component. The youth serve within the board as the key decision-makers, with input from the adults. The adults have two roles. The first is to be the legal and legitimizing authority for the organization, as youth are legally unable to sign business contracts such as leases, telephone service contracts, etc., therefore the adult board members have this authority. There was also recognition by the Almonte youth that there would be some community organizations and individuals who require adult accountability for donations, grants, etc. The adult board members are able to assure these groups that the organization will be both accountable and responsible. The second role is for the adults to serve in a Mentoring capacity for their youth counter-parts. For example, the youth treasurer is expected to be responsible for all the duties of that position, however, the youth is unlikely to know all of the expectations involved. The adult treasurer assists the youth as both a mentor and a back-up, ensuring all expectations are completed. The youth knows that, when in doubt, the adult treasurer is available for clarification and/or assistance. Each board position works in this type of relationship.

Decisions by the parallel board are usually a matter of group consensus rather than a majority vote. However, there is an understanding that if an impasse develops, divided solely between youth members and adult members, the youth vote should take precedence unless there are legal ramifications for the entire organization. In that event, the board must continue to discuss the matter for a consensus resolution. It should be noted that, after almost two years of meetings, both youth and adults remain comfortable with this board structure. Mutual respect and the good-will to listen to each other have been the keys for effective decision-making.

The only draw-back to this board structure was the bureaucratic resistance of some government institutions to recognize a youth-driven organization as legitimate. For this reason, when the Almonte group submitted proposals or requests to some government bureaucracies, the organizational chart did not show the youth as the decision-making body but instead had their roles listed in an advisory capacity. In the organizational chart, this was then expressed by having the youth positions shown in dotted boxes connected

by dotted lines to the adult positions⁸. Regardless of bureaucratic requirements of legal presentation, the effective operations of the youth group remained as intended, with youth and adults working together but with the youths having the final voting majority.

The parallel board provided the youth with mentoring assistance by adults and a means to achieve organizational respect and legitimacy while maintaining the direct authority for decision-making. Although the structure of the board may not always have been the most efficient method for governing an organization, it proved to be the most effective. It fostered a learning process for both adults and youth while specifically empowering the youths involved. The model has since been adopted and/or adapted, by youth groups across Ontario (Voakes 2000).

Although standard protocols for managing meetings were learned, there were many opportunities for innovation and the groups were extraordinarily productive during their meetings. One adult volunteer who was a veteran of other community committees, remarked at the end of a youth group meeting “I can’t believe we completed that entire agenda in only an hour.” At another meeting, an adult guest representing a service provider agency, stated “these kids should come to one of our Board meetings and give lessons on how to manage a meeting.” Most importantly, although the meetings themselves provided an opportunity for individual youth to voice their opinions and make decisions, both important aspects in a PAR project, the youths always reserved time for

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Whether this practice was ethical or not is an interesting problem. Firstly, the law only recognizes the adults as being legally responsible, despite whatever internal practice may be desired. The second point is that the law, therefore, is the main hindrance behind the youth having no voice or rights within their own organization, despite the agreed upon aspirations of the group (youth and adult members). As the law defaults to only recognizing the adults’ authority, the group felt justified in submitting the organizational chart as conforming to the legal, if not the operational, realities.

casual social interaction between themselves and the adult volunteers. This time was important to improving the group's cohesiveness and ability to work together for common goals, but it was also important as a means of social and community connectedness.

Capacity-building, was the term used by one evaluator (Sabo 1999) to describe the T.Y.P.S. model of developing materials that could be readily shared among participants and other groups. For example, the T.Y.P.S. Policy and Procedures manual developed in a format which could be easily passed along for immediate use by other groups, particularly as it was distributed on computer diskette. The computer and portable diskettes, became a T.Y.P.S. technological tool as it allowed a more rapid means of disseminating information and sharing resources. At the beginning of the project, personal computers were only starting to become widespread, particularly in the communities hosting the project. There were few computers in the towns' secondary schools and usually none in any primary schools. The Internet was still unavailable for most of the communities, lacking either a local service provider or having the nearest service provider located in a telephone long distance exchange. As computers became more common in homes and schools, the youths were the first to embrace the technological capabilities. The sharing of information and resources, especially template capacity building tools like the policy and procedures manual, were readily distributed at workshops or through the mail. As email became more accessible, more was shared from computer site to computer site. Eventually, a T.Y.P.S. Web page was developed to allow groups to link and download resources from the main web site or from each other.

A best practice not identified by the participants directly, but indirectly, as evidenced in their keeping copies of newspaper clippings and video tapes of television appearances, was the involvement of local media. As discussed previously, the project had planned for the involvement of the local news media. The project found that news coverage, in itself, provides a tacit level of legitimation for a group, provided the report is not connected to a negative activity. This increased awareness of the project and the legitimation supplied by the news reports, saw public support grow further. Furthermore, the youths involved became avid media watchers, thereby further increasing their own awareness of the community and its issues.

In the T.Y.P.S. Project , the benefits of involving the news media proved worthwhile and consistent with PAR principles, repeatedly, in each town. The level of public awareness increased concerning youth issues and the youths had a direct voice to the community, both in news articles and in their own columns. The youths learned new skills (public relations, media relations, writing columns and letters to the editor) through working with the news media, which all might be viewed as types of political activism. The reporters, for their part, learned the youths preferred to be interviewed as a group. Although individual quotes may be cited in an article, all the youths were present and would correct or clarify any comments made by the membership. Occasionally, one or two representatives would be chosen to speak on behalf of the group for interview situations (particularly television) which could not accommodate the entire group. In these situations, a transfer of representative authority was extended by the group to the selected youth(s). The youths selected were particularly careful to represent the full

group and to carefully select their words and serve as spokesperson(s).

As mentioned previously, four towns completed their own videos. In participatory video, the *process* required of marginalized groups in creating a video, as the tool for telling their group's story, becomes the primary concern in achieving all other objectives. (Longley & Reynolds, 1994; Protz, 1991:3; Voakes 1993a). With the invention of video and the technological advances providing equipment which is portable, user-friendly, and affordable, this medium has become widely accessible to the public. The inclusion of participatory video as part of a participatory action research project enhances the group's sense of identity, aids to clarify and communicate their issues, and affords an opportunity to learn new skills and to work together.

Participatory video process is predicated on the philosophy that, for a film production to be representative and authentic, it must be a creation of those who are the subjects of the product. For those groups who are socially marginalized or not a part of the dominant culture, the experience of being completely in control of all aspects in the telling their story can be empowering, therapeutic, cathartic, and often political. In Jennifer Kawaja's (1990:3) introduction to "video stories", she explains:

In participatory video the issues being explored belong to the group and the group must collectively call the shots. The script can be written collectively or by a select few; it can be shot by one camera person or a number of people.... The most important thing to remember is that participatory video is a form of collective expression about a particular situation or experience.... As well as validating peoples' feelings and life

experiences, participatory video can be used to make the community, decision makers or peers take positive action in solving problems either individually or collectively. The process of the video production itself often, in the end, produces more change than the completed video. ... Finally, it can create solidarity and clarify community action and advocacy around particular issues.

Each youth group enjoyed the experience of making the videos, the skills learned through the process, and the freedom to tell their views in a medium they were familiar and comfortable in using. The portable, permanent record of their effort became so popular that over one hundred copies of the videos were requested and distributed.

Unquestionably, the youths were proud of the articles and tapes of their interviews, as a means of presenting their accomplishments and views. The attention provided by the news media validated that they were involved in something important and had become respected members of their communities. These benefits were, in my evaluation, can best be interpreted as “empowering.”

4.3 Unanticipated Outcomes

Anthropology appreciates the potential of serendipitous occurrences which may lead to new learning. Participatory action research is well matched with the same willingness to embrace surprises, supporting emergent dynamics which may lead the participants and researcher to new knowledge and experiences. This can be both exhilarating and/or exhausting. As mentioned previously, when using PAR the project and those facilitating it, must routinely adapt and incorporate the new directions, provided

the change is connected to the project's objectives. The T.Y.P.S. Project had repeated opportunities to practice flexibility and adaptation as unanticipated outcomes presented themselves on a regular basis.

Unanticipated outcomes are occurrences which develop following an initial action, regardless of whether that action achieved its original goal or not. The development of the T.Y.P.S. Workshops, described in earlier chapters, exemplifies the mechanics at play when emergent dynamics have larger, more long-term consequences. In the project proposal, each town was expected to open its own youth centre and there was some planning for workshops to aid toward that goal. Workshops are a standard methodological tool in many PAR projects, encouraging the sharing local knowledge and experience and the learning of new skills required to be successful in achieving mutual goals. The first T.Y.P.S. workshop was rated so successful and useful by the groups, all those who participated immediately planned for more workshops, to be held monthly, rather than just occasionally as was originally proposed. This generated a new list of interactive learning opportunities and soon communities not part of the T.Y.P.S. project were requesting to be involved with the workshops. At this point, the project had gone from planning occasional workshops with five or six groups, to monthly workshops with a dozen groups or more. The next unanticipated outcome was that a three day workshop series was needed to respond to the many communities too distant to travel to Eastern Ontario but eager to gain the T.Y.P.S. Project resources and experiences. Fortunately, Health Canada was willing to fund this new initiative which has since been conducted over fourteen times and has included over one hundred and fifty communities across

Ontario. The more recent unanticipated outcome has been the establishment of a network of youth centres across Ontario and annual T.Y.P.S. Conferences hosting forty-five to fifty towns and one hundred and fifty to two hundred delegates.

Although both the project and its participants were supportive of the increased interest by other groups, the number of additional communities wanting to be involved was difficult to manage. T.Y.P.S. staff attempted to accommodate these new groups by including them in all communications (primarily electronic), invitations to workshops, distributing new resources and information, and attending their special meetings and activities, as time allowed. Fortunately, Health Canada helped offset some of the expenses of distributing the policy and procedures manual and other resource materials developed during the project. Requests for presentations required many hours of time from T.Y.P.S. personnel and the youths involved during the project. However, the experience gained by information sharing was a rewarding activity, particularly when provided by the youths.

As more towns connected to the project, new requests and issues were identified. For example, requests from visiting Francophone groups requesting information in French, resulted in the T.Y.P.S. Policy and Procedure Manual and other resources requiring translation. Again, Health Canada was supportive of this unanticipated outcome and provided translation funding. Thereafter, the project was conscious to search out other materials in French to pass along as requested. Eventually, the T.Y.P.S. office became an information resource centre for youth groups across Ontario and beyond. Requests for information (manuals, resources, advice) came regularly enough to

warrant starting a resource library and establishing a web page. To date, T.Y.P.S. materials have been distributed across Canada and the United States, as well as England, Australia, and Russia.

Native groups found the T.Y.P.S. resources, and especially the project's process suited their needs. I was routinely contacted for additional information and was invited, as the T.Y.P.S. Coordinator, to speak at special conferences and gatherings. Although the PAR process, in general, has proven itself suitable for native communities, the T.Y.P.S. Project was specifically designed to address small town circumstances. Unexpectedly, and although there were modifications required, the T.Y.P.S. model was easily adapted for native youth. The most attractive elements of the T.Y.P.S. model, from the native communities' perspective, was the parallel board and the involvement of youths learning decision-making with the aid of adult (elders) mentoring and that the learning of these skills was experiential. Furthermore, the native groups explained that the model required a process of self-determination for resolving local issues using local action, tradition, and experience. There would have been more Native communities involved, except for Health Canada's internal restrictions which insist that reserve communities required approval from a separate branch of administration. Since the Health Canada funding of T.Y.P.S. Workshops across Ontario began, twenty-four native organizations have attended.

Another completely unanticipated outcome has been that through volunteering at youth centres, some adult volunteers, who were themselves in socially marginal

situations, learned “transferrable skills”⁹ and gained a new sense of purpose. These volunteers reported becoming more employable following their involvement with the youth centre or youth groups. In several cases, individuals went on to exceptional career advances from previously being social assistance recipients. There were also many adults who learned advocacy skills which provided a basis for improving their own assertiveness when interacting with institutions, employers, or abusive family members. Adults also commonly reported that through the training, they learned better parenting skills, life skills, and communication (computer, telephone, and writing) skills. Although this was not an intention of the volunteer training, the results were welcomed.

Occasionally, the adult volunteers assumed too much authority and abused their trust. At one youth centre, prior to becoming involved with the T.Y.P.S. Project, an adult assumed control of the group’s finances and all other administrative roles. Shortly thereafter, over three thousand dollars went missing. A criminal investigation resulted and although the offender was convicted and forced to resign, the money was not recouped and that youth centre suffered a major setback , both financially and in its community support. All the youth centres learned from the one group’s unfortunate experience and each became more diligent in establishing by-laws, policy and procedures, and other “checks and balances” to assure a similar situation did not reoccur.

Similarly, some adults became obsessed by a misdirected sense of ownership toward the youth group/youth centre and would hoard important files (official minutes

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Transferrable skills is a term commonly used in social services and employment development projects to describe any skill which can be adapted and used in other settings including the home or personal life, but particularly useful for improving employability.

books , copies of important correspondence, copies of the archival materials, etc. The risk became that if that one person suddenly left the organization, for any reason, vital papers, information, and documentation could be lost. A strategy developed to manage this possibility, by always having a neutral “keeper” of all original and important files, usually a local service provider or the municipal office. A policy developed that no person, regardless of status or position, could remove any document from the offices of the keeper, although photocopies were allowed to be made and removed. This policy has since saved groups many hours of reconstructing files or losing valuable papers.

4.4 Lessons Learned

Canada has a remarkable diversity of cultural backgrounds and a wide range of geographical regions, therefore researchers conducting social projects in this country are well advised to avoid over-generalization. In the relatively small area in which the T.Y.P.S. Project was conducted, the distances between the parameters of the project area exceeded one hundred and fifty kilometres and each town had, until the past fifty years been relatively isolated from each other. As mentioned earlier, although all the towns had nearly homogenous cultural backgrounds, each community’s local values and attitudes were remarkably different. The long-term influences caused by local economics and history, in both distant and recent pasts, directly affected the results of this project, on a town-to-town basis.

Anthropologists have long understood that every community has its unique attributes and worldviews (Turner 1969; Myerhoff 1978) , however, these concerns are often neglected aspects in planning for social development projects, especially in Canada.

Too often, an initiative is designed and tested in one community as a 'pilot project.' If the pilot project is found to work well, it may be then recommended for replication throughout the country. Rarely is there an analysis of the local conditions which may have been as influential upon its success, or failure, as the project design. Although this paper can only review a few communities' differences within this particular project, there remains much to be learned about methodically preparing PAR researchers to recognize and address the dynamics of each community's local culture, as those forces influence social/community development projects and particularly those using PAR methodology.

The above cautions aside, the T.Y.P.S. Project learned new methods and lessons applicable for future community project development. PAR methods and principles, for these small towns involved, proved beneficial and an appropriate process in the development and promotion of community health promotion strategies. Moreover, many of the same methods and principles appear to be equally useful in other towns across Ontario, demonstrated by the rapid sharing and diffusing of the T.Y.P.S. Project materials.

The project found that official recognition and support, from the community's Town Council and Mayor, is important. Although planned in the proposal, and discussed previously, it bears repeating in this section because of the profound influence this single action had on the success of the project. The support of the town's elected administration eases many potential problems in establishing and continued operations of any youth group/centre. Municipal personnel were more likely to assist and provide in-kind support once the Council had publicly endorsed the goals of the project. Town

Councillors are significant “door-openers” for any group, with their own sets of expertise and ‘people connections’ which can be beneficial to all involved.

Despite the commitment and efforts of the participants involved in each town’s youth group, youth centres develop and become successful largely due to the drive and efforts of only a few individuals, often only one or two people, with a deep conviction and determination to ensure success. These few individuals, with at least one being an adult, are able to organize and gain supporters to work toward the agreed upon goals. This point is supported in the sociological literature on small towns. Most notably, Vidich and Bensman (1960) concluded most small town politics and decision-making are influenced by those in the professions, local business, or have long-standing kinship links throughout the community. However, their conclusions also included the remark that “Politics, whatever the social and economic background of the groups involved, expresses itself through individuals” (Vidich and Bensman 1960:110). Therefore, each youth group must be certain it has at least one individual who is fully committed to the continuation of that group. That individual, in turn, must ensure that a successor is always prepared to continue with the youth group when there is an eventual, and inevitable, change in leadership.

Volunteer “burn-out” can be the result of a group not ensuring work is divided among enough people. The leadership must make continued efforts to enlist new people and share both the work and recognition. Volunteer appreciation needs to be a regular part of every group’s annual general meeting, with an accompanying notice of thanks printed in the local paper. Public leaders should also be encouraged to recognize the

achievements and devotion of the volunteers, as a service which benefits the whole community. This is a role community leaders should willingly embrace as it provides an important ritual process of public legitimizing and inclusion for the youths and adults involved, which is an empowering experience.

When provided the opportunity, youth can be effective managers and decision-makers, providing perspectives and knowledge not available to most adults. As shown earlier, youth have knowledge about what local drugs are available, where they are acquired, their local street names, etc. Similarly, youth are aware of dynamics within their community affecting their lives, which may go unnoticed by adults. For example, the change of the high school's principal or vice-principal may go unnoticed by most of the community but may have far-reaching ramifications for the students of that school. Similarly, a new business which hires a large number of youths can have a cascade of effects upon a small community which may be both positive and negative. Therefore, youths need to be involved at every level of an youth group's administration, or with any organization providing youth services.

All volunteers, youths and adults, should be interviewed, screened, and trained before assuming positions of trust and responsibility. Local service providers are excellent resources and should be encouraged to become partners in developing a thorough training package. Training should address a variety of youth issues, including substance abuse, depression, suicide, relationship, sexual development, and communication skills. The individuals who undertake training (becoming familiar with the youth group's history, policy and procedures, administrative workings, and how to

manage difficult situations) prove to be the most stable and contributing volunteers. Importantly, training must include a special focus on learning to resist judgmental attitudes towards any particular youth or their family, a particularly important issue in small communities where “everybody knows everybody.”

It was the opinion of all the youth groups involved, that as quickly as financially possible, a Program Coordinator should be employed by the youth centre. To begin, a part-time position may be all that is affordable, but an increase of hours and responsibilities can be added as funds allow. There are numerous sources of funding to assist in hiring individuals for limited periods, and each group must consider a variety of funding strategies and options. Program Coordinators proved themselves important to the youth centre in providing overall consistency of operations and having an important role in the recruitment and training of volunteers.

The youth groups all learned that policy and procedure manuals are not an option, they are a necessity. Manuals must be developed, and regularly reviewed for updating. Copies of the policy and procedures manual should be available and easily accessible to all volunteers, especially during hours of operation. A copy of the youth centre’s policy and procedures manual should be available and presented at every public information or presentation concerning the youth centre, as evidence that the organization takes its responsibilities seriously.

Youth centres should have only a minimal number of posted rules for its members, but those rules must be clear and consistently enforced. Most of the youth centres adopted two basic rules: “Mutual Respect” and “Use Common Sense.” All other

rules were subsets of these two simple categories. Detailed rules were part of the policy and procedures manual, but referral to these two basic rules was enough for most youth members to adjust their behaviour accordingly. Consistent application to the youth centre rules can instill a level of confidence among both youths and adults. This confidence should then develop into a sense of safety and security within the confines of the youth centre. Equally important, is that the rules be fair and reasonable, allowing for youths to repair their mistakes and retain dignity.

Youth centres need to develop strong linkages to local social service agencies. Social agencies, known as service providers, can assist and be important resources for a youth group/centre in connecting youths, or their parents, to the services they need. Social agencies also have professional staff that can provide important training and information to volunteers. As local service providers become more involved with a youth centre, that youth centre will gain improved credibility and accountability within their community.

Youth centres should avoid reliance upon any one funding source, particularly government funding. Although government monies can ease much of the time-consuming work of fund-raising, a group's reliability upon government support is a foolish strategy. Each level of government can change each election and a change in political support or priority is not a function of need or the value/benefits derived. Therefore, a diversity of funding sources, each dedicated to manage specific operating expenses was determined as the best strategy for organizational survival. Youth centres devised self-sustainability plans and learned to divide their operating needs among

several sources of revenue. This ensured that each operating expense would have a separate strategy of funding, and that their youth centre's future would not be at risk if any one funding source suddenly ended. A standard T.Y.P.S. strategy developed during one of the workshops and recommended that youth centres/groups divide their expenses and funding plans into three categories: overhead, staff, and program. Each category was usually further sub-divided, but for discussion purposes the three main categories will be sufficient.

The first category was overhead, which included rent, utilities, phone and insurances. This category was deemed to be the most important to protect since without it, there would be no space to meet, have programs, and remain as a functioning organization. Each group managed this category with a separate strategy, in one town a small admission fee of one dollar was charged on Friday and Saturday nights, the most popular hours because of the music and dancing. On average fifty youths would attend each of those nights and thus generating at least \$ 400. per month revenue, which was exactly the cost of the youth centre's rent. In addition, a canteen for selling soda pop, potato chips, and other snacks would also generate approximately \$ 25. per night profit, for an additional \$200 dollars monthly revenue. Finally, the pool table or large video games cost fifty cents per game and the money was shared 50/50 with the company that owned them, but realized an additional \$ 200 per month revenue. The combined total of the revenues generated by the community's youth who were enjoying the youth centre only on the weekends, resulted in enough money to cover their entire overhead costs. Any donations made to the youth group, through service clubs, individuals or the youth's

regular fundraising events (car washes, pancake breakfasts, etc) were dedicated to program expenses (special excursions, new equipment, computer programs, etc.).

The staff costs were considered the most expendable expense. Although the youths valued having a paid coordinator to aid in the operations of the youth centre and programs, that role had been and could be again, managed by volunteers. Staff salaries constitute a large expense and were recognized as requiring too much effort to acquire solely through fundraising activities. Two options emerged, special grants from different government departments or agencies or through a non-government foundation. The government department which has the most options has been Canadian Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) with a variety of training programs for youth and adults. All of the youth groups involved have benefited from at least one HRDC program, each providing the funds for individuals to learn the roles of youth centre employees, while learning new skills which they can apply to future jobs. Similarly, the Trillium Foundation, an Ontario government-established organization, has also provided special grants for employing individuals to work in the youth centres. The preferred, long-term strategy, was for each of the youth centres to become affiliates with the United Way. As mentioned earlier, there was a mutual benefit to this relationship for both youth centre and United Way, however, the youth centres benefited most by having a stable source of funding dedicated to paying their staff.

Youth groups also learned that their budgets must also consider in-kind support as part of their operational plan. As in the example cited earlier, one of the T.Y.P.S. youth centres had an agreement with a local service club for free photocopying. The cost to the

service club was less than a couple of hundred dollars per year, yet it saved the youth club many times that amount in machine leasing costs, service fees, etc.. Most importantly, a positive relationship and on-going communications between the two groups was reinforced every time photocopying was done.

Youth centres usually operated best when there was a clear limitations of membership or usage, dependant upon age. When very young children were allowed access, older youths quickly ceased attending. Some youth centres were successful in having specific hours for different age groups, limiting younger members to earlier hours and reserving the evenings for high school students. Special events for younger children have also been found to be successful, but the youth centre's main open hours needed to be reserved for those aged fourteen to nineteen years.

Youths reported that they needed a space (a youth centre) which they can consider as their own, where they can have control over the rules, activities, and expectations. They did not want space in which adults dictated the parameters of use and programming. The youths' descriptors as needing a "drop-in" or "hang-out" were clear indicators of the type of social space desired, a place of easy access allowing for spontaneity. Equally important, youths reported that they desired opportunities to learn new skills and have access to resources which would be beneficial to their lives, education, and work opportunities. The youths were equally clear that they expected adult involvement and presence as supporters of initiatives and of the agreed upon rules of conduct and self-management expected within the youth centres, but not as controlling overseers.

A common theme, described by a number of adjectives, was the importance of

have meeting places and youth centres as spaces which were “safe.” The word safe has a number of different meanings, depending upon the youth and his/her current situation. For some, it could mean a refuge from peer pressure to use drugs, drink alcohol, start smoking, pressure to have sex etc., while for others, it meant a place to escape abusive home situations or local bullies.

Youths expressed a need for more unstructured time for social interaction with both their peers and adults. This kind of time was needed for “finding out who we are, what we want to be when we get older.” In short, the youths wanted unstructured social time as part of the process of identity construction. As a society, we have failed to recognize the limited opportunities provided for this important developmental need in adolescence. Schools allow only short intervals for social opportunities, with most of the time dedicated to instructions and assignment completion. Contrary to popular adult belief, most teenagers are assigned increasing numbers of homework projects, further restricting any “free time.” Team sports and part-time jobs further limit relaxed, unstructured social time. For rural and small town youths, limited local resources and a lack of public transportation further limit opportunities to relax, have fun, and socialize. The success of the T.Y.P.S. Project was based on quickly recognizing the importance of combining both structured, goal-focussed activities along with unstructured opportunities for participants to socialize.

Youth participation required the project and its methods to provide for a fluid membership. The involvement of any one youth was conditional on many external forces beyond the control of either the project or that youth. School workload, part-time

employment, and the involvement of any sports team, or similar interests will each affect the time a youth has for a project like T.Y.P.S.. The new realities of “the family” during the past decades have also added considerable domestic responsibilities to the average teen, as two working parents or single parenting cause increased reliance on youths caring for themselves and their younger siblings (The Vanier Institute of the Family 1994) . However, additional family factors include: shifting residences on weekends because of post-divorce custody arrangements; decisions by parents to move residence to another town; the youth having obligations for attending to siblings because of their single parent’s work schedule; or, the sudden decision by a parent that some family matter supercedes any commitment to the youth group. In addition to the above, are factors connected to a personal change in the youth’s relationships (new girlfriend/boyfriend who is not involved with project); personal needs have changed because of maturation process requiring the youth to leave the community for school or work reasons. In review of the literature concerning PAR projects, I could find no other reference to working with a group which can change its membership as quickly as when working with youth. Therefore, any PAR community project planning to work with youth need to prepare for the issue of a fluid membership within the project’s design.

The above highlights the more pronounced lessons learned within the project, both from the coordinator’s perspective and the participants. Each town had its own set of observations and most are recorded in the T.Y.P.S. Final Report (1998), however, now that some time has elapsed it would be interesting to return to each community and speak with past participants and inquire if additional lessons might still be learned.

Chapter V

Implications and Conclusions

5.1 Concerns and Implications during the T.Y.P.S. Project

In every PAR project there is a requirement to undertake research for the purposes of gaining new knowledge and sharing that knowledge, especially with those who are most affected and involved with the issues to be explored. The T.Y.P.S. Project fulfilled this obligation through a continuous involvement of the local communities in devising new or adapting approaches for disseminating information. The development of capacity-building resources i.e., manuals, workshops, computer diskette sharing of resources, news media coverage, and public presentations to local and national audiences, all contributed to the sharing and distribution of what each town's group learned.¹⁰ More importantly, the participants had direct involvement in the creating and managing of the information that was produced.

The T.Y.P.S. Project provided a new approach in health promotion, linking local youth issues and concerns with the funder's objective of reducing substance abuse. The locally identified social problems were addressed through a respectful process involving both youths and adults within each community. Solutions were not pre-established programs, devised elsewhere and delivered to each town. Instead, a core group of youths, with a few adult supporters, worked within the community and gained respect and

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Interestingly, these are the very types of activities which Ervin (1996) and Scrimshaw and Hurtado (1987) cited as important collaborative tasks which anthropologists should take a role in assisting.

support from their efforts. Documented indicators of change within each community were presented in chapter III of this thesis and stand as evidence that there were improvements realized in all communities, although some may have benefited more than others. More importantly, as documented by myself and two other evaluators (Sabo 1999, and Shields 1996), the communities themselves believe there were positive gains directly attributable to the project.

Did the T.Y.P.S. Project conduct itself ethically? Did it adhere to the standards it set for itself? No project can be considered ethically faultless, but the T.Y.P.S. Project made special efforts to address these issues. There were aspects of managing the multiple roles of facilitator, project manager, and researcher which caused self-doubt and personal questioning of issues of conflicting interests. However, two mechanisms served to aid this project to confront and address those doubts and conflicts. The first was the ability to discuss the issues as they presented themselves among the sponsoring agency's supportive team of professionals. Although not mentioned throughout this paper, the sponsoring agency provided, as a sounding-board, staff who were community connected and supportive of the project's initiatives. This project was particularly fortunate to be associated with an agency that is well known and respected throughout the region for its attention to ethical conduct and social responsibilities. Secondly, the ten principles of PAR, as listed in the first chapter, proved valuable in the management of occasional methodological and ethical dilemmas which arose from time to time.

There were several interdisciplinary teams involved in the project, but this was admittedly one of the weakest conformities to the PAR principles. There were experts

from health, education, and sociology involved at times throughout the project but few were available during all phases of the project and only two, excluding myself, were part of the final report writing process. There were many attempts to include those from different disciplines, particularly academics, but few showed a sustained interest once they learned of the time-length of the project and the distances required to travel to be an effective team member. Local agencies and service providers did not add their full potential expertises and support, although admittedly, during most of the project, all were undergoing provincially imposed restructuring and their resources were strained.

Two points are worth noting regarding the interdisciplinary aspects of the projects. The first was that although local service providers did not directly aid the project by assigning staff, nonetheless, every town involved had at least a few who volunteered their time. There were, and continue to be, social workers, health nurses, youth workers, psychometrists, psychologists, teachers, journalists, and ministers who regularly volunteer their time to work with the youth centres on committees, boards of directors, or in staffing the open hours of the centres. These professionals deserve recognition for their contributions and were viewed by his writer as part of the interdisciplinary team. The second point was that there were several undergraduate students and two graduate students who became involved and wrote from their respective disciplinary perspectives about aspects of the project or the participants. The results were shared with the participants, who in turn reported to me, that generally those studies were deemed to fairly reflect the realities and opinions of those involved. Neither of these two points completely compensated for the lack of direct and on-going interdisciplinary

involvement, but the principle was recognized and managed as the circumstances allowed.

The final questions of whether the project provoked a critical consciousness among participants and whether the experience was empowering were answered by the participants in the affirmative, directly and indirectly. Many of the project activities undertaken by the youth groups would not have been possible had the youths not acquired both attributes. The ability of the youths to make presentations, which included both critiques and recommendations, was evidence that the participants had developed critical knowledge and a sense of empowerment. The youths ability to work with adults as equals but respecting the mentoring offered was another statement of group empowerment. The adults were invited *by the youths* and no adult, in four of the six towns, could impose a decision as it was the youth who had final right of approval. Although each town's group experienced different degrees of empowerment, at various times, the principle was maintained.

The above points clarify the general PAR principles which served as checks and balances for effectively and ethically *conducting* a project, however, other ethical considerations arose and require additional discussion. One of the issues is in recognizing the level of sensitivity required when participants chose to disclose personal information and problems. In PAR projects such as this one, some participants can be seen as oppressed, marginal, and economically and politically disadvantaged. Do PAR practitioners ensure they understand the impact and implications of requiring participants to share their feelings, frustrations, and anger about their social position within their

community? In my review of PAR literature, I could find little discussion on the ethics surrounding the interview process, whether done within a group or one-to-one. Although research ethics review committees have increasingly recognized this issue and requires the researcher to consider and plan for the “risks to participants,” my personal experience is that this issue is not addressed in the depth it deserves..

When a person is interviewed or openly divulges personal information during group discussions, they are compelled to remember and reflect on many aspects of their lives. This has a different intention than the PAR ideal of "consciousness-raising." Memories can become resurrected and uncomfortable incidents from the past may become painfully present. Although discussions of family, deaths, births, and social involvements are the "stock and trade" questions of social researchers, they also may serve as triggers of unpleasant memories about personal, unresolved issues.

Interviewers must learn basic counselling-interview techniques, much as professional counsellors are trained on how to bring closure to a session which has brought forward painful memories. The techniques is to provide the client with a reduced level of pain or anxiety which may have arisen during discussions about specific issues i.e., family trauma, sexual exploitation, etc. This is not to suggest that each interviewer take on the role of a counsellor therapist, however to leave an informant/participant psychologically vulnerable is both unethical and irresponsible. Learning counselling-interviewing techniques may lead to both better information and an emotionally healthier informant/participant. In addition, the learning of local services (i.e., counselling services and self-help groups) available within the community, and having readily

available referral information about those services, prepares for the eventuality of recommending a service to participants in need. These preparations need to be completed prior to beginning meeting potential participants and the conducting of interviews. The ability to provide these types of assistance is the minimal level of reciprocity a researcher can offer participants and communities.

Addressing the role of the project in affecting change within a community, whether in writing or evaluating discussions, caused an unexpected ethical problem to surface. As the self-reliance and a sense of project ownership increases by the group and community, this occasionally creates a collective amnesia toward the role of the project coordinator and the funder. This may, in a sense, be a positive development as increased ownership for the project ensures a decrease of reliance upon the coordinator and funder. However, this disconnection from historical realities may make it difficult to post-assess the benefits of the original program's design, activities, and resources expended. This may result in an inaccurate assessment with only minimal benefits being attributed to the project. The problem arises not only in the implications of being unable to produce a solid evaluation and documented research, but it also may impact any government's willingness to support similar projects and thus reduce the number of other communities that might benefit.

The ethical dilemma then becomes a question. Should a project coordinator challenge the total sense of ownership now claimed by a community, or the group involved, or risk a lack of recognition of the benefits derived by the project's planning and resources? This dilemma was fortunately avoided in our project, by assessing only

the project's impact as outlined in the original proposal. The method simply compared that which existed prior to the project to that which occurred during or existed following the project. The weight of cumulative evidence of changes which occurred in each specific town, as well as the collective changes of all six communities, was viewed by the funders as more than adequate to realize the benefits and effects the project achieved. When added to the supportive testimonies by other participants and community leaders, the results become self-evident.

5.2 Future potentials

In this study, the research of the T.Y.P.S. Project was intertwined with the desired outcomes of the researcher, the funder's, and participants. The participatory action research principles required me, as the researcher/practitioner, to be directly accountable to both the community and the participants. This project confirmed the benefits of incorporating the concerns, interests, and knowledge of the researchers, funders, and those most effected within a community. Working together and using PAR methodology, they can provide the multi-levelled social context needed to understand an issue or problem and contribute to its solution. Through that process, the researcher/facilitator and the participants gain useful knowledge, which can then be shared with others. A set of PAR principles, especially when outlined prior to engaging in a project, as done in this project, can provide a standard of reference which reminds the practitioner, regardless of disciplinary background, of how the research is to be done and for whose benefit.

Perhaps the most valuable learning in this project was the utility of PAR as a methodology. If used thoughtfully, PAR aids in all aspects of project planning and

conceptualizing the intended goals. PAR can become a means of organizing and initiating activities for the expressed purpose of problem solving and improving the lives of the participants while simultaneously being educative and inspiring hope for self-improvement. PAR can also provide a methodology for incorporating an on-going monitoring and evaluative process. Lastly, PAR can guide the process for reviewing and producing final reports and materials. The T.Y.P.S. Project, as shown in this thesis, was able to demonstrate PAR's effectiveness in all four aspects.

PAR practitioners may both benefit from investigating ways of including journalists in their projects. The principle of "interdisciplinary collaboration" and respecting "local knowledge-keepers" can readily include working with local news media. In small towns, they can provide a wealth of local information and can serve as important gate-keepers in a project. As stated previously, journalists are trained to provide information in a language most suitable to their audience. Although a cautious approach toward the news media is prudent and participants should agree upon whom should be interviewed and by which specific journalist, there is more to gain than lose through a cooperative approach. Local news outlets are the most trusted and recognized story-tellers in Canadian communities. The combination of being both knowledge-keepers and story-tellers of local events and information, can make these community members powerful allies and excellent resources.

As mentioned previously, participatory video captures a variety of anthropological interests including story telling, life stories, and ethnographic documenting. But when a participatory video workshop is arranged, participants learn to use the video camera as a

means of expressing their issues and contextualizing those issues from their specific worldview and perspective. Although involving video-making is not unusual for anthropologists, including having the ‘informants’ making their own videos, it is unusual to combine participatory videos within participatory action research projects. As the PAR process has participants becoming more physically and politically involved in creating changes within their communities, the videos provide an immediate communication of their thoughts and aspiration in a format which is almost unavoidable once started, which is not entirely unpolitical in presentation. As one participant explained, video is “in your face” and unless a person physically removes themselves from the audience, the message is delivered. Participatory videos proved, in the T.Y.P.S. , to be a valuable activity producing a tangible example of the empowering potential for future PAR projects.

At the start of this thesis, I questioned whether PAR was an appropriate methodology in an industrial, and literate society. The T.Y.P.S. Project demonstrated the flexibility of this methodology in working in small town Canada and that there were unique opportunities for PAR within these settings. The use of local news media, mass communications, and digital information sharing are far less possible, individually, within communities of the developing nations. In Canada, and likely other similarly industrialized countries, these resources are available and participants only need some assistance to learn how to fully access and harness the potential.

Throughout this thesis, there were stories and indicators of how youths became increasingly accepted by their communities as having valuable opinions and knowledge. There was also documented indicators of the personal changes that several youths made

in their lives, having previously known as the “trouble-makers” to the publicly recognized community leaders. Although I have many unused notes examining the profound identity changes that many of these youths experienced during the project, I regret not having included more into this document. However, the transformative potential of participatory action research, for the individual, will remain an on-going interest for me, and hopefully for others. Because, after all is said and done, a community is only as healthy, physically and spiritually, as its individual members.

Appendix # 1

The following is a short account of the historical and socio-economic backgrounds for each community. These descriptions are written in the present tense and as these towns were situated during the time of the project. Also included are the most salient points concerning each towns' early connections to the project and any exceptionally defining issues which affected their involvement. In the full T.Y.P.S. Final Report (Voakes 1998), additional details were provided but these summaries are adequate for the purposes of this thesis.

Brockville

Brockville is a small city located on the St. Lawrence River in the County of Leeds with a population of 21,000. It is the central community for many governmental activities within the area south-west of Ottawa. There are courthouses, a county jail, regional government offices and many social service offices. There are several white collar industries and services located within the area, including the regional Psychiatric Hospital. Unionized blue collar manufacturing and petro-chemical related industries are also significant contributors to the local economy. Generally, there is an industrial mix with a variety of products produced. St. Lawrence College has a campus on the north-end of the city. Most of the residents of Brockville are employed within or close to their community.

Brockville has many of the recreational services which are usually associated with a small city. There is a YM/YWCA, a Rotary Pool, and an arena for hockey leagues and figure skating clubs. The city also provides several baseball diamonds, soccer fields, etc., as well as similar recreational areas surrounding the local primary and secondary schools. Most of the recreational

opportunities require membership fees or registration fees to belong to a league, team, or sports club. All have some user fees and some are very expensive. There are also several commercial recreational spaces, including a double-screen movie theatre, an arcade, and fast-food restaurants.

Brockville has, compared to most of the other communities in this project, a more locally focussed media. It has a daily newspaper, the *Recorder and Times* and a local television cable station. There is a local radio station, and a few nearby U.S.A radio stations routinely cover Brockville events and news because of the close proximity and potential viewer market. Canadian television and radio are otherwise received through Kingston, Toronto, Montreal, or Ottawa, almost none having any interest in Brockville unless there is an event that has national significance.

There are both Via trains and Voyageur bus services in Brockville, which connect to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The community is near the 401 highway and there are several connecting highways.

The community leaders, prior to T.Y.P.S., had some recognition of a "youth problem," indicated by the increasing numbers of youths roaming the downtown streets at night. There had been previous efforts to open and maintain a youth centre within the community, but they failed due to the lack of funding commitments, permanence of location, and lack of regular volunteers. One youth centre had opened and closed several times over a two year period. Youths in the community had stated in questionnaires and surveys that they considered Brockville to have "nothing to do if you don't have money " and that they considered themselves "not wanted anywhere in the community." These opinions, and many similar statements of youth alienation, were made by youths to community workers and to myself, the T.Y.P.S. Project Co-ordinator.

The Brockville Chapter Canadian Mental Health Association (C.M.H.A.) took the initiative to become involved with T.Y.P.S.. C.M.H.A. approached the City council for their support of T.Y.P.S. and their intention of operating a youth centre, which was approved by a subcommittee. C.M.H.A. consistently dedicated staff and resources to realize an operating youth centre. The commitment towards youths and T.Y.P.S. was repeatedly demonstrated through the efforts of the agency's successive Executive Directors and the Board of Directors. Without the C.M.H.A., Brockville would have been without a youth centre and may never have linked-up with T.Y.P.S..

The CMHA's youth group named their youth centre "Off the Wall" and the group maintained a youth advisory committee and produced a participatory video.

Kemptville

Kemptville, population 3,500, is located on the north-west edge of Grenville County, less than an hour drive to Ottawa, along highway # 16. The community historically has been a centre for local farmers to purchase supplies and attend community meetings and functions. An agricultural college is located at the south end of town. There are a few small, light industries in or near Kemptville, but for the most part, the town is becoming a bedroom community for Ottawa. There are subdivisions being developed in or close by the town and a significant increase of youths within the community is inevitable.

At present, there are very few recreational/social outlets for youths except those directly connected to the two elementary schools and the district's secondary school. An arena provides an ice surface for the local hockey leagues and figure skating clubs, but there is very limited open

skating time available and expensive fees are associated with all arena activities. Only the most athletically inclined adolescents are involved in the arena sports leagues. There had been one small arcade which opened and closed sporadically; a bowling alley is available, but their targeted customers are bowling leagues. The only outdoor swimming pool has a history of frequent closing for repairs and maintenance.

Kemptville formed an action plan for its youths following the tragic murder of a thirteen year old girl by a local boy of fourteen. Mayor Jean Sommerville called for community meetings in the fall of 1993 and winter of 1994. Followed-up the meetings' recommendations by appointing a committee to establish new youth programmes and activities, including a youth centre. The new youth centre, "Industrial Underground," opened in June 1994. The Industrial Underground maintained a youth advisory committee and produced a video for in-house use only.

Almonte

Almonte is a town in the northeastern quadrant of Lanark County with a population of 4,300. Originally, this was a central community serving rural interests with its businesses, mills, and schools. Almonte has increasingly become a bedroom community for Ottawa, which is less than a 30 minute drive along Highway 417. There is no large employer within the community, most jobs are service focussed. The town has a small hospital, an arena and community recreation centre, three elementary schools, a district public secondary school, and an alternate school.

The town has few resources for youth, particularly for teenagers not involved in

competitive team sports. There is no movie theatre, bowling alley, swimming pool, or local pool hall/video parlour, although recently there has been a new Pizza Restaurant with a pool table and a few video games. Youth employment opportunities are limited to part-time work at local grocery stores, an ice-cream company, small retail businesses, and seasonal agricultural jobs. The few youth groups available are directed to younger children; i.e., Cubs, Brownies, etc., and youth were rarely encouraged to participate in adult community clubs involved in theatre, recreation, etc.

Most of the community's information is disseminated by the *Almonte Gazette* (a weekly newspaper), the *EMC* (a free mailbox advertising package), and from Ottawa radio, television and daily newspapers. The Ottawa media rarely cover Almonte events until after the event is over.

The main concern among community leaders, prior to T.Y.P.S., was the recognition of few recreational social opportunities for teenagers. Teens were often seen in large groups "hanging-out" on the street in the downtown area, usually until late at night. There was considerable vandalism committed by the youth, and substance abuse was recognized as a problem. Downtown merchants and seniors complained about "skateboarders" and "rollerbladers" who were obstructing the sidewalks and potentially dangerous to pedestrians.

The T.Y.P.S. proposal was originally supported by a group organized through Almonte Community Development Corporation (A.C.D.C.) and its Executive Director, Karen Slater. The group representing Almonte's interest in T.Y.P.S. was the most impressive collection of citizenry that had approached the T.Y.P.S. project. There were several social agencies represented, the mayor, a town council member, a senior police representative, a youth, interested citizens and a

recreation dept. staff. The *Almonte Gazette* sent a reporter to interview me and report on the committee's impression and an explanation about T.Y.P.S.'s goals.

Within 60 days of the first meeting, the Town Council's committee passed a resolution supporting Almonte's involvement with T.Y.P.S.. Regular meetings were established to involve more youth, and a special meeting was scheduled for youth to express their concerns and suggestions. CBC Radio from Ottawa was invited and recorded most of that 90 minute meeting. From that beginning, a core group of a dozen youth began planning and managing activities. Their eventual goal was to have a youth centre where any town youth could feel welcomed. The youth supported the idea of a youth advisory council, and the idea of producing a video was appealing to a group of those in attendance. A Town Councillor, a minister, a local journalist, a new Almonte citizen and a business women also attend these meetings, working with the youth as both a liaison and as mentors for the group.

The group structured itself in a unique format called the “parallel board” which had both adults and youths share, equally, the responsibilities of governing the organization. They incorporated as a non-profit organization named “Take Young People Seriously “ or T.Y.P.S. for short. In two years they opened their youth centre and produced their participatory video.

Perth

The Town of Perth is located in the southwest quadrant of Lanark County. It was founded in 1816 as a military settlement by the British after the War of 1812, to station military personnel for protection against possible American invasions. This Scottish and English background has continued to influence the town in its architecture and traditions. The attractive

stone heritage buildings, excellent selection of stores, local public parks, rivers, and nearby lakes now attract tourists throughout most of the year. A small percentage commute to Ottawa or Kingston, the two closest cities within an hour's drive. Most of the population work within or nearby the community in a variety of light industrial and service industries. Several mid-size firms have relocated elsewhere, bringing about a rise in unemployment, particularly in the blue-collar segment of the population. Slowly, some of these previously vacated plants and offices have been re-occupied by new ventures. These businesses, along with the inception of the Perth Theatre Project, and other tourist/cultural linked ventures, have created a renewed optimism. Unemployment and welfare in the rural areas surrounding Perth continues to be high.

There are many sports and recreational facilities available, including an indoor swimming pool, an arena, developed river areas, a bowling alley, Conlon Farm (a multi-use sports park with six baseball diamonds, four tennis courts, two basketball courts, cross-country ski trails, walking trails, a tobogganing hill, two fully lit soccer fields, sand volleyball court, a curling rink, lawn bowling, basketball nets, and basketball courts. The Perth Fair Grounds also has some recreational facilities, and there are two video arcades/billiards parlours. All recreational facilities are within walking distance of the downtown core.

For a small town, Perth has a considerably developed arts community. Music, theatre arts, writing and visual arts are well represented by galleries, book stores, jazz festivals, the Perth Community Choir, Perth Citizens Band, Country Jamboree, and several other festivals. In this past few years, there have been Coffee House events and numerous musical performances of interest to youths within the community. There are also many innovative groups within the local churches and service clubs, who host special events in an effort to involve youth.

There are fourteen adult service clubs and organizations, many of which have facilities open to the community. Eight churches are located in the town. There are the usual youth groups; e.g., Cubs, Scouts, Girl Guides, etc., as well as the sports teams for hockey, baseball, soccer, etc. There are opportunities for student employment at local restaurants, stores, businesses, and these places also provide high school co-op placements.

The *Perth Courier* is the local weekly newspaper; the *Ottawa Citizen* serves as the daily newspaper. Television, cable TV service and radio originate from Ottawa and Kingston; the Smiths Falls radio station is also available. Telephone service to Ottawa is long distance, limiting time spent connecting to city services. Transportation is limited to the use of personal vehicles, with a Voyageur bus only available once per day to Ottawa or Kingston. There is no train service or other public transportation.

Most of the previously mentioned resources are available and used by the youths of Perth. From performing on the stage or being behind the scenes, to refereeing, taking lessons or playing in one of the many bands, listening to writers or learning beside an experienced adult artist, youths are not restricted from many activities. There are church services for youths and adults as well as church youth groups. There are also Explorers, C.G.I.T., 4-H clubs, environmental groups, Amnesty International, and several other organizations mostly supported by the youth of the area. From all the above, one would think there would be little reason to provide more opportunities for youth, but there are still many gaps. There are no facilities solely dedicated for young people (other than schools), and most require the youth to be involved in an organized, and recognized, fee-paying group to gain access to facilities.

The town of Perth appeared to be very supportive of youth, generally speaking. The local

newspaper, "The Perth Courier," provides two columns for young people and an openness to youth issues. The publisher also agreed to sit on an advisory committee for the centre and consistently supported T.Y.P.S.'s objectives. The Mayor, Town Council members, the Parks and Recreation Department, B.I.A., Children's Aid Society, churches, organizations, service clubs, and a number of individual citizens all expressed an interest in youth issues and a willingness to help towards an eventual youth centre. The adults of Perth appeared ready to participate with the teens in the establishment of '*something*' for youth, but that '*something*' remained hard to define.

Perth struggled over most of the project's three years with different groups forming briefly and then disbanding. A few individual adults made extraordinary efforts to assist these groups but there were no youth who were interested in working towards the primary goals of T.Y.P.S.. However, in the last few months of the T.Y.P.S. Project, approximately twenty youths and a few committed adults began to meet every week at a local restaurant. T.Y.P.S. staff was involved in the first several meetings and then attended whenever invited by the group to assist with specific organizational planning. The T.Y.P.S. Policy and Procedures manual and many other resources were provided to the group to aid their development. The group visited nearby youth centres connected to the T.Y.P.S. Project and benefited from many of their suggestions, including the adopting of the parallel board. The Perth youth group, who became known as YAK (Youth Action Kommittee) was unusual because of the strength of youth leadership from the start. YAK, following a concentrated effort, moved quickly towards its primary goal, to open a youth centre. YAK opened its youth centre in the spring of 1996 and adopted a parallel board governance model. There was not enough time for this group to complete a participatory video.

Prescott

On the shore of the St. Lawrence River, approximately 20 minutes drive east of Brockville, is the historic town of Prescott. The town was originally established over 200 years ago, as a fort town by the British to protect Upper Canada from American invasion. Many of the town's buildings were erected in the early 19th century and remain in use today. Fort Wellington has become a small tourist destination, and the community actively promotes itself as an historic community.

The town has a mix of retail businesses and only a few small industries. Many of the local residents work in a petroleum-based products factory several kilometres west of the town. Prescott's population is 4,300 with one district secondary school and two elementary schools. There's an arena and a few parks, providing baseball diamonds, soccer fields, etc. There are very few services or businesses specifically appropriate to youth; e.g., there is no movie theatre, arcade, etc. Public transportation is limited to Voyageur buses, which pass through the community daily en route to Ottawa or Toronto, and Via rail stops once a day.

In the late 1980's, the Prescott Mayor initiated the Prescott Youth in the Community Committee. Social agency workers and concerned citizens formed a youth group and opened a small youth centre in 1990, following the recommendations of a local needs analysis and a two year funding grant from the Ontario Anti-Drug Secretariat. The funds assisted in the overhead expenses and the salary of a part-time co-ordinator. The youth centre was reasonably successful in attracting youth but had many problems maintaining operations. It closed after operating for approximately one year, and efforts to re-establish were on-going. One town councillor led an effort to expand the youth centre into the municipal building, as he was familiar with the success

of the Smiths Falls youth centre,. The organizing committee applied to United Way for future funding. Prescott Town Council approved the group's proposal to renovate a condemned gymnasium, which was located in the basement of the municipal offices. They opened their youth centre, known as "The Cave," as a part of a youth support initiative known as Youth for Life. It is a very large open area with high ceilings, easily lending itself to numerous sports activities and a space for regular dances.

Prescott was the first community to actively support the T.Y.P.S.project. The town council passed a resolution to support T.Y.P.S. and encouraged the project to be involved with their community. Prescott was the only community which had an operating youth centre when the project began, excluding Smiths Falls which was not originally planned as part of the project.. The committee operating the youth centre recognized that other youth centres had opened and closed in surrounding communities and they did not want to repeat those experiences. Youth for Life had a governing committee appointed by Town Council. This committee was composed of twelve members, but there were rarely more than four individuals attending meetings or involved in their planned activities. The committee invited T.Y.P.S. involvement to assist in several goals: 1) to improve commitment and involvement by the governing committee, 2) to strengthen programming for the youth and avoid the mistakes of other youth centres, 3) to better connect with other youth centres, sharing from their experience, 4) to increase volunteer involvement, 5) to increase fundraising potentials which would not conflict with United Way policies, and 6) to offer advice and suggestions on issues which might arise from time to time.

Prescott's Youth for Life Committee expanded its role of managing youth recreational

opportunities which did not require team sports leagues. “The Cave” extended its hours and connected with other youth groups to share space and co-sponsor youth events (dances, camping, etc.). A youth advisory committee was formed and a participatory video was completed.

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls was the community originally involved in the Small Town Streetworker Pilot Project and was not one of the selected communities to be a part of the T.Y.P.S. Project. However, the historical connection and unforeseen circumstances compelled T.Y.P.S. to establish an on-going assistance. In retrospect, although the Smiths Falls youth centre required a considerable amount of extra time, the lessons learned from it have been useful for the entire project.

Smiths Falls established, by the efforts of a few dedicated women and a group of youths who met with me, then in the role of co-ordinator of the Small Town Streetworker Pilot Project the first youth centre in an Ottawa Valley town. The youth centre, known as Midnight Junction, began operations in 1990. The first location was in borrowed space above the town offices each Friday and Saturday night. The turnout averaged 50-80 youths with several volunteer adults, the youths managing most of the planning and moving of supplies and equipment. The space had to be vacated and cleaned each night, which caused considerable work and the inability to have more permanent equipment (pool tables, VCRs, etc). Within a year, Midnight Junction was able to secure a large open space above the post office and there was a core of committed adults and youths involved in setting up and operating the youth centre, all as volunteers. The youth centre began to experience a number of problems in its second year, largely due to its success in

attracting too many youth members, but few adult volunteers. The large numbers of youths visiting the youth centre caused some disruption within the location's neighbourhood, and volunteers had a difficult time managing the average crowd of 250. Eventually, they were compelled to seek other premises or lose public support. It was at this time that the Town of Smiths Falls (mayor, council, recreation dept. and police) were vocally supportive of the youth centre and its goals. There was considerable effort from these town officials in assisting the youth centre to locate new premises and lending a variety of in-kind support.

In early 1994, a new location was opened for Midnight Junction, much smaller than the original site. The number of youths were limited by the space, but the centre had a steady attendance of about one hundred youth on most week-end nights and a few dozen attending during the week-day program. The difficulty began when the original volunteers and founders of the organization became "burned out" by their years of effort. One-by-one, these volunteers became more sporadic in their commitment, or resigned completely. A new group of volunteers became involved, but all were closely connected to one person. That one person was eventually involved in a scandal regarding missing youth centre funds and had to resign.

This scandal caused the youth centre almost to close completely, but a few of the volunteers gathered and re-affirmed their determination to keep Midnight Junction open. These few remaining volunteers, mostly youths, contact me asked for assistance in the re-building of a Board of Directors, and a volunteer committee and, to investigate funding options. With approval of both the T.Y.P.S. funder and sponsor, the Smiths Falls group was included into the T.Y.P.S. Project. A small group of volunteers maintained the youth centre, while T.Y.P.S. staff, with the support of the Town of Smiths Falls and local agencies, recruited past and new

supporters of Midnight Junction. Within a few months, Midnight Junction formerly incorporated as a non-profit organization with the new name of Smiths Falls and District Club for Youth (SFDCY), with an new twelve person Board of Directors, including most of the original founders of the youth centre. In addition, there was established an additional Community Advisory Committee, serving with six additional experts for the new Board. The Advisory Committee included the Chief of Police, the Town's Recreation Director, a minister, a lawyer, an accountant, and the Executive Director of TriCAP. The purpose of having this double structure of community involvement was to ensure maximum visibility and accountability.

SFDCY regained public support and played an active part in all T.Y.P.S. Project initiatives. It maintained an active youth advisory committee and produced a participatory video.

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