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A place for all seasons: Examining youth shelters and the youth-in-trouble network in Toronto (Ontario)

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A PLACE FOR ALL SEASONS: EXAMINING YOUTH SHELTERS AND THE YOUTH-IN-TROUBLE NETWORK IN TORONTO

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses upon youth shelters as non-profit, voluntary organizations, and their relationship with formal child welfare systems. Two case examples, Covenant House (CH) and Youth Without Shelter (YWS) are examined through archival material, participant observations of "shelter culture," and structured/unstructured interviews with front line and managerial shelter workers. These methodological tools provide a distinct portrait of the evolution, the "life stories," and the present day activities of two prominent Toronto youth shelters. The findings suggest that both Shelters' operating goals have been modified in order to reach a suitable partnership with more entrenched and formal child welfare organizations (such as the Children's Aid Society). CH and YWS were envisioned by their architects as "alternatives" and "buffers" from the impersonal and bureaucratic formal system. However, both Shelters are now increasingly described as "dumping grounds" for formal system players, and less of "alternative havens" or "buffers." CH and YWS are currently crowded facilities predominantly harboring "system kids" rather than "street kids." The consequences of such an arrangement are threefold: 1) CH and YWS no longer possess an internal environment to support traditional street kids; 2) Both Shelters no longer exist as "short-term emergency crisis centers" and have strayed from their original intentions; and, 3) Many shelter workers feel frustrated and impotent in working within this dynamic. Two distinct explanations for CH's and YWS' transformation are discussed, as well, numerous recommendations are provided regarding the survival of such youth shelters.

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FOCUS OF STUDY

This study focuses upon youth shelters as non-profit, voluntary organizations, and their relationship with formal child welfare systems. Two case examples, Covenant House (CH) and Youth Without Shelter (YWS) are examined through archival material (local histories), participant observations, and interviews with shelter workers. These methodological tools provide us with a distinct portrait of the evolution, the "life stories," and the present day activities of two prominent Toronto youth shelters.

The findings suggest that within the youth-in-trouble network,[1] youth shelters have formed a reciprocal and asymmetrical relationship with formal system players. This partnership can be understood through Murray Milner's (1980) notion of "symbiotic inequality." Identified as the weaker partner, youth shelters have become less of an "alternative haven" for street kids and more of a "dumping ground" for clients with whom the formal child welfare system cannot or does not want to deal. This conclusion counters much of the academic research and present day public perceptions of youth shelters. Numerous investigations of youth shelters (see Chapters Two and Four) suggest that street kids/homeless youth perceive the youth

[1] This term is used throughout my analysis and includes all formal (i.e., the Children's Aid Societies, Probation, Police, mental health hospitals) and informal (i.e., youth shelters, drop-in centers) agencies which are generally involved in the lives of disadvantages and disturbed adolescents.

shelter as a "home" - a place to which they could always return and be accepted.[2] However, youth shelters are now under extreme pressures within a resource-sapped social service environment. The following analysis examines their plight.

The mission of Toronto's Hostel Services is "to provide emergency shelter and assistance to homeless individuals on a short-term basis until alternative arrangements can be made for their housing or treatment needs" (Metro Community Services, 1997:1). An emergency hostel, such as CH and YWS, is defined as:

> A facility intended to provide immediate response to the needs of homeless persons by the provisions of safe accommodations, nutritious meals and personal supports including counseling, assessment and referral needed to enter treatment or return to a community address (Metro Community Services, 1997:1).

However, CH and YWS have increasingly abandoned their role as "emergency shelters," instead, gradually metamorphosing into organizations that resemble formal system establishments. A large percentage of youth shelter residents are now "formal system kids" - Children's Aid Society (CAS) graduates, runaways and/or Wards; youth experiencing mental health issues; and immigrants and refugees. A highly publicized and acclaimed Toronto Report on Homelessness charged:

> The emergency shelter system has become the catch-all for many of the problems faced by the homeless population which cannot be handled through

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[2] My own previous shelter work experience also supports this belief. One scenario clearly illustrates this claim. I was asking several youth to leave one morning and "get on with their day" when a youth turned to me and replied: "I really don't like leaving because you are the only place that doesn't make me feel like a street kid, but a human being." This experience spawned an article describing youth shelters' community building and empowering apparatus (see Karabanow, 1999a).

> other supports and services. Shelter workers must respond to problems of addiction, mental illness, housing, employment and child welfare. A system that was originally intended to provide emergency, short-term accommodation is now struggling to address the long-term needs of many individuals and families... (Mayor's Homeless Action Task Force, 1998:37).[3]

As early as 1987, Byrne (1989:11) noted that more than one-half of the 20,000 people who used Toronto shelters were between 16 and 24 years old and correctly predicted that "...there is no sign of this figure declining." During the late 1980's, only 8% of all hostel beds (185 out of 2,5000) were located in facilities designated for youth. One decade later, the Interim Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force (1998:7) noted that "...the fastest growing group of hostel users are youth under 18..." and make up approximately 28% (between 4,000 and 12,000) of Toronto's homeless population. At present, there are ten Toronto youth shelters. Moreover, the number of youth staying in these establishments has doubled in less than ten years, from 170 youth per night in 1988 to 329 youth per night by 1996 (Mayor's Homeless Action Task Force, 1998: 3). The current picture of Toronto youth shelters

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[3] My analysis draws a distinction between "street kids" and "system kids" insofar as their past experiences are concerned. "Street kids" are characterized by their *street* experiences (for example, living on the street, "squeegeeing," living in a squat, being involved in prostitution and drug use/sales, etc.). "System kids" are identified by their *formal institutional* involvement (for example, group homes, jail, immigration centers, mental health clinics, etc.). However, these categories are not mutually exclusive, since many "street kids" experience the formal child welfare system, and many "system kids" experience street life. Nonetheless, my participants often made the distinction between these groups, noting that the youth shelter originally attracted adolescents *directly* from the street, rather than from other institutions. As one of my thesis committee members insightfully commented, the fact that youth shelters now attract "system kids" can be viewed as a success story (i.e., this population is prevented from falling onto the streets [and thus becoming "street kids"]). Nevertheless, many shelter workers believed that their primary role should be to work with adolescents who "lived on the street" rather than adolescents who were being "passed on" from other organizations. This distinction pervades the following analysis.

is aptly described by most employees as "clogged" and a "bottle neck." Youth shelter populations are staying longer and demanding unique and varied services. Community resources for which to refer youth are either "backed up" or no longer exist. My analysis reveals that CH and YWS have shifted their operations in order to accommodate their new clientele. This change is a consequence of two powerful forces: the dismal state of social service resources in the community; and, the symbiotic partnership youth shelters find themselves in with formal organizations. Concerning the latter element; Kramer (1994:54) eloquently touted:

> Clearly, a New Age has emerged of blurred organizational boundaries in which public and non-governmental organizations need and depend on each other more than ever. It is necessary, however, to get beyond the usual rhetoric of collaboration and to recognize not only the mutual dependency but also the significance of the unequal distribution of power in these public-private "partnerships."

My analysis follows Kramer's directive, providing an in-depth portrayal of the organizational gains and costs of such a partnership.

Contracting

In a larger sense, this analysis conveys a story about privatization in its most common and dominant form - contracting. While privatization implies the public sale of government assets ("load shedding") such as national airlines or postal services, the term contracting is used here to describe a system whereby the government continues to fund services that are implemented and/or delivered by the private sector (profit or

non-profit agencies).[4] Handler (1996) refers to contracting as the "allocation of control" from the public to the private sector. Privatization, the rejection of statism, is the *modus operandus* of the last several decades, and will be a defining characteristic of the years to come. Privatization is defended ideologically by both the Right (conservatives) and the Left (liberals) - each camp arguing against big government growth, hierarchy and bureaucracy. Conservatives applaud the shift to the private sphere in terms of "efficiency, effectiveness and freedom of choice" (Handler, 1996:9). Liberals support small, scale grass roots democracy. However, they both champion the end result - citizenry empowerment.[5] In this sense, privatization concerns the management or diffusion of conflict - allowing those nearest to the "problem" (i.e., at the local level) to provide intended and appropriate services.

The two cases used in this analysis are both representative and illustrative of how voluntary, non-profit organizations have become the primary deliverers of particular services while the government has, through contracting, become a purveyor of funds. While there are various contracting schemes employed by government with regard to non-profit organizations, homeless youth shelters receive per diem funds from various levels of government.[6] Increasingly, non-profit organizations and workers are the sole players "in the trenches" or on the "front line" - repairing,

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[4] Toronto youth shelters have always been part of the private/non-profit sector, and thus, never publicly owned.

[5] Whether clients "gain power" through privatization is a contested issue. At times, privatization has simply implied a "new master" for subordinate groups with little else different (Handler, 1996:5). As such, *how* services are delivered may be more important than *who* delivers them (Kramer, 1994:44).

[6] Provincial and Municipal governments are important actors in supplying funds to youth shelters. The Federal Government is relatively absent in domestic policies. The reason youth shelters are funded on a per diem basis has to do with the type of service being purchased. When performance standards or outcomes are difficult to define and measure (as in the case of youth shelters).

controlling and defending various populations. Jeremy Rifkin (1995:249) described this phenomenon:

> Community based organizations will increasingly act as arbiters and ombudsmen with the large forces of the marketplace and government, serving as the primary advocates and agents of social and political reform. Third-sector organizations are also likely to take up the task of providing more and more basic services in the wake of cutbacks in government aid and assistance to persons and neighborhoods in need.

The end result of contracting does not necessarily imply the extrication of government.[7] Instead, as this analysis suggests, a mutual dependency has emerged between the private and public (quasi-public)[8] sector, resulting in a blurring of distinctions between the two systems. Over time, contracting has evolved into a policy strategy whereby: there is government intervention in the lives of non-profit agencies; many non-profits have seemingly shifted away from being informal structures and towards more formal apparatuses; and there exists greater uniformity of services within service categories (Smith and Lipsky, 1993).

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government, rather than focusing upon results, will focus upon the measurement of inputs, such as number of shelter days (Handler, 1996).

[7] In his analysis of government and non-profit organizations, Handler (1996:12) concluded that "[w]e see an extension of government through the private sector."

[8] While the Toronto Police force and Probation services are clearly public institutions, the CAS is best understood as a "quasi-public" institution - existing as an independent organization (with its own Board of Governors) that nonetheless represents the State (mandated through legislation). For the purposes of my analysis, all of these organizations are viewed as formal systems involved in the lives of disadvantaged and disturbed adolescents.

OUTLINE OF STUDY

This study describes the "stories" of two youth shelters, from their conception to their present day role within Toronto's "youth-in-trouble network." At one level, the analysis focuses upon the substantive content - the development and operation of two youth shelters and those employed within their walls. However, this is a story within a larger context - the role of informal organizations in the social service sector environment. My analysis interweaves both micro and macro considerations. Chapter Two explores the literature on street youth and street youth shelters. This discussion sets the framework for the entire analysis. Chapter Three identifies the study's methodological approach and the manner by which data was gathered and analyzed. Chapter Four provides a conceptual portrait of how formal and informal organizations have been perceived within the literature - presenting the reader with a context by which to understand CH and YWS vis-a-vis their formal system neighbors. Chapter Five and Chapter Six are the local histories of CH and YWS - portraits of two shelters' life stories. Chapter Seven reviews the significant events which shaped CH's and YWS' development, and provides two diverse explanations regarding both Shelters' transformation. Chapter Eight analyzes the present day role of CH and YWS within the youth-in-trouble network and explores the current "partnership" between youth shelters and the formal child welfare system through the lens of Milner's (1980) "symbiotic-inequality." Chapter Nine concludes the analysis and provides some recommendations for the survival of youth shelters.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study was spawned by my past work experiences at Dans La Rue - a downtown Montreal street kid shelter. During my tenure there as clinical supervisor, I gradually came to see our refuge being used by adolescents other than traditional street youth. During weekly team meetings, shelter employees argued the merits of "opening the shelter's doors to anyone who comes." We discussed the "roles" of youth shelters and their interactions with other players in the youth-in-trouble network. A number of questions inevitably filled these debates: Are we providing short term care? Do we continue to serve marginalized street youth? What should be our responses to system kids? As my local histories illuminate, these questions also permeate the walls of CH and YWS. In fact, they have become essential queries in light of the growing number of youth living on the streets of Toronto. The purpose of my present analysis is to uncover the reasons as to why street youth shelters have transformed - presenting the voices of shelter workers and illuminating the current environment in which youth shelters exist.

A study of youth shelters is important on different levels. My analysis provides a comprehensive portrait of two youth shelters by exploring their local histories. This type of in-depth study helps to uncover the internal and external mechanisms that explain the present-day situation of Toronto youth shelters. An analysis of this kind does not exist within the literature concerning street kids and youth shelters.

At a policy level, my analysis serves to illuminate the role of volunteer agencies such as YWS and CH as they are becoming the primary resources for those in need.

Youth shelters are currently the principle actors in the lives of troubled youth - as such, they act as "street level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980) in scripting day-to-day public policy. However, as the Mayor's Homeless Action Report (1998:57) suggested: "Shelters are important for homeless people but too much is being asked of them. They should be available only for emergency use and not used to provide transitional or long-term housing..." Many homeless advocates believe that the Toronto shelter system is currently in dire straits. My study addresses both the past and present realities of two such shelters.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980's, homelessness came to be seen as an extremely significant social problem within North America. However, homelessness was by no means a new phenomenon. Throughout history, the image of "being homeless" has been framed within different contexts including: the pre-sixteenth century notion of "holy poverty" (the Church's view of the spiritual wanderer void of possessions as worthy); the Middle Age's view of the "beggar" as suspect and dangerous; the "hoboes" and "tramps" that made up the vast armies of itinerant workers during the Great Depression; and, the emergence within the last six decades of skid row areas and the so called "bums" or "skid rowers" who inhabit these regions (see Baum and Burns, 1993; Hoch,1987; Hopper, 1990; Katz, 1986; for complete histories). What is "new" is the increased visibility of homelessness. The last two decades witnessed both more homeless individuals as well as the development of a large number of different services directed towards these individuals: from soup kitchens, to drop-in centers to shelters, in the majority of North American metropolises (Baum and Burnes, 1993; Hetzberg, 1992; Hopper, 1990; Price, 1989; Stark, 1994).

Throughout history, responses to both youth and adult homelessness have often taken the form of criminalizing the "deviant": enforced imprisonment, compulsory work, banishment, branding, pillory and torture (Hopper, 1990); including specific settings used in different times to contain these populations:

poorhouses, police stations and municipal lodging houses (Baum and Burnes, 1993). During the 1960's, youth hostels and drop-ins were developed for homeless youth, who were primarily identified as substance abusers (Ruddick, 1996). More recently, the voluntary shelter has emerged as another response to homelessness, leading many authors to characterize the 1980's as the decade of "shelterization" (Barak, 1991; Baum and Burnes, 1993; Hoch and Slayton, 1989; Ruddick, 1996; Tiernan, Horn, and Albelda, 1992; Timmer, 1988).

This chapter highlights the main themes found in the literature regarding street kids, street youth shelters, and the relationships between street youth shelters and the youth-in-trouble network.

STREET KIDS - NATURE OF THE POPULATION

Homeless youth have been characterized as the next generation to become homeless adults (Baum and Burnes, 1993).[9] In the past several decades, much of the research on homeless youth has identified these children with "running away" from the horrors of their particular family setting: sexual abuse; physical abuse; neglect; divorce; separation; new siblings and parents; and, general family dysfunction. In his survey of 536 clients of homeless agencies, Shane (1989:212) found that "...running is less frequent *toward* than *away* from something, often from a place and life in which the runaways felt abused, rejected, unheard, unwanted and unhappy."

[9] Two empirical studies of adult homelessness (McChesney, 1987; Susser, Streuning and Conover, 1987) found at least one-quarter of their populations experienced homelessness as adolescents.

The literature dealing with street kids has conceptualized them variously, often using terms that emphasize the reasons why they left home and/or ended up on the street. Thus, some authors call them "runaways" or "runners", others label them "throwaways" or "homeless", and still others feel that the term "in and outers" is a more apt description (Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987; Morrissette and McIntyre, 1989; Shane, 1989; van der Ploeg, 1989). Rather than adopting one of these explanatory terms, I prefer McCarthy's (1990:5) definition of "street kid" as "...all adolescents [who] share the experience of having no permanent address other than that of a friend or shelter..."

Why do kids run

In answering the above question, most research regarding street kids has emphasized etiological factors. Earlier accounts focused primarily on locating the causes of running in the individual: runaways suffer from "substantially more personality pathology" and a "runaway reaction disorder" (Jenkins, 1971:169), poor self esteem, immature and withdrawn personalities and depressive, anti-social character structure (Stierlin, 1973), and the "depressed-withdrawn, uncommunicative and delinquent" profiles associated with "psychopathy and patterns of maladjustment" (Edelbrock, 1980:218-22).

Some studies identified family pathologies as another key difference between runaways and non-runaways. It has thus been contended that "...running away...is the surface manifestation of deep psychosocial conditions" located in "family relations" (Stierlin, 1973:61); that runaways perceive their parents as "significantly less

supportive and more punishing" than non-runaways (Brandon, 1974); and that runaways are more likely to come from broken homes and have poor relations with their parents (D'Angelo, 1974; Adams, Gullotta and Clancy, 1985). A number of studies also noted that runaways report parental physical and/or sexual abuse as a major reason for running (Farber and Kinast, 1984: Janus. McCormack, Burgess, and Hartman, 1987; Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987; Price, 1989; Weber, 1991). Troubles at school, as well as a variety of less consistent factors, have also been identified as distinguishing runaways from non-runaways. Runaways are more likely to report poor grades, trouble with teachers, disinterest in school, a general inability to relate to adults (Goldmier and Dean, 1972), limited educational goals (D'Angelo, 1974), and more behavioural as well as academic problems in school (Olson, Liebow, Mannino, and Shore, 1980).

In contrast with this pathologized portrait of street kids and their backgrounds, there have been several efforts to present "running" as a normal extension of adolescent desires for freedom, independence, adventure and fun away from the "adult world" (Yablonsky, 1968). However, this perspective, framed prior to the "discovery" of child abuse, has since been largely rejected as "naive and inaccurate" (McCarthy, 1990:24). As one girl in Jack Rothman's (1991:1) study of runaway and homeless youth exclaimed: "Why would any kid leave a happy environment?"

> In summary, The Child Welfare League of America (1991:3) contended that:
>
> The problem of homeless and runaway youths...continues to escalate. Young people run away or find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons, including family physical contact and/or sexual abuse, family breakup due to

> homelessness, aging out of foster care, struggles with sexual orientation issues, substance abuse, serious health problems (i.e., HIV/AIDS), school truancy or dropout, and poverty-related situations. The streets - with their myriad dangers - are usually the first refuge for these youths.

The etiological debate surrounding adult homelessness (individual fault versus circumstance) is less apparent with street kids. The general "flavour" of recent literature on this subject has painted a picture of this population primarily running away from horribly abusive settings. Most recent accounts have tended to pathologize these actors' new setting - the street - as opposed to those who dwell in it.

The Street

Only a few studies have focused upon kids' experiences of "street life," emphasizing their methods of survival and particularly their involvement in deviant and criminal activities (for example, drug use and sale, prostitution, panhandling and theft). In an early investigation and follow-up of "transient youth" surveyed from a Canadian hostel (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1970; 1971), the most common sources of income while "living on the street" were identified as employment, contributions from friends and panhandling. More recent studies have emphasized the process of progressive involvement in more serious forms of criminal activity as street survival strategies.

Palenski's (1984:90) analysis of the "process" of becoming a runaway and the steps involved in the "careers" of runaways highlighted the following typical sequence of activities: the adolescent leaves school and fails to secure a job, leading to "hanging

out" with friends who share survival information, and ends with "hustling" ("a systematic procedure used to take something of value from others" that includes prostitution, drug sales, purse snatching, and cheating individuals or agencies of money). Illegal behaviour is presented as a response to the conditions of being "on the street."

In their study of 489 adolescents interviewed in Calgary's downtown core, Kufeldt and Nimmo (1987) divided their sample into "runners" who have lived on the streets for an extended period of time and "in and outers" who use the street as a temporary coping strategy. The authors reported that a much greater percentage of "runners" were involved in deviant activities (such as prostitution, drug sales and theft) and had experienced physical and sexual abuse. In another study of runaways in a Toronto shelter, Janus, McCormack, Burgess and Hartman (1987) similarly concluded that "street experiences" quite commonly included sexual abuse (predominantly for females), violence and interactions with the police.

McCarthy's (1990) study of 390 street youth residing at several downtown Toronto shelters and common "street hang-outs," reached similar conclusions. Using multivariate techniques to analyze the prevalence and incidence of illegal activities associated with "living on the streets," the author concluded that "a greater proportion of adolescents violate the law [in terms of theft, drug-selling and prostitution] after they leave home (relative to the proportion of offenders at home) and offend on more than one occasion" (McCarthy 1990:1). McCarthy (1990:2) explained this phenomenon using Sutherland's theory of differential association, whereby the

"likelihood of street crime increases substantially with the number of deviant peers, peer offers of "criminal" assistance and the adoption of non-normative beliefs."

In his foreword to Margaret Michaud's (1988) study of homeless teenagers, Judge Douglas Campbell, summarized what 'we know so far' about street kids:

1. Youth are on the street because of the push/pull phenomena - they are pushed out of their family homes, and are pulled to the street by the money and excitement.
2. Police and social service agencies are normally successful in removing "first flight kids" within a short period of time.
3. The real problem is in dealing with the "entrenched kid" who successfully resists removal.

This categorization of "first flight" and "entrenched" kids is critical - it is precisely this second group (also referred to as "hard-core" and "hard-to-serve") that is more likely to "make the loop" from one agency to another - initially running away from the formal system and finding his/her way into a myriad of alternative services. Judge Campbell noted that the "successful removal" of the "entrenched" kid has failed, due in part to the lack of a well-orchestrated and integrated response to deal with the problem.

STREET YOUTH SHELTERS

Many authors have acknowledged that shelters make up a part of street kids' worlds (Karabanow, 1994; Ruddick, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1993) and my own experience as a street kid worker in several Canadian cities supports the belief that shelters have become a prominent stop on many street kids' travels. Toronto alone

boasts ten street kid shelters. Between 1986 and 1989, Los Angeles County increased emergency shelter beds from 82 to 124, and long-term living beds from 0 to 88 (Yates, Pennbridge, Swofford, and Mackenzie, 1991:559).

The largest response to the street kid phenomenon has come from private charities, religious groups and non-profit agencies (Baum and Burnes, 1993; Cooper, 1987; Solarz, 1992; Weinreb and Rossi, 1995). Henry's (1987) analysis of voluntary shelters noted that all except two organizations in Washington DC serving homeless populations had either a religious auspice, religious sponsorship, religious origin, or religious ideal. The 1988 HUD national survey of homeless shelters found that ninety percent of all shelters are privately operated (Jencks, 1994:160).

Street kids are presently seen within the category of "deserving" an authentic response to their situations,[10] and thus the creation of shelters has emerged as a growing business not only to house, but to treat street youth[11] (Tiernan, Horn and Albelda, 1992). In contrast to most adult shelters, youth shelters place a greater emphasis upon counseling and "working with clients" in order to redirect them away from the streets and towards safer and more productive lifestyles (Karabanow and Rains, 1997). In this sense, treatment becomes a major focus of youth shelters (see Abbott and Blake, 1988; Bronstein, 1996; Morrissette and McIntyre, 1989). The

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[10] This has not always been the case. Street kids have been variously described: early nineteenth century categorizations included "petty thieves," "street sinners," and "begging impostures;" in the early twentieth century, street youth were known as "young barbarians" and "street wanderers;" in the 1950's, perceptions were painted by notions of this population as "psychologically deviant" and "disturbed."

[11] Evidence of a growing "treatment orientation" towards street youth can be seen in the range of practice approaches used in working with this population, including: psychodynamic perspective; attachment theory; and person-environment transactions (Bronstein, 1996).

goal of the street kid shelter is to reintroduce its clients into society as 'functional and productive citizens'.

Within the past few years, academic investigations have turned towards street youth shelters and have documented 'what goes on' within specific agencies from the perspectives of both kids and workers (Karabanow and Rains, 1997; Kariel, 1993; Ruddick, 1996). The literature concerning street kids shelters has been more redeeming than adult shelters and generally describes a "culture of care" (Karabanow and Rains, 1997), recreating a family-like environment with warm and understanding staff (Karabanow, 1994; Kariel, 1993; Ruddick, 1996; Washton, 1974). The present conceptualization of street youth as "deserving" has painted this more sympathetic undertaking within the literature of the last few decades.

Youth shelters have been criticized on the grounds that they resemble correctional institutions (through an excess of rules, rigid structures and "power hungry" staff) (Abbott and Blake, 1988; Karabanow, 1994; McCarthy, 1990; Weber, 1991); employ professionally untrained workers (Robertson, 1992; Rothman, 1991); and, have questionable effectiveness from the point of view of staff and kids (Alleva, 1988; Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987; Michaud, 1988; Miller, Miller, Hoffman and Duggan, 1980; Price, 1989; Rothman, 1991).

YOUTH SHELTERS WITHIN THE YOUTH-IN-TROUBLE NETWORK

Despite the dearth of academic attention placed upon understanding youth shelters vis-a-vis the youth-in-trouble network, several authors have acknowledged various roles played by youth shelters within such an environment - they act as

"buffers" (Henry, 1987; Vosburgh, 1988) from, and "dumping grounds" (Alleva, 1988) for formal organizations such as the CAS, the Police, and hospitals.

As "buffers," youth shelters attract marginalized and disadvantaged youth who find the formal system confusing, demanding, and dehumanizing (Karabanow, 1999a; Michaud, 1988; Miller, Miller, Hoffman and Duggan, 1980). As explored in Chapter Four, youth shelters are commonly perceived by their clients as informal, non-bureaucratic, and welcoming structures. Conversely, formal child welfare organizations are described as impersonal and rule-oriented settings that impose numerous "roadblocks" (for example, requiring clients to show identification or divulge personal information) in order to receive services (Liebow, 1993; Miller, Miller, Hoffman and Duggan, 1980). As such, youth shelters have been very popular with hard-core street kids - providing them with a relaxed, caring and inviting setting (Karabanow, 1999a; Michaud, 1988; Wilkinson, 1987). In this regard, youth shelters "buffer" a segment of the street youth population from the "harshness" of formal systems (Karabanow 1999a; Ruddick, 1994; Vosburgh, 1988).

Youth shelters also assume the "buffer" role when acting as liaison agents - linking clients to formal system apparatuses or acting on behalf of clients when approaching the formal system (Henry, 1987; Karabanow, 1994; Karabanow, 1999a). Kurtz, Jarvis and Kurtz (1991:313) argued that homeless youth "...are unlikely to fit into the traditional molds," and thus need "flexible and forgiving" programs. For example, a recent exploratory study of street youth and service providers in Calgary found that the formal welfare system became inaccessible to homeless people due to its

rules and structures (for example, in requesting an appointment, one is required to call back at specific times and/or leave a phone number) (Kufeldt and Burrows, 1994).

From an organizational point of view, youth shelters also act as "dumping grounds" for youth served by the formal system (Alleva, 1988). According to several accounts, youth shelters are increasingly behaving as referral points or "storage bins" for the CAS, the Police, Probation, hospitals, immigration centers, as well as other shelters (Alleva, 1988; Hare, Leslie, and Saunders, 1998; Karabanow, 1994). According to Alleva (1988), shelters become the "last resort" for youth when family, friends and placement options are unavailable:

> As their young undone lives demonstrate, a substantial number of youth are, therefore, in emergency shelter care not because they have run from home or other intolerable situations, *but because they are being warehoused by a resource poor, and slow to respond social service system* [Emphasis added] (36).

Alleva's analysis, albeit over ten years old and within an American context, resounds remarkably true for present day Toronto youth shelters.

Milner's (1980) analysis of hospitals also sheds light upon the present-day relationship between youth shelters and the formal youth-in-trouble network. In his study, Milner (1980) examined the unbalanced yet cooperative relationship ("symbiotic inequality") between rich and poor hospitals in the same neighborhood. Poor hospitals, which are virtually powerless in the relationship, nevertheless play an essential role in the local health care network. In return for a link with more experienced staff and better facilities, poor hospitals provide rich hospitals with: a

"dumping ground" for undesirable and medically uninteresting cases; a way to maintain their "high" status; and, justification for the purchase of expensive equipment (that can be "farmed out" to poor hospitals). Milner (1980:5) explained the essence of his argument as:

> [G]iven the present structure of American society, high-quality health institutions in large metropolitan settings must limit the demands placed on them to serve the poor people and to treat medically uninteresting cases. If they do not do this, the quality of the services they offer - and eventually their status - are likely to decline. Consequently, for high-status institutions to exist, there must also be low-status institutions to take on the unwanted functions and patients.

The author saw this process as involving a "forced division of labor" (179) whereby the dominant actor ensures that the weaker actor's minimal needs are met.

Similar to the notion of symbiotic inequality is Kramer's (1981:164) discussion of a "bureaucratic symbiosis" between government and voluntary agencies. Primarily through contracts for purchase of services, both parties recognize their interdependency and are careful not to upset it. While governmental welfare agencies receive a cheap partner, loyalty from a constituency, extension of services, and an image of responsibility and cooperation, voluntary agencies enlarge services, gain greater financial security, increase status and legitimacy, and gain an opportunity to influence public policy (Kramer, 1981:165-6). However, "bureaucratic symbiosis" implies an egalitarian relationship, while my analysis argues that the relationship is far from equal. Instead, "symbiotic inequality" suggests an "unbalanced reciprocity"

(Smith and Lipsky, 1993:224) whereby formal organizations (such as the CAS) maintain an upper-hand. Chapter Eight will adopt Milner's notion of "symbiotic inequality" in order to understand youth shelters vis-a-vis the youth-in-trouble network.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is growing desperation on our city streets. An increasing number of people are finding themselves with "no place to go" and consequently are making the streets their new home and last hope. Shelters, drop ins, food banks, counseling services, job training programs, health and legal clinics have been constructed to rescue our homeless populations. Jacqueline Wiseman (1970) referred to this organizational network of helping agencies as "stations on the loop." This study focuses on one particular population among the homeless - street kids, and one particular service - the shelter. Today, the street youth phenomenon is seen as a major social problem (Robertson, 1992; Solarz, 1992) and their plight has been a predominant focus of North American media.

An increasing amount of evidence points to the growing role played by both shelters and child welfare institutions (such as group and foster homes) in the lives of street kids (Karabanow, 1994; Ruddick, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1993; and this author's work experience). However, little attention has been directed towards the interactions between these two organizational forms.

A study of interactions between agencies is critical for several reasons. First, the number of people living on the streets increases each year. Some experts suggest

that the present homeless situation is approaching "national disaster" status. However, there is little research regarding the network of agencies organized to help this population. Less is known about their interactions with one another. If we do not understand how specific agencies work together, then we have no insight as to whether a given population is actually being helped within that system. As Milner (1980:x) explained:

> Increasingly organizations rather than individuals have become the key actors in our society. Therefore the need to understand the nature and structure of interaction between such units grows in importance and urgency.

Second, we are now in the midst of a political environment that espouses neo-conservative values and neo-liberal economics that advocates for less government in the market place and a replacement of state care with community care. As argued by Henry (1987:152) in his analysis of two voluntary shelters in the United States:

> Today, with cutbacks in the public welfare system, especially general assistance, the problem of homelessness requires an even heavier commitment from the shelter organizational population.

In this sense, it is not only timely but necessary to investigate and understand the actors who are increasingly assuming the role of caring for our society's disadvantaged. The following chapters proceed in this direction.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

> There is no knowledge that is true in itself, that is independent of the languages and institutions that we create and invent. Empirical reality does not exist as a universal truth but as an unending collection of "stories" that we tell. The truth is made, not found (Irving, 1999:32).

This analysis presents a "collection of stories" of both past and present youth shelter activity. The methods of investigation are naturalistic - employing participant observations, structured and unstructured interviews with shelter staff, and a review of archival materials. My goal is to shed light upon the "social worlds" of youth shelters. However, this analysis is not exclusively a portrait of youth shelters, yet provides an opportunity to understand the Toronto youth-in-trouble network, for youth shelters live within "webs of organizations" (Blau and Scott, 1962).

My study lies somewhere in-between two qualitative approaches - grounded theory and ethnography. These naturalistic camps are by no means mutually exclusive, but each espouses particular techniques for understanding the social world. Ethnographic research relies heavily upon participant observation, believing that in order to describe a culture, one must become "immersed in the field." As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:1) reported:

> In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly and covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

While ethnographies provide the reader with an in-depth portrayal of a particular social phenomenon, grounded theorists "immerse themselves" within the data, allowing for the emergence of substantive theory that will "fit the situation being researched, and work when put to use" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:3). From the beginning of the research process, the investigator answers to the data, evoking an intimate sense of things. As Eisenhardt (1989:547) suggested: "This intimate interaction with actual evidence often produces theory which closely mirrors reality." Grounded theorists tend to rely upon interviewing participants in order to elicit their perspectives of a particular social phenomenon. In the end, both naturalistic forms of inquiry attempt to describe how people "understand their worlds." The following section highlights the instrumental qualities of naturalism.

NATURALISM[12]

The philosophical essence of naturalism as a methodological tool is to "remain true to the nature of the phenomenon under study" (Matza, 1969:5). In remaining "true" to the phenomenon, the naturalistic paradigm emphasizes sensitivity, respect

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[12] This section was initially developed as an assignment for a Social Work doctoral course on Theory Construction with Dr. Anne Westhues at Wilfrid Laurier University. A version of this discussion can be viewed in Westhues, Cadell, Karabanow, Maxwell and Sanchez (1999).

and appreciation for the social world as opposed to manipulation, control and the creation of artificial settings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Naturalistic research captures social phenomenon "...in the natural context in which they occur" (Ruckdeschel, 1985:17).

Within this paradigm, the nature of reality is seen as multiple, constructed and holistic. Individuals are held to be "[e]ssentially interpretive and symbol constructing" in creating meaning and making sense of their worlds (Ruckdeschel 1985:18). As Blumer (1978:98-99) explained: "Human beings interpret or define each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions." There is no universal, singular truth 'out there,' but many different perspectives that reflect how individuals view their surroundings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Creswell, 1994; Peile, 1988; Gergen, 1985; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ruckdeschel, 1985; Matza, 1969).

The tools of research in this paradigm - participant observations, structured and unstructured interviewing, and review of documentation - reflect the above mentioned emphasis on respect and sensitivity towards the social world and upon *understanding* and *describing* the phenomenon under study. In order to remain "true to the phenomenon," naturalistic research "resists schemes or models which oversimplify the complexity of everyday life" (Denzin 1971:168). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:8) convincingly argued: "Any hope of discovering 'laws' of human behavior is misplaced...since human behavior is continually constructed, and reconstructed, on the basis of people's interpretations of the situations they are in." Instead, naturalists provide "detailed accounts " of the phenomenon under study. There is great reliance upon tacit knowledge (insight or intuition) gained from

experience. Inquiry is seen as value-bound through "the values of the inquirer...the assumptions underlying both the substantive theory and the methodological paradigm...and by the values that characterize the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:161). Research cannot be seen as value neutral and naturalists place a great deal of emphasis upon reflexivity. Implied in reflexivity is the rejection of the notion that social research can somehow be carried out in "some autonomous realm that is insulated from the particular biography of the researcher" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:16). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:17) noted: "...there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it." Rather, the researcher is viewed as an "instrument" within the inquiry - responding, adapting, exploring, summarizing, questioning and interacting with participants (Lincoln and Guba 1985:193). There is a "...reciprocal involvement between the knower and the known" (Lincoln and Guba,1985:65). Knowledge surfaces through participation and involvement (Ruckdeschel,1985:19). Wax (1971:14) equated this process with gaining an "insider's view" into the world of the participant that cannot be obtained through quantitative methods.

This manner of "doing research" allows for a greater understanding of the phenomenon through the creation of "thick description." Geertz (1973) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) employed this term to capture a portrayal of the participant's world view in a contextual framework. It is the process whereby social phenomenon is studied "...in a rich and densely detailed fashion" (Ruckdeschel, 1985:17). Rather than a preoccupation with causality, explanation and prediction, naturalistic investigations emphasize the complexity and interrelatedness of individuals in the

social world. Lincoln and Guba (1985:151) described this idea eloquently as "mutual simultaneous shaping" whereby "everything influences everything else, in the here and now." This inductive process allows for the "data to speak."

CASE STUDIES

My study utilizes the case study method. Case studies are empirical inquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin 1984:23). Rather than discovering causation or conjunctures between variables, case studies explore a phenomenon through story telling or narrative processes, explaining how something got to be the way it is (Becker, 1992). Consistent with the naturalistic approach, case studies provide a "thick description" about a specific phenomenon and its surrounding environment. Described as "slices of life" and "snapshots of reality" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the goal of case study research is to use the parts that we have uncovered concerning a phenomenon to develop an image or understanding of the entire process or organization. The case in and of itself acts as a bridge between empirical evidence and theory articulation. In this sense, cases "come wrapped in theories" (Walton, 1992).

At the singular level, a case study interprets and describes "what was found" in a particular setting. My analysis explores two shelters' "local histories" in order to document their evolutionary processes, in particular, vis-a-vis the formal child welfare system. Local histories contextualize outcomes from settings in which they arise and provide answers as to why certain things are done in specific ways (Higgins, 1985; Prus and Irini, 1980; Rains and Teram, 1992). As noted by Vaughan (1992:179), by

identifying the influential factors that make up the local history, "we situate our case." Local histories make us aware that structures, such as youth shelters, have pasts, and that the present is not permanent. Laura Epstein (1999:7) noted that "...there comes a time when one knows that things have histories, constituted by events, by ideas, and according to definitions and rules put out in the midst of a tangle of conflicting stories." My analysis is an attempt to acknowledge the historical roots of two particular youth shelters.

The use of multiple cases has an additional motive - to generate theory through comparison. As noted by Walton (1992:129), building analogies from one case to another is "likely to produce the best theory." My focus upon two diverse shelters allows for substantive theory regarding their interactions with child welfare institutions as well as the implications that arise for street youth.

Choosing Sites and Participants

Naturalistic sampling relies heavily upon informational rather than statistical reasoning: it is more important to gain information and understanding about a certain phenomenon rather than facilitate generalization (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The choice of cases within my study rests upon theoretical or purposive sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Platt, 1992) in order to include different "types" of shelters in terms of age, size, and location. More importantly, the cases have been chosen to represent diverse operations, varied statuses within the street kid shelter network, and disparate relationships within the youth-in-trouble network.

CH, being the oldest street kid shelter in Canada, maintains a legitimate and reputable status among street kid agencies and the Toronto public, due to its large funding base, experience, media savvy, and professional style. It approximates a formalized and professionalized organization with well developed technologies, procedures and resources. Funded primarily by the Catholic Church (through the ShareLife organization) and private donations, CH tends to be seen as a "conservative" agency that views itself as "rescuing" kids from the horrors of street life. Its conservative style is reflected in the Shelter philosophy, rules and structure (for example: early curfews, dress code, structured plans and assessments, and anti-abortion position). CH has recently merged all operations (administrative, residential, intake, and outreach) into a newly renovated, institutional-like edifice. Due to independent funding and reputable status, this organization concentrates upon its internal operation and functioning somewhat independent of its environment.

While CH may be seen as the "model" shelter (the largest, most experienced, and best equipped), YWS is more representative of existing youth shelters. It is primarily funded by the government and has experienced a myriad of financial crises. Situated in a Toronto suburb, the small Shelter provides a "cozy" and "family-like" environment for its residents. Rather than trying to "pull" them away from the streets and "change" them into model citizens, YWS acknowledges the positive elements of street life (for example, protection, friendship and honor) and provides both time and space for the youth to decide what he or she needs. Within the shelter network, YWS is seen by youth as a progressive, caring and popular agency. Throughout its

existence, YWS has fought for legitimacy among the formal child welfare system, the shelter network, and the Toronto public.

Choice of cases for inclusion within a study should be "shown to be cases of something important" (Walton,1992). In this context, the two cases selected for my analysis represent the typicality of street kid shelters found in North America, and perhaps more importantly, the variability that exist within the shelter network. As Yin (1984:57) pronounced, cases should be chosen for their expected similar and contrary results. The inclusion of CH and YWS will substantiate and expand earlier knowledge gathered about youth shelters.

The shelter setting is this project's natural field site. Following the tenets of purposive (theoretical) sampling, workers were chosen for interviewing based on maximum variation. Workers holding various positions (front line, middle management, upper management) and diverse work histories (neophytes, long time employees) within the organizations were found. In reference to theoretical sampling in general, and specifically, maximum variation sampling, Lincoln and Guba (1985:201) emphasized: "The object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations [as is the case with random sampling], but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor." Moreover, in keeping with the naturalistic tradition, my sampling design was emergent and continuously adjusted. For example, I added several participants to my sample during the writing stage in order to provide feedback concerning my theoretical assumptions. Sampling was terminated once the "point of redundancy" (the emergence of no new information) or "theoretical saturation" was reached (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

PRE-FIELDWORK

A year into my doctorate program, I decided that my dissertation would involve street kids and youth shelters. The majority of my academic research and direct practice experiences fell into this territory. As shown in Chapter Two, there is a lush body of literature in which to frame such an analysis. As a result of my past shelter work experiences, I entered both CH and YWS as a partial "native" to their cultures - being familiar with their language, rituals and belief systems. As Sterk (1989: 93) noted about her research on prostitutes, drugs and AIDS, it is important to enter the field "being somewhat familiar with the lifestyle of the persons studied..." I spoke the same "language" and had lived in the same "world" as my participants. During the interview process, participants often explained situations with which I could identify. I routinely shared my own experiences as well - fostering not only a relaxed and open setting, but also a sense of mutuality between interviewer and interviewee. My familiarity with shelter culture and closeness to shelter workers helped me acquire an intimate view of this particular social world.

My interest in organizational interactions was, to a large extent, spawned by my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Eli Teram, who guided me through this body of literature, and discussed its application to my substantive arena. In addition, during my years at Dans La Rue, a small alternative street kid agency in Montreal, my responsibilities included the creation and maintenance of collaborative relations with colleagues in the field, such as child welfare, the police and other shelters. This experience provided

some insight (and many questions) regarding how agencies interact and perceive one another.

Prior to (and during) my research, I was aware of the "prejudices" and "pre-understandings" permeating the analysis. As noted, I had extensive experiences within the youth shelter culture, and as naturalists suggest, I "...exploited [it] for all it is worth" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:19). My personal work experiences, coupled with a familiarity of the literature, allowed for "sensitizing instruments" (Blumer, 1969) or hunches to guide my travels, yet not overwhelm the particularities of the setting under study. Specifically, Milner's (1980) seminal work fit my own preconceived notions of how youth shelters interact with other organizations. Rather than fighting my preconceived understanding of how youth shelters function, I accept that my analysis is a subjective account produced through selective observations. Acknowledging how one's world view clouds interpretations of data is a positive step towards reducing bias and misleading conclusions (Vaughan, 1992). As will be discussed, I also employed particular methodological techniques (such as collegial exchange, case comparisons, and triangulation) to reduce biases related to data interpretation.

ENTERING THE FIELD

I contacted both Shelters in the Fall of 1998, and soon after, met specific members from each organization to discuss my research intentions and present a proposal as to how my investigation would be conducted (see Appendix A for Description of Study). Previous investigatory experiences made me aware of the

difficulties researchers often encounter when attempting to elicit an entry into particular "worlds," especially human service organizations. As such, I was surprised by the expeditious and eager reply from both Shelters. While CH and YWS expressed their "frustrations" at being inundated with research requests, and "trepidation" regarding the usefulness and benefits of much "academic" research, my quick and easy access can be explained by several factors. Over the years, I had maintained close relations with certain employees at CH, and my positive status as an ex-worker and ex-researcher allowed for swift site entry. Even though YWS was a completely new environment for me, upper level managers were impressed with my work experiences and believed that I could offer an important analysis of shelter culture. I was also viewed by shelter staff as someone who had both worked and researched at youth shelters, and thus, maintained an appreciation and sensitivity for such a culture.

Moreover, what seemed novel and exciting investigatory grounds to both Agencies was my interest in sketching their "local histories," which would provide them with a "story" of their respective evolutions. Both Shelters were eager to accommodate my archival investigation (I had imagined that they would be somewhat reticent to having their pasts "dug up"). At CH, while their celebrated history was known to most seasoned workers, there was a feeling amongst upper level workers that more novice staff members (particularly front line workers) were not well informed as to the Agency's past. I have subsequently been asked if my historical research could be used as part of the Shelter's training program. For current staff at YWS (front line and upper management), there existed little knowledge of the Agency's development, but importantly, an interest in "rekindling" its history (for

training and fundraising), and fortunate for me, dozens of unopened boxes of archival material sitting in the Shelter's cold and damp storage room.

I began my fieldwork in November 1998. I spent ten months in the field,[13] dividing my time between CH and YWS, approximately three to four days per week, four to seven hours per day. I had been granted access to both Shelters' documents, given permission to perform active and passive participant observations, and, conduct staff interviews.[14]

As I entered each Shelter's premises, encountered their residents and workers, and observed the "hustle and bustle" of shelter life, I realized that this project would, in part, resemble a "confessional tale" (Van Maanen, 1988). The essence of confessional tales involves an exploration of a particular topic through the voice of the researcher as guide. Researchers use confessional tales to "convince the audience of the human qualities of fieldwork" (Van Maanen, 1988:75). As I continued to collect data and write, I was habitually reminded of my own presence. I did not cease to be "human" as I took on the roles of "researcher" and "writer." My own feelings of excitement, frustration, fear, confusion, boredom and enlightenment wash over the

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[13] While I had not planned a fieldwork deadline, I imagined that approximately one year would allow for enough "rich" and "thick" data. I was cautious of my being an "intrusion" in the day-to-day life of both Shelters, and was grateful that neither CH nor YWS placed any time restrictions upon my research.

[14] My initial research proposal requested interviews with each Shelter's residents. While CH and YWS were "open" to such activity, I was aware of their hesitancy - manifested in frequent remarks to me by shelter workers concerning researchers (and media representatives) "exploiting" street kids for their own personal gains. After several conversations with shelter employers, I decided not to formally interview residents, largely out of respect for both Shelters, as well as the fact that I had already accumulated an impressive body of data from archival review, worker interviews and participant observations.

following pages. Van Maanen's (1988:2) discussion of field work provided a telling and accurate portrait of the researcher:

> Fieldworkers, it seems, learn to move among strangers while holding themselves in readiness for episodes of embarrassment, affection, misfortune, partial or vague revelation, deceit, confusion, isolation, warmth, adventure, fear, concealment, pleasure, surprise, insult, and always possible deportation...

Moreover, while I constantly confronted a multitude of feelings concerning my investigation, it soon became evident that the research process provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their work and express their feelings. On numerous occasions, interviewees thanked me for allowing them a space to "open up" and explore personal issues. Many workers were grateful that I had created a local history of their respective shelter, believing that past events would not be as easily forgotten and could be linked to present and future activities. I was surprised at these comments, but nonetheless, thankful to be able to "give something back" to a culture that was very accepting and open to me.

DATA COLLECTION

> Fieldwork, at its core, is a long social process of coming to terms with a culture. It is a process that begins before one enters the field and continues long after one leaves it (Van Maanen, 1988:117).

In principle, there are three ways to obtain information about people and social organizations: by examining material that has been written by them or about them; by watching them; and by asking them questions (Blau and Scott, 1962:16). The

corresponding research techniques involve: analysis of documents; active and passive participant observations; and interviews. My analysis employs all three methods, in order to provide an in-depth and holistic portrait of youth shelters. Multiple data collection also makes for stronger validation of constructs and hypotheses.

Analysis of Documents

My first venture "into the field" involved reviewing agency documents in order to create local histories. Concurrently, sifting through archival material provided me with a sense of each Shelter's experiences, stories, and culture. The analysis of documents included: Boards of Directors minutes, letters to and from other organizations, financial statements, and Agency program, training and fundraising material. I was fortunate that both Agencies had an impressive archival collection. At YWS, I spent most of my time in the Agency's basement - inspecting numerous boxes and scattered materials. The task proved easier at CH since I was given an office as well as chronologically organized archival material. After three months of reviewing documents, I began to feel a part of each Shelter - I had become a familiar face to both workers and residents. In hindsight, I believe that my "immersion into the field" had begun.[15]

[15] I was fortunate to have developed close relations early on during my fieldwork with several upper level workers from each Shelter. These individuals (deemed "important players" within my two cases) acted as my guides - facilitating participant acceptance and trust of my research, supporting my day-to-day fieldwork (for example, scheduling interviews, finding a location for me to work, etc.), and discussing at length my observations, inquiries, and analyses.

Participant Observations

During my 'review of documents' period, I purposely spent one to two hours per visit "hanging out" at each Shelter, casually talking with staff and residents. I participated in Shelter activities such as day programs, sport events, meals, and watching TV. In these instances, I acted as a volunteer - helping to organize events, cleaning up, preparing meals, etc. For these observations, I took copious notes when I was alone. Moreover, at YWS, I was granted access to staff team meetings, whereby I participated as "researcher in residence," providing weekly updates of my findings. CH did not grant me access to staff meetings.

I also engaged in passive participant observations, such as sitting in the living rooms of each Shelter, casually observing the day-to-day flow of shelter life. I was aware of my "outsider" presence in these instances and tried to fit in through common dress and behavior. For the most part, residents ignored my presence. At the end of these sessions, I would find a closed office and detail my observations (never in view of workers or residents). These accounts provided another window into "shelter life" and were important data sources for the case studies and analysis.

Interviews

I utilized three interview styles in my analysis; each one providing for multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon. First, during the review of documents stage, I sought out individuals who had knowledge of, or were involved in each Agency's evolution, such as founding members, long time staff, and previous employees. These

interviews were primarily focused upon the histories of each Shelter and helped "fill in" gaps found in my review of archival materials. One problem in social science research in general, is reasoning from the parts we know to something about the whole they and parts like them make up. As such, I discussed my renditions of each Shelter's evolution with these participants in order to validate my data. Secondly, twenty-one shelter workers were formally interviewed, ten from YWS and eleven from CH. Interview questions focused upon day-to-day shelter operations, shelter culture, and perceptions of the youth-in-trouble network. These interviews were relaxed and unstructured in order for participants to feel comfortable and unrestricted in what was discussed (see Appendix B for Interview Guide). Participants included front line personnel, middle level managers, and executive directors. Third, during participant observations, I often explored specific issues with shelter residents. These informal interviews focused upon their perceptions of shelter life (for example, how they perceived house rules or other shelters).

Apart from two worker interviews which took place at the respective participant's home and place of work, all interviews occurred at the Shelters. Many interviews were scheduled days in advance, yet several interviews simply occurred by chance. Interviews transpired in private offices, lasted approximately one hour and a half, and were audio-taped. Informal resident interviews occurred by happenstance and were not audio taped. Participant recruitment proved to be a simple process of asking particular individuals for time to conduct an interview. No one declined my invitations, and I believe that the "positive attitude" towards my research was a result of familiarizing myself with each Shelter's culture and inhabitants (making myself a

"familiar face") as well as close contacts with influential players at both sites. All participants were advised that they were not obliged to participate in my research, could stop the interview at any time, and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix C for Letter of Consent).

I interspersed interviews throughout the data collecting and data analysis stages. As such, they maintained an emerging quality. Each interview took on a specific "flavor" according to the particular worker's experiences and my own emerging analysis. I came to each interview with general questions and tried to develop the interview around specific topics that emerged during the exchange process. The majority of interviews included issues which had surfaced in previous interviews, observations, and/or Agency documents that I deemed worthy of pursuit. For example, my first participant voiced her belief that youth shelters had become "dumping grounds" for other human service organizations. Subsequent interviewees were asked about their feelings concerning this label (since I too had come across this notion within the literature). In this sense, the methodology employed was highly flexible and entertained an "accumulative" approach.

THE PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

Within a naturalistic framework, data analysis is seen as a process whereby the constructions that have emerged (and have been shaped) through the researcher's interaction with participants are "reconstructed" into a sense-making entity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). During the course of my fieldwork, I began transcribing observation notes and interview tapes, and then proceeded to reading and re-reading the transcripts

in order to familiarize myself with the data. During this process, I made notes in the transcripts' margins (with different colored crayons) of recurring themes, implications for future data gathering, and theoretical speculation. Coding and categorizing the multitude of data proved overwhelming at times. However, I attempted to make sense of the data by chronologically organizing the material - attempting to devise each Shelter's life story (through the stages of early, middle and present development). Once the data was organized as "story lines," I began comparing my cases (to each other, other youth shelters, and the literature) and linking their common themes. Categories such as "shifting shelter populations" and "changing house structures" were developed, discussed with participants, and placed within my analysis. The notions of youth shelters as "buffers" and "dumping grounds" emerged from both the literature and the data, becoming key features within my analysis. Findings from my field notes (consisting of observations, informal interviews with residents, and document data) supplemented these categories. Fresh ideas and patterns emerged from the data and were followed-up with further data collection. I often returned to the field to "check" particular issues as well as gain feedback from participants. In these instances, it was invaluable that I felt comfortable enough to return to both Shelters and take up participants' time (again) in order to re-address specific elements in my analysis.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Within the naturalistic framework, several criteria are invoked in order to defend the "trustworthiness" of a research endeavor. Based on Lincoln and Guba's

(1985) comprehensive discussion concerning this topic, the following section outlines two criteria (and the major techniques to deal with them) employed in my fieldwork.

1. *Producing "credible" finding:*

- I invested extensive time ("prolonged engagement") at each Shelter in order to learn the culture, minimize distortions and build trust. Concomitantly, there was little fear of total immersion ("going native") since I was able to return to my own "world" after each day of fieldwork.
- Through "persistent observations" (vis-a-vis participant observations, interviews, and reviews of documents), I was able to recognize and assess salient material and atypical occurrences while being aware of premature closure.
- I employed multiple sources and methods to obtain data ("triangulation").
- I discussed my findings with colleagues, friends, and professors ("peer debriefing") in order to test hypotheses, discuss methodology and illuminate biases.
- On numerous occasions, I presented my interpretations of data to participants ("member checking").

2. *Producing "transferable" or applicable material:*

- I developed rich detail ("thick description") of context that allows for readers (not the researcher) to decide whether findings can be transferable to other settings.
- Throughout my fieldwork and writing, I regularly compared themes, topics, and findings that emerged from one shelter with the other shelter ("case comparisons").

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Analysis of the two case studies is contingent upon "what these cases are cases of" (Platt, 1992). This study presents its cases at both a micro and macro level of analysis. At the micro level, the case is the individual shelter and its local history. At the macro level, the case becomes the shelter's role within the youth-in-trouble network, and the relationship between informal and formal child welfare organizations.

Qualitative methodology is the most appropriate way to explore this field, not only because it allows for rich and thick descriptions to surface from anecdote (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) but it also provides the means to build theory and explain the data (Mintzberg, 1979). From the beginning of a naturalistic research project, the investigator answers to his or her data. In this sense, theory produced during the analysis "closely mirrors reality" (Eisenhardt, 1989:547) and provides an intimate sense of how things "feel, appear, smell and taste." My analysis gives a voice to youth shelter workers; the entire study is interspersed with their accounts. They create the analysis; theory and discussion are placed "around" these accounts.

The ensuing discussions furnish the reader with a portrait of the two youth shelters, their past stories and their present activities. The following chapter sets the stage for these histories by describing the similarities and distinctions between formal and informal organizations.

CHAPTER FOUR: JUXTAPOSING FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

INTRODUCTION

> This inside world does not appear as a self-contained, self-generating, self-sustaining system or even subsystem with clear boundaries marking it off from the larger world around it. It is in continuous, intimate contact with the larger society - indeed, is an integral part of it... (Liebow, 1967:208-9).

As much as street youth represent a "hidden culture" with unique rules, practices and values, they also constitute a part of the larger society. Street youth, like Liebow's "Negro streetcorner" men in Tally's Corner, are linked to mainstream culture, especially visible in their interactions with formal (the CAS, welfare, the justice system, immigration, schools, the Police and hospitals) and informal (youth shelters, adult shelters, and drop-in centers) social service agencies. Similarly, youth shelters exist within the networks of formal and informal organizations, and my study places street youth shelters and street youth in the context of the web of child welfare policies and agencies. A YWS worker described her perception of the youth shelter: "I think we [YWS] are part of the system. We're a separate entity on our own, but also connected to all the other agencies. We're all fighting the same cause...We are all dealing with one issue - youth homelessness" (March 2, 1999). Many authors have documented that a large percentage of street kids have had prior and/or ongoing relationships with formal youth service agencies (Brandon, Wells, Francis, and

Ramsay, 1980; Hare, Leslie, and Saunders, 1996; Martin, 1996; Morrissette and McIntyre, 1989; Raychaba, 1989; Stone, 1987; van der Ploeg, 1989). The local histories of CH and YWS also support this proposition.

Youth shelters are different from child welfare agencies insofar as they have a "voluntary" clientele (they can leave at will), but this does not mean that they can operate freely in accepting clients. Both the lives of street kids and the nature of the shelters set up to "help" them are shaped in the context of the larger web of policies and agencies that impact upon the lives of kids: schools (via the legal school-leaving age), child welfare agencies (via the legal rules about which kids are old enough to be free from supervision), and employment and welfare policies (via the age and under what conditions kids can work full time and/or receive welfare). Much of what can and cannot be done for street kids is defined by these parameters, and the establishment of youth shelters is heavily impacted by the rules that determine whom they can and cannot accept (age), and what has to be reported and to whom (troubles with the law, notification of agencies or parents, etc.). As noted by Alleva (1988:33): "...shelters are presently caught within a network of conflicting interests between the youth, family and state apparatuses." This chapter focuses upon the relationship between two organizational forms - the street kid shelter and the child welfare system, in order to illustrate important distinctions and parallels between informal and formal operations.[16] Furthermore, this discussion will help the reader contextualize CH and YWS vis-a-vis their formal system neighbors.

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[16] Throughout this discussion, youth shelters will be conceptualized as informal, voluntary, non-profit (private) and alternative structures. Traditional child welfare organizations are described as public (quasi-public) and formal operations.

THE SYMBOLIC NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations of all types and sizes attempt to present themselves in a certain light in order to gain resources and legitimacy from customers, clients, colleagues and/or constituents. The "image" exhibited may or may not be an accurate reflection of the organization's day-to-day functioning. Culture - through symbols, rituals, language, images, stories and ceremonies - helps shape an organization's "aura" or "meaning" within its environment (see Karabanow, 1999b). One only needs to walk into a Toronto Bay Street law firm or financial house, amidst the artistic prints, lush carpets, massive wood desks, and well dressed actors, to understand how "culture" produces a certain intended "meaning." Youth shelters adhere to similar "rules" - displaying a manufactured portrait of who they are and what they do. One impressive characteristic of youth shelters is its voluntary, alternative nature - easily seen in their physical settings, workers' appearances and styles of behavior, and clientele (see Karabanow, 1999a). Formal settings, such as child welfare organizations and Police departments, portray an aura of bureaucracy, power and professionalism in their outward appearances - large buildings, professional staff, waiting rooms and offices, as well as overt procedures and rules for activities. The following discussion highlights some important perceptions and images regarding formal and informal settings - providing the reader with a backdrop by which to understand CH and YWS.

INFORMAL AGENCIES VERSUS FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the informal, voluntary welfare sector (consisting then of the Church and private philanthropy) enjoyed a monopoly with respect to providing for the poor and the weak. CH and YWS are products of this earlier arrangement. As described by a CH worker:

> CH is really part of the charity system - church, non-government run, non-profit, funded by churches...mostly donations, and it's that whole idea of delivering services through agencies that take on the task because of some religious affiliation...the old community, neighborhood house...and we have sort of become like that... (May 25, 1999).

The formal welfare system (government) is a relatively new partner in the "care" business, creating a prominent place for itself post World War II. As historian Daniel Boorstin (1965:121) noted: "Communities existed before governments were there to take care of public needs..." yet it is the formal system that now dictates the practices of informal agencies. For example, in Toronto, The Hostel Services Division of the Community Services Department operates several emergency facilities. It also contracts with community, non-profit shelters through purchase of service agreements, in order to provide shelter to Toronto's homeless populations. CH and YWS are examples of the latter operational arrangement. The Hostel Services Division dictates all hostel standards, involving accountability, operation, food and nutrition, conduct, health and safety, and eligibility requirements (for youth under the age of 16 years). Funding for shelter services is provided under the Ontario Works Act and all shelters,

on an annual basis, must provide program and budget information to the Hostel Services Division (Metro Community Services, 1997).

Street youth shelters, identified variously as informal systems, non-profit organizations and alternative agencies, epitomize the essence of the voluntary organization. In her discussion of alternative institutions, Rothschild-Whitt (1979:509) provided an useful definition of informal and alternative organizations: "...parallel to, but outside of, established institutions [rational-bureaucracies] and which fulfill social needs (for education, food, medical aid, etc.) without recourse to bureaucratic authority."

In essence, the street kid shelter is an organizational form that counters the trends of the traditional welfare state by being non-bureaucratic, non-professional, decentralized, and direct provider of basic needs services, without the obligation for personal information and disclosure. Voluntary shelters are most often rooted in religious experience and classical charity, characterized by simple organizational structures that provide immediate services in a flexible, caring and easily accessed environment. In general, voluntary agencies tend to have the following characteristics: innovation, flexibility, participation, protector of particularistic interests and providers of immediate needs not met by government (Kramer, 1981).

Conversely, the established welfare system has arguably failed to rescue those on the streets, precisely due to its "machine-professional-bureaucracy" that is rigidly organized around efficiency of service outputs and based on intense information gathering, record keeping and rehabilitation (Henry, 1987). Henry (1987:14) noted:

> Some would have the system dismantled and reorganized to include non-compliant [hard-to-serve] groups. However, if this were to happen, if the bureaucracy were to become less rigid, it could not remain what it is intended to be - an accountable, expeditious, effective bureaucracy in its people-processing and its people-changing.[17]

Similarly, a YWS manager illustrated the failure of the formal system to create a surrogate family for its clients:

> CAS says - 'Oh come in here, your own family is a very unsafe place, you need to be here, we'll take care of you, here come stay at a group home, oh you're 16, bye.' And that's why I think young people are so upset about CAS...They [youth] feel so abandoned, so angry, so everything because there was this promise of care which human beings need love and holding and whatever, yet institutional care falls short. How can you not just want to get out of that system the first minute you could (February 4, 1999).

The voluntary shelter organization emerged out of the ideals of the Settlement Movement and according to its advocates, is presently the only structure that is simple and flexible enough to respond to hard to reach populations (such as the homeless) through the provisions of food, shelter, and clothing to "all who come."[18]

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[17] In describing innovative family support programs and the formal child welfare system, Cameron and Vanderwoerd (1997:238) argued that child welfare's resistance to new approaches primarily stems from its entrenchment in an "individual-cases-investigation-apprehension-courts-care" way of working that leaves little room for alternative designs.

[18] Milner (1980) suggested two factors contributing to the greater efficiency and responsiveness of non-government institutions. First, informal systems like youth shelters do not hold a monopoly on the services they offer, and must compete for clients. The second factor involves job security - the

Organizations tend to reflect the characteristics of the clients they serve (Blau and Scott, 1962:77). As noted earlier, street kid shelters proliferated in the 1970's and 1980's due to the growing number of runaways and street kids in need of a safe refuge. Alleva (1988) argued that these shelters were portrayed as alternatives for youth who mistrusted traditional services:

> Runaway children tended to be mistrustful of adults and adult organizations and institutions. The youngsters seemed to be seeking a better social environment than those in their own homes and their communities, and avoided assistance from the traditional social welfare agencies which they regarded as too structured, too impersonal or too inflexible to respond to their own problems or needs (Alleva, 1988:29).

Street kids are more likely to feel safer accessing services from those community-based agencies that work with homeless and runaway youth but do not have the authority to apprehend them (Interagency Committee on Homeless and Runaway Youth, 1993). Two shelter workers explained their perceptions of formal systems vis-a-vis voluntary youth shelters:

> Kids like the shelter system more than the CAS system, first of all there aren't the rules, like if you run away from a group home we'll send the Police after you...The shelter system seems to be more respectful...It's that now you are 16 and an adult...you have to make your own decisions...its voluntary (YWS staff, March 2, 1999).

"less secure and more flexible reward system of...voluntary agencies encourage their employees to higher levels of performance and greater responsiveness to clients" (144).

> I mean the people who have been in the care of the Societies have had such negative experiences as have their families. I mean, that's the reason CH works as well as it does, is because it's a free choice...and that we are very strongly relationship based...I think that a lot of CAS' would like to operate with a very strong relationship based philosophy, I think that it is damn near impossible given workload expectations and the fact that it's not voluntary (CH staff, May 27,1999).

There is a consensus in the literature that adolescents are much less likely than their younger counterparts to receive appropriate assistance if they are referred to child protection authorities. Two recent Canadian investigations of the child welfare system found "...care options limited for older teens and system abandonment of youth at age 18" (Peirson, Laurendeau, Chamberland, and Lefort, 1998) coupled with a "...lack of support for older adolescents (age 16+) in transition from the children's service system to the adult service system" (Snow and Finlay, 1998:40). The result has been a growing service gap for adolescents and a real risk of "chronic homelessness or delinquency and...living on the streets" (Snow and Finlay, 1998:40).[19] As such, the voluntary shelter, expressing dissatisfaction with the inadequate methods and resources plaguing the public welfare system, emerged to *supplement* (extend) and *complement* (add something qualitatively different to) the formal child welfare system.

[19] As will be evident in the following chapters, CH and YWS workers clearly support these sentiments.

Some vivid distinctions between formal and informal organizations, regarding issues such as management philosophy and daily operations, are illustrated in the following Table.

TABLE ONE: CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL AGENCIES

CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL AGENCIES	CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMAL AGENCIES
rigid, slow to change	flexible, adaptable
only well accepted services	experimental and pioneering
little citizen participation	voluntary citizen participation
mass, universal services	individualized, personal and selective services
diffuse contacts	intensive relationships
non-sectarian and non-partisan	religious, sectarian and reform-oriented
large, bureaucratic structure	small, non-bureaucratic structure

(Kramer, 1981:100-1).

Formal and informal social service agencies make varying assumptions about the nature of problems and ways in which to deal with them; the relationship between workers (the helpers) and clients (the helped); and the organizational set-up in which the "help" occurs. Since most informal agencies arise in response to a lack of available services or a perceived inadequacy of existing services, their domain is more narrowly defined (focusing upon a specific population or set of needs) than the formal welfare

system. Moreover, service technologies differ for both groups. Formal agencies rely on intervention strategies based upon rationalized measures (of effectiveness and efficiency) and are administered by professionals through structured interactions between clients and staff, where control of form and content lies with the professional. Generally, these contacts take on an impersonal orientation, whereby clients are treated as "cases," and workers maintain an emotional detachment (Blau and Scott, 1962:33). In contrast, informal agencies tend to rely upon client experience and participation as the predominant mode of intervention and rationale for activity; engage fewer (if any) professionals; and pursue egalitarian and sharing relationships between participants and staff (Gidron and Hasenfeld, 1994). Both systems are also characterized by distinct organizational structures. Informal agencies are regularly described as informal structures emphasizing horizontal relations, interchangeability of roles, diffusion of authority, and participatory and democratic structures with few rules. Formal agencies, on the other hand, are bureaucratic structures reinforced by hierarchical relations, reliance upon professionals, and little client input. Henry (1987:145) highlighted the major differences between these two organizational forms in reference to his analysis of two homeless shelters:

> The main conclusion which can be drawn from the characteristics and the general scene of homelessness is that the response of voluntary shelter organizations to the problem of homelessness is antithetical to the response of the professional bureaucracy. As such, it lacks the discipline and authority, the orderliness, the predictability, the standardized solutions and technologies of the accepted bureaucracy and the social work profession.

Informal organizations tend to be "mission-oriented" (Lipsky and Smith, 1989-90) and promoters of a more "humanistic" welfare state. Workers from YWS and CH often defined their work and respective organizations in terms of "humanitarian struggles." Kramer (1981:9) acknowledged four organizational roles of the voluntary service agency that are highlighted in YWS' and CH's local histories: vanguard (innovator), improver (advocate), value guardian (encouraging citizen participation), and service provider. In their national survey of voluntary organizations serving homeless populations in the United States, Berman and West (1995:237) perceived voluntary shelters as an "important driving force" in solving the homeless crisis. According to the authors, informal organizations have legitimacy in working with homeless populations; provide a loud voice on behalf of this marginalized population; and, are quick to respond to crises (Berman and West, 1995:237).

The emergence of street kid shelters (and other alternative social service outfits, such as drop-ins, soup kitchens, detox centres, independent and co-operative living settings, and health clinics) represents the public's efforts to devise a "better way" to fix or contain youth homelessness. Its older alternative, the formal system of child care and protection, has been described by many as part of the problem. As noted by a CH worker: "Some of our [CH] kids have been in so many group homes you can't believe it, or so many foster homes, you can't believe the numbers they're giving you and it usually pans out" (May 27, 1999). In their discussion of a Spokane street kid service, Ray and Roloff (1993:498) acknowledged that "...these children [street kids] are failures of the system...Traditional resources seem to be ineffective in helping these children experience a wholesome and fulfilling life." Edney (1988)

contended that much of the blame for youth remaining on the street lies with formal social service agencies:

> While some street youths may find their own way off the streets, a significant proportion do not. The reason may be that negative experiences and interactions with social service agencies contribute to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness that makes the possibility of seeking, or accepting, help less and less plausible (Edney, 1988:70).

Another study of Spokane street kids provided a similar account:

> Members of the social service community are keenly aware that an increasing number of youth are choosing to live on the streets of Spokane than in the traditional forms of shelter. Attempts on the part of the social service community to make these youth fit into the traditional structure appears to have been met with an increase in the number of runaway reports being turned in to the police and sheriff's departments and an increasing sense of frustration on the part of law enforcement personnel, caseworkers, parents, and the judicial system (Wilkinson, 1987:10-11).

Several authors (Price, 1989; Ray and Roloff, 1993; Washton, 1974) suggested providing basic services in a non traditional way (voluntary shelters, drop-ins, street outreach) as a means to reach street kids. For example, as early as 1969, the Canadian Welfare Council convened to investigate, what they called at the time "transient youth," and discovered that newer, more youth-focused services (such as Edmonton's Drop In Center) provided flexible, caring, and youth-culture-sensitive programs. In her discussion of different modes of service delivery and the effects of these on

homeless people, Henry (1987:109) concluded that a simple structured, voluntary organization (seen as "classical charity") better satisfies hard-to-serve populations than more bureaucratic and professional apparatuses. The formal child welfare system has been depicted in the same light as Weber's bureaucracy - cold, sterile and impersonal structures enshrouded in excessive formality.

BLURRING BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL STRUCTURES

The previous discussion centered around the manner by which formal and informal apparatuses are experienced by their clients. However, there is contention that the characteristics of such operations are somewhat exaggerated, idealized and nostalgic. A clear distinction between the voluntary and public (quasi-public) welfare sector has become clouded within the last few decades, primarily due to governmental contracts with the private (non-profit) sector for delivery of services. Kamerman (1983:8) suggested that rather than conceptualizing a (false) dichotomy between private and public service providers, a clearer understanding would be reached in the form of a hybrid model that intersects both camps - the "public-private sector." Kramer's (1981) comparative study of voluntary social agencies in the United States, Netherlands, Israel, and England emphasized the blurring of boundaries between 'private' and 'public' in terms of funding, autonomy, and service delivery. For example, voluntary agencies in the Netherlands are the primary service delivery system, while the government is almost exclusively the financier (having a residual role in service delivery) (Kramer, 1981:146). My analysis illustrates a similar situation - both CH and YWS obtain per diem funding from the municipal government. Since the

1960's, voluntary agencies have become increasingly dependent upon government funds. This phenomenon is illustrated in the local history of YWS. Lipsky and Smith (1989-90:625) suggested that most non-profit service organizations depend on government for more than one-half of their revenues. Similarly, Ostrander (1985:435) demonstrated that even though voluntary agencies are seen as non-governmental, non-profit, and independent of state mandate, they typically receive significant funding from the state; involve paid professionals rather than volunteers; and may accumulate surpluses from gains on securities. CH is an example of this new trend in alternative service provision.

Increasingly, the welfare state has adopted the role of "enabler" (Kramer, 1994) - funding (monitoring and regulating) other agencies to provide services. Consequently, there exists much overlap and blurring between formal (government and quasi-government) and informal (voluntary) structures, leading to a relationship best described as being mutually dependent. As Handler (1996:104) suggested, non-profits and government bodies co-exist, "...occasionally collaborating and exchanging resources, infrequently competing or in conflict."

Voluntary structures, while espousing the roles of "advocate," "innovator," and "alternative" are nevertheless partially funded through government bodies. As a result, many investigators have charged that the non-profit sector has been seriously compromised through government permeation (Kramer, 1994: Smith and Lipsky, 1992). Toronto youth shelters receive per diem funding from provincial and municipal governments, and as a result, must adhere to certain regulations and procedures in order to exist. Under this contracting regime, it has been suggested that non-profits

become more professionalized (less volunteer-oriented) and bureaucratized (implementing more standardized reporting instruments), and to some extent, lose their identities as "advocates,"[20] "innovators," and "alternatives." While youth shelters once filled a gap - to house and support street kids - they now are supplements (extensions) of government services for youth in care, immigrants and refugees, and psychiatric youth. As the local histories demonstrate, youth shelters have increasingly opened their doors to "formal system" clients - a result of the voluntary organization's philosophy and its role as "dumping ground" for the more powerful, formal system that helps finance its existence.

My analysis suggests that youth shelters are increasingly starting to resemble formal organizations, in terms of appearance and operation. Since non-profit agencies' revenue largely comes from government sources in the form of contracting, co-optation appears to be common.[21] According to Handler (1996:105), "...voluntary agencies retain their innovative characteristics for only a short period of time; if they are successful, they become bureaucratic and professionalized." At present, CH and YWS employ dynamic entrepreneurial executive officers (primarily focused upon administration and fundraising); maintain a dominant focus upon securing government and private funding; meet government requirements concerning services provided and clients recruited; provide standardized and formalized accounting procedures; and,

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[20] The amount and intensity of advocacy will no doubt be tempered by the fact that youth shelters are funded in part by government.

[21] It is not clear however, whether co-optation is a direct result of contracting (Kramer, 1994). For example, pressure to professionalize and bureaucratize may stem from venues other than government, such as other funding bodies (foundations, charities, private donors) or professional associations.

utilize professional staff and services.[22] As such, many shelter workers in my analysis consider themselves an "extension" of government child welfare agencies in terms of shelter procedures and clients served. Several authors have made the claim that contracting, paradoxically, has not lessened the role of government, instead, it has extended it through a relationship of mutual dependency with the private (non-profit) sector (Handler, 1996; Kramer, 1994; Smith and Lipsky, 1993).

One of the fundamental distinctions between government and non-profit organizations has involved the notion of equity (Smith and Lipsky, 1993). Government agencies provide services in terms of *universalism*, establishing procedures that ensure treatment to all people of like-situation.[23] While non-profit agencies, such as youth shelters, are also concerned with fairness, they deliver services within the realm of *responsiveness*, providing immediate care to those who come to the door, in the guise of "first come be first served." However, this distinction is slowly eroding. By joining the ranks of formal child welfare organizations, youth shelters have purged their particularistic character. As demonstrated in my analysis, youth shelters are shedding their identity as "refuges for street kids," instead, they are emerging as "storage bins" or "receptacle centers" for "system kids." Smith and Lipsky (1993:94) addressed this sense of "dumping" in a positive light: "The

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[22] Many shelter workers noted the increased administrative demands (e.g., making sure youth sign certain forms during intake; the burdensome procedures in grant writing; etc.) in order to gain government funding. Additional costs to voluntary agencies of accepting government funds can include changes to the composition of the Board of Directors (e.g., needing to acquire more corporate/business members); operational changes (e.g., demanding that an agency be open 24 hours; increasing/reducing staff-client ratios); and reducing volunteerism in service provision while increasing volunteerism in the fundraising department. As Handler (1996:217) suggested: "Government revenues, in the form of contracts, make up the bulk of payments to charities. Responding to the new environment, the successful charities have become large, hierarchical, and dominated by the entrepreneurial chief executive."

organizational requirements necessary to operate under contracting have induced many non-profits to expand their definitions of clients and recruit champions of their clienteles from a broader base." My analysis supports this claim, however, it acknowledges that this strategy to expand their referral base also imposes costs - youth shelters are now experiencing frustration and impotency in dealing with varying and more difficult clients.

According to many authors, contracting has called into question the unique characteristics of voluntary agencies. Handler (1996) argued that client empowerment becomes a secondary goal to most organizational arrangements interested in financial survival. "Thus non-profits are torn between organizational maintenance and pursuit of their purposive objectives" (Smith and Lipsky, 1993:149). As shown above, numerous investigations have argued that contracting services from government leads non-profit organizations to bureaucratize, professionalize, rigidify, become larger, less flexible, and less innovative. "...The experience with various forms of neighborhood organizations suggest that even they can become as institutionalized, rigid, inaccessible, unresponsive and undemocratic as professionalized bureaucracies" (Handler, 1996:108).

Nevertheless, client experiences of formal (e.g., the CAS) and informal (youth shelters) organizations suggest that a distinction between organizational forms does exist. The portrait that emerges from extensive empirical work is that the relationship between government systems and clients is rarely characterized as just, fair, uniform and responsive. On the other hand, numerous investigations point to the fact that

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[23] It is debatable whether this is perceived fairness or actual fairness.

youth shelters provide a caring and genuine response to 'those in need'. The voluntary youth shelter has been praised within the literature - primarily due to its mission orientation. While all organizations are geared towards maintaining themselves and when possible, making themselves stronger, non-profits are also driven by a strong sense of purpose and commitment. Despite the major trends in the internal organizational structure of non-profits being increased size and scale of operation and greater formalization and bureaucratization, it appears that within the world of contracting, youth shelters are struggling to maintain a unique service delivery style.

Despite the fact that contracting comes with a price - youth shelters now have reporting requirements; more extensive record keeping; and managerial and operating standards (regarding staffing, Board representation, service provision, etc.) - it is not regarded as the most serious threat to independence.[24] As Handler (1996:106) concluded: "In general, [voluntary] agencies do what they want to do, but now have the funds." Kramer's (1981:158) analysis found little evidence to support the view that government funds corrupt or constrain, and argued that this notion may be more ideological than real.[25] Despite complaints over red tape and adherence to regulations, most social service agencies in Kramer's analysis admitted little intrusion by

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[24] On the other hand, costs to government in purchase of service agreements can include loss of public control and accountability; difficulty in monitoring contracts; difficulty in ensuring standards; loss of public control and accountability; the role of government being undermined; unreliability of contractors; and, loss of protection to the most needy ("creaming") (Kramer, 1994).

[25] It has been suggested that government requirements may be no less controlling than other funders, such as United Way donations or private donors. Accordingly, non-profits are accountable to numerous bodies - to their boards, clients, staff, contributors, and other funders, which in turn limits their discretionary behavior (Kramer, 1994).

government concerning service programs, governance, administration and advocacy.[26] This perspective best describes YWS and CH. Both organizations perceive government regulation as inconsequential and believed instead that they possess higher operating standards (in terms of services offered and staff qualifications) than required in the per-diem contract. The image of contracting as "making a pact with the devil," seen frequently in the literature concerning non-profits (especially women shelters), does not appear to apply to my analysis. Kramer's (1994) study supports this premise by arguing that as a result of minimal accountability demands requested by government (since they have neither the interest nor capacity to demand more), the autonomy of voluntary agencies is scarcely compromised or contaminated. A CH manager explained that the paper work associated with their per-diem arrangement involves approximately three hours per month. A YWS manager exclaimed: "[w]e're pretty free to do what we please...there are no inspections...we pretty much invent our own standards of services" (October 25, 1999). However, regardless of the lack of overt government restraint, CH and YWS perceive the "dumping" of government clients as a major threat to their identity. This may prove to have devastating effects for both the youth shelter's "alternative" image and its early-envisioned clientele - street kids.

[26] Kramer (1981) argued that organizational autonomy is more a function of funding. He suggested that any organization should avoid depending solely upon one source of revenue, be it public or private.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The informal system has been repeatedly described in the literature as a more favourable and conducive environment for homeless youth, than the formal child welfare institution. Lipsky and Smith (1989-90:632) explained about non-profit organizations in general:

> First, if people say they are hungry, or homeless, or recently assaulted and fearful for their safety, non-profit organizations are inclined to accept such testimony as sufficient. Government officials upholding the equity requirement cannot tolerate such an accepting attitude.

The formal child welfare system has been painted by most scholars as a bureaucratic, machine-like structure that is cold, rigid and perpetuates street existence for many youngsters. Ray Edney (1988:28) described the system as controlling and punitive:

> The system is designed to be a parent, and in this role attempts to restrict and to control the lives of juveniles without due consideration of their individual experiences. Unable to endure this controlling and punitive approach, these juveniles resist, rebel, and run away at every chance.

Many scholars have argued that government, as a bureaucratic, public monopoly is unresponsive and inefficient in providing services to marginalized populations. Instead, such services can be better provided through private (non-profit) agencies. Privatization was the strategy to reduce and reshape the welfare state. The notion of contracting has everything to do with performance (Handler, 1996:80), the way in which government has delivered services has fallen under much scrutiny.

Concomitantly, we encounter much praise for private (non-profit) organizations in terms of efficiency and consumer satisfaction.

However, contracting has also led to a blurring between private and public - there are consequences for youth shelters in accepting government funds. Henry (1987:15) suggested that any partnership between government contracted private agencies and the formal welfare system entails "...accepting conditions attached by the government partner - identification of the client, accountability for monies spent, program evaluation, monitoring."

Contracting to the private sector presents mixed and complicated images. As this chapter suggests, it is debatable whether or not the penetration of the non-profit sector by government undermines its value core of service delivery. Regardless, contracting has created a mutual dependency between formal and informal organizations. My study focuses upon the interconnectedness between these sectors while highlighting the distinct roles played out by youth shelters within the youth-in-trouble network. The following two chapters begin this exercise by exploring the local histories of two Toronto youth shelters.

CHAPTER FIVE: LOCALIZING TORONTO'S COVENANT HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

Covenant House (CH) is both typical and atypical of the Canadian youth shelter experience. It is typical in the sense that it experienced common shelter "growing pains," for example, by having to foster a meaningful philosophy of care and eliciting external support. CH is atypical since it was borne out of an American model with a celebrated reputation, and became a prominent, affluent, and massive Toronto organization.

CH Toronto was established in the early 1980's by the Archdiocese of Toronto - G. Emmett Cardinal Carter, who invited CH New York to develop and implement a program for street kids and runaways in Toronto's downtown core. Prior to this announcement, there had been several reports suggesting a rise in young runaways on Toronto's streets and a dearth of alternative community resources set up to provide assistance to them (Metro Police Force Youth Bureau, 1979; Social Action Committee Youth Report, 1980). These reports, coupled with a prominent news story concerning the murder of Emanuel Jack, a 14 year old Toronto male prostitute, spawned the genesis of CH Toronto.

WHY NEW YORK?

In the early 1980's, no agency specifically served homeless youth in Toronto (if brave and desperate enough, street youth could stay at several downtown adult

shelters). At this time, CH New York was seen as an innovative and prominent street kid organization built by private funds and Christian faith through the work of a charismatic theologian, Father Bruce Ritter. Challenged to "practice what he preached" by several of his college students, Father Ritter left his 'comfortable' college post in the late 1960's, rented a small apartment in New York's East side, and soon began housing runaways and street kids. A Globe and Mail editorial explained: "In New York City, Franciscan priest Bruce Ritter created the Covenant House shelter to rescue these young prostitutes from the street life around Times Square; he fed them, arranged medical attention and helped them kick their drug habits" (October 20, 1982). This was CH New York's inception (incorporated in 1972), evolving from several abandoned tenements in the East Village during the late 1960's to a massive $100 million operation with 20 sites throughout North and Latin America in the 1990's.

Like much of the charity work throughout the United States, CH was affiliated with a religious mandate, that of the Catholic faith. As a result of Cardinal Carter's belief that Toronto needed a reputable service for the growing numbers of street kids, he found a professional and prominent institution in Father Ritter's CH, and one that wore the same cloth as his own. As Cardinal Carter noted: "We have been extremely fortunate in finding the right man and the right organization to establish and develop our program" (Cardinal Carter's Address, October 15, 1981).

TORONTO'S CH

> The Archdiocese [of Toronto] made a commitment to be the moving force in creating services for these young people, and invited Covenant House to share its expertise gained in working with street kids and runaways in New York City and create a program... (Bruce Ritter, Toronto Press Conference, October 15, 1981).

Bruce Ritter, with a team of specialists from New York, arrived in Toronto in mid- October 1981 and initiated a needs assessment - supposedly inquiring about the feasibility of a CH through discussions with street youth and downtown agencies.[27] Father Ritter explained at a Toronto News Conference:

> Last week, our start up team of five staff, professionals who have been trained in our New York program arrived in Toronto to develop the program here. This team will begin making sure that we understand the needs of Toronto youth through talking with other professionals and the kids themselves (October 15, 1981).

Subsequently, the New York team planned and executed massive construction renovations on two sites, donated to CH by the Archdiocese. At this time, the CH team noted that important liaisons with the community (service agencies, local business, and Catholic organizations) were established along with the recruitment and

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[27] There is some speculation as to whether a needs assessment and feasibility study was actually conducted. Many of the existing agencies would soon attack CH for not discussing their motives with the social service community. Moreover, several long time CH staff have no recollection of any such study; one participant submitting that "...it wouldn't surprise me if the study was never done." knowing Bruce Ritter's "hands-on" and "lets-do-it" character (April 20, 1999).

training of professional and volunteer staff. In the ensuing years, Father Ritter and New York's CH would be at the helm of its Canadian counterpart.

From its infancy, CH Toronto had been framed as a short-term crisis center, "a port-in-the-storm" (Carter's Address, 1981), providing refuge to homeless, runaway and distressed youth. By providing "immediate access to food, shelter, medical care, clothing and other concrete services so desperately needed by street kids" (Father Ritter Press Conference, 1981), CH believed it would attract an alienated and hard-to-reach population. An integral component of its operation was (and still is) the open intake policy: "Our program in Toronto will be located near Yonge Street and it will be open and accessible 24 hours a day. Any youngster of either sex who is under the age of 21 will be welcome" (Father Ritter Press Conference, 1981). Open intake, a novel and unique instrument in the world of social services, allowed any first time user an opportunity to walk through the doors and be serviced, no matter how full the Agency.[28]

CH had no intentions of becoming a "crash pad" where street youth could "hang out" and "take a break from street life."[29] Besides providing basic needs, CH was interested in directing street youth away from the destructiveness of street life and towards more "positive-directed lifestyles" (Father Ritter Press Conference, 1981). CH was eager to demonstrate that street life need not remain its residents' only alternative:

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[28] All other shelters (both youth and adult) maintain a certain occupancy level whereby no new intakes are possible.

[29] These characteristics described the existing adult shelters.

> Each kid, when he or she comes to the door, is asked to respect the "covenant" which consists of four rules of behavior: 1) no weapons; 2) no drugs or alcohol; 3) no physical contact, amorous or otherwise; and 4) be human. We also asked kids to take themselves and the program seriously - to work everyday towards some plan, whether that means reconciliation with family, finding some place to live, or securing a job...They [residents] found out that [CH] is not a hostel where they could hang out, with neither responsibility nor challenge. You can't just crash here. You have to accept a certain amount of structure and responsibility. You must want to change (Father Ritter, 1982 Toronto Press Conference).

And so, CH Toronto (also known as Under 21 until 1985) was born with exceptional speed (approximately eight months), due to the political and financial backing of the Toronto's Catholic community (specifically the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto and its charities branch, ShareLife) and the professional and financial wealth of a celebrated and established American agency. The new Shelter pronounced a clear mandate of who it would serve - runaway and homeless youth between the ages of 16 (under 16 year olds were the legal jurisdiction of Children Aid Societies) and 21 (for whom services already existed).[30] CH's philosophy at this time was *short-term crisis intervention* emphasizing immediate basic services (shelter, food,

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[30] The age range also signified a population that was "falling through the cracks." Sixteen year olds were too old for CAS involvement and 21 year olds were too young for the adult shelter system. In the early 1990's, with on-going low census (low number of residents), CH increased the age limit to 22, charging that "...the population that we served was growing and we knew that there were kids out there that weren't accessing our services..." (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

safety) followed by referrals to existing community agencies: "We [CH] did not get into a lot of therapy, what you did was you got into rescuing in terms of off the street, a safe place to be and if there were resources in the community then you referred out" (CH staff, April 20, 1999). In order to accomplish its goals, CH was aware that it needed links in the community. However, the Shelter would continuously be plagued with collaboration and co-operation ills. While 'top players' at CH spoke of building relationships with other agencies, in practice, there existed much antagonism, distrust and jealousy for CH's isolationist practices. Father Ritter's first Toronto address emphasized the importance of collaboration: "They [his team from New York] will...begin building the relationships with existing service providers which will be so essential to success of our program..." (1981). However, existing youth-adult agencies like Mercury and YMCA resented CH for not being consulted prior to its development.

On the first day of February 1982, CH's doors opened at two neighboring locations in Toronto's downtown core - "Residence" which housed 15 boys and 15 girls in bedrooms on separate floors, and "Intake" for youth processing and the over-flow of male residents. In the beginning, the program architects of CH imagined that youth could stay up to two months - believed by workers to be ample time in 1982 to find employment, housing, school or the appropriate services required.

Father Ritter frequently reminded his audiences that at CH, "the kids come first," and as such, there was (and definitely still is) much effort towards keeping the structures immaculate - walls freshly painted, carpets clean, windows washed, the food fresh and nutritious, etc. As described through the eyes of a journalist:

> In one of the toughest parts of downtown Toronto, there's a beautiful house where destitute teenagers live. The windows sparkle, the bedrooms are spotless and graffiti is conspicuously absent from stairwells and bathroom walls (Globe and Mail, September 20, 1982).

A long time CH worker recalled that in the first several months of operation, Father Ritter frequently flew to Toronto for "cleanliness inspections" and during one visit, he ordered the walls of Residence to be painted immediately (paint had to be bought, furniture moved, and residents re-located that day!) As Father Ritter explained: "Many people ask me why I insist on making the place so beautiful. I tell them I make it beautiful because my kids are beautiful. That they are loved. That they are worthwhile" (Father Ritter, News Conference, 1982). In the early years, street youth nicknamed the Shelter "Hotel Covenant House" and "Hotel California."

When the Shelter's doors first opened, there was some concern as to whether youth would accept and make use of the Agency. While a need had been professionally documented, there was no guarantee that it would be translated into a response. By the third day of operation, CH was full to capacity - with 34 kids. By March 27, 1982, the Shelter had seen 405 intakes (312 new youth and 93 recidivists). As the numbers of residents increased throughout the years; numerous projects, programs and initiatives tried; and thousands of staff and volunteers passed through; CH would invariably maintain its reputation of being "the fat cats of social services" or the "Rolls Royce of shelters" in terms of financial and political backing coupled with thoughtful, innovative and unique services. Notwithstanding street kids' perceptions

that the Shelter "has too many rules" and is "too strict" (Karabanow, 1994; Karabanow and Rains, 1997), the majority of Canadian street youth have, at one point in their street lives, made Toronto's CH their "home away from home."

Philosophy

> One thing you absolutely have to know. These kids are good kids. Most of them want desperately to get off the street. They're not good kids the way your kids are good; they're not nice the way your kids are nice; but they are good kids. What happens to them should not happen to any child (Father Ritter, 1981).

CH believes that there is a unique component to its program - a spirituality based on the "covenant." Most street kid shelters espouse a caring, non-judgmental setting for youth to feel safe and supported. CH's uniqueness is based upon five principles, which were scripted by Father Ritter (and his colleagues in New York) and used at all CH sites as guides for daily operations.[31] The principles include: Immediacy (responding immediately to kids' needs); Sanctuary (providing a safe and secure place); Value Communication (teaching values based on trust, respect, honesty and care); Structure (providing kids with stability to focus on the future); and Choice (kids are empowered to make serious choices about their future.) Immediacy and Sanctuary provide the backbone or precepts for Value Communication, Structure and Choice to emerge.

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[31] While all 20 CH sites maintain these principles, they are framed in different voices according to their specific environments (principles are delivered in a culturally relevant manner).

The Agency's stated desire was to forge a "covenant" - a personal, non-judgmental bond (a sacred agreement) - with each resident. Building a relationship with youth, and thus entering into the covenant, would involve the incorporation of each principle (Steve Torkelson, 1991). Open Intake, CH's hallmark policy, embodied the five principles - no youth is turned away on the first visit and is accepted on a "no questions asked" basis (Strategic Plan, 1997:7). A mission statement, introduced by Father Ritter in December of 1983, committed the Agency "...to serve suffering children of the street, and to protect and safeguard all children...with absolute respect and unconditional love."

While it is said that CH's philosophy still permeates the Toronto Shelter and "affects everything we [CH] do," (Bruce Ritter, 1983) seasoned staff believe that the Agency's early days represented a true commitment to the five principles. The Shelter is remembered as a very intimate place where workers interfaced with one another and discussed each rule or policy with a view to each of the five principles:[32]

> It was a small family, there were two houses...Staff was very small, and because the Agency had the opportunity to really train its first set of workers for two weeks before people actually started to implement the philosophy, the

[32] Long time Toronto staff question whether the current Shelter's front line workers understand the underlying philosophy in the same way as it was intended. For example, in the early years, CH did not have support staff and so all youth workers were involved in house cleaning (signifying the principle of sanctuary and care for street youth). As the Agency grew, so did the family and now workers leave all cleaning to support staff (thus distancing themselves from some understanding of sanctuary).

early staff were more focused on the ideals of the five principles, we lived them, we talked about them...(CH manager, April 20, 1999).

Religion

CH is a Catholic organization, funded, in part, by ShareLife,[33] the charities branch of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto. The Agency and the Church share similar values and philosophies, yet remain separate organizationally and structurally (CH International Annual Meeting, 1988). CH's mandate ("sheltering the downtrodden") and philosophy ("building a covenant") are highly steeped in religious belief. While both staff and youth agree that religion is not "shoved down residents' throats," there is an undeniable religious undertone permeating throughout the Agency, as evidenced by the crucifixes on many of the Shelter's walls, the inclusion of a chapel, and the presence of pastoral ministers and a faith Community (individuals who devote one year of service to street youth and the Catholic faith at CH). The Shelter is also committed to a pro-life policy (residents who are planning abortions are discharged prior to the operation and readmitted thereafter).[34]

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[33] ShareLife, as a charitable fundraising body, was formed in the early 1970's once it removed itself from the United Way Appeal in protest to Planned Parenthood becoming a member.

[34] In the late 1980's, CH gained some media attention when, after much consultation with numerous theologians, the Agency decided that in response to the growing AIDS crisis, condoms would be distributed by their outreach program. Consequently, CH was described by one journalist, as having its religious ideals eroded throughout the years of operation, leading to a type of "cafeteria Catholicism - accept what you want, leave the rest" (The Interim, February, 1988). The Shelter responded by demonstrating adherence to Christian living - maintaining pro-life, pro-family values, having crucifixes on the walls, a faith community and chaplain. However, it nonetheless ceased condom distribution a few months later.

THE EARLY YEARS (1982-1986)

Several events or processes signify the early years of CH's development: 1) acquiring and subsequently losing its designation as "a place of safety" for minors; 2) developing relations with other agencies; 3) New York's influence over Toronto's affairs; and, 4) the changing face of its client population.

Designated Place of Safety

Youth shelters have consistently argued over the merits and legalities of housing minors. In Ontario, CAS retains jurisdiction for youth under the age of 16. When CH began its Toronto operations, it maintained the status of a "place of safety" for minors, which translated into the recognition that it was a safe location for a youth under the age of 16 who needed protection. By August 1982, 23 children under 16 had been admitted into the Shelter (Toronto Star, August 26, 1982). However, during that time, CAS' perception of whether CH was, in fact, an acceptable place to send minors shifted. Three circumstances were cited: 1) the range of age groups at the Shelter; 2) the high number of residents; and, 3) the tumultuous relationship between the new Shelter and established agencies such as the CAS and the Police. A Toronto Star article described the scenario:

> Both Metro Police and Metro's CAS agree that a new shelter - officially designated as a "place of safety" for young people and run by the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto is not safe enough for children under 16...The Society has boycotted Under 21, a Gerard Street shelter that opened in February, on

> the grounds that it is too crowded, the age gap between residents is too great, and workers have been tardy in reporting about Society wards staying there...The Society has told its workers not to place children under 16 at the shelter and to remove its wards, including those up to the age of 18 (August 26, 1982).

CH replied that they were not an overcrowded setting and that youth under 16 years of age were consistently placed in private rooms with a ratio of one-to-one supervision. However, the Police and the Societies agreed that CH "...is a place of safety but we're not going to leave them [minors] there" (CH Archive, 1982). An internal memorandum (dated June 28, 1982) sent throughout Metro's CAS, ordered front line workers not to place wards under 16 years of age at CH, instead suggested that they seek alternative housing. Metro Police adopted a similar practice with minors,[35] yet agreed to send youth who were over 16 years of age to CH. As explained by the Downtown Police Coordinator For Youth Services, there was anxiety about placing inexperienced youngsters with "street wise" older teens: "I personally don't feel someone under 16 should be at Under 21, he winds up there and he's into a new game. I prefer it be worked out by an agency that's been in the business a little longer" (1982).

There exists speculation as to whether the Shelter ever in fact desired to be involved with minors and whether it was perhaps relieved when its designated "place of safety" status ultimately expired in June 1983. CH charged that "...this is appropriate as we could be used by many agencies to place children at Under 21 when

they really should not be there" (Board meeting, June 15, 1983). For CH, there was a fear that it would become a dumping ground for inappropriate referrals by other agencies. As will be seen later, its fears were founded.

It appears that in addition to the above-noted reasons, the CAS and the Police "boycott" of CH involved territorial marking. CH was the "new kid on the block" who was required to prove itself before gaining acceptance from existing agencies. Moreover, CH was perceived as arrogant - having the nerve to 'jump' into a setting without much perceived collaboration with other services. As a former CAS worker and current CH upper level manager remembered:

> Well initially I don't think anybody had any idea what CH was. There was such a lack of process at the front end...I mean I was sitting at CAS and all I know is that all of a sudden it seems like here's a program that was up and running...in eight months, that's astonishing when you think of the time frame...In fact, CH developed a reputation very quickly at the front end - they cooperated with nobody (May 25, 1999).

As such, there was a marked strain between the Shelter and those around it. The Police and the CAS were especially bitter, believing that CH was not fully cooperating in their searches for specific runaways. A long time worker explained the Shelter's dilemma:

> Initially it was how do we [CH] interact and interface with all these other institutions, yet remain true to our philosophy, particularly the issue of confidentiality. I know the police had tremendous difficulties with that piece of it

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[35] Within this analysis, minors are referred to as youth under the age of 16.

> and if they felt that we had kids that they were intending to apprehend, we were not prepared to divulge names of kids and those kinds of things. But I mean, you have to understand our position - on one hand we say to kids, you're safe, you're safe from your past, and on the other hand, you have the Police who say, well you know we need to get those kids... (May 31, 1999).

At the same time, both the CAS and the Police recognized the important gap filled by CH. Few services existed for youth over the age of 16, but not yet adults. As such, while the CAS and the Police agreed that CH was not a setting for minors, they conceded that it could be an important referral mechanism for a growing, hard-to-place, and at risk, population. A newspaper article noted:

> Both police and CAS say the fledging organization [CH] - badly needed for the hundreds of street kids in Toronto - may be suffering "growing pains" and needs only to set up a firm policy on how to deal with children under 16, Society Wards and Police inquiries (Toronto Star, August 26, 1982).

So the 'newcomer,' put in its place by those traditionally mandated to work with youth, created policies and procedures to work within the establishment. With respect to minors, a case audit conducted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (June 1983) concluded that between October 1, 1982 and April 13, 1983, no child who had been apprehended by the CAS was placed at the Shelter. During the same period, non-Wards were removed from CH and placed at a CAS resource: "It is therefore not the practice of either Metro CAS or Metro CCAS to use Under 21 as a place of safety. This is consistent with policies established by both agencies" (Board minutes, June 15, 1983). CH, following Metropolitan Toronto's Hostel Services'

Operating Requirement for Hostels Assisting Youth,[36] agreed to accommodate minors, but also agreed to contact the CAS and/or the Police immediately upon these youths' admission and have the other agencies decide the subsequent plan of care. Furthermore, with regard to runaways being sought by the Police, CH amended its philosophy in order to incorporate the Police's wishes:

> We sort of backed off of that position [not providing information to Police], our position was we would cooperate fully with the Police however we wanted to maintain that environment in which kids didn't see the Police charging through their environment at will. So our thrust with the Police was - tell us what the problem is, tell us what your needs are, we will get that kid and bring that kid to you... (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

Building Relations

> So we had to develop the kind of policies and procedures which allowed us to interconnect with the social service agencies here, because we are part of that network, and so we had to interconnect, become part of that network, remain true to our philosophy and guarantee the kids the kind of confidentiality that we sort of promised them at intake (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

By the end of 1983, the Shelter's "growing pains" were perhaps tempered by a clearer relationship between itself, the Police and the CAS. A greater understanding of the respective agencies' mandates was becoming visible. Both the Police and the CAS

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[36] Metropolitan Toronto's Hostel Services is the branch of Metropolitan Community Services Department (MCSD) that oversees all youth and adult shelters and provides guidelines such as the "Operating Requirements" manuals.

noted that their relations with CH had steadily improved. In 1983, The Ministry of Community and Social Services concluded that:

> During its first year of operation, the Under 21 staff situation was stabilized and the agency has acquired experience and expertise in delivering its service. The misunderstanding and confusion which existed between Under 21 and the CAS have subsided, and a more effective working relationship has clearly evolved. It is apparent that Under 21 has made the establishment of this collaborative relationship a priority (Board of Directors Report, June 15, 1983).

Similarly, CH reported that: "[t]he police department is very happy with its relationship with Under 21. They come quite often and are always received openly. They respect our position and we try our best to be cooperative with them" (Board minutes, September 16, 1983).

By 1985, CH was involved in a collaborative venture with all Toronto Children Aid Societies (Metro, Catholic, Native and Jewish), referred to as The Juvenile Prostitution Project (also known as, The Toronto Street Youth Project). Based on the belief that minors needed a separate program (rather than the CAS or shelters), The Ministry of Community and Social Services brought together various agencies in order to develop residential support for young prostitutes and chronic runners, in an effort to get them off the street. The demonstration project operated out of a CAS safe-house facility (Moberly House). CH was involved both programmatically (sitting on steering committees) and financially (seconding two staff to work at the safe house). Four months into the project, there had been 128 admissions (11% were 16 years old; 57%

were 15 years old; 22% were 14 years old; and 9% were 13 years old). CH regarded the project as a bridging between itself and the CAS. One year later, the Shelter withdrew itself from the project, citing both financial constraints and the belief that minors were appropriately covered by the child welfare mandate.

In addition to the relationships developed with the Police and the CAS, CH made efforts to foster and mend its relationship with other agencies: "...we were dependent on the community to refer [residents] out...[and it] was very evident that we needed to do something in terms of the relations with the community" (CH staff, May 29, 1999). A cross-sectional Toronto Community Impact Study (January 31, 1983) surveyed over 70 agencies, finding that most social service agencies felt CH was "too secretive" and rarely "worked together" with other organizations. The Study suggested that greater collaboration and cooperation with other agencies be developed by using the expertise and experience of other agencies; informing the other agencies of the Shelter's procedures and policies (especially what occurred during a resident's stay); and, developing one-to-one dialogue with other resources, holding open houses, and encouraging tours of the Facility. Among Toronto's social service community, there was a sense that although it was an important addition to the youth serving network (two thirds of the sample believed there was a "great need" for the Shelter), CH had ignored local input in defining and developing its program:

> The feeling was that...other agencies should have been consulted and their recommendations considered during the process of program planning...That this did not occur had underscored for them the program's strong political and financial backing which they resent...They also see Under 21's consequent

> independence and what they perceive as a lack of involvement in the service system as a barrier to their efforts to improve coordination... (Toronto Community Impact Study, January 31, 1983).

Similar to present day perceptions, most agencies believed (and perhaps envied) that CH possessed a unique program backed by extensive political clout that could contribute greatly to the entire youth service delivery system. However, relations with other street youth serving agencies continued to be strained. A telling example involved the Shelter sending a scathing letter to YWS contending that the suburban shelter was describing itself in the press as the "first youth shelter providing 24 hour service" when in fact it opened several years after CH. YWS apologized and admitted that the media had ignored the distinctive quality that YWS was the first "suburban" shelter with these characteristics. Over the years, CH attempted to shed its reputation of being a social service "snob" by hosting an open house with invitations to all agencies, residents and staff. By the summer of 1984, a new Executive Director (hired from the CAS) announced "inter-agency collaboration" as an important goal of the upcoming year. A valiant effort towards enhanced collaborative practices emerged during the 1986 Metro CAS staff strike - CH offered to care for some of its children until more appropriate placements could be made. Over the years, the perception of CH as a "fortress" would erode.

New York's Influence

> In fact, New York Corporate CH came here and was running the program for the first year and a half...The Catholic community was up in arms because they

> didn't know CH was coming to Toronto...and in all fairness, people in New York CH, they had no idea about the child welfare laws in Ontario...and the relationship was pretty damn awful between the structured agencies and CH because again there had been little process in terms of explanations or understanding mandates or who's cooperating with who, etc., etc. (CH staff, May 14, 1999).

The Shelter's isolationist practices were due, in part, to CH being a product of an American model of social service provision, which has been characterized as highly fragmented and lacking cooperation between agencies. Throughout its early years, CH Toronto was primarily managed by its New York parent organization.[37] Therefore, rather than searching for advice, experience and partnerships, in their own community, CH Toronto tended (and still does to a certain extent) to communicate most frequently in a vertical direction - up to its New York parent organization.[38] Throughout the early years, CH Toronto remained accountable to New York. Father Ritter was a permanent member of the Toronto Board of Directors, and throughout the initial years, all Board meetings involved at least one New York member. The first Executive Director (acting) came from the New York site, and Corporate New York contributed approximately one million dollars in the first two years of Toronto's development. For the next several years, New York CH would provide approximately

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[37] It has been suggested that while CH Toronto staff realized the importance of building community relations, CH New York was more interested in the organization's infrastructure and philosophy.
[38] As will be seen, the "child" would soon grow into an adolescent, attempting to break away from its "parent" in search of new found freedoms.

one-half of Toronto's total operating costs. There was a strong sense amongst Toronto CH employees that New York was at the helm of its day-to-day functioning:

> We called them the boys - Ritter and his boys...They would do surprise checks on our site...Just call from the airport and ask to be picked up...You knew that meant someone was going to be fired... (CH middle level manager, May 31, 1999).

> Someone would take a call from whomever in New York at 3:30 on a Friday afternoon, saying that a new policy and procedure needed to be implemented and that we would implement it...no discussion, no process, it was like 'boom', it needed to happen... (CH upper level manager, May 25, 1999).

However, CH Toronto saw New York's site as containing a wealth of experience, expertise and innovation:

> CH is like a family. Its tentacles are so far reaching...If you need something, a resource, or whatever, you'll get it - someone from CH will deliver... It's an infrastructure within an infrastructure...CH basically looks after its own...It's a type of education from within...If you want to know about The Rights Of Passage Program [long-term living], call up Corporate [New York] and they'll send you to New York to see first hand the program...They basically look to themselves for information, innovation and expansion...Everything you need basically comes from some branch of CH (CH middle level manager, May 25, 1999).

CH New York's influence over Toronto's operations is exemplified when CH Toronto pondered the merits of developing a drug rehabilitation program. New York's CH sent several Toronto staff members to its Florida site to view its own drug program (CHAMPS). Similarly, when the Toronto Shelter experienced high census (high number of residents), a call was placed to New York and a protocol developed soon after that involved referring 19 and 20 year old males to other shelters.[39] During the early years, the relationship between Toronto and New York sites was described by the CH Toronto's second Executive Director as "excellent."

The Population

Adhering to the shelter concept, CH provided short-term emergency housing and basic needs for a hard-to-serve population. Those staying at CH were described as: "...a world most people never see. Teenagers, some as young as 13, live on urban streets at the mercy of pimps, prostituting themselves and dying by inches from hunger, bronchitis, syphilis, and eye infections. They fled their families, most are not wanted back" (Globe and Mail, October 20, 1982).

CH workers described the residents in the early years as "hard-core," "tough," and "street wise." The average age was 19 years, their Shelter stay averaging seven days. Most residents were self referred (60%), white (88%), male (68%), and from Toronto (71%) (Program Update, July 27, 1983):

[39] The Shelter believed that older males had more shelter opportunities than more 'at-risk' populations (younger youth and females).

> [T]he young men and women who live there [CH] are running away from pimps and prostitution, they are weary from months of living on the street...eighty percent of the residents are white, middle-class teenagers who have run away or been thrown out of their homes and have survived in the street for longer than a year... (Globe and Mail, September 20, 1982).

At this time, there was little discussion in the media and within social service circles concerning street youths' experiences of family and institutional abuse. Rather, this population was primarily described in terms of their delinquent behaviors on the street - prostitution, drug use, and crime. The majority of youth were depicted as in conflict with their parents, having no parents, or being Wards of CAS (Program Update, July 27, 1983). According to workers, most residents would leave the Shelter after a few days, still "addicted" to their street lifestyle. As such, the Shelter was established as highly structured and rule-oriented in order to 're-socialize' the street kid:

> There are strict rules at CH and the teenagers who live there know that if they break them, they will quickly find themselves back on the street...The nightly curfew is 9:30 p.m. They are awakened every day at 6 a.m. and must be out of the house by 8 a.m. And unless residents are going to school, they must report back at night with proof that they have asked at least four employers for work (Globe and Mail, September 20, 1982).

Another account conjured images of a shelter structure akin to that of 'boot camp' or monastic living:

> More than 1600 of them [street kids] have stayed at the shelter since it opened in February, receiving treatment and learning the basic skills of job hunting. They have exchanged a life with few rules for a sanctuary with many; the discipline is strict because reformation only comes, if and when it comes, from commitment (Globe and Mail, October 20, 1982).

By the end of 1983, the Shelter realized that a large part of its clientele had former experiences with CAS. An Advisory Board Program Update in September 1983 declared that: "[a] significant number of our youth were once wards of the CAS and there appears that with many of these youth, once Wardship has been terminated, they are unprepared to pursue independence." Similarly, a previous Advisory Board Meeting (August, 1983) noted that: "...very few youth are interested in family reconciliation. A significant number of youth with extensive problems [emotional depression, illiteracy, drug involvement] have been in the care of a child welfare agency or wards of the court. Abandonment and rejection would characterize their family relations."

By 1986 and 1987, CH was encountering more youth with "mental health issues," described as: "...more hostile and generate a great deal of work, especially for youth workers and social workers as there is little outside support systems in the community for this group" (Executive Director's Report, September, 1986). Furthermore, the Agency was consistently full and its clientele were staying longer (an average of nine days) due to the dearth of community resources.[40] A letter from the

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[40] These concerns would become more prevalent during the mid-1990's.

CH's Executive Director to the Commissioner of Metro Community Services provides a telling description of the Shelter's emerging population:

> On the whole, the profile of the average youth in residence at CH is a disturbing one. The majority are socially and economically disadvantaged. They've come from chaotic dysfunctional family situations which have not allowed for normal adolescent development to occur. The symptomology that we are facing in these young people is frequently so severe that we are finding our length of stay is increasing. This is especially true for the psychiatrically ill or addicted youth...The paucity of resources in the community for young people over 16 is well known and scores of them are of necessity...Housing and employment difficulties compound the problem and re-admissions are frequent... (September, 1986).

Multiple Board of Directors' minutes addressed these issues: "...we are experiencing an increase in drug and alcohol problems but more youth are requesting referrals to rehabilitation programs...Unfortunately, the demand is greater than the supply of beds..." and, "...for approximately two years the medical and social work staff have tried to arrange appropriate psychiatric assessments and consultation services in the community. All arrangements to date have failed miserably" (Executive Director's Report, October, 1986). With respect to the rising number of residents (by 1986, hovering between 75 and 90, while an average of 100 youth per month referred at the door), the Executive Director noted: "The high census will likely continue...the entire hostel network in the City is plagued with overcrowded conditions...Toronto is a Mecca of sorts and there seems no relief in sight for emergency shelters" (December,

1986). These telling observations would recur, with more fervor, throughout CH's history.

The Shelter's responses to these events, which would be repeated throughout its evolution, included: pressuring government agencies to increase shelter funding levels; establishing its own fundraising mechanisms; developing new programs; and searching for more appropriate locations to house a growing infrastructure.

1. An increase in per diem rates

During the early years, CH was funded through three main sources: ShareLife, CH New York, and Municipal and Provincial Government expenditures. While ShareLife would be a continuous supplier of revenue, by 1985, CH New York began to decrease the amount of revenue allotted to Toronto. Accordingly, CH made a concerted effort to obtain more government funding. The Shelter's first year operating budget approximated $1,400,000.00 and the CH Board acknowledged that "[s]ome measure of government support is needed if the service is to be successful on an ongoing basis" (February, 1985). In June, 1982, the acting Executive Director met with the Chairman of Metro Services regarding funding and concluded that "they [Metro] felt the prospects looked fairly bright for us to obtain possible government funding." At this time, the per diem rate for youth hostels was an abysmal $23.00, leading the Archdiocese to request, albeit unsuccessfully, an augmentation to $27.00. By 1983, CH received $167,264.00 from Metro Toronto, a shortfall in the expected amount due in part to fluctuating numbers of residents. By 1984, the per diem stipend increased to $24.50. CH argued that this pay regime ignored a substantial number of

youth who dropped-in for services, but did not stay at the Shelter. By 1985, CH fought to increase the per diem rate to $28.00, by sending a letter to Metro Community Services noting "...the level of support [from the municipality] is woefully inadequate in relation to our true service cost." As a result, the Shelter received case management fees (a supplement to per diem rates) for 85 beds rather than 50 beds. Due to the Shelter's consistent pressure of government bodies, its per diem rate increased slightly and now accounted for CH's true census (kids who drop-in). Given the meagre increase, CH was required to turn to other means to secure its financial survival.

2. Fundraising

CH, from its genesis, made every effort to obtain media exposure in order to communicate street kids' realities to the public as well as gain reputation and support. A 1982 Globe and Mail article concluded its report by stating: "CH offers a passport from a world of hopelessness and exploitation. It deserves every cent that can be raised for it." From press conferences to print and TV reports, CH was becoming synonymous with street kids. In 1985, the Executive Director noted that there had been much coverage concerning street kids, and the Shelter was mentioned each time. In order to increase public awareness, the Shelter hired a public relations officer (1983) and a fund-raiser (1985). Moreover, in 1985 CH Toronto chaired an international symposium on street kids (entitled "The Street is no Place for a Kid"). By the end of 1985, the Agency had obtained $140,000.00 (10% of its revenue) through private donations. In a few years, private donations would compose more

than 70% of Toronto's CH revenue and the Agency would gain the reputation amongst other street youth agencies as being "a fundraising machine." Its first few years of operation had already "...established Cov as a leader in the social service arena in Toronto and has earned respectability in professional circles that is notable for an agency that is still viewed as a 'newcomer'" (Executive Director's Report, 1986). By the end of 1986, CH completed its first television commercial.

3. New programs

CH began operations with a residential program providing shelter, food, counseling, job counseling, social work counseling (housing, jobs, family sessions), and health care. While growth within these areas was continuous, by the end of 1986, CH had developed a walk-in service, an after-care component, a runaway prevention program (with the slogan - "Before you run, ask someone for direction"), and the acquisition of a psychiatric consultant. Plans for street outreach services (the Bond Street building was leased) and a Rights of Passage (long-term housing) project were evolving. As mentioned earlier, CH had also recently hosted an international conference and cooperated in the safe house demonstration project.

4. Vying for a larger building

With an increasing number of youth seeking shelter, diverse populations needing more and separate space (i.e., psychiatric youth and drug users), an increase in staff, and the development of various programs, CH began discussing a new infrastructure in 1985. At the February, 1985 Board meeting, the Executive Director

introduced "[a] request for serious consideration of a new residence...I cannot see continuing long term with 40, 50 and 60 kids on the cramped floor of our intake center. The program suffers. The staff suffer." In addition to the cramped setting, Intake was experiencing structural problems, including leaks and floods. By early 1986, a capital campaign was sculpted and CH initiated a search for a new building that could house all of the Agency's services. However, due to several unforeseeable factors, it would take the Shelter another eight years to achieve this dream.

THE MIDDLE YEARS (1987-1993)

By the late 1980's, CH's strong reputation as a professional street kid service provider had permeated throughout Toronto. Apart from increased public awareness and financial support, the Shelter began to receive numerous requests for consultations from street kid agencies throughout Canada. During this time, CH was the only shelter serving 16 to 18 year olds in Toronto's downtown core. As the Commissioner of Community Services noted:

> CH had proven itself as a major service to young people in Toronto. It is still the primary place for a young person to turn when they become suddenly homeless. In our view, CH is an integral component of the social housing system which must be available in the community (April, 1987).

During this period, CH spent considerable effort planning and searching for a larger downtown[41] facility (through a $6.5 million grant from Metro Community and Social

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[41] CH believed that the downtown location was vital in order to reach the street kid population. As explained by the Commissioner of Community Services: "...CH serves a unique role with these young people who gravitate downtown and who frequent Yonge Street and risk all the problems this brings.

Services and the City of Toronto) to house 100 street youth and bring all of its programs under one roof. A letter from the Commissioner of Community Services explained:

> The department does not directly operate any shelters for young people and is therefore dependent on Covenant House to fill this important function...Covenant House often becomes the true place of last resort for many of these kids (February, 1987).

CH Clientele

CH's building search coincided with a new paradigm sweeping through the Agency. Due to an extensive North American street kid study (in which CH was a participant), there was growing acknowledgment by service providers (and the public) that the majority of street youth had incurred histories of extensive physical and sexual abuse - they were "running away" from very dysfunctional families (or institutions), rather than the conventional belief that they were "running towards" a new life (adventure, freedom, lack of rules). The authors of these findings noted: "[a] positive future for the runaway will come from a public recognition that runaway behavior represents more than a wayward or adventurous youth (Janus, McCormack, Burgess and Hartman, 1987:232).

Throughout the late 1980's, the Agency regularly experienced high census - a response to the growing numbers presenting themselves for shelter. Due to CH's

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Even when youth shelters are available in the suburban municipalities, a certain percentage of young people will still end up in the downtown area. CH must locate in this area if it wants to continue to reach this population" (April, 1987).

"high census protocol," where older youth (19 and 20 year olds) were referred out, the Agency soon filled up with younger youth (16 to 18 year olds) manifesting "more complex issues:" "When older youth are being turned away [due to high census protocol], our population consists of much younger kids who are more complicated and difficult to serve and who stay in-house longer" (Executive Director Report, January, 1987). During this period, the in-house population per night averaged between 75 and 90. The Executive Director reported in June, 1987, that: "...the census figures remain high. This is due partly to provision of extra services, resulting in longer stays related to making a plan...As well, the increasing numbers of homeless and runaway kids continue and CH remains the main provider of services for this population."

At this time, CH intake and outreach staff were encountering more episodes of youth violence and crack cocaine, as well as youth presenting vast abuse issues. The media began to frame this young street population as "deserving" of care:

> Police and social workers estimate there are 10,000 homeless street kids in Metro Toronto. 70% of them are there because of awful family problems - physical and sexual abuse and alcoholism. Or they are "system kids" who have been passed from foster homes to group homes and back again until they run away or reach the age of 16. The tougher kids live on the street: in abandoned houses and parks and on rooftops in the summer, cramming together in one rented room in the winter (Toronto Star, April 11, 1990).

Janus and colleagues found that: "Runaway shelters should not be restricted to short-term treatment, rather they must have the option of providing a safe holding place for

a sufficient length of time to enable the causative long term issues to be addressed" (Janus, McCormack, Burgess and Hartman, 1987: 225). With the belief that youth were presenting themselves with more serious issues and the community lacked the appropriate responses, CH embarked on an extensive program shift which culminated in the "Three Phase Program." The Agency hoped to provide three levels of housing - short-term shelter (up to two weeks - with an emphasis on basic needs); transitional accommodation (two weeks to three months - with a focus upon counseling and goal setting); and, residential housing (over three months - with an emphasis upon long-term education and personal support). As noted in an April 1, 1987, letter from the Commissioner of Community Services to the Community Services and Housing Committee:

> First and foremost, CH Toronto is planning to break away from its present focus on emergency housing...The lack of proper facilities at this time is the main impediment to the provision of a broader range of services to this population. In the development of a new facility, three distinct levels of housing services will be examined...

The new program was designed to provide a continuum of care that would help youth make the transition from street life to healthy independent living in the community. However, after several weeks of operation, the program was canceled due to conceptual and operational inconsistencies. CH returned to its previous Intake and Residence format:

> The three phase program...we spent a lot of work developing...there was a lot of trouble with it - if you have open intake you must have open discharge, if

> you don't do that, the system is going to fall out...it couldn't work because on one hand we're taking kids in because we have open intake policies to come in, and we're not letting any kids out, so what's going to happen, you have a big bubble...it was terrible...the system couldn't take it... (long time CH staff, May, 24, 1999).

Returning to the previous Intake and Residence format meant that while the 30 shelter beds (at Residence) filled up quickly, the remaining residents (averaging 50) were sleeping on mats on Intake's living room floor (lacking privacy and losing belongings). The Shelter would experience a similar crisis in the future, due to external circumstances rather than internal restructuring.

CH Image

The late 1980's saw prosperous times for the Agency - CH Toronto consecutively finished each year with excess revenue (in 1987, it approximated $70,000.00); there was an abundance of media representation - from interviews, to commercials, to political and celebrity endorsements; Father Ritter received the "Endow a Dream" award from President Ronald Reagan; Vice President George Bush visited the New York site; and the donor list rose to approximately 15,000-20,000 (translating into over $2 million in 1989 alone). CH Toronto slowly emerged as an equal to CH New York, evidenced by a $1 million loan *from* Toronto *to* New York because of a temporary cash flow problem (September, 1987). By 1989, CH Toronto had an operational budget in excess of $6 million. The Agency also successfully pressured Hostel Services to lift the $100,000.00 ceiling on per diem fees, thus

augmenting the rate to more accurately reflect the actual numbers served by the Shelter.

While the entire Agency gained a celebrated international reputation, Toronto's site struggled with a crowded, younger population who were staying longer (approximately 10-14 days) and presenting more complex needs. In response, the Agency turned inwards and developed numerous multi-disciplinary programs - legal referrals, psychiatric consultations, group sessions (AA, independent living, life skills), street outreach, and retail job links. Concurrently, CH looked outwards - becoming an active member of the Coalition of Downtown Youth Serving Agencies; cooperating more with the Police regarding sought-after residents; and collaborating with the CAS in fostering initiatives for minors and pregnant teens (again, a safe house concept involving all the Societies). Moreover, the CAS expressed their support for CH's outreach program, noting in an August, 1987 letter that it "...is an exceptional innovative move...to reach a segment of the youth population which is very difficult to serve." The Shelter's commitment to collaborative ventures with other agencies is described by the Executive Director:

> The challenge that faces CH and indeed many other social services today is this: how do we continue to provide quality service in a period of high demand with limited resources. The traditional approach of most agencies is to close off intake. CH instead seeks to engage this larger community in a partnership to meet the needs through our own development efforts and through advocating for more services for our youth (October, 1989).

Due to CH's strong political and financial infrastructure, it was possible to turn inwards, while also looking to the external environment for new partnerships.

Hard Times Befall

By 1990, the Agency was rocked by internal strife - allegations surfaced in the media that the revered and saintly Bruce Ritter had been sexually involved with five residents under his care. Furthermore, Father Ritter was investigated (internally and externally) for misappropriation of funds - he was alleged to have given $25,000.00 to his brother. In addition to these devastating accounts (which were never legally substantiated), there was speculation that the Agency's Latin American sites (Guatemala and Honduras) were being used by AmeriCares (an enterprise founded in the late 1960's to mobilize corporate relief) in connection with funding and equipping Nicaragua's contra regime. With the scandal making headlines in the American media (front page of Newsweek, New York Times, and Time), Bruce Ritter was asked to take a leave of absence which soon proved to be permanent. A New York Times editorial pondered the fate of the entire Agency and its clientele:

> The Reverend Bruce Ritter and CH are virtually synonymous. Father Ritter founded this remarkable home for runaway children in 1968. More than 200,000 kids have gone in and out of its doors...Some of those kids have stayed only a few nights; some have stayed long enough to save their lives...Almost all of its $87 million funding is private, and that's three times what the federal government spends on similar programs. Will the government assume the challenge that Bruce Ritter took so valiantly? (February 8, 1990).

By the year's end, New York CH's private funding was reduced by $3 million, affecting not only service delivery in New York, but at all CH sites (funding to Toronto was cut in half from over $1 million to $500,000.00). While CH Toronto still reached its budget for the fiscal year (due in part to ShareLife's augmented financial support), the Toronto Agency launched a "positive image campaign" to counter the negative publicity emanating from the United States (there had been very little Canadian media coverage concerning the scandal). Advertisements, depicting homeless youth involved in drugs, prostitution, and crime, seeking help at CH, were placed in The Globe and Mail as well as throughout the City's transit system. After an emergency meeting (January, 1990), CH Toronto's Board agreed to be up-front about the scandal - sending letters to all donors explaining the situation while confirming the realities of youth homelessness and guaranteeing that all money raised remained in Toronto.

Within the Agency, staff were shocked, saddened and disbelieving - "[t]here is a strong sense of anger, betrayal and shame directed at New York" (Executive Director Report, January-February, 1990). As one long-term employee remembered:

> I was stunned, I could not believe it - then it hit me and I said - oh my God, I've been conned. Is this a cult? Have I been in a cult for the last eight years? Here was someone [Bruce Ritter] who embodied so well the covenant philosophy. He was the first person to put a face to homeless kids...Was he a fraud? Or simply human? (May 25, 1999).

During this tumultuous period, CH Toronto's upper management was radically restructured (previous staff taking jobs elsewhere). In addition, there was a 40% staff

turnover, thus, causing a period of adjustment and drift within the Agency. A newly appointed Executive Director described the turbulent situation:

> Various factors are contributing to organizational tensions at CH Toronto. We have experienced little in the way of negative press coverage and poor public image here in Toronto. However, the effects of the scandal in New York have created a state of insecurity, a loss of credibility at the corporate level, and financial fragility in Toronto. In the past, CH was a dynamic organization with resources and dollars to make dreams happen...Long time staff here in Toronto are dealing with the losses of key senior management staff, well liked and respected colleagues and the type of aggressive and progressive culture that they have come to know, when resources were not at issue (March, 1990).

Operationally, the Agency experienced low resident numbers (an average of 50 to 60 per night) in 1990. This phenomenon was explained by the development of several new downtown and suburban youth shelters coupled with changes in general welfare legislation (which no longer required youth to have an address in order to collect support.) With fluctuating resident numbers, organizational strains, and financial concerns, the building search was delayed and the Agency returned to aggressive fundraising.

A Regained Confidence

By the end of 1990, commitment and optimism within the entire Agency had returned, headed by the introduction of a new CH President - Sister Mary Rose McGeady, a bright and experienced American social service leader. On a visit to

Toronto's site in the fall of 1990, she noted that "[w]e are now out of the crisis and into recovery."[42] This could not be truer for the Toronto site. By the end of 1991, the Shelter had purchased a $4 million historic building (Willard Hall) that was intended to house 100 youth and all services by 1994. Media representation was phenomenal and the Agency launched an innovative "yellow feet" campaign (painted feet on the sidewalk from a popular downtown venue directly to the Agency), leading a reporter to label CH: "Toronto's high profile shelter for street youth" (Catholic New Times, February 16, 1992).

During this time, Toronto's CH was determined to "Canadianize" its Board of Governors and procure operational control over its own site. Corporate by-laws stated that Founding Members (including Father Ritter and Cardinal Carter) were the only voting members and thus had complete power to elect members and control operations. While Toronto recognized the basic tenets and principles binding all CH sites, it believed that the Shelter should be governed at the local level and membership should be Canadian. The scandal undoubtedly contributed to this mindset. By 1991, CH Toronto contracted with New York to continue to use the logo "CH" and maintain its fundamental characteristics. Sister Mary Rose became an ex-officio member of the Board, and Toronto and New York continued to share donor bases, program ideas and faith community. In return, Toronto CH transformed its Board structure - allowing one class of membership, general members, to have equal voting power as well as the capacity to make operational changes without CH New York's

[42] By the end of 1992, CH New York was financially strong again and promised no more budget cuts to its sites.

approval. These changes were characterized as Toronto CH coming into "maturity," emerging from a "parent-child" relationship to one of "equal partnership" whereby it would operate in a consistent manner with CH principles, yet have the "flexibility" to deal with the particularities of Canadian homeless youth (CH manager, April 20, 1999). The ability of CH Toronto to loosen the "apron strings" from CH New York was realized by its increasing self sufficiency regarding fundraising and budgetary responsibilities. Despite CH New York's retreat, "...the hands were still kind of in the background...in terms of support should [Toronto] ever fall on [its] bottom...like a proud father" (CH manager, May 25, 1999).

By 1992, CH Toronto was experiencing a widespread social service "Catch 22" - the Shelter assisted fewer kids, which allowed for more in-depth relationship building and counseling, but concomitantly, received less government funding due to the per diem pay structure. Other agencies were faring far worse - smaller street kid shelters (such as Youth Without Shelter) were caught in a funding crisis that involved "...dealing with deficits, reliance on donations and food banks to nourish the kids and dealing with unsafe staff youth ratios" (Program Services Report, January-February, 1992). The blame was directed towards the inconsistency between per diem and case management rates and actual shelter service costs.[43] CH, albeit maintaining a low

[43] Due to Provincial Government transfer payment freezes since 1989, CH forecast a census increase because new shelters would not be able to finance their own operations: "Indications that the Government will be unable to continue the levels of support given to social services are already becoming obvious as many smaller programs have already closed while larger wholly government funded services are receiving fiscal increases ranging from 0 to 1% for this year. This will no doubt mean potentially higher census numbers for CH" (Service Plan, 1992-3).

profile, participated as a member of the Youth Shelters Interagency Network (YSIN) in its efforts to demand more responsible and adequate government funding.[44]

> In a report recently released, the World Health Organization made the assertion that Canadian street kids face third world conditions. These conditions are homelessness, without family supports, health issues concurrent with street lifestyle, depression and hopelessness, seeking food from the garbage, victimization in the sex and drug trade industry and high levels of violence and crime. CH is a part of a greater community that has experienced much pain and uncertainty with the recession, job loss and serious Provincial debt load. It is a challenge for us to continue to advocate for homeless and runaway kids... (Executive Summary, Service Plan, 1993-4).

For CH, the effects of financial constraints were not readily apparent: it ended the 1993 year with 114 staff and a budget totaling over $7 million; $4.5 million of which was due to highly effective fundraising efforts. Sport celebrities such as Toronto Maple Leafs' Doug Gilmour and Toronto Blue Jays' Pat Borders represented the Agency. The Shelter also gained increased exposure on TV, in print articles, documentaries, seminars, and speaking engagements (CH had recently employed an advertising firm).

At a time when Toronto's unemployment rates, child poverty levels and welfare lists were increasing, and government support for social services was decreasing, it appeared that once again, CH was largely unaffected by the external

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[44] Due to tremendous lobbying from YSIN and Metropolitan Community Services Department, the per diem rates for emergency care were increased from $32.55 to $44.55, effective April, 1992.

political-economic environment. As CH's Executive Director charged: "Our finances and fundraising continue to be strong and we are again most fortunate to be largely unaffected by the [Bob] Rae government social contract negotiations" (June, 1993).

However, CH's most pressing concern was its low census. In February, 1993, a Sub-Committee was organized to examine the internal and external factors affecting residential census. The Committee made the following recommendations: reach out to new street youth; engage youth to stay longer in a more effective manner; examine program expectations; and, develop more achievable goals given the socio-economic environment. CH would adopt subsequently many of these recommendations and make its program and operational policies more flexible. As a result, the Shelter would re-experience high census, this time with a population presenting very complex needs coupled with a more desperate external environment. While the Bruce Ritter scandal was an unfortunate and unforeseen hurdle in CH's life, the ensuing hardships were very much anticipated.

PRESENT DAY (1994-1998)

In July, 1994, the Agency moved to its present location - Willard Hall, an elegant historic building (built in 1911) which included 75 restored bedrooms. Located a few blocks west of its original houses, CH now had the ability to provide beds (100) rather than mats to its residents. Even though the Agency's census had been consistently low, CH was confident that more street youth would visit the new premise: "I am confident that with beds our census will improve dramatically...why sleep on the floor if you don't have to?" (Executive Director's Report, March, 1994).

In addition, all of the Shelter's services were now under one roof - the beginning of an universal trend in social services - "one-stop shopping." Learning from past mistakes, CH engaged its 'new' community (made up of neighbors, Ryerson University and the Police) in dialogue and invited them to be involved in developing programs for youth at the Shelter. The opening of Willard Hall remade CH into the largest and oldest youth crisis center in Canada, and a crowd of 300 people (including members of Parliament, sports figures and popular entertainers) closed off a large part of Toronto's downtown core in celebration of the Agency's re-opening.

Within days of Willard Hall's opening, CH's census rose from 50 residents to 71 residents. Many youth experienced a night in a facility that boasted oak-paneled hallways, antique furniture in all bedrooms, an elevator, and a general decor that resembled a private New England College rather than a street kid shelter. As with all changes, there were complications - at first, youth found the building "...large, confusing, and somewhat institutional with its security system and cameras" (Board Report, September, 1994). Staff also experienced the stress of change, including an increase in residents coupled with a new environment. Upper management wrote that: "It is essential they [staff] receive emotional support, effective positive leadership and objective problem-solving and physical improvements so that they can focus their energies on our youth" (Board Report, September, 1994). For the next several months, CH tackled both structural (e.g., plumbing, security doors, handicap ramp, ongoing construction) and logistical issues (e.g., increased youth traffic in the building, youth congregating on sidewalk which upset many surrounding neighbors).

New Faces

> So our philosophy is still that the kids are number one, that we are here to serve them, that these kids are kids that we need to help get off the street and get back into the community. But we now have lots of different types of kids here, it's not the kind of kids that we originally opened the doors to serve... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

While CH continued to experience a younger population who were staying longer, there was a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants and refugees - a fairly new segment of the youth homeless population.[45] By the end of 1994, and continuing up to the present time, CH's census fluctuated between 80 and 100 youth per night (considered "high census protocol"),[46] due primarily to the Shelter's "new type" of resident. Approximately 20%-30% of CH residents now consist of adolescents who have fled war-torn countries such as Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Congo, arriving in Toronto with nobody to support them and no citizen status. In the first six months of 1997, the Agency saw residents from 33 different countries. Numerous accounts of young refugees entering Toronto, being processed, and then being sent by Immigration directly to CH, were common. Others in this population experienced broken-down sponsorships or familial conflict regarding the fusion of old

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[45] This reflects Toronto becoming one of the world's most ethnically and racially diverse communities - 52% of racial minorities in all of Ontario reside in Metro Toronto (Yalnizyan, 1998).

[46] Being at capacity for several years has now made access to the Shelter difficult for older youth (who have already stayed there).

versus new cultural values. Immigrant and refugee youth posed very complicated problems for the Agency:

> The trend of an increasing number of refugee claimants [and immigrants] continue. The variety and complexity of their immigration problems present a challenge. The young people often speak little or no English and are in "culture shock." At times, these languages and cultural differences can create tensions amongst residents...making referrals for these youth can also be difficult because the language barriers prevent clear and understandable communication (Program Services Report, October, 1994).

As a result of these emerging issues, the Shelter called upon an immigration consultant to provide information sessions to front-line staff regarding issues concerning status, welfare, job, and housing opportunities. In 1995, the Shelter liaised with the Canadian Center for Victims of Torture for support in dealing with many of these residents' past experiences.

By the end of 1995, CH's population consisted primarily of "...refugee claimants; youth with significant mental health issues; developmentally delayed youth; abuse victims; drug and alcohol dependent youth; [and] a number of pregnant women" leading to "case planning becoming more complex" and consequently "considerable impact on our staff" (Program Services Report, November, 1995). Moreover, residents were younger and "...less mature - they haven't finished school, no source of income...drug dependency, maybe hooked up with a crowd on the street who are pretty destructive..." (CH staff, May 25, 1999). The Shelter's February Program

Service Report for 1998 described the emerging population at CH in relatively bleak terms:

> The challenge in providing care, counseling and supervision is not in the high numbers but in the kind of youth that are showing up at our doorsteps. Many of the youth using our services are quite disturbed and often so poorly socialized that relationships with both adults and their peers is conflict ridden. Power struggles and poor impulse control can quickly escalate into very dangerous situations. We had one incident when a male lost control and pushed another youth through a glassed-in doorway...Teen violence is on the increase in the community...The other group requiring much care are the psychologically fragile.

In response to these presenting concerns, staff were trained in group dynamics, aggressive behavior, mental illness and drug addictions. Furthermore, the Agency developed the CREW Program (Community Recreation Education and Work) - focusing upon self-esteem building through volunteer services and recreation projects and designed for residents who are dealing with psychiatric/drug/alcohol/intellectual issues and incapable of performing work or attending school.

A Different Shelter

> So long as open intake remains an integral and almost an enjoyable aspect of the program, then you must have some process which gets kids out, otherwise you end up with a thousand kids (CH manager, May 27, 1999).

During this period, a new trend emerged within the Shelter, aptly labeled by the Agency as a "bottle neck" effect. As a result of overwhelming Provincial Government cut-backs on social services (downsizing and restructuring), coupled with a flogging economy, there remained few external community services: "A bottle neck is occurring as a direct result of the cutbacks and the economy. We are experiencing difficulties making referrals due to the fact that there are fewer discharge planning options available to our youth" (Program Services Report, November, 1995). While CH maintained its open intake policy, youth continued to enter the Shelter. However, due to their complex needs and a depressed external environment, few were able to leave. The Agency was imploding - more CH residents were staying longer producing a bubble effect or bottle neck.[47] For residents, that phenomenon translated into the need for a "more patient attitude," since finding a job or housing would now take months rather than weeks. By 1998, the situation was critical:

> As I write this report [September, 1998] we have 93 youth in shelter. A major concern is that a number of our young people are now positioned to move on to longer term housing but cannot do so. All of our external resources have centralized waiting lists from three to six months...Affordable decent housing, such as small flats, rooms in downtown or apartments are simply not an economically viable option nor is there much availability (Board of Directors Report, September, 1998).

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[47] Compared to 1984 when the average stay was one week, the current length of stay is two to three months, however, it is not uncommon to have residents staying past six months.

Furthermore, front line staff were impacted by the radical changes occurring within the Agency:

> Obviously staff at CH, as in many other organizations, are finding these to be very demanding, stressful times. With the news of cutbacks in our sector, the dramatic increase in demands for our services, and the need to adjust on a daily basis to ever-increasing numbers of youth who come to us with ever more complex problems, our staff need as much support as is affordable and reasonable for us to provide (Human Resources Report, November, 1995).

In order to combat these changes, CH emphasized staff training (for example, by instituting the "Managing The Challenge Of Change" workshop) as well as provided staff with extra support (such as massage therapy). More significant however were the internal Shelter reorganizations that took place in order to adapt to a new population who were staying longer:

> We don't have the short-term nature any longer, not really, not like it was, not the way the Shelter was originally set up to do. And I think that's because the clients have changed, therefore we have changed to accommodate. I think CH as it stands right now is a big giant mutation - that every time something was needed we 'glommed' on another piece... (CH staff, May 24, 1999).

Most staff believe CH had 'mutated' into a hybrid model - balancing itself between crisis intervention and group-home treatment. Within its walls, House rules and policies slowly shifted from being seen as rigid and moved towards a more flexible, compromising approach. In this vein, CH adopted a later curfew and became less strict in discharging youth for breaking rules such as swearing, physical touching,

alcohol and drug use. It was believed that during CH's early days, a rigid, structured and rule-oriented setting was required and thus, workers took on a "policing" role with residents. One long time worker recalled: "I can remember discharging kids, hard-core kids, because they swore. That would not happen as quickly now" (May 28, 1999). At present, a new perspective emanates within the Shelter:

> It's bleak out there...CH knew that job searching and staying there for two weeks wouldn't work anymore. To maintain our mandate, our mission of support, love and care, you had to be flexible, to adjust...The old way wasn't working - what's so loving and caring about sending out a kid to be frustrated...that's when we recognized that we had to give kids something else... (CH manager, May 14, 1999).

Program requirements became more flexible - less pressure was placed on a resident being assessed quickly in order to create a plan to find work, housing, or particular services. Rather, more emphasis was now directed towards individual and group counseling[48] (life skills, anger management, etc.), recreation (art and music programs, sports, etc.), and educational training (ESL classes, high school courses, computer learning, etc.):

> People [workers] are really working on a more counseling basis and trying to get kids to sort of see that we understand they are frustrated...it becomes

[48] Counseling at the Shelter has become an important component, as is evidenced by an increase in the number of social workers at the Shelter; from two to six in the past few years. The counseling emphasis is a result of youth needing longer, more comprehensive, support and more sophisticated case managing in terms of immigration, legal, emotional and psychiatric issues.

> required because we can't have a kid within here for that many months in a row with such rigid kind of expectations... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

Internal Strength

More fortunate than other youth shelters during this time, CH possessed the resources (annual operating budgets of $8 million in 1995 and $10 million in 1998) to accommodate a growing mass of residents. By 1994, CH New York was debt-free and promised increased allotments to all sites. A new CH site in Washington was privileged to have Hillary Clinton as a keynote speaker at its opening. In Toronto, media representation and fundraising were on the rise. With over 80,000 active donors (a rise from 18,000 in 1988; 60,000 in 1990; and 73,000 in 1993), CH Toronto raised over $5 million in 1994 and 1995, and over $7 million in 1997 and 1998. By 1998, donations comprised 73% of the Shelter's revenue (Toronto Hostel Services generated 12%; ShareLife raised 5.5%; Covenant House NY allotted 9.5%): "Because CH does not depend so much on government money, we are still able to do things" (CH staff, April 19, 1999). No other youth shelter (nor social service agency) produced the advertisement dollars and active media savvy of CH. Increasingly, the Shelter has become Canadians' charity of choice - in 1994, the Rolling Stones donated all earnings from a practice rehearsal in Toronto to CH; most recently, Allanis Morrissette announced that one dollar from each ticket sale from her Toronto concert would go to the Shelter. As one CH worker explained: "...we're in a comfortable position now, thank god, we don't have a budget, everything is raised...Our communication department does a tremendous job" (April 20, 1999). Sister Mary

Rose echoed these sentiments: "[w]e are so blessed to have a half a million donors" as partners of the Agency (CH Orientation Video, 1997).

In addition, numerous social service agencies around the world currently seek the Agency's help and support: " We [CH] are constantly providing consultation to other agencies who have an interest in working with street youth. This is a result of our high visibility and credibility regarding effective models of program services" (Board Minutes, 1994). In 1996, when CH planned to open a Vancouver site, the Director of Toronto's Hostel Services provided a glowing portrait of the Shelter:

> I have been involved with CH as a funder since their beginning in 1982 and have witnessed the many changes that have lead up to the creation of their terrific one-stop site...They have the ability and capacity to rope in huge community support...CH is the perfect organization to establish a new shelter in a new city... (August, 1996).

External Chaos

Despite its strong financial base, CH was still not completely sheltered from the political and economical environment experienced in Toronto during the mid 1990's. As described by an upper level manager:

> The climate we in the social services sector are living in today is unlike anything, I, in almost thirty years of practice, have ever experienced. I feel the level of depression and sense of hopelessness present in our youth is steadily increasing. The social service supports whom we traditionally work closely

> with are strained to the max. This is particularly true of our colleagues in the child welfare system... (Executive Summary, September, 1997).

CH used two strategies for survival in this depressed external environment - partnering with community resources and advocacy. While both practices were evident throughout the Agency's existence, they became stronger and more visible components in its later years. In many cases, partnering and advocacy were not mutually exclusive devices:

> The relationships with foundations and businesses that have been fostered, we hope will continue to grow and expand. The initiatives also with educational institutions and other agencies serving similar populations must and will be enhanced. It's tough out there, but our kids are worth everything we can do for them, and do it we will (Service Plan, 1995-6).

In terms of partnerships, CH collaborated with the CAS and Ryerson University to engage in research which focused upon individuals who had traveled through both child welfare and youth shelter system (the survey found that 40%-50% of CH residents had such involvement) and subsequently, to develop strategies to strengthen youth leaving the CAS care to be better equipped to manage their lives (rather than becoming shelter clients). By 1996, CH was looking to other agencies for partnerships in order to address the delivery of long term housing and job training. Moreover, CH, the CAS, and several other downtown agencies partnered to deal with a growing population of pregnant teens and "kids having kids."[49] CH also succeeded in

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[49] Representatives from all of these services continue to discuss strategies in which to deal with these populations.

attracting a psychiatric resident worker and welfare worker to provide voluntary services at the Shelter. By 1997 and 1998, the Shelter's community membership (at all levels of the organization) was vast - taking part in street kid agency networks, child welfare organizations, CAS associations, suicide prevention groups and AIDS programs. As one long time staff member noted:

> Look at the amount of 'partnershiping' that's going on...that's the flip side from the earlier years...CH is out there and very proud that it's out there...and it is a lot more positively received I think in the community now in comparison to the early years... (May 25, 1999).

CH also actively sought out foundations and businesses for partnership ventures - searching for potential employers to develop job training and employment opportunities (mentoring projects) while successfully connecting with Ryerson University to provide residents with computer training. The theme for CH's 1998 Annual Report involved "serving kids through creative partnerships." As stated by CH's President: "As I look back over the history of our programs, I realize that central to our success had been the cooperation and assistance of the business community, local service groups, schools, and many other community partners" (CH Orientation Video, 1997).

The Agency also hoped to adopt a stronger advocacy position. While at times in the past CH had been a strong voice on behalf of its own youth, the Shelter now acknowledged advocacy on a larger scale - addressing macro issues linked to youth and adult poverty. As one worker described:

> A big piece of what we hope to do is more politicized advocacy, not just the general, yes of course we support good health for children, etc., I think we need to make some real commitments on committees and grass roots agencies who are out there doing the swim, we have to throw our weight behind some of those...Like the 1% solution...the disaster committee...housing stability...families living in abject poverty... (May 25, 1999).

In the mid 1990's, CH initiated an annual candlelight vigil for homeless youth. One goal of the Agency's "Strategic Planning For The Future" portfolio involved effective advocacy - taking a much stronger role in the upcoming years. In Toronto, this meant addressing welfare reform, job training and creation, affordable youth housing and services for high-risk teen mothers and their children. At present, much of the Shelter's advocacy work translates into partnerships with other agencies to fight against the massive cuts to the social service sector as well as to provide a loud voice for those without home. Recently, CH hosted Anne Golden's Task Force on Homelessness providing material on programs and urging her to see the Rights of Passage program in New York (long term transitional housing for 200 young people).

Nonetheless, CH's greatest response to the darkening social and economic environment continues to stem from its internal infrastructure. Privileged with a large funding base,[50] the Agency has developed its own programs to replace the devastation

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[50] One worker described CH's donor base as "bearers of hope" - "...the donors always come through every time there's a need. It's amazing...I can't believe the amount of support that we get by sending out direct mail...It's unbelievable. I think people really want to be involved in helping" (May 25, 1999).

found in a social service community plagued with cutbacks and closures. In 1995, the Shelter created an Educational Program and employed two full-time teachers through a partnership with the Metropolitan Municipal School Board. A Second Stage Transitional Housing Project was developed one year later, emphasizing long-term stable housing for six males (soon to be offered to single mothers, refugees, and under 18 year olds.) Group work sessions, focusing upon issues of abuse, anger management, and sexuality have also been initiated within the residential program. A Residents' Council was formed in 1997 to provide leadership and advocacy skills to youth as well as a forum to express concerns to Shelter staff. By 1997 and 1998, CH provided the following services - emergency shelter, health care, runaway prevention, pastoral ministry, ombudsperson, community support services, education services, vocational services, planning for independence, volunteer program (legal counseling, art, music, etc.), CREW, and second stage housing.

Looking To The Future

During an October, 1998 staff workshop, CH President Sister Mary Rose announced: "Our mission is not going away and the problems are worse." Through the collaborative efforts of all CH sites' Executive Directors, a vision statement was introduced to "...shove [CH] into the future" (Board Reports, 1998). The credo emphasizes the path by which the entire Agency should travel into the next millennium and reinforces the Agency's mandate: to provide shelter and services to homeless children and youth in the spirit of open intake; making every effort for family

reconciliation and community re-integration; and, focusing upon collaborative ventures with other agencies while advocating on behalf of youth.

> A trend across the emergency shelter system is longer stays due to poverty and lack of affordable housing. Transitional and subsidized housing have long waiting lists. Therefore, solutions to Toronto's homeless population will require many strategies due to the complexity of the issues (Program Services Report, October, 1998).

By 1998, CH is regarded as an impressive and wealthy street youth organization with 20 sites in six countries (Canada, The United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua). In Canada, advertisements for the Agency can be found on television, radio, bus shelters, newspapers and endorsed by various celebrities. Currently, the Toronto Shelter feels constricted in its present building and rumors are emerging that a new site search is forthcoming. With growing concern over Toronto's present homelessness crisis (some groups believe it has reached disaster status), CH is persisting as a premier 'one-stop' service for homeless youth through increased partnering and advocacy. Service to street youth comes in a holistic manner - serving their intellectual, material, physical and spiritual components. As declared by its President: "There are so many holes in these kids, that we have to do so much to heal these holes...We help change around the stuff that kids have problems with - not just the homeless part, but the jobless part, the psychological part, etc." (CH Orientation Video, 1997). Recently, a Vancouver site opened, with a ceremony filled with staff, board members and executive directors from most sites. A description of

the Vancouver gathering by a long time CH member also serves as a telling commentary on the Shelter's impressive spirit:

> It was like a christening - where all the aunts and uncles [Board members and Executive Directors] come to christen the new born...we're an extended family...who else can do this more than blood...they're saying you're important to the family...its a home here. There are good times, bad times, illness, growing pains...The philosophy gets us through it...It's like a religion (April 19, 1999).

TABLE TWO: CH THROUGH THE YEARS[51]

	1983	1989-90	1998
# of intakes (to all programs)	2806	3649	4529
# of beds	70 (30 beds; 40 mats)	70 (30 beds; 40 mates)	100 (94 shelter beds; 6 transitional housing beds)
# of staff	73	112	118
average shelter census	high (65-70)	low (50-60)	high (85-95)
average length of stay	8 days	7 days	1-2 months
type of resident	hard-core, white, CAS involved, Toronto	hard core - violent, drug/alcohol involved, history of abuse	younger, immigrant/refugee, mental health issues
average age	19 years old	17-18 years old	16-17 years old
shelter services	shelter, food, social work, health care, counseling, pastoral ministry	*plus* runaway prevention, outreach, life skill training	*plus* second stage housing, job training, education, CREW
shelter expenditures	over $2 million (and surplus)	over $7 million (and surplus)	over $10 million (and surplus)
shelter funding	ShareLife-55% Metro-17% New York-20% Fundraised-7%	ShareLife-16% Metro-14% New York-8% Fundraised-62%	ShareLife-5% Metro-13% New York-8% Fundraised-74%

[51] The three years provided in this table represent snapshots of CH's early, middle, and present stages of development.

CHAPTER SIX: LOCALIZING TORONTO'S YOUTH WITHOUT SHELTER

INTRODUCTION

Youth Without Shelter (YWS) is an emergency crisis shelter in Etobicoke, a West Toronto suburb, serving youth between 16 and 24 years of age. Originally conceived of as a shelter for Toronto's North York region, YWS opened its doors in West Toronto in March, 1986. The 30 bed, suburban shelter for homeless youth was envisioned well in advance of its actual opening and to understand its character and nature requires an account of the years spent within the stages of development and implementation. Aptly noted by the Shelter's Founder, Richard Corbett, YWS' history is best described not with any "...significant battles, just dogged determination" (Speech given at YWS' Annual General Meeting, June, 1997).

PREVIOUS STUDIES

YWS is a by-product of numerous years investigating and documenting suburban youth homelessness coupled with community and government inaction.

As early as 1973, social service providers believed that the North York suburb could benefit from some type of youth agency. The original proposal for a North York adolescent residence was prepared by a Sub-Committee of the North York Inter-Agency Council (NYIAC) who surveyed the placement needs and priorities for adolescent clients of four agencies (North York Children Aid Society, Family Services

Association, North York General Hospital, and Youth Clinical Services). The collaborative investigation concluded that "the greatest need in North York is for a short-term, crisis oriented, adolescent residence" (Planning for a Crisis Care Facility, 1982:1).

A second NYIAC Survey completed in 1974 documented the specific needs that could be met by a North York, short-term, residence. Surveys were sent to eight youth and family service agencies; four hospitals, and 46 schools, in North York eliciting information regarding adolescents who would be referred to a short-term, crisis oriented, residence, if one existed. Results (73% response rate) suggested that approximately 297 adolescents would have been referred to such a residence in 1973. Sixty percent of the adolescents would have been between the ages of 15 and 17; 59.6% of which were female. The Survey indicated that for those adolescents who needed placement outside the home (mostly due to communication breakdown with parents), 35% were forced to remain at home; 14.5% were sent to group homes outside of North York; 11.5% were sent to CAS facilities; and 11.5% were hospitalized (YWS Funding Proposal,[52] 1982: Appendix). The Survey concluded that "placement in a structured setting, with a built in referral to counseling and planning program, can increase significantly the number of adolescents who are able to return to, and function in their family homes" (YWS Funding Proposal, 1982: Appendix). The Survey proposed that the shelter would act as a "cooling off" period for youth

[52] There are a number of proposals written during YWS' genesis.

experiencing family problems, with intervention directed at returning clients home, consequently diverting them away from child welfare placements. The Survey also suggested that a residential house would be a cheaper alternative to hospital and CAS-type setting placements.

The Survey further discovered that over 80% of professionals interviewed believed that "an adolescent residence is a needed and valuable resource for North York" while 11.7% of the sample felt that a residence was a good idea, but qualified their opinions with the following conditions:

- staff needed to be properly trained, supervised and professionally supported;
- utilize professional back-ups (psychologist, psychiatrist);
- utilize on-going family counseling;
- maintain definite consequences for breaking house rules;
- orient programs towards helping clients learn how to interact with their peers; and
- "...implement controls so that the residence cannot be used as a "dumping ground" or an easy way for agencies and schools to deal with difficult adolescents" (YWS Funding Proposal, 1982: Appendix).

This study played an important role in the conceptualization and ultimate operation of YWS.

During the spring of 1978, the Metropolitan CAS convened a meeting with North York agencies and community groups to discuss youth issues in the Jane/Finch area (a North York region plagued with high crime, delinquency and poverty). As a result of this meeting, the Downsview-Weston Action Community (DWAC) produced an informal report exploring existing supports, and what could be provided to assist

these efforts. The final product, entitled "Jane/Finch Youth Study" was published in September, 1978, and was financed by the Metropolitan CAS. This Study is explored at length in the following discussion as it became a major impetus for the development of YWS several years later.

By interviewing individuals identified as "working with youth," the Study found that "the number of people who are offering youth programs seems to be quite limited" (Pengelly, 1978:2). In contrast, Toronto Police perceived youth crimes as numerous, including car theft and break and entry. A major problem identified by the Study was adolescents' "poor attitudes" defined as a "lack of motivation... ambition....discipline, poor self image, low level of moral standards, lack of participation, [and] dropping out of school" (Pengelly, 1978:3). Other issues identified included the perceived ease for youth to obtain welfare or entry to group homes (rather than working out problems at home): "The concern here was that youths were not being made to assume responsibility and to come to terms with the realities of life" (Pengelly, 1978:3). The Study indicated that over the years, school drop-out rates had increased, and reports suggested that youth were no longer finding school interesting since many extra-curricular activities had been terminated, thus opening the door to negative peer-influenced behavior.

Concern was also directed towards the family unit, and the Study focused upon "poor parental guidance" and "lack of adult models" (Pengelly, 1978:3). Family breakdown was perceived as fostering low moral standards: "Experience had shown that young people did need standards to be set, and did need to know the limits within which they could operate"(Pengelly, 1978:3). Youth were often left unsupervised,

especially after school, occasionally leading them to perform illegal activities such as fighting and vandalism. Furthermore, the Jane/Finch area catered to a transient population and thus, a sense of community was largely non-existent.

The Study further disclosed that youth perceived social service "helpers" as inauthentic, insincere, and ineffective in their work (Pengelly, 1978:3). The Study also suggested that there was little co-ordination among service providers: "Groups seemed to operate in virtual isolation and there was a great need for further co-ordination of services in order to promote development of social and recreational programs" (Pengelly, 1978:6). Sport and art programs that existed were helpful, yet "...should be geared towards improving self worth and a sense of responsibility as well as developing life skills" (Pengelly, 1978:4). According to Police, Probation Services, and Youth Clinic Services, "...there is an important need for temporary shelters for youths, as it has been found that, in most cases, their problems are of a crisis nature" (Pengelly, 1978:6). Often Police had no place to send youth, consequently they were kept on a bench in the station. It was common for the Youth Clinic, Probation Services, and After-Care to send homeless youth on a bus to a downtown Toronto shelter (such as Covenant House): "Facilities for such situations are limited and tend to be located in the downtown Toronto area" (Pengelly, 1978:6).

It became clear from the Study that an emergency shelter for youth was needed, in order to complement both government agencies (Probation Services, After-Care, Police) as well as community organizations (Youth Clinic, downtown shelters) by providing clients with shelter and assistance. The Study's author remarked that "...although they [shelters] would have to be well supervised, it was suggested that

they should not be too rigidly structured" (Pengelly, 1978:6). In this sense, youth shelters were to be framed as "alternative" to traditional child welfare institutions in order to attract and maintain adolescent clients. Conversely, the community voiced concerns that these shelters would "become places where youth could escape instead of dealing with problems" (Pengelly, 1978:6). As such, the Study recommended that the youth shelter provide counseling as well as "breathing space" or "cooling off time" for youth in trouble. YWS would adopt these recommendations.

An Appendix to the Study explored the existing emergency youth shelter situation in Metropolitan Toronto (Goebel, 1978).[53] In this analysis, the author noted:

> In order for any such facility to be truly responsive to the needs of our community...it is essential that the community play the primary role in the planning, establishment, direction and staffing of such resources, but also that it is essential that they have the on-going support of all interested parties including social service agencies. This support can be in the form of funding, consultation, staff time, facilities, equipment, training, referrals to the facilities and, most important, from the facility (Goebel, 1978:2).

YWS would adhere to these constructs - emerging as a community response to suburban youth homelessness and forging strong ties with its external environment.

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[53] The author of the Appendix concluded that "[t]hese shelters are almost non-existent in our community and rare throughout the rest of the Metropolitan Toronto area as well, except for a small concentration in the downtown area" (Goebel, 1978:9). A short-term solution proposed in the Study did in fact exist at the time - private residents fostering troubled youth in their homes: "[t]he model that the resident's private home presents to us is one such facility" (Goebel, 1978:9). Residents who were interested in creating "safe homes" for youth could arrange for funding and training from the CAS (through their Home Assessment Program). The foster home was a pre-cursor to the shelter movement in Toronto's suburbs.

In November, 1978, representatives from the CAS met with the authors of the Jane/Finch Study and its Appendix to further explore the possibility of a North York youth shelter. The participants discussed the creation of several "safe havens" in the community - youth shelters that could provide basic needs while serving as "time outs" for adolescents experiencing difficulty at home:

> That the home [shelter] be viewed as crisis prevention - that is, that parents and children be encouraged to use or go there before a major crisis develops, e.g., children of alcoholics would feel free to come when a crisis is developing; parents who had reached the end of the line, and were about to lock out children would have one last option before "lock out" action (YWS Archive entitled Emergency Shelter for Youth, no date).

Shelters were emerging as critical supplements to existing agencies: "[t]hat agencies such as Children's Aid Society, Police, Probation and After-Care would be encouraged to view the above as legitimate first use rather than convenient dumping ground for emergency use" (YWS Archive entitled Safe Haven, no date).

However, the above meeting resulted in little action, and for some time thereafter, various community groups tried unsuccessfully to create a suburban youth shelter. For example, in 1980, a combination of social service agencies and providers (including Caribbean Outreach Program, Ryerson social work students, Mennonite Mission Council, Oakdale Junior High School, and the CAS) penned a proposal for "A Central Home" in North York; the goal of which was to "rescue children who are temporarily abandoned or who leave home because of family conflicts" (YWS Archive, 1980). The objective was to provide temporary residence to youth under 18

years of age (who had run away from home, been thrown out by their parents, or referred by the Police, Probation Services, schools, and social service agencies) within a warm, safe and supportive environment, 24 hours per day, seven days a week, working towards reconciliation and reintegration of children into the family unit. This description mirrored the soon-to-be YWS residence. Despite these foregoing recommendations, it took until 1981 before there was real commitment to the arduous job of creating such a residence.

YOUTH WITHOUT SHELTER'S GENESIS

> The emerging housing needs of youth have been a concern of many North York agencies for some time. Youth Without Shelter, as an incorporated, charitable organization, has grown out of this shared concern (YWS correspondence, November 10, 1983).

In 1981, guidance counselors at various high schools in North York documented the large number of youth sleeping away from home: "A new sense of urgency was felt...Students were complaining of being locked out of their homes and resorting to sleeping in stairwells and laundromats" (North York Emergency Residence and Referral Agency, 1982). This "amazing finding" (YWS correspondence, 1983) coupled with the above mentioned reports led to informal meetings consisting of professionals from North York social service agencies and educational organizations. As noted by Richard Corbett, the passionate high school teacher- turned-YWS Founder:

> I remember quite vividly the genesis of this organization [YWS]. It came as a result of a phone call to my office at about 3:45 on a Friday afternoon in December...A guidance counselor from a high school called me and explained that he had two teenage girls who had come to him and asked for help. They were going to be left on the street over the Christmas period...It didn't take long for me to find out that there was no place for them to stay. Crash at a friend's home or camp in an apartment stairwell or go downtown were virtually their only options. A decision was taken that day to pursue the opening of an emergency residence... (Speech given at YWS' Annual General Meeting, 1997).

These informal meetings spawned the birth of YWS in 1982; an officially incorporated registered charity. The development of YWS involved several important components: community-based Board development; site searching; clarifying the legalities regarding the age of residents, number of beds, zoning by-laws; licensing; searching for support from integral politicians and community members; developing a connection with established social service agencies; and, administration issues, such as bookkeeping and payroll. An initial draft of YWS' Funding Proposal described the key goals for the Shelter's development:

> At this stage in the development of the project, paid and volunteer staff, working closely with Board committees, are involved in raising the profile of YWS and securing support from social service agencies, foundations, government and business. Program and personnel committees are actively

involved in the development of house management guidelines. The Board is currently conducting a property search... (YWS Funding Proposal, 1982:2).

In order to fulfill these development obligations, a three-phase timeline was scripted:

- The Exploration Phase involved: 1) documenting need, conducting a feasibility study, developing networks of support, advice and future referrals; 2) incorporating as a non-profit business, establish bookkeeping procedures, develop budgets; 3) hiring part-time staff to assist in fundraising, community backing, and office administration; and, 4) developing and implementing site search, program development, and funding strategies. Total costs were approximated at $17,500.00.
- The Start-Up Phase emphasized: 1) finalizing the purchase and renovation of a building, furnishing and equipping the residence; 2) securing all sources of start-up funds and continue to raise funds for operating expenses; and, 3) completing documentation of program and house policies, and hiring staff. Total costs were approximated at $75,000.00.
- The Operation Phase envisioned: 1) managing program, intake, referrals and organization of residence; 2) administering residence, completing project evaluation and compiling case records; and, 3) continuing fund raising, community involvement and employee development. The estimated total costs would reach approximately $285,000.00.

YWS' primary objective was to provide "a supportive environment for adolescents in times of serious family difficulties...alleviat[ing] the immediate

problems of teens with nowhere to go" through "short-term accommodation" (Funding Proposal, First Draft, 1982: Appendix). The Agency prided itself as being "[t]he first emergency residence outside the downtown core" and would provide "...a model upon which other youth shelters may build" (Funding Proposal, First Draft, 1982: Appendix). According to its Founder, YWS was envisioned as a distinct model from the traditional child welfare system. Rather than playing the role of "alternative jail for kids," the Shelter was conceived of as a "safe house" for youth in need who would be referred to it by the various existing systems (schools, community, the CAS, etc.).

By November 1982, YWS, comprising of a dozen members from the earlier task force of concerned citizens, had developed a proposal for its North York shelter, adopting many of the findings from the earlier surveys. Defined as a "Crisis Care Facility," YWS would provide up to one month coed accommodation in North York for 20 adolescents between the ages of 16-20.[54] Services would be offered to:

> Adolescents who, for a variety of reasons cannot remain at home, but for whom return to the family is possible if both immediate, intensive family counseling and follow-up family counseling are provided...[or]...adolescents who cannot remain at or return to their family home, and need help in establishing themselves in the community in an independent life style with follow-up counseling being provided (YWS Funding Proposal, 1982:1).

[54] As time progressed, the Agency would change its mandate regarding residents' ages, number of beds, length of stay, and location.

As such, YWS would act as a "cooling out" setting, that could provide youth with a space to temper emotions and relieve stress. Its unique and crucial establishment was represented by the fact that "there are no crisis care facilities for North York adolescents (ages 16-20) within their community. Facilities serving other boroughs have a limited capacity to handle referrals from North York" (YWS Archive, 1984). As noted in YWS' 1984 Funding Proposal: "Downtown hostels serve an estimated 100 young people from North York daily. These hostels are often over-crowded and most are not structured to provide anything more than a bed for the night for the very unfortunate skid-row population" (1).

The earlier task force that ultimately created YWS strongly believed that "an adolescent should be able to remain and receive help in his own community" so that contact with family, school, and friends may continue (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984:2). YWS explained its significance to the community with this construct:

> The time has come for North York to improve the very difficult situation of its young people who find themselves without a home. Adolescents are the key to the future life and development of the community. It is essential that in time of urgent need, a young person may stay and find help within the community, among friends and family. A stable supportive environment for these young people is a social obligation which must be fulfilled to ensure the long range health of the community (Funding Proposal, 1984: 1).

Throughout its development, YWS attempted to foster connections with other social service agencies, foundations, corporations, and political actors in order to accrue allies for its cause. The general message presented to these diverse groups was noted

by YWS' then Coordinator: "...it is a matter of urgent concern that the emergency housing needs of adolescents between 16 and 20 years of age are not currently being met by any agency in North York" (December 8, 1983). This message was continuously emphasized by the Agency during its five years of planning, development, and implementation.

THE EARLY YEARS (1982-1986)

Between 1982 to 1986, YWS' history resembled the children's fable 'The Little Train That Could.' Plagued with external bureaucracy, politics and inaction, the small community-based Agency experienced frustration in finding a location, securing public and private funding, and fostering political support.

By the end of 1982, YWS received start-up funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to purchase and renovate a property through a guaranteed mortgage. Metro Community Services Department (MCSD) agreed to fund up to 60% of the annual operating budget once the Shelter had opened (purchase-of-service agreement). Furthermore, the Agency vied for foundation money and private donations, and soon gained the confidence of the Anglican Church (who provided a three year donation totaling $60,000.00).

Until the Shelter was firmly established in 1986, YWS was managed and guided by a Board of Directors consisting of individuals from social service agencies (including the CAS), schools, and the community. Throughout the early years (and up to the present), the Board's constitution remained constant, consisting of between 8 and 12 members and continuing to maintain a balance between social service agency

workers and community and business representatives. Members and supporters of the Agency included several North York Alderpersons, Trustees, Comptrollers, as well as school guidance counselors, clergy persons, lawyers, and various social service agencies. As remembered by a former managerial staff member: "My experience was that there was a lot of community members, people living in East York [region] who worked in the education or social services field who were very much behind the project" (March 3, 1999).

Building Search

Finding a site for the Shelter proved elusive and occupied much of YWS' early years. Zoning rules, by-law regulations, community apprehension and CMHC's rigorous approval process, complicated YWS' search for a 20 bed residence. A Toronto Star report echoed the Agency's frustrations: "Restrictive zoning policies have made it difficult for such services [shelters] to be provided in the communities where these young people were raised...Young people in North York should at least know that if things go wrong, they don't have to leave town" (January 11, 1983). Nonetheless, after a two year search in North York, YWS members "left town," and agreed to move their search to another suburb - Etobicoke (a region adjacent to North York). Nonetheless, the members maintained the belief that they could still serve Jane/Finch (North York) adolescents: "We knew we would have to find a location that was convenient for access by young people but far away from residences so that neighbors wouldn't be frightened. A very difficult task..." (Richard Corbett, YWS Annual General Meeting, June 1997).

While public fear and re-zoning laws (the Shelter's placement in a residential area) proved to be strong deterrents to discovering a suitable location, North York politicians did not believe that a street kid shelter within their borders was imperative.[55] Despite support from specific politicians, YWS' Founder believed that "...a lot of those [North York] politicians were really uncaring about a shelter here [North York]. They kept saying there were no homeless out there so nothing was really done to help YWS out" (February 4, 1999).[56] The Agency's experiences approaching North York's City Council for their "moral and financial support has been received with mixed reactions" (YWS correspondence, 1984). Several councilors argued that Agency funding fell to Metro Toronto and higher forms of government, however, by mid 1984, the Shelter gained City Council support by very thin margins. A former manager remembers the frustration in dealing with government bureaucracy and politics:

> We got a letter from [the Mayor of North York], he had been [the Mayor] for years, supporting the project [YWS] in principle. Then I went to make a presentation at North York Council about not a specific site at this point in time, just about what we were attempting to do in that community, and the Mayor [along with other councilors] began to speak as if he had never heard of the organization, wasn't really supportive, and I happened to have brought his

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[55] North York's Mayor and several Councilors supported instead an existing housing referral agency. The Board of YWS responded that a housing referral agency does not meet the needs of homeless youth.

[56] Several years ago the North York Mayor, Mel Lastman, (who is now the Mayor of Toronto) blundered when he staunchly argued that there were no homeless people in his suburb, only to awaken the following day to news that an elderly woman had frozen to death near a North York bus shelter.

> letter of endorsement with me and you know, kind of naïve, not really understanding all the political ins and outs and personalities I was dealing with around that Council chamber, I said [the Mayor] sent us a letter of support and I can't understand why he's saying what he's saying now and one of the councilors said well do you have that letter of support and I said yes I do, well would you read it out to us, I did and everybody started laughing (March 3, 1999).

In 1984, hope amongst YWS Board members was tenuously restored with the opportunity to rent a York University building (situated in the heart of North York). The Agency emphasized the interaction of research and practice and the collaborative benefits of university disciplines such as social work and psychology, by having a location on campus for placements. However, dreams were soon tempered when the University failed to accept an agreement. By the end of the year, a Shelter manager noted that "site selection is proving to be a very difficult process indeed" (YWS Archive, September 17, 1984). After two and one half years searching for a location, YWS members were tired and frustrated, evidenced in the following memorandum scripted by the Founder:

> Due to busy schedules, flus and disappointment that the shelter is not yet open, the attendance at regular meetings has been declining. It is important to remember that the young people are still there and there is a great deal of support for the project...Continued and consistent participation by the Board members will result in success... (Richard Corbett, January, 1985).

At the close of 1985, the Agency's luck had turned when a Board member 'accidentally' stumbled upon a site in Etobicoke. A three floor residence situated on a quiet residential court, zoned for diverse treatment facilities (an adolescent treatment facility and a mother-child center already existed in the location) was soon rented by YWS from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. The change of location (from North York to Etobicoke) allowed YWS to serve clients from various suburbs (Rexdale, Weston, North York, Downsview). The house was large enough for 25 residents (a shift in numbers), suitably designed for coed habitation including bathrooms and showers, and had ample office, meeting and recreational space. It was also situated on a major bus route and was next door to several complementary services. YWS Board members were relieved and scheduled an opening for early 1986 - framing its Shelter as a "neutral setting" and "supportive environment" for teens from both North York and Etobicoke. The program was to operate as:

1. an emergency residence located within a local suburban community serving North York and Etobicoke adolescents staffed 24 hours by youth workers and administrative personnel;
2. a setting in which to take referrals from local schools, youth serving agencies and families and work closely with guidance counselors as well as social service organizations in North York, Etobicoke and downtown Toronto;
3. a residence which would provide a safe environment, lifeskills counseling, assistance with independent living and information on education and employment opportunities to residents; and,

4. an environment which encouraged family reconciliation "whenever possible" and referral of residents to professional individual and family therapists for long-term assistance when necessary (YWS Archive, 1985).

After almost five years of 'conceptualizing' a suburban youth shelter, a small group of concerned suburban residents could now transform their 'dream' into reality.

Philosophy and Mandate

During the early years, YWS existed (and still does) as a group of committed individuals struggling to operationalize their youth shelter concept. Throughout their arduous site search, the group developed community relations, personnel policies and program directives in order to minimize the start-up time required for the shelter once site selection occurred.

YWS prided itself on being unique - Toronto's first suburban street youth shelter - presenting suburban youth experiencing problems with greater opportunity to return home, continue with school, and maintain community ties. As described by a former middle level manager:

> [YWS] is a one-of-a-kind service in North Western Toronto for local young people who are displaced from home as a result of conflict or abuse. Their problems are currently compounded as they must travel downtown for emergency shelter, far from their family, friends, and schools. We anticipate that family reconciliation will be more frequent, school drop-outs will be reduced and participation in downtown crime will be curbed (particularly for

> prostitution and drug related offenses) when teenagers can stay in their local community to receive help (YWS correspondence, 1985).

Another Agency document noted that "[o]nce they [kids] have left the local area they lose the possibility of staying on at school or being reunited with parents" (1984 YWS Letter to York University).

As such, YWS framed itself as a short-term emergency crisis center that would keep its suburban clientele close to family, friends and school. Its major priority would be family reunification, or if that failed, independent living. As noted by the Founder:

> We wanted to give shelter to adolescents who found themselves on the street. We also wanted to reunite families if that was possible...most of them [youth] require only a short 'cooling out' period in a safe haven and some mediation assistance before returning home (February 4, 1999).

The Shelter's service model was described in simple and clear terms - adolescents either "walk in" or are "referred" to the residence, which in turn lead to three options - "returning home," "independent or co-operative living," or "long term residences or special care facilities" (Funding Proposal, 1984). The Shelter's focus was to provide crisis counseling, food, shelter, life skills development, job search training and a referral service to coed adolescents between the ages of 16 and 24.[57] YWS described

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[57] At first, YWS sought to provide services to youth between the ages 14 to 20 - noting the gap in services for 14 and 15 year olds due to CAS' overworked social workers and operational budget cuts. However, the lower end cut off was changed to 16 after the Shelter received a letter from Metro Community Services Department (June, 1982) clarifying: "...youth under the age of 16 are not eligible for subsidy independent of their parents or legal guardian. Hostels which receive requests from persons in this age group are required to contact the CAS..." (YWS correspondence, June 22, 1982). The upper end age range became 24 shortly after opening; the Shelter explaining that there existed few services available for youth between 20 and 24 years of age, while there existed numerous adult shelters for those aged 25 and older.

itself as an 'in-between service' stopover - a safe place to consider options before returning home or being referred to an appropriate long-term setting.

As mentioned in CH's local history, YWS received an angry letter in 1986 from CH ("Toronto's primary youth shelter") regarding YWS' description in the media as "the first youth shelter providing 24 hour service." CH informed YWS that the first youth shelter offering 24 hour intake, 365 days a year was in fact CH. CH further contended that it had provided extensive support and guidance to YWS in the early years. As such, CH insisted that YWS cease defining itself in the press as "unique." In a letter to CH, YWS apologized and noted that "they are modeled after CH" and that press reports have ignored the distinctive quality that YWS was the first "suburban" shelter with these characteristics.

The Perceived Population

With clear documentation of suburban youth "...sleeping in school corridors, T.T.C. washrooms, park benches or going to downtown residences and frequently landing up on the Yonge Street strip" (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984), YWS imagined its shelter population consisting primarily of suburban high school kids, and thus the impetus towards keeping them in their home community.[58] The Agency's clientele was primarily described as "...good, upstanding adolescents who have often been forced into their housing problem through no fault of their own" (YWS correspondence, 1986). What was perceived to differentiate YWS' residents from their downtown

[58] As a past middle level manager reflected: "These were very motherhood-like ambitions and I wouldn't be surprised at all to find out that YWS isn't doing exactly that right now" (March 3, 1999).

shelter counterparts was a lack of inner city street experience, even though the youth were in crisis (Byrne, 1989). As explained by a former middle level manager:

> ...I had a sense that we were dealing with a different population...the inner city population somehow struck me as being less naïve, more street wise, more hard-core. Certainly the staff [at downtown shelters] projected that street savvy...led me to think that we were dealing with a slightly different beast in North York... (March 3, 1999).

Accordingly, YWS' clients were framed as "...kids [who] aren't in trouble, they're not offenders or addicts, they're just kids who can't manage at home" (Toronto Star, January 11, 1983).

While its clientele was viewed in sympathetic terms - "victims of abuse," "sleeping in school corridors," and surviving "family dysfunction," YWS was nonetheless billed as a structured and rule oriented environment. A 1985 YWS letter to community members described the Shelter:

> The proposed shelter will not be an open-door, drop in center for undesirables. Rather the youth staying at our residence will be referred there by other social service agencies. We will have a lengthy interview with these young people, prior to their moving in, to ensure that they are aware of their problem and prepared to deal with it.

Similarly, a YWS letter to corporations in search of funding (1986) noted:

> Each adolescent within our program has to have an emergency component to their cause, or we will not accept them into our program. We are not a 'flop-house' and our clients are not ones who expect a 'free ride' in life or refuse to

> work. Our program is based on a 'tough love' concept and is totally reality based. Each client has specific chores to do and is expected to fulfill the program which has been individually developed on his or her needs.

According to Richard Corbett (Founder), YWS had to "sell" its program to various groups (politicians, foundations, businesses and members of the community), emphasizing that its residents were not "lazy bums," rather, they were suburban youth in need of care. Throughout the Agency's genesis, the Founder was amazed at the community's perception of homeless youth as "undeserving of this type of help" (February 4, 1999). A former middle level manager recalls:

> I mean can you imagine 15 years ago, there weren't nearly as many kids on the street, and those who were on the street were pretty disheveled, hard-core looking. I don't think there was a lot of general awareness about the difficulties they have just keeping a head on their shoulders at school, or functioning in a normal life. I don't think there was a real awareness of the extent of the problem for kids, so maybe we [YWS] were trying to do that a bit...it's a basic marketing sales pitch...You know, we had a vision and we did whatever we could to see that through to reality (March 3, 1999).

In order to gain public support and approval, YWS framed its clientele as "good kids" and the Shelter as a professional and conservative institution.

At its inception, the Agency adopted a set of operating guidelines, most likely from existing downtown youth shelters:

1. Accept coed referrals, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;

2. Require an aspect of crisis or emergency within the referral conditions. If this condition is not required, the facility will soon fill up with "professional hostel-hoppers" and adolescents who only need independent housing. Independent housing anywhere (especially in Toronto) can take up to six months to obtain and clients who remain within the program for that long will not only become dependent upon the program but will reduce the number of potential clients annually served (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984:6-7);
3. Establish a reputation of accepting "hard to service" referrals (therefore becoming indispensable to the community) (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984:7); and
4. Maintain program length of stay to a maximum of three weeks (otherwise, the entire facility will rapidly evolve into a treatment center, which will make client movement almost impossible) (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984:7).

These indices form the Shelter's operational mantra and are easily visible throughout YWS' middle years. However, as will be seen, present day YWS struggles to maintain this notion of short-term emergency care.

Interorganizational Relations

Throughout the four year search for a home, YWS gained the trust and support of many constituents. In North York, a strong advocate emerged from City Council and provided glowing approval for the Agency:

> As a former high school teacher, I am also aware of the need in North York for a place which would provide youth with safety, shelter and support during periods of crisis and emotional turmoil...A safe place to go and a "cooling off"

> spot could well mean the difference between a high school drop out and a graduate...I very strongly support the need for a youth hostel for North York and offer my assistance in any manner possible (Comptroller Barbara Greene, March 14, 1983).

By 1984, the Agency had endorsements from numerous levels of government, including the Solicitor General of Canada, several Federal and Provincial Ministers, and the Chairman of Metropolitan Toronto. An important ally to YWS was the Mayor of Etobicoke who not only supported the concept of a shelter in his region, but also provided needed financial aid ($15,000.00 in donations and non-interest bearing loans through his own foundation). As noted by YWS' first Executive Director: "I am afraid that without the Dennis Flynn [Mayor] Foundation's involvement...and trust in us and our professional beliefs...we might have been forced to cease operations..." (June 3, 1986).

In terms of social service agency support, YWS made several local friends - community based agencies that saw the benefits of a youth shelter. For example, North York's only other adolescent center argued:

> For several years now our agency has been painfully aware of the complete lack of emergency housing for North York adolescents. Unable to find any in their borough, these teens are forced to search elsewhere. If they're lucky, something is found in downtown Toronto. The distance however, often prevents them from continuing with their school or negotiating with their families. In view of the urgent and long lasting need, I was most pleased to hear of YWS' efforts to initiate a crisis facility for North York teens. It's long

> overdue...We will continue to assist with the development of this facility as we feel it is an important and needed resource for the city of North York and its young people (J. D. Griffin Adolescent Center, 1984).

Guidance counselors from local secondary schools also voiced their belief in the urgency for such a shelter since students (as young as 14) were living on the street or in downtown shelters. In general, the North York and Etobicoke Boards of Education were very supportive of the project, believing that it would provide some of its students with a stable environment so that their education could continue.

Downtown shelters, especially Covenant House, Turning Point and Stop 86, provided guidance and shared operational and developmental information with YWS:

> We [YWS] learned a lot from them [downtown street youth shelters], particularly around their program design, their planning, staffing models, their organizational structures...they were very open about that kind of information, [and we] took from them what we could and altered their designs and structures in order to fit comfortably with the Board that I was working with at YWS (former middle level manager, March 3, 1999).

North York branches of the CAS were members of the task force that launched YWS. Throughout the early years, YWS and the CAS enjoyed a co-operative and supportive relationship. By 1985, one CAS worker sat on the Shelter's Board and there existed frequent exchange of information between the agencies. YWS had gained an avid referral base through the Societies:

> We [YWS] are so very close to opening and [our] colleagues [CAS and CCAS] will be making referrals to the shelter. It is often the case that troubled

> teenagers over the age of 16 who are still involved with CAS, have few options available to them when they are forced from home or unable to remain in a foster home. We [YWS] are addressing this problem and expect to be able to help the CAS and other youth-serving organizations by providing an option to sending kids downtown to hostels or seeing them remain in a situation of domestic conflict...CAS stands to benefit from this... (YWS middle level manager, 1985).

However, like other shelters at the time, YWS highlighted one of its colleagues' shortfalls:

> Wards of CAS under the age of 16 can be placed in CAS facilities...although admission policies reflect their reluctance to accept 14-16 year olds into care. The task force feels it should not be necessary for adolescents to become wards in order to receive crisis care (YWS Funding Proposal, 1984).

YWS became painfully aware of the service gaps for this young population, at the same time realizing that their hands were tied when it came to housing under-16 year olds.

Collaboration amongst various groups and agencies existed in theory, but not necessarily in reality. Despite numerous acclamations for a suburban shelter, YWS experienced difficulty translating vocal applause into tangible financial and political support. For example, Richard Corbett (Founder) presented the Shelter's proposal to the Catholic Church (usually avid supporters of homeless causes) only to discover that they would not support an agency which would provide abortion counseling, despite being assured that it was not part of YWS' mandate. The Shelter's Founder recalls

that: "It was a real fight, a real struggle to get people involved...to get the support from politicians and people in the community" (February 4, 1999). A former manager echoed this opinion: "I remember feeling in those days a little without an anchor, as you say, it was a new territory, there were few other groups working on similar projects...There was a bit of a sense of being alone..." (March 3, 1999).

THE MIDDLE YEARS (1986-1993)

After five and one half long years at the helm of the YWS 'movement', Richard Corbett resigned once the Shelter opened its doors in 1986, claiming that "it had taken everything out of me" (February 4, 1999). Although the committed school teacher continued to financially support YWS, he removed himself from the Shelter's operations. Even though the struggle to open a shelter in Toronto's suburbia became a reality, new struggles would continue to sap the Agency's energies and resources.

By January, 1986, the opening of YWS was looming. With $70,000.00 in its bank account, the Agency estimated house renovations to cost approximately $40,000.00, shelter furniture approximately $25,000.00, and $42,000.00 in expenditures for the first three months of operation. In March 1986, all staff were hired - one program coordinator, five front line crisis counselors, four overnight relief staff, one cook and one secretary. The Shelter's philosophy permeated the structure: "Keep kids in North York, keep kids in a home community, provide a safe environment" (former manager, March 3, 1999). On March 24, 1986, YWS opened

its doors: a 23 bed facility[59] located in suburban Toronto servicing 16 to 24 year olds. The first resident was a young girl with developmental problems who had been 'dropped off' downtown by her mother and her new boyfriend - physical and sexual abuse was believed to have transpired within the family. The second resident was remembered as a 16 year old South Asian girl who was fleeing an arranged marriage. Richard Corbett recalled that these were "wonderful kids" (February 4, 1999).

While emerging as a necessary venue for homeless youth, YWS could not ignore its growing deficit (approximately $70,000.00 by the end of 1986), a problem that would plague the Shelter throughout its existence. Accordingly, YWS used two strategies to elicit funding - direct attention towards corporations, businesses and foundations, as well as join other shelters to protest the Ontario Government's abysmal shelter funding rates. Throughout the late 1980's (and continuing to present), YWS expended great effort in 'selling' itself to the public. Framed as providing "...kids with space...counseling and support to start to sort out their lives," YWS sent out pamphlets throughout its community to raise funds (YWS correspondence, 1988). It argued that homeless youth "...cross all social, cultural and economic lines. It is not just an urban problem; this is now a suburban problem too (YWS Letter to corporations, 1989). These appeals for financial support included two case studies of the "typical" shelter client - Sarea, a 17 year old girl who was beaten by her father and brothers because they suspected she had been out with a boy; and 18 year old David, who had experienced horrific sexual abuse as a child, consequently fleeing at an early

[59] It had been decided that the facility would hold 23 youth in the second floor bedrooms. Some rooms were single occupancy, others contained two to four bunk beds.

age to downtown Toronto and becoming involved in prostitution and drug/alcohol abuse. YWS consistently emphasized its suburban location: "We [YWS] provide youth a chance to escape from Yonge Street...because we are a 90 minute bus ride from downtown" (YWS Letter to potential funders, 1989).

While the Shelter targeted potential donors, it also became involved in a youth shelter network - Shelters for Youth Coalition - which advocated for the need and importance of community based shelters as preventive mechanisms to mitigate youth falling into the downtown street culture, as well as for better legislation and funding initiatives. Funding for YWS came primarily through the Ministry of Community and Social Services who acted in a cost sharing agreement with Metropolitan Toronto to provide a per diem rate. According to the Shelter (and the Coalition), the per diem rate was approximately one-half of actual operating costs. Compared to services for minors (under 16 years of age), the Coalition noted:

> Hostels are funded under the General Welfare Act, an adult level of service for those people 16 or older. The per diem rate for this service is significantly lower than for residential services for children up to the age of 16. The result is staffing averages for youth in adult facilities falling far below those of children's services. Young people in their "transitional years" of 16-20 fall through the crack in current legislation as they are neither children nor fully responsible adults (Shelters For Youth Coalition, 1988:11).

Advocacy (in terms of agency networking) and fundraising would continue to be important components of the Shelter's quest for survival.

Operational Philosophies

From its genesis, YWS saw itself as an emergency crisis shelter - a short-term stop-over where adolescents could be 'bandaged' and sent on their way. The medical metaphor was pervasive in describing its operation:

> We're the farthest thing from a treatment centre...We get them out and we get them ready for another part of the system. They're assessed quickly and may stay on 48 hours or a maximum of three weeks...Symbolically, we start them breathing and stop them bleeding. Like an emergency ward. We have a profile of accepting hard-to-service clients, with personality disorders to schizophrenia. But we won't accept clients just looking for independent housing...We're open all the time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Executive Director quoted in Toronto Star, December 8, 1986).

> The home is like the emergency department of a hospital...we patch up the crises, assess the damages and then send them off to the proper department or agency...we take in kids from all kinds of situations - from prostitution to drug abuse to kids who've been abused at home...The only requirement for admittance is that they are in an emergency situation and need our help... (Program Director quoted in Toronto Star, October 14, 1986).

During this period, a mission statement was scripted declaring YWS "a short-term emergency residence and referral agency" providing shelter and support programs for homeless youth aged 16-24 in order to enable them to live "responsibly

and independently in society" (YWS Archive, 1986). The Agency did not believe that it was a "hostel for homeless youth" (which supposedly denoted long-term habitation) but rather it was "...set up to provide crisis counseling..." (First Executive Director, 1986). The Shelter's operational philosophy was best described by the then Program Director as: "From the day people come, they have to start preparing to leave...we don't let people get too attached to the place. We insist on being a temporary station to get people going in the right direction...That's our whole philosophy" (First Executive Director quoted in Toronto Star, December 8, 1986). Current YWS staff liken the Agency's earlier operational style to a "bed and breakfast" whereby youth were not allowed in the building during the day and entered essentially to sleep and eat. As will be discussed, this approach to sheltering youth would shift.

In order for a youth to secure a bed at the shelter, two assessments were conducted (one telephone and one face-to-face) whereby the potential resident explained his or her situation (i.e., why a bed was requested, family life, legal, medical, drug/alcohol, prostitution issues, etc.). Once accepted into the program, the resident had one week to follow whatever plan was developed during the assessments - generally taking the form of job and/or housing searches. At the end of the week, the resident's progress was reviewed by a team of workers and a decision was made whether more time would be granted. YWS soon gained the status of being "more strict" and "more intrusive" than most other shelters. As a long-time worker remarked: "We make them do things, we force them to focus on their goal, and come up with a plan to accomplish it" (March 1, 1999).

The House Rules included standard sanctions - no drugs, no alcohol and no violence: "Rules are strict. A cook prepares meals but residents have to do all the washing up and maintenance of the house...Those who cannot live by the rules or who don't make an effort to find jobs and get out on their own are asked to leave. Most stay..." (First Executive Director, 1986). Counselors were responsible for developing plans with residents and directing them to appropriate agencies (group homes, psychiatric facilities, job training programs, long-term housing units). As noted by the then Program Director: "Many who see the shelter as just another stop on the hostel circuit are turned away and some, such as kids with acute psychiatric problems, are sent to other agencies better able to handle their situations" (YWS correspondence, 1986).

The Actual Population

Soon after its opening, the Shelter remained predominantly full (census ranging from 20 to 23 residents on average, and eight adolescents refused per day due to bed shortages) and its clientele consisted primarily of "...schizophrenics, alcoholics, drug abusers, pregnant women, wanted out of province, sexually assaulted, physically abused, transients, [and] ex-convicts" (YWS Program Report, April 1986). It was not quite the resident portrait earlier imagined by the Agency.

By 1987, over one half of the Shelter's population were suburban youth (out of a total of 326 youth seen in 1987, 124 came from Etobicoke and North York, 71 from Peel, and 16 from Toronto, the rest being from outside of Ontario and/or Canada) (Program Data, 1987). By 1988, over 1000 homeless youth had been "intaken" and

the demographic make-up of the Shelter's clientele included: 57% male, 81% abusing drugs and alcohol, 35% prostituting, 60% in trouble with the law (50% on probation), 71% reporting family sexual and physical abuse and approximately 80% having been out of the home for three months or more (Program Data, January 5, 1988). This bleak portrait was echoed by the then Executive Director:

> When we first opened, we thought we'd be getting middle class kids who'd had a fight with their parents and needed a place to crash for a couple of days. But we've yet to see our first middle class kid...The people who come here... fall through the nets at school, and they keep on falling until they're out on the streets (January 5, 1988).

Internal Struggles

The Shelter was repeatedly described as "hectic" during these times due to the high number of residents with behavioral problems, medical issues and horrific accounts of family abuse. As a result, YWS opened a short-lived health clinic in January 1988 that included an adolescent drop-in and counseling service, a medical drop-in clinic, a suicide prevention hot-line, and family counseling: "Since our residence program which normally deals with these aspects is already being overtaxed and is constantly full, it is obvious that another program service is necessary and long over-due" (YWS Crisis Clinic, no date).

The following years prove to be unsteady for the small Shelter - low staff morale invaded the environment (due primarily to work pressures and low wages) coupled with the resignation of one worker who was entangled in impropriety and

fraud allegations. Compounding these problems was the large debt being amassed by the Shelter. Accordingly, house expenditures such as food, phones, and drug prescriptions were drastically reduced. In fact, the Shelter was required to lay-off several staff members.[60] By June 1988, most staff were looking for other jobs and morale was extremely tarnished. The Agency acknowledged that it was in "financial crisis" (the deficit as of May 31, 1988, had grown to $134, 876.00). By mid-July 1988, the Health Clinic was put on hold. It subsequently closed in early January 1989. An emergency staff meeting was called in late November 1988, because "...staff feel they have lost control...change in management makes them feel unsure and thus insecure...staff are suffering from burnout; tired; depressed, emotional... overburdened, etc." (YWS Board of Directors Minutes, November 23, 1988). Some Board members even suggested that the Shelter close for several weeks in order to revamp the program, clean the facility, and rehire and re-train staff. The Youth Shelter Inter-Agency Network (YSIN), of which YWS was a member, commented that in the early 1990's "[t]he fundamental issue facing existing centers can be summed up in two words: Inadequate Funding" (YSIN, 1994:7).[61] YWS' plea to the United Way described this grueling period:

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[60] Metro Toronto Shelter Director suggested at this time that YWS "[r]eassess admission policies to allow maximum capacity." The Agency would have been able to receive $365,000.00 more in per diem funds if it kept its beds consistently full - a seemingly hard task for a voluntary shelter.

[61] At the time, YWS was one of five existing Toronto youth shelters (others included Turning Point, YMCA, Covenant House and Stop 86). With 105 coed beds, 25 female and 95 male beds available for a growing street youth population (numbering over 10,000 at this time), four new shelters were being developed (Eva's Place, Second Base, Touchstone, and Housing for Youth in York). All of these agencies were YSIN members and spent considerable time lobbying various levels of government for adequate funding that reflected actual operations.

> Presently this funding formula [with the Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services] gives us a per diem rate of $40.73 per client, per night. This rate falls far short of what is required to operate this program, which is closer to $65.00 per client, per night. We are very frugal in the operation of our program. We employ only two counselors per shift which is the absolute minimum required to provide for the safety and security of the clients and the staff. We use food banks to keep food costs down. We operate rent free. We use donations at every possible turn but running a program which serves over 900 homeless youth annually costs at least $500,000.00 whereas our per diem rate will allow for only $297,000.00 at an occupancy rate of 80%. In an effort to correct this inadequacy we have been instrumental in the development of a network of youth shelters who have combined their efforts to lobby the Province directly (August 1990).

With an operating budget of approximately $400,000.00 in 1991-2 ($322,200.00 from Metropolitan Toronto through per diem and case management fees; $35,000.00 from donations; $57,000.00 from grants; and $20,000.00 through special events), YWS projected a deficit of well over $130,000.00, leading its Board to note that "...the funding situation at YWS is critical" (Board of Directors Minutes, February 19, 1991). As a result, the Shelter increased the number of beds (from 23 to 25), gaining an extra $28,375.00 in per diem funding. Throughout 1992, YWS (and other youth shelters) continued to struggle financially while lobbying for an increase in the combined per diem and case management rates.

YWS' Image

During these tumultuous middle years, YWS continued its mandate "[t]o foster a strong partnership with agencies, individuals and organizations," having particularly strong relations with the CAS and police. Moreover, the Shelter played an important role in the Youth Shelter Coalition, the North York Inter Agency Council, and the Metropolitan Toronto Youth Task Force, as well as many other local community committees (for example, Etobicoke Council Special Committee on Illicit Drugs and the Central Etobicoke Youth Center). Despite an awareness of its reliance upon external referrals, YWS was firmly uninterested in becoming a "dumping ground" for other agencies (hospitals, the CAS, Probation and other shelters). As noted by the first Executive Director: "[w]e don't take kids who are high or drunk or violent. Agencies try to dump kids on us but we don't accept every referral" (Executive Director quoted in Toronto Star, December 8, 1986). A YWS letter to Probation and Parole Services in August 1986 echoed this sentiment:

> Inappropriate referrals would be clients who are simply "hostel hopping" and show none of the motivation mentioned above [working on specific goals]. Clients who cannot manage their behavior and emotional outbursts are also inappropriate as there is not a treatment component to our facility. With regards to your clients [probation and parole], it is important that they understand that their utilizing our service is strictly voluntary. We have found, on occasion, that clients coming to us via the correctional system have a

tendency to feel 'placed' here and become rebellious towards any internal structure or authority.

Within these middle years, YWS staunchly defended itself as a short-term crisis shelter with little interest in treatment and long-term stays. Religiously following the mantra of "short-term crisis intervention," YWS was particular about who was an appropriate client - in order that the small agency did not "fill up" with hard-to-refer (i.e., 'hard-to-move-out') individuals. A few years later, with a changing external environment, YWS would not be able to maintain such a stringent approach to sheltering homeless youth.

PRESENT DAY (1994-1998)

Throughout the mid 1990's, the Agency continued to struggle for survival. With massive cuts to social services in 1995 by a tough-minded Provincial Conservative Government, YWS lost its case management fees, thus lowering the per diem rate to $50.50. As noted by a current upper level manager: "...the actual cost should be more like $75.00 to do this [operate a shelter], if you wanted to do it decently...to invest staff time in the youth who are here..." (March 1, 1999). In order to increase revenue, the Shelter again augmented its bed capacity - from 25 in 1994 to 27, then 28 and presently 30 (taking away an upstairs staff office). Nevertheless, by 1995, YWS appeared different - the Agency had recruited a new managerial staff with impressive administrative and fundraising skills, and in turn, there was a greater sense of confidence amongst workers (YWS no longer consisted of "amateurs" but tenured service providers). During this period, the media (primarily newsprint) took a keen

interest in the Shelter's operation and plight. Concurrently, YWS constructed a more notable presence throughout the community by organizing shelter and street kid awareness projects (e.g., "Youth Shelter Awareness Week"). A Community Outreach worker was hired to build and foster relationships with external bodies (media, the community, other agencies, etc.). Increasingly involved with other agencies (through YSIN) in lobbying for better youth shelter funding (relative to well funded battered women shelters), YWS also made a commitment to build a strong fundraising base - primarily focused on the business sector. In 1997 and 1998, the Shelter's revenue approximated $750,000.00 - over $250,000.00 privately raised each year (approximately 35% of the shelter's total revenue), the remainder coming from Metropolitan Hostel Services. Internally, a different climate was developing - staff were becoming more comfortable and secure with their positions: "It's a warm feeling here now, I've never had that before [at YWS], it's like a family" (long-time staff, March 2, 1999). For the first time in its history, the Agency could live year-to-year rather than day-to-day. By 1998, YWS had a balanced budget, with a proud surplus of $5,900.00. A current upper level manager displayed YWS' new confidence:

> Let me give you my vision of YWS. There are so many people who have an interest in YWS staying around...Who's to say we are not needed, if we are always full and there are more people asking for shelter than we can house then we must be needed...and there is still a demand to run a shelter...Hostel Services are funding us, they want us to provide 30 beds. The community is used to us. We're established, everybody knows here's the shelter and this is what the shelter does... (February 4, 1999).

A New Population

During this period, the small Shelter continued to be filled to capacity (1,079 individuals visited YWS in 1998) yet a shift in clientele became apparent - residents were becoming younger and appeared "new" to the system. For example, from April 1997 to March 1998, 30% of new males and 50% of new females were between the ages of 16 and 17. Female residents were overwhelmingly younger than their male counterparts, and twice as likely to be first time YWS visitors (Proposal for a Long Term Stay Project, 1999:4).

YWS' new population also included graduates (or drop-outs) from the child welfare system (Annual Report, 1997-8:10), a large number of youth experiencing mental illness, and an ever increasing immigrant group (YWS upper level manager, February 1, 1999). This diversity in population has proven difficult and sometimes dangerous for Shelter staff. Many workers feel that a younger population is equivalent to immature and rowdy residents, causing "big headaches in the house" (Team Meeting, March 3, 1999). Staff expressed frustration regarding how to provide meaningful services to immigrant and psychiatric youth. One front line worker recalled that a young girl with mental health issues was referred to the Shelter by a North York Hospital, only to later discover that she had slashed her wrists in the middle of the night. With respect to immigrant youth, workers felt their "hands are tied" when dealing with culture shock and language barriers. As a result, this group tends to be ignored: "They're [immigrants] the first to go to bed...they're always quiet...there's not much to be done with them" (YWS staff, March 9, 1999).

Even though the Shelter experienced a population change, the reasons as to why youth continued to seek shelter were familiar:

> The overall reasons why kids are here are the same as what it was all along, there's abuse issues, there's all these background things, whether it be abuse or whether it's just an unstable home where there's one parent or two parents or alcohol or things like that...we're getting a lot of kids who run away because they can't deal with things going on at home... (YWS staff, March 24, 1999).

The introduction of younger youth, youth with psychiatric problems and immigrants has made one striking change to the Shelter - its clientele are staying longer (from one to two weeks during the Shelter's early days to several months currently). A long-time staff member noted: "On average their [residents] stay here is longer, I keep seeing the same kids here, we have 30 residents here and probably six of them have changed over the last month, we seem to have a lot more stable house" (March 1, 1999). The debate has already begun amongst YWS employees whether or not they are turning into a group home.[62]

A Changing Shelter

YWS' philosophy has maintained remarkable consistency - conceptually remaining a short-term crisis center. As described recently by an upper level manager:

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[62] As one long-time worker explained: "[w]e're right now up in the air about what's a short-term shelter. Is that one month? three months? Or a year?" (March 1, 1999).

> YWS [is] a place of safety for young people who might be fleeing abuse, or an unsafe situation or abandonment, coming out of jail or CAS. I see it as an emergency place they come in at a time of crisis, it can be a safe place for them, for a short period of time and that ideally we would...make a connection with them, help them understand their needs and do an appropriate referral for them... (February 4, 1999).

However, this sentiment is tempered by the realities facing Toronto's social services sector (over-worked front line staff, massive budget cuts, and lost services). As the upper level manager continued, perceiving YWS as an emergency crisis shelter is "a nice pie in the sky...the problem is there aren't any referral places...there aren't enough supportive housing, second stage housing..." (February 4, 1999). However, the fact remains that YWS residents are staying longer - some individuals making themselves "at home" in the short-term crisis facility for six or seven months.

The Agency continues to portray itself to the public as a structured, 'no-nonsense' establishment: "...the youth have to call ahead, they can't just show up. Once there they find the shelter is no flop-house. The youth bunk out, sometimes in groups, and get hot meals...They are then required to do two chores a day and clean up their rooms as a prerequisite to staying..." (Program Manager quoted in Etobicoke Life, March, 1999). However, according to present day front-line staff, YWS is becoming less strict and more flexible. Two long-time staff members recall:

> When I first started here we weren't open during the day our program was basically you were out by 9:30 every morning and you weren't allowed back in until 4:30. We didn't run a day program, things were different, the rules were

> very strict, there wasn't a lot of leniency and it was very set in stone how things happened. I think we have evolved to the point where we're willing to take risks, we're willing to accept someone's stay [such as a psychiatric youth] if we think it will be beneficial to them (March 8, 1999).

> We've become more adaptable to each resident. When I first started it was cut and dry rules, we were more concerned with following policies and procedures and less in actually bending our rules to accommodate individual residents. I find that there's a lot fewer discharges and warnings given out... (March 1, 1999).

Another front line worker makes the distinction between the 'old YWS' that was more concerned with "running a specific shelter," and the 'new YWS' that is "more goal oriented towards the client."[63] As an example of this transformation, a former policy of YWS mandated that clients experiencing mental illness were only allowed into the Shelter with a psychiatrist's written assessment. As explained by one worker: "...we changed that policy, I think ultimately we felt that we were being too picky, there were too many people we were turning down for beds." The Shelter currently accepts psychiatric youth (who make up an increasing percentage of YWS' population) and monitors them closely. According to front line staff, YWS is consciously attempting

[63] One front line worker disagreed with this rendition believing that the Shelter was more client-focused in the past and now pays more attention towards structures, protocols and guidelines. An example given involves the amount of paper work presently required at discharge which consequently leaves little time for worker-client interaction.

to open its doors to "much more difficult clients"[64] since there are few existing resources to which they can turn (YWS staff, March 24, 1999). Accordingly, workers are "relaxing" the rules and structures in order to make this new population more comfortable and able to function in such an environment. Most shelter workers believe that being consistently full has impacted the way in which they "police" house rules and structures:

> We're much more lax on our rules now, we used to be a lot stricter. The reason behind it I think that there's a lot more people now, and shelters are always full...and discharging them is probably not the best answer...putting them back on the streets is putting them much further back (YWS staff, March 24, 1999).

Providing A Vision

In 1996, the Agency re-explored its mission and developed a vision statement: "To end homelessness for youth, one person at a time, one step at a time," thus, attempting to foster a more global outlook regarding youth homelessness (linking the "micro to the macro"). As explained by an upper level manager:

> A couple of years ago we did a visioning exercise with our staff...our mandate says we are going to house youth in trouble and get them back independently

[64] An additional characteristic seen more recently in youth involves emotional distress. A worker noted that: "...some of them [residents] are like total wrecks, things that have happened in their lives that they don't want to deal with and which is also holding them back at the same time. They don't trust people, especially adults, there's absolutely no trust there" (March 1, 1999).

> whereas our visioning statement is about taking a bigger picture, a sort of bigger sense of what else can we do to value our work here that each day here was important and each night was important...each night that we had given safe shelter, as good of food as we could provide and trained staff the best we could provide who are knowledgeable and care about clients... (February 1, 1999).

As a device to propel YWS into the future, the vision statement was specifically operationalized through two new shelter initiatives - an educational/recreational day program and a proposed second stage housing project. Both programs provide additional alternatives to short-term shelter. The day program links educational life skill training (resume writing, job interviews, anger management counseling, etc.) with recreational activity (music, art, sports, etc.). The second stage housing project intends to provide long-term residency (approximately one year) to ten 16 to 17 years old youth who are enrolled in school on a full-time basis. YWS is currently searching for an appropriate second stage site and is in the process of fundraising for the project. In addition, the Agency is vying for government grant money in order to secure a Community Support worker position, who would focus upon prevention issues and after-care assistance. The vision statement also incorporated an advocacy component to the Agency's operation, clearly seen in YWS' lobbying activities and openness for research to be conducted within its premises:

> The mission statement says we will give you shelter, the vision statement says we're here to end homelessness...it seems to open us up...get us out of our box...its a broader question, it's about ending homelessness, maybe not

> tonight, but how can we end homelessness for this person... (Upper level manager, February 1, 1999).

At present, the small suburban Shelter sees itself as "an innovative and provocative shelter...that has regained its confidence" (Proposal for a Long Term Stay Project, 1999:2). Being more secure in terms of its operation and funding, YWS now defines itself as a "mature organization" in an "ideal position to put solutions into practice" through innovative programs, caring staff, successful fundraising and experienced Board members (Proposal for a Long Term Stay Project, 1999:2).

With a history consisting of implementation barriers, financial struggles and operational concerns, YWS has evolved and maintained itself as a "safe place" to those without home. The Agency managed to stave off numerous catastrophes, as a result of its resilient character: "Three or four years ago, YWS wasn't going to be in existence. We were going to close down, we didn't have the money. I remember...We're still here..." (YWS staff, March 24, 1999). The Shelter's current 24 hour, open intake[65] mandate coupled with prospects for imminent long-term housing are testimonies of YWS' perseverance. Throughout its existence, it has followed a credo of attempting to offer its residents a "little bit more" besides shelter and food:

> YWS believes that we cannot just be a bed and breakfast service. We believe we have an obligation to provide our residents with what they need to get off the street and out of the shelter system (YWS Annual Report, 1997-8).

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[65] YWS' open intake policy is defined as being ready and able to intake an adolescent 24 hours a day, seven days a week, conditional on bed availability.

TABLE THREE: YWS THROUGH THE YEARS[66]

	1986-7	1992	1998
# of intakes	over 1000	over 1000	over 1000
# of beds	23	25	30
# of staff	12	15	16.5
average shelter census	high (20-23)	high (22-24)	high (28-30)
average length of stay	7-14 days	7-14 days	2-3 months
type of resident	suburban; hard-core; drug and prostitution involvement; trouble with the law; CAS involved; history of abuse	same	younger; new to shelter; immigrants/refugees; mental health issues; CAS-involved
average age	19-20 years old	19-20 years old	16-18 years old
shelter services	shelter, food, counseling	same	plus educational/ recreational day program
shelter expenditures	$492,965.00 ($70,000.00 deficit)	$505,800.00 ($130,000.00 deficit)	$750,000.00 ($5,900.00 surplus)
shelter funding	Metro-80% Private donations/grants-20%	Metro-80% Private donations/grants-20%	Metro-65% Private donations/grants-35%

[66] The three years in this table represent snapshots of YWS' early, middle, and present stages of development.

CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPLORING THE LIFE STAGES OF CH AND YWS

INTRODUCTION

> Human services organizations exist in a web of interactions with the larger social environment, which affect their support and ability to function. They are particularly vulnerable to changes in the economic and political power structures that can increase or diminish support for particular social programs, and to demands from clients or community groups that can affect their credibility, status, and survival (Gutierrez, 1992:322).

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, youth shelters were regarded as safe houses for homeless and runaway youth. These establishments provided basic needs services (i.e., shelter, food, clothing) and short-term counseling supports. Soon after its inception, the youth shelter evolved into surrogate parents for this abandoned and/or nomadic population.[67] A YWS front-line worker described the Shelter's 'parental' status:

> A lot of the kids love us here, they are constantly back. It's about trust ultimately. The ones who love us, love us because they trust us and they know we're here to help them even though we're a pain in the butt (March 1, 1999).

As shown earlier, homeless and runaway youth regularly characterize youth shelters as

[67] I worked at one youth shelter where residents would often come into the house shouting, "Hi mom, hi dad, what's for dinner?"

helpful and needed services (Alleva, 1988; Janus et al., 1987; Karabanow, 1997; 1999a). Accordingly, youth shelters achieved credibility from their client base and presently, they are a significant resource for troubled adolescents throughout North America. Identified in the local histories of CH and YWS, these two Shelters have undergone dramatic transformations in their respective operations and clienteles.

The stories of YWS and CH are a striking portrait of conflict begetting change and change begetting innovation. The social context of youth shelters consists of other organizations, clients, and the community at large. Each of these constituents places expectations upon youth shelters, some of which may not necessarily be compatible with the shelter's mandate. This chapter discusses the major trends in the evolution of CH and YWS in light of their clients, other organizations, and the public at large. The analysis also discusses two theories regarding the evolution of CH and YWS. The first explanation, entitled the "mission-focused" perspective, argues that both Shelters were primarily shaped by their environments. According to this perspective, CH and YWS "did the best they could" in order to adapt to their surroundings. Both Shelters identify the "mission-focused" perspective as representing their evolution - and thus this theory is focused upon in the body of this chapter. The "organizational-interest" perspective is an alternate view discussed in the final section of this chapter (entitled "A Differing Perspective"). This theory argues that in order to survive, CH and YWS carved out specific niches within their environments. In essence, both Shelters transformed their operations in order for a specific group of clients ("system kids") to stay longer. According to this perspective, CH and YWS adopted the role of "dumping ground" in order to accrue legitimacy and

stable funding. However, this view does not represent the manner in which participants explain their Shelter's evolution. Nonetheless, both perspectives presents a distinct portrait of the youth shelters.

ORGANIC SYSTEMS WITHIN AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Organizations are most often understood as "organic" creatures - composed of internal apparatuses and external environments. All organizations are dependent upon their environments and embedded within larger systems of relations. As illuminated by their respective local histories, CH and YWS did not remain isolated entities, rather, each functioned within various networks consisting of child welfare organizations, other youth shelters, adult shelters, Police, courts, hospitals, Probation and Parole, neighborhoods, and business sectors. Shelter youth are the bond joining these systems.

The life stories of CH and YWS reflect how organizations' internal operations shift and adapt in order to fit with external environment requirements. Both Shelters survived tumultuous external (political and economic) landscapes through "smart management," that involved being flexible, adaptive and innovative. As described by a Shelter worker:

> We [CH] have to always pay attention to the kind of population that comes to our door and to the social and economic situations that Toronto is having...and not be afraid to change, to try something new, readjust, always in light of our philosophy, our principles - you have to have something like that

> otherwise you get scattered and it's chaos. I mean five years ago nobody thought of a lot of the changes that have happened (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

In acknowledging important evolutionary trends in the lives of CH and YWS, this chapter also highlights the "organic" and "flexible" style of youth shelters - transforming the way in which they look and act in order to meet external realities.

As organic systems, organizations depend on the environment for two resource types - legitimacy and power; and productive resources (Handler, 1996). Legitimacy is gained by conforming to the dominant value system in the environment (the focus of the institutional perspective). Power refers to authority and influence within an organization. Productive resources include staff, clients and money (Hasenfeld, 1992a). All organizations desire autonomy and a steady flow of resources; however, most environments are characterized by resource dependency. As such, organizations adopt strategies (e.g., cooperation or competition) to manage their environments (Hasenfeld, 1992a). As will be discussed, the way in which CH and YWS have managed their environments is by accepting "formal system" clients. Recognition of legitimacy commands productive resources from the environment (money, legal authority, and desirable clients) (Handler, 1996). Conformity to dominant cultural norms and belief systems becomes an essential characteristic of organizational behavior. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977:340):

> Organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work...Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects...

Since social service agencies are engaged in "moral work" - conveying a judgment as to the moral worth of the client in terms of how he or she is treated, selected, processed and changed - they are consistently searching out "moral legitimacy" gained by adopting the dominant moral, cultural and belief symbols (Handler, 1996; Hasenfeld, 1992a). The institutional perspective, which has been particularly salient in the study of human service organizations, argues that organizations emulate (mimic) successful organizations in their sector (institutional isomorphism) through the adoption of rules, values, beliefs and cultural symbols. Strong forces of institutionalization work to reduce organizational diversity (Romanelli, 1991). As suggested in Chapter Four, non-profit organizations providing services under contract now resemble more formal organizational structures.

Within the culture of contracting, institutionalization explains the way by which organizations accrue legitimacy and thus obtain resources. Institutional mimicry is clearly evident in the world of youth shelters (and the youth-in-trouble network in general) in terms of bureaucratization (e.g., adopting standard accounting procedures) and professionalization (e.g., hiring fund-raisers, social workers and, executive directors who are management-focused). Organizations also develop "institutional mind sets" - common held assumptions as to how an organization should look and how its work should be performed (Handler, 1996:98). For example, both Shelters framed their work in professional terms such as "counseling" and "case management" which resembled formal child welfare practices. In this sense, the Shelters adopted

technologies that are sanctioned by the institutional environment.[68] For instance, during CH's middle years, numerous counseling programs (individual, group, psychiatric, and legal) emerged as well as distinct collaborative ventures with the CAS and the Police.

Institutional theorists argue that organizational behavior cannot be explained solely by market pressures, but also by institutional pressures (e.g., state regulations and social expectations) (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996:1025).[69] Over time, institutional pressures lead to new organizations imitating dominant structures in a particular environment. Youth shelters were once specialized apparatuses which provided unique support to a particular population - CH was primarily a street kid agency and YWS acted as a refuge for youth with family or school problems. As my data indicates, both Shelters are presently, housing a different variety of youth - mirroring the various formal systems within their environments. Rather than being focused upon the short-term needs of clients, YWS and CH are now faced with residents' more in-depth "biographies" (Lefton and Rosengren, 1966), again reflecting the *modus operandus* of formal systems like the CAS, group homes, and psychiatric institutions. According to the institutional school, existing and dominant modes of

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[68] Hasenfeld (1992a:13) argued that an agency's technologies in fact reflect practice ideologies - reifying the dominant belief system about which clients are "deserving" and what type of services are good for them.

[69] Apart from the fear of losing legitimacy and risking sanctions, arrangements are often reproduced out of the belief that there are no other alternatives. Rules and structures are diffused within highly institutionalized settings, espousing the sentiment that "this is how things are" (Handler, 1996). Sometimes, conformity is a result of substantive requirements - for youth shelters to operate, they must abide by Hostel Standards.

thought and organization are consistently reproduced and reinforced (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996).

At the same time, organizations are by no means passive actors, rather, they help shape their environments.[70] Blau and Scott (1962:195) referred to organizations acting and reacting to their environments as "feedback processes." Organizations generally have the opportunity to choose various symbolic and cultural systems. According to Hasenfeld (1992a:11), organizations are "moral entrepreneurs" - seeking to influence the moral conception of their environments. As mentioned in Chapter Four, all organizations are propelled by symbols - rituals, ceremonies, myths, stories and heroes. CH and YWS constructed the way in which they were perceived by other agencies, clients, and community members. Both Shelters defined themselves as "unique" services. For example, CH made sure that YWS characterized itself as "suburban" in order to maintain a somewhat different appeal. Since youth shelters maintain elusive goals and achieve questionable effectiveness, the appearance of legitimacy and professionalism needs to be framed and exported. As evidenced in the local histories, both CH and YWS shed their "alternative" images and adopted "professional" characteristics in order to fit into their external environments. A telling example comes from a 1994 Youth Shelter Collective (YSIN) document entitled "Building Futures" that attempted to portray its members as legitimate and professional apparatuses:

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[70] Institutional theory has been criticized as a reactive model of organizational behavior (Handler, 1996; Hasenfeld, 1992b).

> Youth shelters are a key entry for youth into the social service system... Youth shelter programs provide stable, safe environments where youth can begin to face their issues and separate from the street culture... Such positive results are largely due to the wide range of counseling services provided by these shelters in the areas of housing, family mediation, employment, education, health care, sexuality and literacy... Youth shelters work with all other youth serving agencies and have developed extensive networks in the educational, employment, mental health, substance abuse treatment and housing communities... Youth shelters have current knowledge of youth issues, concerns and needs... (12).

From its inception, the youth shelter has struggled to portray itself as a legitimate service provider rather than a "flop house." In doing so, the youth shelter has attempted to search out clients who meet this need for legitimacy. As evidenced in this analysis, youth shelters have moved away from serving hard-core street kids in order to accommodate "system-kids" from the CAS, the Police, immigration centers and hospitals.

In this sense, youth shelters have shaped and have been shaped into an organizational form similar to formal child welfare organizations. This chapter provides an overview of the stages in CH's and YWS' evolution, and presents two distinct explanations regarding both Shelters' transformation.

MAJOR EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS

Despite several apparent differences between the two Shelters, such as size, location, financial support, political backing, and religious affiliation, both organizations maintain a similar operational style. As noted above, CH and YWS emerged out of a perceived need for services to support: in one case, downtown street youth, in the other, suburban high school students experiencing family and/or life problems.[71] Ultimately, both Agencies served a common and growing disenfranchised adolescent population. Both Shelters emerged from inspired and committed individuals who interpreted a dearth of resources for their respective populations. Each Shelter assumed a philosophy of "rescuing" youth from destructive situations within a short-term crisis intervention framework:

> Ultimately, it's about getting to know them [street youth], building a relationship with them, and then working towards whatever goals they have set out in their minds, and helping to make them [goals] a little more concrete. What steps can we take to help you get out of the system? So does that mean reconciliation with family? Does that mean going to a group home? Does that mean independent living?...But it has to be fast paced in that they have a short time here...they have to move fast towards their goals in order to be successful to get out of here and not have to go to another shelter (YWS staff, February 23, 1999).

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[71] As the local histories indicate, CH "marched" into the downtown core with the support and recommendation of powerful members of the Catholic community; YWS emerged out of repeated research findings suggesting a need for such a residence in suburban Toronto.

CH and YWS were not satisfied with simply providing shelter and food - the criterion set out by Hostel Standards. Rather, both Agencies adopted a philosophy of individual counseling and case management support. Workers from both organizations exclaimed proudly that they were not only "bed and breakfast" services, but provided each resident with the opportunity to escape his/her street-life environment through individual and group counseling and skills building.

The Early Years

In her exploration of an American Mid-West women's shelter, Hopkins (1983) identified several characteristics of alternative organizations including: limited resources, lack of social legitimacy, and hostile external environments. These characteristics are evident in YWS' and CH's evolution. In the early years, both YWS and CH struggled with securing external acceptance. For YWS, approximately four years were spent searching for a community to house its operation, political backing and financial support. CH had little difficulty developing its physical operation and gaining political and financial commitments. However, the Shelter was enmeshed in confrontations with the CAS, the Police and other social service agencies.[72] For example, CH initially posed a threat to the CAS by accepting minors, and was quickly "reprimanded" (i.e., boycotted) by established organizations (the CAS and the Police). In turn, CH emphasized its unique focus upon "street kids" between the ages of 16 and 21. Similarly, prior to opening, YWS intended to serve 14 and 15 year olds until it

[72] CH likely incurred more difficulties than YWS with respect to interorganizational relations because it was the first of its kind in Toronto and was less collaborative initially.

received a letter from the Metro Community Services Department regarding age requirements for youth shelter residents.

Building relations with external institutions was viewed by both Agencies as a crucial tenet to successful implementation.[73] YWS credits its existence to prominent allies in the local government and community. Each Shelter engaged in active promotion of their operations to the public - emphasizing the urgent need for such a project; highlighting the scarcity of youth services in the neighborhood; and quelling fears that such a house would attract "lazy bums" and "criminal elements." YWS and CH described their residents as "upstanding citizens" who were experiencing difficult adolescent pains. Each Shelter also promoted its respective operation as a highly structured and rule-oriented setting in which residents would have little time to relax, "goof-off," or take advantage of the system. Both Shelters clearly defended themselves from common perceptions of such organizations as being "crash pads."

A defining characteristic of both YWS and CH during the early years was the claim of being a short-term "band-aid" service. Residents of both establishments stayed an average of six to seven days; sufficient time for shelter workers to assess, counsel and refer. Throughout the 1980's, YWS and CH functioned at approximately 80% to 90% capacity, a comfortable zone in order for shelters to "do their job" with respect to staff-resident interaction, while maintaining bed availability for those who would need such services.[74]

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[73] Cameron and Karabanow (In press) identify community acceptance (in terms of social service organizations, business sectors and neighborhoods) of new projects paramount for successful implementation and replication.

[74] Both Shelters desired the ability to accept youth who presented themselves at the door.

During the early years, both Shelters' clientele were composed of hard-core street kids who were fleeing abusive families and/or street life.[75] CH's and YWS' operational focus involved the provision of support and counseling for residents to procure employment, housing, and social services. The youth shelter of earlier days did not provide day programs (involving skills training, group therapy, and recreational activities). Instead, the early day environment of both YWS and CH was characterized by strict adherence to a youth's plan of action (job and/or housing search) in order to quickly leave the "emergency" shelter. As described in both local histories, youth shelters were initially devised of and operated as crisis centers - using such metaphors as "port-in-the-storm" and "emergency stop-over" for "cooling out" and "bandaging." CH and YWS were not settings for long-term therapy - they were neither professionally nor organizationally equipped for such practices. In fact, YWS' 1984 Funding Proposal clearly warned that if not viewed as an emergency crisis center, "...the facility will soon fill up with 'professional hostel-hoppers' and adolescents who only need independent housing...[which] can take up to six months..." and resulting in possible dependency upon the Shelter as well as reduction in the numbers of youth served (6-7). While "professional-hostel-hoppers" have never been a major problem for either CH and YWS, youth awaiting external resources (like housing) would inevitably place a burden upon these organizations.

An emerging issue facing the Shelters during their early years was their role

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[75] As intended, YWS received suburban residents experiencing family difficulties, however its early population also consisted of more street-entrenched adolescents - an unintended clientele. A seasoned worker explained that the Shelter's earlier projections of who it would serve was "naive" and ignored a growing disenfranchised Toronto street youth population (March 8, 1999).

vis-a-vis the CAS with respect to minors. While both Shelters were mandated to serve youth over the age of 16, CH and YWS frequently interacted with youth under 16 years of age. Front-line workers felt (and continue to feel) impotent in providing services to under 16 year olds. CH and YWS were frustrated by the nonchalant attitude adopted by the CAS towards 13 to 16 year olds in crisis.[76] With growing numbers of minors living on the streets and in squats, the above concerns continue to haunt shelter workers.[77]

The Middle Years

Hopkins (1983:489) suggested that the survival of alternative organizations "...involves consistent growth and stability of the organization with the objective to become part of the established social service delivery network." The local histories of CH and YWS support this claim. As both Shelters evolved, the public's acceptance and support grew. CH emerged as an international social service leader in the field of youth homelessness, gaining much media attention and fundraising dollars. The community's perception of street kids also shifted in the late 1980's with the discovery that a majority of this population faced overwhelming experiences of sexual and/or

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[76] CH's collaboration with the CAS and other agencies to deliver services to minors within a safe house failed miserably. As recounted by a seasoned CH worker, youth would escape through windows a few hours after being brought in.

[77] Byrne's (1989) analysis of four Toronto street kid shelters highlighted their desire to have a more flexible system of service delivery which was not bound by government controls. For example, "...the fact that the centers [shelters] are only allowed to serve youth who are over 16 is not favorable to them, they indicated that the youth on the streets are getting younger, and that they are not legally permitted to help them" (43). There were mixed feelings amongst participants in my sample as to whether sheltering minors should fall under the youth shelter's jurisdiction. While all workers felt that there needed to be a place for minors other than the CAS, many workers were not comfortable sheltering 13 year olds with 20 year olds.

physical abuse within the family, within state institutions, and on the street. CH was instrumental in educating the public regarding street youth characteristics (where they come from, what they look like, and what they do on the street). A more sympathetic and compassionate view of the street kid's plight grew from CH's active advertising campaigns. YWS was similarly involved in its community's subtle transformation regarding the perception of troubled teens.

During this period, YWS and CH experienced varying degrees of internal turmoil, including, a change of management teams, instability of front-line staff morale, shelter operation woes, financial hardships, and legal troubles with specific personnel.[78] While YWS struggled primarily with funding issues (increasing the number of shelter beds; joining the youth shelter network, YSIN, to advocate for increased government support), CH's greatest enemy appeared to be its own internal scandal. Furthermore, CH experienced a reduction in the number of youth served (an average of 50 to 60 residents as opposed to its earlier average of 80). It explained the decrease in clientele as a result of two external occurrences - the advent of several new downtown youth shelters and increased welfare availability. As clearly indicated in its local history, CH became concerned with its low census, so much so that it formed an internal sub-committee to investigate measures to "attract" more clients. The sub-committee recommended "reaching out to new clients" and "engaging youth to stay longer."[79] This directive was not simply an altruistic response but a financial

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[78] Throughout these hard times, the passion, spirit, perseverance and commitment which aptly described both Shelters' genesis remained. For shelter workers, delivering immediate services to downtrodden youth assumed the aura of a "calling" more than an employment opportunity.

[79] Hostel Services suggested similar strategies to the debt-ridden YWS. YWS, in turn augmented the number of beds during 1990 and again in 1994.

imperative, for youth shelters were (and continue to be) funded on a per-diem basis.[80] In contrast, YWS did not experience a decrease in clientele; perhaps because it was not located downtown, or perhaps, because it was a smaller facility.

The middle years were critical in the youth shelters' evolutionary processes. While CH and YWS initially envisioned a somewhat different population than they actually served, each Shelter soon filled up with a 'new type' of hard-core problem youth. This population was made up primarily of CAS Wards and graduates, the mentally ill, drug and alcohol abusers, and youth involved with the criminal justice system. The "street kid" as envisioned by CH and the "youngster experiencing family/school problems" as envisioned by YWS, now made up only a minority of each Shelters' respective populations. Both Shelters learned that their clientele were products of various other organizations working with troubled youth. In other words, youth shelters were not isolated entities with their own particular client base. While servicing their "new" residents proved difficult, each Shelter continued to maintain an external community to which it could refer. As such, up to the mid 1990's, CH and YWS remained short-term emergency crisis centers.

Present Day

In the mid 1990's, YWS and CH experienced the fiscal constraints (described by more than one shelter worker as "very mean spirited") brought on by a tough-

[80] CH, despite an impressive fundraising operation, still relied upon government support.

minded Ontario Conservative Government.[81] The cuts to social services directly impacted the youth shelter system in terms of a decrease in shelter per diem rates and the closure of many community agencies (job training projects, counseling services, group homes, and co-operative housing) that served as shelter referrals: "A lot of the referral agencies out in the community have closed down or had to change the way they service, so it's hard placing kids these days...and there is less and less affordable housing" (YWS staff, March 24, 1999). Ontario social service programs were commonly described as being "slashed and trashed" (CH staff, May 25, 1999). A CH front-line worker shared these sentiments:

> The context of Ontario has changed dramatically since Harris has been in power, I mean let's face it, there is a lot less out there [in the community] than there was. Turning Point [youth shelter] is an example, when all the cuts happened and they said to kids they can't service anybody over 18 any more, the counseling part, not the shelter...we have an increase [of residents] because other places have had to tighten up or close down (May 27, 1999).

Despite the severe cutbacks, all Toronto youth shelters survived. CH and YWS

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[81] During this period, the Harris Government slashed welfare rates by over 20%; youth unemployment increased to 22%; and, eligibility to programs of assistance, benefits and/or shelter allowance was reduced (Yalnizyan, 1998). As a result, there emerged a growing gap between the rich and poor in Ontario. By February 1995, the number of households receiving social assistance in Ontario rose to 672,190 while benefits decreased by 21.6%. During this time, one in six children lived in poverty (CH Strategic Plan, 1997). Indicators such as increased emergency food use (approximately 50% in Toronto during 1996); longer social housing waiting lists; declining vacancy rates (at present, hovering around .07% in Toronto); increasing rents (no rent control exists in Ontario); and a growing gap between tenant incomes and owner incomes, point to the greater potential risk of homelessness throughout Ontario (Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, 1999).

experienced crowded facilities as well as new 'types' of residents.[82] The demand on youth shelters rose by approximately 50% between 1993 and 1995, from an average daily occupancy of 200 from 1992 to 1994, to over 300 by 1995 (Hostel Services, 1995). In order to combat these hardships, both Shelters turned inwards - focusing upon ways to survive and accommodate an emerging clientele.[83] The results were almost synonymous: house rules and structures were reinvented; innovative programs developed; and, new relationships with residents forged. As such, both Shelters underwent a metamorphosis - assuming new identities to accommodate a pressing resident population within a depressed social service sector environment.

Shelter Philosophy

Both Shelters were orchestrated to provide basic emergency services in a loving and caring environment. As explained by a CH front-line worker: "It's [the youth shelter] based on the compassion model" (May 25, 1999). A YWS worker similarly noted: "The general philosophy would be not just providing the basic needs, it's more like an humanitarian service" (March 2, 1999). Youth shelters have attracted their clients because of this philosophy.

The underlying logic of YWS and CH is to provide short-term support to a certain age group who are either on the street and/or suffering from family, school, or

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[82] While both Shelters were surprised and overwhelmed at the changing face of their environments, CH had previously hoped for more residents. One way in which CH "attracted" more residents was by acquiring a new and impressive building that acted as a "face-lift" for its organization's structure and procedures.

[83] CH, due to its impressive financial situation, had a much easier time "turning inwards" than YWS, which has consistently struggled to survive financially (for example, the short-lived YWS Health Clinic).

personal turmoil. As mentioned earlier, both Shelters emphasized the short-term nature as a defining characteristic of their respective operations. As such, each Shelter's operating philosophy dictated the approach by which to work with youth - provide basic services (food, shower, clothing and shelter) with few questions asked, and when the individual feels safe, comfortable and out-of-crisis, refer him/her to appropriate external resources. As defined by a CH supervisor: "Our philosophy is to provide basic necessities for street kids, food, shelter, health care, so that they can move on and take care of other things..." (April 20, 1999). However, the local histories tell a different story.

Since the mid 1990's, both CH and YWS were required to restructure internal shelter procedures in order to deal with turbulent external environments. Operating structures and house rules transformed because of external political and economic pressures. Consequently, the short-term shelter evolved into a longer-term type group home: "So the emergency shelter has turned into for some kids, an interim transitional housing base...We [CH] have obviously a more residential group home relationship with a lot of these kids and our flexibility around programming has become a lot more flexible" (CH staff, June 3, 1999). A short-term emergency crisis approach can only exist when there are external outlets to place clients who have been temporarily supported by the shelter. As both YWS and CH discovered, the mid 1990's resulted in shelters beginning to implode, since referral points were either full (with extensive waiting lists - up to ten months for a group home) or closed due to financial troubles. CH workers aptly defined the situation as a "bottle neck," implying a system that had become clogged. As clearly described by a CH worker: "So there's been a huge shift

in how long kids stay here and it's because of the availability of resources" (May 31, 1999). Rather than serving as an entry-point into the youth-in-crisis system, a role it had courageously played since inception, the youth shelter became, and continues to be, a final stop on the continuum:

> The longer I have worked in the shelter [YWS], the more I am convinced that we have the very first part right, but then we have nothing else. The first part is emergency shelter, there needs to be a place where, say, Police can bring young people from an unsafe situation...There needs to be a place of safety...I still think we have a very good place where we can do a very good job of taking people in, in their time of crisis and so forth, but as for the rest of it, all we seem to do is sentence these people to live in the shelter system... (YWS staff, March 8, 1999).

> We are really assess-support-refer, get them [residents] to services, except that when they go for the service, it's gonna take them three four months to get seen... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

> The problem is there aren't any referral places, there aren't enough supportive housing, second stage housing. Because when people come here they are homeless, so ideally, the first thing we should be working and helping them deal with is their housing. And of course, that gets complicated by income, and health status, immigration status. It gets all complicated...There isn't any continuum (YWS staff, March 8, 1999).

> These kids need a whole range of stuff - they need therapists and medical intervention, health care and supportive housing and they need the gambit. It seems logical that a shelter system could help youth access all of that, it seems to be that the shelter is the logical entry point for the clients we see. The problem is what's out there... (YWS staff, March 2, 1999).

Due to residents' longer term stays in shelters, the frustrations associated with residential living (lack of privacy, overcrowding, house rules, staff-resident conflicts, etc. - see Karabanow, 1994) and a scarcity of jobs, housing opportunities and supportive services, most workers feel that shelters have little to offer their clients besides basic services:

> We're [CH] not as much short-term crisis, there's a lot more long-term, we used to see kids coming and staying here for a while and leaving. They're staying longer now, also with the major increase in immigrants, refugees that come here...these kids have nowhere to go and they can't even look for work or even go to school...yet they have to stay somewhere, so they stay here... (CH staff, March 16, 1999).

> Now it's to try and hold them together and deal with some of the stuff that's coming out [from residents] without dealing with too much of it because this [shelter] is not the place that they [residents] are going to be doing the work, you know they are gonna leave, so you're trying to hold them up like this with

> a band aid and that's really what we are, trying to hold things together (CH staff, April 20, 1999).

Within this new shelter environment, a wave of pessimism emerged: "This really disturbs me because the whole thing [youth shelter] is set up for young people to fail, and to continue to be in the shelter system..." (YWS upper level manager, March 1, 1999). Similarly: "It's that old debate whether shelters are good for people or bad for people. Sometimes I think they're bad, but where would all these people go. I think what would make me feel better is if we could offer them more options to set them up for success" (YWS middle level manager, March 3, 1999). Sadly, it is the residents who suffer within this type of environment: "It's very hard on the kids who really want to deal with things and here is the chance to do it and all they are doing is waiting, waiting, and waiting..." (CH staff, May 25, 1999). Similarly, a CH front-line worker added: "Having to wait for counseling for months is really a bad, bad thing, because they are ready now and these are teenagers, it's now or never...Most times they drop off...[or] if they get discharged for any reason it can be a very long time before they can come back in..." (May 24, 1999).

The entire youth shelter system, full to capacity,[84] has been required to transform its vision of "band-aid" support into long-term care: "I mean to have a group home for fifty boys is outrageous, and that's what we [CH] have plus 25 girls thrown in for good measure" (CH middle level manager, May 25, 1999). As one

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[84] In fact, adult shelters allegedly are mirroring this trend as well. A protest by poverty activists and the homeless in a downtown Toronto park (Allan Gardens) in early August 1999 maintained that the City's adult shelter system was overcrowded and unsafe.

concerned senior manager at CH explained, while the Shelter's operation is changing, the structure to support it has remained static:

> What's happening now is that we [CH] still have open intake, we still have open discharge, now kids are staying longer because we are managing certain issues in more depth or detail than we did before. Now I'm not sure that's the best thing...I think we've gone to longer term, definitely to longer or medium term. I hear the term 'treatment' being used very frequently, you can't do treatment in a short-term crisis place...I also notice that our social work department has expanded tremendously, so all these little things tell me that the program, the process is changing, has changed. I don't see the structural changes to support that, and that may be something that creates tremendous difficulties for us later (April 20, 1999).[85]

Shelter Residents and Operations

> They're [residents] coming from everywhere. Everything you can think of. They don't have parents, they have parents and they can't get along with them...They don't know where they come from, they've been homeless for many years, they come out of CAS homes...Individuals who have been in the system forever when they've been younger and now they've been passed to us (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).

[85] A recent (August, 1999) purchase of a new facility to house a Rights of Passage program (long-term housing and support service) may in fact allow CH to match structure to operation.

With fewer resources existing in the community, youth shelters are discovering that their in-house populations have radically changed. Rather than the tough, hard-core street kid/runaway/throwaway to whom shelters had been accustomed, the new shelter client is likely to be characterized by mental health issues, behavioral problems (aggressive and violent), drug and alcohol dependency, previous CAS involvement, and/or refugee/immigrant status. The new population is a direct result of the dissipation of community mental health centers, CAS group homes and after-care support, detoxification centers and immigrant/refugee safe houses. Due to CH's high census protocol, a much younger population is being currently served. YWS is also experiencing a larger proportion of residents between the ages of 16 and 18. Consequently, older youth (over 18 years of age) are encountering more difficulties acquiring bed space in youth shelters - leaving the adult shelter system or the streets as their only options. Numerous shelter workers expressed regret at not being able to provide services any longer for this age group. As one long time CH worker noted:

> We used to have a lot of 18 to 20 year olds, now it's mostly younger kids...and with the census the older kids get moved out...because we are always full...so we are not servicing that older group, who need it and who probably are more able to use an emergency shelter to some short-term benefit than a kid who is 17... (May 18, 1999).

Concomitantly, shelter workers continue to be frustrated at the lack of support being provided by the CAS for youth under 16 years of age. Both seasoned and new workers voiced this concern:

> These kids who are 14 and 15 [years old] are at tremendous risk...we know they are on the street...and we have to push heaven and earth to get CAS involved (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

> Unfortunately for them [minors], they're in the streets, in squats, a lot of 15 year olds get picked up by pimps downtown and they're prostituting. You can call the CAS, but it is a real hassle to get them to take a 14, 15 year old, from my experience... (YWS staff, March 24, 1999).

> CAS is a struggle for us because we get 15 year olds in the door, and CAS isn't very open to taking 15 year olds into care, doesn't really want to even get too close, so that they're [15 year olds] kind of stuck in a catch-22, they can't be with us and CAS doesn't want to take them...somebody has to do something... (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).

CH, with the aid of the Youth-In-Care-Network, is currently meeting with the CAS to encourage Society workers not to be so quick to discharge 16 year olds from their caseloads. Recently, the Youth-In-Care-Network, with support from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, successfully lobbied for extended care and maintenance to be available to any Crown Ward up to the age of 21. As noted by an ex-CAS worker and current CH upper level manager: "In the last analysis they [CAS] are the kids' legal parent and have a moral obligation I think to hang on through the tough times even though the kid's over 16" (May 25, 1999). While CAS workers

continue their reluctance to deal with young adolescents, these youth themselves want little to do with the CAS:

> These particular homeless youth present a very special problem for society. Many are not eligible for shelters, which are only for people 16 years old and up. If a 14 year old comes to a shelter, he is referred to a CAS. These children know what that means - they may be sent back to the parents, put into foster care, or a group home, and they won't have the final word in that decision - they often don't want to leave it up to CAS (Toronto Star, February 17, 1990).[86]

Over one-half of both Shelters' populations had previous experience with the formal child welfare system, leading a CH middle level manager to note that youth shelters have become "Children's Aid Societies for 16 year olds and up" (May 25, 1999). A recent investigation of CAS graduates found that a majority of this population are experiencing poverty, unemployment, lack of housing, ill health, confusion and desperation (Martin and Palmer, 1997).[87] Characteristics of CAS-turned-shelter residents are as disquieting:

> Kids coming out of any kind of system generally have no place to live, they don't have an education, they don't have any type of training, they can't get a

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[86] My work experiences complement this analysis. When asked to choose between the CAS and the streets, most young adolescents with whom I have worked, chose the streets.

[87] This has led some youth shelter workers to question CAS practices. A YWS front line worker described common feelings of frustration and anger held by Shelter employees: "I think, come on, why haven't you [CAS] helped this individual way back and how are you going to help them now, you know, because we [YWS] get these 16 year olds who have just come out of CAS care and what have you [CAS] done for them? Like how have you helped them?" (March 1, 1999).

> job and they never had a job, and most can't read and all these things... (CH staff, May 27, 1999).

> The kids who have been in the system for a long time, we have an expression for, 'oh, he's a group home kid'- for some kids because they have been in that system [CAS] for a long time, they are even better at going around the bush, not being straight forward, working workers against each other, like they know how to work the system - survival skills - the longer they've been doing that, the harder it is to get to them and develop a trusting relationship... (CH staff, May 27, 1999).

Accounts from both Shelters' front-line staff suggest that younger residents, while being less street-entrenched, present disturbing behavioral and emotional problems as well as a lack of employment and life skills:

> These kids now really need support, whether they're immigrants...or someone with mental health issues...There's a greater need for someone case managing their plan...so they're staying longer and they need higher support...more than just a bed, food, and a shower and some time to chill out... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

Many workers believe that the new shelter population presents more intense and complex case management scenarios:

> It's hard because I think that a lot of kids nowadays need that extra support, so I mean you're seeing people go out and you have to give that extra support - well we are a crisis agency...you just don't have the manpower to do all that

> you want to do...just because of the numbers, just because they [residents] need more (CH staff, May 27, 1999).

> With the numbers [of residents] going up all the time...it's hard to be specific to each client...and they need it, they need to be talked to, one on one, like, 'what's going on with your housing? Do you need help looking for a job? Do you want to go back to school?' It's hard to find the time to do all that (YWS staff, March 8, 1999).

The Shelter itself has had to alter some of its traditional procedures and structures in order to accommodate a population who inevitably is staying longer:

> I think the program [YWS] has changed a bit, structures have changed. We're a little more lenient, more lenient on behavior type things, we're more flexible for kids who have been here for a long time (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).

> I think a lot of us [front-line workers] felt that there's a lot of expectations here, the structures are sometimes unrealistic, too strict (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

CH, known for its strict and structured living arrangements (Karabanow, 1994) has recently extended its curfew and become less rigid with regards to traditional rules such as dress code, swearing, physical contact and alcohol/drug use. As noted by a CH middle level manager: "We've [CH] gone through an attempt at loosening up..." (April 20, 1999). Traditional shelter plans involving strict job and housing searches have given way to more relaxed and "therapeutic" approaches to shelter life - group

therapy, life skills, computer and employment training, and educational programs (such as ESL classes for immigrants and refugees).

According to many youth workers, YWS was similarly perceived as a highly structured and rule-oriented setting where residents were expected to devote their energies towards their future plans. As noted in numerous descriptions of YWS' daily procedures, residents had little time to "take a break" or "hang around." This short-term program philosophy has given way to the Shelter's present perspective of long-term programming, involving day-long workshops that attempt to focus upon various needs. Rather than forcing residents to be out of the Shelter for the entire day (under the assumption that these adolescents were searching for jobs and/or housing), YWS' day program allows residents and ex-residents the opportunity to stay at the Shelter during the day and learn about "...employment skills, housing options...how do you cook spaghetti, how do you do laundry, those are our basic life skills, then we go into anger management, conflict resolution...then we incorporate things like art day, sexual education issues..." (YWS staff, March 2, 1999). In addition, residents participate in sports activities and recreational outings several times per week.

Both Shelters' recent emphasis upon life skills training is rooted in the disappearance of numerous external resources as well as the plethora of young "system kids" who have minimal social, employment and life skills training. As explained by a YWS worker: "I can see that we [YWS] are getting a lot more of their [Child Welfare] residents coming out of CAS, and we're starting to gear our programs to the younger clientele - just structured, life skill stuff. We do not want to make the same mistake as [the] CAS has" (March 1, 1999).

However, these shifts have not emerged problem-free. Both Shelters are currently searching for measures to balance fundamental principles of safety and sanctuary with newer, more relaxed practices such as allowing intoxicated residents into the Shelter. As noted by an upper level manager at CH: "We can't mix apples and oranges...what do you do? Do you house that kid [who is drunk] for the night or not, and if you house that kid for the night, then you start to contradict one of the sacred principles of the philosophy..." (April 20, 1999). While this debate looms within both Shelters, CH and YWS have allowed these youth to return for shelter once they are "less" intoxicated (an example of the Shelters' transformation to a more relaxed setting).

Due to the present difficulties in obtaining services, front-line workers believe they have become more lenient and less quick to discharge residents for policy violations. As one front-line worker from CH noted: "I think we are a bit more understanding that there is a lack of services out there, so I think we can't have a kid go out after three months if there's nothing for them out there" (May 25, 1999). As a result of the more relaxed and less pressured shelter environment, front-line workers also observe an emerging intimacy with residents. Previously perceived as "policing" youth, shelter workers now enjoy a more familiar and close relationship with clients - another characteristic found in the group home: "Kids are here [CH] so long, you can't not build a really deep relationship with them" (CH staff, May 25, 1999). Front-line workers define their work as "engaging" rather than "supervising" residents: "The issue became not how many applications did you put in for a job today, the issue became what can I teach you about finding a job or maintaining a job..." (CH staff,

May 25, 1999). However, several workers have voiced the concern that youth shelters are now creating more dependent populations:

> Separation is harder now and I think they [residents] grow a bit more dependent the more they are here, it's like their home away from home.... (CH staff, April 20, 1999).

> I would think the shorter you are here the better...I really think sometimes, this doesn't seem right, what are we doing here [YWS], people get shelterized, people get used to living in institutions... (YWS upper level manager, February 4, 1999).

Most front-line workers agree that the longer youth stay within the Shelters' setting, the greater the probability of becoming involved with the "wrong crowd." An accepted yet unwritten dictum within shelter work is to move residents out of the shelter system as soon as possible - a feat becoming increasingly difficult:

> The first time someone comes here, that's the time you need to get them out as quick as you can. I find the longer that they stay, the more people they meet, the harder it is to get them out.... (YWS staff, March 8, 1999).

Looking To The Future

In response to more desperate social and economic conditions facing disadvantaged youth and street youth shelters, YWS and CH have recently developed new vision statements, incorporating increased levels of advocacy with housing

initiatives.[88] Despite the numerous internal and external threats to both Shelters, each organization continues to create innovative approaches to servicing youth (such as educational and skill training programs, and independent long-term housing). As a YWS front-line worker explained:

> I think we [YWS] are constantly growing, I don't look at YWS as walking straight ahead, it's like sprouting, there are so many branches, there are always new ideas, something else, like a housing worker, second stage housing...We're always moving... (March 2, 1999).

A DIFFERING PERSPECTIVE

The above rendition of CH's and YWS' evolution is a common story expressed by most of my participants. It is a story that depicts both Shelters as primarily shaped by their external environment. CH and YWS transformed internal operations in order to accommodate new clients and a new social service environment. Workers from each Shelter described their struggles to provide loving and caring support to a different set of clients in the face of a tumultuous and resource-sapped external climate. This story can be characterized as the "mission-focused" perspective - CH and YWS retained their humanitarian orientation throughout their stages of development. This perspective, however, leaves several important questions insufficiently answered: Why have CH and YWS strayed so drastically from their original mandates? Why are they not serving street youth anymore? If system-kids

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[88] To date, advocacy has involved fighting for higher per diem rates, rather than social action issues. This behavior could be explained by youth shelters' dependence upon government funding.

present such troubles, why have CH and YWS been so accommodating? While the mission-focused perspective would argue that CH and YWS were powerless to these changes - they were simply reacting to difficult situations in the best manner possible - an alternate version might portray CH and YWS as active, conscious participants in shaping their destinies. This story can be aptly labeled the "organizational-interest" perspective.

Organizations, if viewed as natural systems, are governed by one overarching concern - survival (Tucker, House, Singh, and Meinhard, 1984:4). Organizational-interest focuses upon CH's and YWS' survival within the youth-in-trouble network. Both Shelters commenced as novel services within environments lacking support for street youth. Initially, each Shelter concentrated upon a broad range of clients (defined as "street youth" or "youth having difficulties") and multiple aspects of the client's biography (such as employment, housing, past history, education, etc.). One can understand this behavior as CH and YWS attempting to be recognized within their environments - by being "everything to everyone." At the same time, neither Shelter was interested in clients staying long-term. In the language of Lefton and Rosengren (1970), young organizations are characterized as having "lateral" (broad range) and "non-longitudinal" (short-term biographies) interests in their clients. These elements help organizations survive throughout the "liabilities of newness" (Rosengren, 1970:121). CH and YWS employed a strategy to contend with their status as neophytes - make contacts and build social relations with numerous organizations (such as the CAS, the Police, Probation, and other youth shelters) in order to gain legitimacy and resources. For example, CH, a once-staunchly independent

organization, conformed to Police pressure and modified its internal operating policies in order to accommodate the more entrenched and powerful neighbor. Subsequently, CH made many efforts (e.g., open houses, collaborative projects) to increase dialogue with other organizations.

As both Shelters evolved, their "place" within the youth-in-trouble network became more stable.[89] With an increasing flow of clients, CH's and YWS' prediction of "being needed" came to fruition - both Shelters had invested much effort to forge acceptance within their environments. In order to reduce uncertainties, CH and YWS increasingly adopted a more specific client focus (such as CAS-involved youth, refugees and immigrants) and more limited yet intense connections with various organizations (such as the CAS and Probation). Focusing upon a specific type of client (such as CAS graduates) or a specific aspect of the client (such as citizenship) allowed these young but evolving organizations to sell themselves as "important" and "legitimate." Rather than the argument espoused by the mission-focused perspective - that both Shelters' misunderstanding of their intended populations stemmed from naiveté regarding environmental pressures - CH and YWS were active beings interested in carving a niche for themselves within the youth-in-trouble network. In other words, as organizations age, they inevitably become more specialized in order to survive within an environment characterized with increased organizational density (Rosengren, 1970). CH and YWS chose system kids rather than street kids because the former group provided more legitimacy as well as a stable flow of clients.

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[89] At an early point in CH's career, the Shelter was "put in its place" by the CAS and the Police for accepting minors. YWS did not travel the same path, most likely due to the fact that CAS members were involved in the task force and Board makeup that launched the Shelter.

With a more specific client orientation, both Shelters became more involved in their clients' biographical space. Their focus upon "short-term" emergency crisis care was reinvented along the lines of "intermediary" or "long-term" support. As CH and YWS evolved, they shifted towards an interest in the "non-lateral" (specific-focus) and "longitudinal" (long-term biography) client dimensions. From the organization's point of view, having specific types of residents staying longer creates a more stable internal environment (less intakes and discharges; more homogeneous populations) and a more legitimate external image ("we are important" and "we are needed") within its environment.

The drift from broad-focused and short-term interest in clients to more specific-focused and longer-term interest in clients, makes perfect sense. As young organizations, CH and YWS remained broadly-focused in order to gain clients and thus survive. They were "testing" a new technology - emergency crisis care for young people in a warm and supportive setting. Rather than remaining vulnerable to external contingencies (i.e., whether a runaway needed shelter), CH and YWS opened their doors to clients from various formal organizations (and held them for longer) in order to achieve what Rosengren (1970:124) suggests as "predictability of future benefits or outcome." By forging relations with the formal system, both Shelters gained a stable and long-term clientele. Retaining certain clients for longer periods of time provides youth shelters with stability and predictability.

An organization also benefits in terms of interventions with clients when they adopt a "non-lateral" and "longitudinal" arrangement. More stable populations (such as immigrant and refugee residents) provide calmer and easier work environments for

staff as well as the chance to create more intimate staff-client attachments. While a number of front line workers described a more intense shelter environment at present (primarily due to a younger shelter population), this situation could be explained as "growing pains" for both YWS and CH as they learn to cope with such changes (and retrain staff to deal with "system kids"). A focus upon specific clients and/or specific aspects of the client requires less staff energies and shelter resources than a focus upon anyone who presents him/herself with any type of problem. Rosengren (1970:125) argued that it is more difficult, more demanding, and more costly for organizations to work on the "whole person" (i.e., converting the street kid to respectable citizen) rather than "technical" changes (i.e., gaining citizenship or providing educational services).

For the most part, front line workers noted that newer shelter populations were easier to handle on a "hands-on" basis (daily living), even though they present more complex case management issues (plan of action). For example, immigrants and refugees are generally highly motivated and rarely break house rules, despite nuisances for front line staff with respect to diverse languages and customs. On the other hand, shelter staff responsible for case management (primarily social workers at CH and case managers at YWS) are facing more intense episodes, dealing with areas such as immigration, mental illness, abuse, torture, violence and isolation/alienation. Nevertheless, more intimate client-worker relationships have formed at both Shelters. Most workers described a less strict environment, with relaxed rules and structures. One could argue that these internal changes result from clients now being seen as more legitimate (and deserving), as well as a way in which these organizations can keep

residents longer. Another way to look at this situation is to state that CH and YWS have become more strict towards "traditional" street youth, who are encountering less welcoming shelter practices (such as exceptionally long waiting lists).

Organizations survive by accruing resources and legitimacy. As pointed out by Rosengren (1970), age leads organizations to develop a specific and long-term orientation towards clients. While neither YWS nor CH set out in this manner, the transformation (or drift) towards "non-laterality" and "longitudinality" can be justified as laying claims to a specific niche which insures clients, resources, and legitimacy. CH's and YWS' role as "dumping ground" for the formal system has ensured their survival within a turbulent youth-in-trouble network.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are two distinct perspectives by which to make sense of how CH and YWS arrived at their present situations. Rosengren (1970), in his discussion of the evolution (or "careers") of organizations, described these perspectives through Weber's notions of Gemeinschaft (personal, compassionate, and natural) and Gesellschaft (rational, impersonal, and fabricated). Human service organizations are plagued with such dichotomies - providing humanitarian services within a culture of rationality, efficiency, and efficacy. For CH and YWS, the two perspectives can be described as organizational-interest versus mission-focused. From a mission-focused perspective, CH and YWS are products of their changing environments, shifting and transforming their internal and external operations in order to adapt to their settings and provide the best services to those most in need.

However, it may be naive to assume that CH and YWS are "all heart." There exists an equally impressive and telling story which explains the evolution of CH and YWS. From an organizational point of view, CH and YWS made a conscience decision to provide long-term shelter to formal system youth rather than supporting their initial commitments (street kids). This shift in focus has everything to do with organizational survival. The mission-focused perspective portrays CH and YWS as being primarily shaped by their environments, but at the same time, highlights their humanistic qualities - such as their commitments to creating programs that could fit their changing clienteles. The organizational-interest perspective, while emphasizing survival over any commitment to clients, allows for a view of CH and YWS as living organisms that can make choices. Both images seem to be real - they shed light upon the two faces of youth shelters like CH and YWS. What cannot be contested, however, is that both Shelters have indeed transformed, and there have been consequences to such changes. The following chapter highlights these consequences in light of the present roles played by CH and YWS within the youth-in-trouble network.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE TWO FACES OF YOUTH SHELTERS

INTRODUCTION

> The role of the [voluntary] agency [is] doing things public agencies can't do (participant in Ostrander's (1985:438) study).

The literature regarding interorganizational relations underscores the need for organizations to be seen as open systems, interacting with their environments (comprised of other organizational actors) in order to survive. Organizations depend upon scarce resources, and interactions between organizations pose risks and gains for all actors involved. However, it is naive to believe that the relationship between shelters and formal child welfare agencies stems simply from resource dependency, for both actors also share a common vision. Aside from differences (however small they now might be) in intervention strategies, practice ideologies, and organizational structures, shelters and government child welfare agencies[90] share a mutual purpose - *protecting society's children emotionally, physically, and mentally.* This complements Alleva's (1988) findings (as well as the institutional theory literature) that the distinctiveness of each organization's population has gradually blurred during the past decade. Both systems undertake their tasks quite differently, nonetheless, such tasks are performed in the "name of the child." From the local histories, it is clear that youth shelters and the formal child welfare system operate concurrently, with

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[90] As mentioned earlier, this analysis places the CAS, a quasi-public organization, within the government realm since it is heavily funded and heavily influenced in its operations by government policy and regulations.

overlap in their respective clientele.[91] Disadvantaged youth are the linking and binding factors between systems, or as Lefton (1975) would contend, the "exchange elements" between organizations.

Economics also explains the interaction between both systems. Toronto youth shelters receive funding from government though a per diem allowance. Government contracts with youth shelters to house those in need, and as a result, this arrangement has led to unequal power dynamics. Within the youth-in-trouble network, shelters provide a significant function, but at the same time, maintain a low status. Milner's (1980) concept of "symbiotic inequality" - an unequal yet necessary partnership between "rich" and "poor" systems, describes the present day partnership between street kid shelters and formal child welfare organizations. Shelters, being the smaller and less powerful of the two systems, perform essential tasks for the formal child welfare system. While Ontario's Conservative Government follows the trend of governments across the world (moving away from direct delivery of social services), youth shelters like CH and YWS are "picking up the pieces" by housing diverse populations and providing auxiliary programs (e.g., long-term housing, education and life skills training). In this sense, the chapter's opening quotation should more accurately read that voluntary agencies (like youth shelters) do things that public

[91] As demonstrated in this analysis, age (i.e., under 16, over 16) does not differentiate the two services. CH began its career serving minors and both Shelters currently interact with minors. It is ironic that during their births, CH and YWS were restricted from working with minors, while at present, both Shelters are "encouraged" by the formal system to take part in the case management of many 14 and 15 year olds. This shift may relate to CH and YWS discovering their niche within the youth-in-trouble system and thus becoming accepted by more established players.

agencies can't *or won't* do. Youth shelters continue to develop new service programs that are driven by their humanistic philosophies and client needs. As the formal child welfare system is unable, for a myriad of reasons, to meet these demands, it is very keen to collaborate with youth shelters. However, unequal power dynamics characterize this partnership - shelters give more and gain less. Voluntary shelters stand to lose more of their autonomy in this dynamic, including their originally envisioned philosophy and purpose.

Two related ideas underlie the relationship between street kid shelters and the formal system: shelters act as both "buffers" and as "dumping grounds" for formal organizations, fostering an unequal yet needed exchange relationship between the two actors within an environment of resource scarcity.

AS BUFFERS...

Two major proponents of the voluntary shelter, Vosburgh (1988) and Henry (1987), argue that informal, voluntary organizations such as shelters, exist to provide services to marginal, hard-to-serve populations who resist using the more bureaucratic and machine-like formal system. This role or purpose reflects the earlier discussion of youth shelters as voluntary, alternative and mission-oriented structures. Youth shelters emerged out of a realization that disadvantaged youth were not being supported by existing organizations. At present, youth shelters continue to be driven by a philosophy of care, support and response, despite the seemingly overwhelming pressures of financial cutbacks and strapped resources. According to the majority of

workers, shelters provide safe havens to "system-shy" individuals. A CH worker described the Shelter's role as providing a "safety net" for hard-to-serve street youth:

> It's my job to try and establish a relationship with these kids, then when these kids deal with other things, they can ask me for support, I can go to Court with a kid just to be there as a spokesperson, same thing for a hospital, a kid has just been diagnosed with schizophrenia, that's very scary, 'can you come when I go meet my doctor'- no problem because we would do that with a family member or a friend, they don't have that, so that's what we become (May 31, 1999).

Similarly, a YWS front line worker explained her role with Shelter residents:

> We're here to help our kids, seeing them get out [of the system]...I mean, I see these kids who need a mother or support who's gonna get them through these things. So I was the one who would as much as I could, went to appointments with kids, or moved them into group homes... (March 24, 1999).

Increasingly, youth shelters are "mediators" for marginalized populations vis-a-vis formal organizations. A CH worker described her liaison role as a "go-between" the youth and the formal organization:

> I feel like a broker in the system, like we're the go-between welfare, like we're advocating for a kid, we just had a situation whereby this girl's been receiving welfare and all of a sudden she didn't get her cheque...I mean this kid was three weeks late paying her rent...We called [welfare] and spoke to a supervisor...and we had to advocate with the landlord (May 27, 1999).

Other YWS and CH workers gave similar accounts involving the provision of support to residents who are dealing with immigration centers, the criminal justice system, schools, and the medical system. Many of the residents with whom I spoke described youth shelters as places where one could "get their stuff in order" or be "helped with paper work" prior to encountering other organizations.

Youth shelters act as "buffering" (Vosburgh, 1988) or "mediating" (Berger and Neuhaus, 1996) structures that insulate hard-to-serve individuals from undesirable encounters with formal organizations (for example, long waits, the need for referrals, and the provision of documentation). During my years at Dans La Rue, I accompanied residents to welfare appointments, medical examinations, and school interviews, whereby I provided the youth with support in dealing with overwhelming, complicated and impassive organizations. A YWS worker described similar experiences:

> Filling out forms for welfare and immigration is a big headache...You got to stand in line for hours to talk with someone. Forget it. Our kids [residents] just won't do that...They get too frustrated and lost in all the paperwork and stuff...that's where we [shelter workers] come in (March 9, 1999).

The "buffer" function, albeit diminishing in the wake of its newer role as "dumping ground," continues to be an important quality of youth shelters.

AS DUMPING GROUNDS...

Originally, street kid shelters responded primarily to runaways fleeing their family situations and/or street life. While the youth shelter continues to interact with a

young population entrenched in family disarray and street culture, it has also emerged as temporary home for: youth fleeing or graduating from the CAS; a large number of immigrants and refugees; psychiatric youth discharged from hospitals; and numerous adolescents sent by the Police, group homes, detention centers, courts, and Probation officers. As such, shelters play four important "dumping" roles: first, they act as refuges for those who are thrown out of their family homes or removed from their homes by State intervention; second, shelters take in youth who are fleeing or graduating from institutional care; third, shelters provide sanctuary for those who would have previously been institutionalized in settings for so-called delinquent, deviant or disturbed youth;[92] and fourth, shelters have become "resting places" or "holding tanks" for growing numbers of immigrant and refugee adolescents. CH and YWS are increasingly seen as "warehouses" or "back ups" to the formal child welfare system. As noted by a CH front line worker:

> We are a continuation of child welfare, they [CAS] are technically up to 16 for the majority of them [CAS clients]. So I think that once they've [CAS clients] been in the system for all those years, they end up here [CH], a lot of them start coming here and then they'll get into the system of the shelter... (May 31, 1999).

Another worker voiced a similar opinion: "You've got a lot of CAS kids that are coming, that for whatever reasons things haven't worked with their plans and they are coming to stay because there is nowhere to put them, so they are coming here" (CH

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[92] Shelter growth and utilization in the last several decades stems partly from the recent impact of deinstitutionalization and decriminalization of the status-offender (truancy, running away, etc.) (Alleva, 1988:31).

staff, April 20, 1999). Several front line workers interviewed were dismayed by the perception that their organizations are "extensions" of the child welfare system:

> I remember a staff member coming in all upset because she just got a call from a CAS worker who had said 'I need a bed there [YWS] next week because this young person on my caseload is going to be 16 next week and has to move out of the group home.' I mean, how could CAS take someone into care, house them until 16 and then boot them out? (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).

> I don't see CAS collaborating with us, if you want to draw a continuum, it's like - if your family is an unsafe place to be, you can be in CAS, and if you can't be in CAS, you can be in the shelters. My first reaction initially was that we were dumping grounds, especially for CAS, who would call to reserve a bed in a week's time because they're kicking someone out...What a horrible thing to do...instead of your 16th birthday being this right of passage into adulthood, it's like...from group home to a shelter... (YWS staff, February 4, 1999).

While the average age at which Canadian young people leave home is in the mid-twenties, many shelter workers question how the State can expect children in care to leave "home" at the age of 16.[93] An investigation of youth leaving public care concluded that "[y]outh leave child welfare care in a more abrupt, depersonalized,

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[93] Sixteen is the age at which a youth can live independently and cannot enter or re-enter care. In some circumstances, CAS may provide extended care and maintenance which is an optional package of counseling and/or financial support and post-care programs. Wardship ceases at 18 years of age (21 in some rare circumstances) and youth are expected to vacate child welfare facilities (Martin, 1996).

decontextualized and irreversible way than most youth leave their families" (Martin, 1996). Many CH and YWS workers felt outraged when they perceived CAS attempting to "dump" clients at their respective doorsteps:

> Too often CAS seems to want us to case manage and when it comes to someone under 16, we will not do that...we will not commit to that...because it is their [CAS] job and that includes shelter too, we're not supposed to shelter under 16 year olds, but CAS tries to do it a lot... (CH staff, April 20, 1999).

Several CH outreach workers described feelings of frustration in attempting to persuade a CAS worker to become more involved in the life of a 15 year old pregnant street girl living at several shelters (with false identification) and squats. Some CH staff perceived CAS as uninterested in the case while placing additional responsibility on the outreach team to continue the relationship:

> ...and she [CAS worker] was asking us to keep track of this kid which we can do, we'll let you know when she presents here, it's a small example where they [CAS] are asking us to do things that they should be... (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

As previously mentioned, most front line workers at both Shelters believe that due to budget constraints and overwhelming caseloads, CAS workers are less responsive or attentive to youth who are nearing the mandated cut-off age of 16. An upper level manager at YWS provided a telling description of this perspective:

> My own perception is that if there's someone who is 15 and needs protection, they [CAS] do not even want to open a file, which I think is a travesty. That it

> is like - 'by the time we do all the paper work, the person will be 16 and it won't matter.' And that is why we have kids here who are almost 16 and we call CAS and they are very reluctant to come. I know that on one occasion we ended up calling the Police and saying you have to come and get this person because of our own liability... (February 4, 1999).

Youth shelters are not only "dumping grounds" for the CAS. Other institutions such as hospitals, group homes, schools, the courts, the Police, immigration centers, as well as other shelters, are increasingly sending their respective clients to places such as CH and YWS. As a result, shelters have begun to differentiate between "positive dumping" and "negative dumping." The majority of workers perceive referrals from Probation and Parole, the Police and the courts as "positive dumping" since it is felt to be an appropriate use of the shelter system:

> YWS has a good relationship with Probation. We have a lot of [probation] workers who refer to YWS only, and they'll tell you right out that we have very strict rules and we're very strict about our policies and procedures...they aren't bad kids, it's just that mom and dad are really mad at them because they've gotten messed up with the criminal justice system and so they come to us. A lot of times you get Probation conditions that say they can't live at home...so they [courts and Probation officers] rely on us to keep them (YWS staff, March 2, 1999).

> As far as Probation is concerned, we have Probation officers and Bail officers who send their kids here [CH] as a matter of course. In fact, their plan for kids

> would be stay thirty days at CH without getting into trouble or discharged and then I'll look at whatever plan you want...We have a good relationship with Probation and Bail - they send a lot of kids here... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

> I would say that the professional relationship we [YWS] have with Probation is they see us as a place to send their clients to stay here...someone needs to get out of jail, the judge won't let them out unless they know they have a place to stay that night, well that seems OK to me... (YWS staff, March 8, 1999).

However, youth entering the shelter system through immigration, hospital and group home referrals, are perceived by the majority of shelter workers in the same light as CAS referrals - "negative dumping," or an inappropriate use of their facilities:

> We [CH] get a lot of referrals, lots of them from hospitals...they're at the door all the time and kids who come who don't have medication, or come by taxi from the hospital...it is not a place to discharge somebody who has mental health issues...it's not an appropriate place for them and then they're here for months while we're trying to find places for them to go (CH staff, May 31, 1999).

> There are a lot more kids coming from different places outside of Canada, a lot of kids with schizophrenia or other mental difficulties, so they are coming in, there's nowhere to put them, so it's like they are ending up staying here for longer periods of time... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

> Hospitals are also dumping, they try at least - they call and say we got someone who's being discharged today...a lot of mental health issues, the hospitals are always calling... (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).

Shelter workers were most annoyed with the unwritten practices of CAS group home workers who send their clients to youth shelters as "time-outs" for bad behavior. In addition to the inappropriate use of the shelter in these circumstances, there is also real peril. Two shelter participants voiced their concerns:

> I don't agree that we get referrals from group homes giving 'time outs' [to their residents]. They [group homes] think they will teach them [group home residents] a lesson by giving them a time out at CH, but they don't realize that the house [CH] is probably nicer than where they are, and they'll want to come and stay... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

> I feel that there are some kids from group homes that shouldn't be here [YWS]...They'll break rules, they'll get a week's suspension, two weeks, they call us, they come here...which I don't agree with, they're in a group home - which is a stable environment and to come here, who knows who they'll meet and what they'll get into... (YWS staff, February 4, 1999).

Other shelters also act as referral agents. In fact, most workers agree that despite regular formal meetings between Executive Directors from all Toronto youth shelters, and irregular, informal meetings between program managers from different

youth shelters, there is minimal day-to-day collaborative practices amongst shelters.[94] Justified by front line workers in terms of "resident confidentiality" and allowing the resident a "fresh start," there is little sharing of client information (regarding plans, assessments, previous behaviors) between shelters (as well as other community resources). According to most front line workers, the primary exchange that exists with other shelters involves client referrals. A YWS front line worker exclaimed that in one week, the Shelter "...was seeing a lot [of youth] from other shelters. They're making their rounds in the system" (March 1, 1999). Another worker similarly described the pervasive "shelter-hopping" syndrome: "More than half of these residents [in the Shelter] have come from another shelter, and most will go to some shelter after us...We [YWS] get a lot of kids from other shelters..." (YWS staff, February 4, 1999). Most clients referred out ("discharged") from a shelter have either broken house rules or failed to comply with their individual plans. Furthermore, workers have little discretion to where they refer clients; a lot depends upon bed availability: "When it comes to referring somebody, we don't have the luxury [to choose which shelter]...and if it boils down to the fact that we have to refer someone, all shelters are considered" (YWS staff, March 1, 1999).[95]

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[94] As the local histories demonstrate, both Shelters did co-operate and collaborate with other organizations (such as the Police, the CAS, schools, universities, community task forces, businesses, and external community resources). However, according to front line workers, there was little collaboration in terms of daily shelter operating issues.

[95] It appears that the paramount criterion as to whether shelter workers 'like' another shelter has much to do with the perceived ease in obtaining a bed for their respective clients. As pointed out by a YWS front line worker: "I personally don't like dealing with Our Place Peel [youth shelter], sending our kids there because it's so hard [to get them in]...once we had them on the phone with one of our residents for 45 minutes and at the end of the 45 minutes, they said no [to the referral]" (March 1, 1999).

At present, the primary role of the youth shelter has become a "last resort," a "short-term substitute," and inevitably a "dumping ground" for youth with whom the formal system (and the informal system) has trouble placing due to the dearth of various resources.

SYMBIOTIC INEQUALITY

Milner's (1980) study of the interrelationships between rich and poor hospitals in one neighborhood of a large American metropolis, differs in some ways from my analysis. For one thing, his substantive focus involved hospitals with varying statuses, all maintaining similar responsibilities - providing health care to patients. Moreover, the author described an attempt to restructure the coordination of these hospitals through an ambulance service. None of these elements existed in my analysis - youth shelters and the formal system provide different services to different sets of clients (even though the differences may be more subtle than once perceived); and, there was no attempt to coordinate these services through an internal or external organizing body.

Nevertheless, Milner's essential argument informs the present study - informal structures of inequality, coupled with resource dependencies, provide an avenue in which low-status and high-status organizations can arrive at a mutually acceptable partnership. This is the notion of "symbiotic inequality" - a cooperative yet unbalanced relationship between unequal status organizations. Rather than competing with one another, low-status and high-status organizations carve out their appropriate

niches (in terms of services and clients) and exist within a symbiotic interdependence. As Milner (1980:172) described:

> The dominant institution takes various informal measures, on the one hand, to maintain its prestige and dominance and, on the other hand, to give its weaker neighbor assistance and protection and thereby ensure its continued separate existence.

The weaker organization, instead of being fully co-opted by the more dominant neighbor, can retain its separate identity as long as it "plays by the rules." The earlier discussion concerning institutionalization (see Chapter Seven) highlighted the way in which new organizations, such as youth shelters, learn (adopt) these rules.

Symbiotic inequality explains the *current* relationship between youth shelters and the formal child welfare system.[96] However, this was not always the case. In the Shelters' earlier years, the formal system's relationship with CH and YWS could be described as "less symbiotic" and simply "unequal." At first, CH and YWS were low-status organizations that did not need "formal system" clients. The Shelters remained quite independent from the formal child welfare system. However, in order to gain resources and legitimacy, CH and YWS entered into a symbiotic relationship with their more dominant neighbors. This path was chosen as a way for CH and YWS to survive. In this sense, symbiotic inequality emerged from a state of simple inequality.

At present, within the youth-in-trouble network, shelters can be compared to Milner's "poor hospitals" vis-a-vis the vast, bureaucratic, and publicly-funded formal

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[96] While few CAS workers would characterize themselves as "high status" players, they have more authority and influence over clients than youth shelter workers.

child welfare system.[97] However, the formal child welfare system is in the midst of large budget cuts and dwindling resources, leading many investigators to characterize the system as "at risk" and "in crisis" (Alleva, 1988; Edney, 1988; Wharf, 1990; Wilkinson, 1987). A CH worker provided a common picture of the formal system held by many shelter workers:

> The child welfare system is a dying dinosaur, it's a frustrating system to work with and it's frustrating I think for two reasons. One, is because I feel I don't get most of the time the services that I would like - services for kids... It's frustrating because who do I get mad at? The worker's got fifty some odd kids to take care of... they're just so much harder to reach, they're harder to make an appointment for the kid, they're scrambling around themselves, so it's difficult to know who's to blame for a kid moved from place to place... so it's difficult to work with them... (May 25, 1999).

Youth shelters like CH and YWS assume necessary activities and responsibilities the formal system would otherwise have to assume. As Milner (1980) explained, high-status institutions have a vested interest in the survival of low-status institutions. A state of symbiotic inequality entails that dominant actors provide the minimum needs for survival of the weaker actors. In other words, the weaker actors, as long as they conform to various organizational membership requirements, are valuable enough to be sustained by the more dominant actors. Within a resource scarce environment, both

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[97] The only system that would be viewed as "poorer" is the adult shelter, continually referred to as "dumping grounds" and "storage bins" for the most desperate homeless populations.

youth shelters and formal system organizations perceive a relationship with one another as necessary and mutually beneficial.

Why the system needs youth shelters

> The welfare bureaucracy, like all public bureaucracies, is primarily concerned with its own self-maintenance; accordingly, it will try to manage its environment to conserve its resources and maintain legitimacy (Handler and Hasenfeld, 1991:36).

Shelters have emerged as convenient, timely and cheap[98] alternatives (less formalized, less professionalized and more often privately funded) to "control and contain" kids with whom the formal child welfare system cannot (or does not want to) work due to decreasing budgets and resources. As described by an upper level manager at CH and ex-CAS worker: "I don't think the CAS now has the kind of skill set to work with that population [young street youth]...they're stretched in resources...a lot of the support programs and counseling available for young people has gotten clawed back..." (May 25, 1999). As explored earlier, the formal system uses youth shelters as referral points or "dumping grounds." Consequently, the youth shelter has evolved into a mutation of the formal system: "Sometimes I think that we [CH] are the Children's Aid for over 16" (CH social worker, May 25, 1999). A YWS front line worker also noted: "We're like an extension of CAS, well, that's what they

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[98] From the point of view of government agencies, it is more cost-effective to contract with voluntary agencies than to offer the services themselves. For example, the costs of implementing (e.g., start-up fees) and operating a shelter (e.g., union salaries) are diffused to youth shelters in terms of per diem allowances. As mentioned earlier, this form of funding is much lower than the actual costs of sheltering individuals.

[CAS] are using us for" (February 4, 1999). Yates, Pennbridge, Swofford and Mackenzie (1991) described this type of "partnership" in their discussion of the Los Angeles County collaborative system of homeless youth care. Rather than the standardized process involving runaways being picked up by Police and delivered to foster home settings, the authors illustrated a new arrangement whereby homeless youth are "dropped off" at local shelters in order to avoid paper work; waiting lists for child welfare beds; and, inappropriate services. An upper level director at CH commented:

> In terms of Police and Probation, yes they do refer...[when] a young person who is 16 or 17 who's wandering the streets of Toronto at night...the Police bring them here for shelter...rather than incarcerated because they have no place to go (April 20, 1999).

As noted by a YWS front line worker: "I do get a sense that CAS workers think it's quite a relief to get someone here [YWS]..." (March 1, 1999). Youth shelters help "free-up" the formal system by taking in populations (such as immigrants/refugees and psychiatric youth) who are simply awaiting resources (e.g., psychiatric group home) or bureaucratic procedures (e.g., citizenship).

Youth shelters have also become "dumping grounds" for youth that the formal system deem "difficult" or "hard to handle." While psychiatric youth sent from hospitals fall into this category, shelter workers are equally perturbed by CAS group homes that are sending "problem" clients for "consequences" or "time-outs." As mentioned earlier, most shelter workers perceive this form of referral as grossly inappropriate: "It's a practice that I find absolutely reprehensible. It's a totally

inappropriate use of CH" (CH upper level manager, May 25, 1999). Nonetheless, shelters acknowledge the financial benefit of keeping their beds full even though this practice may contradict their operating philosophies:[99]

> Shelters are doing the job according to our funding contract...we [YWS] have to be full to keep our doors open [and survive]...it's a paradox inherent in the shelter funding...what if we are successful and our occupancy drops to 70%? How can I fund the Shelter then? (YWS upper level manager, February 4, 1999).

CH, being the only Toronto youth shelter that is largely independent of government funding, is slowly challenging referrals they view as inappropriate. For example, CH workers are more cautious in accepting youth who have "time-outs" from group homes. As explained by a CH middle level manager:

> There is the possibility of a kid being dropped here [by a group home], although I think we're pretty vigilant about saying you have a kid in care who's in a group home, I'll give you a couple of days to try and figure out what to do, but that kid has a bed and he's not staying here because there is somebody else who could use that bed (May 31, 1999).

Nonetheless, both Shelters continue to "open their doors" to this form of referral.

Another function of youth shelters within the youth-in-trouble network is to "catch" many of the formal system's runaways, escapees and graduates, thus providing

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[99] The per diem payment scheme places youth shelters at a disadvantage because they are paid on the basis of the clients they actually serve, while their operational costs (e.g., staff, food, electricity, and water) are not variable but fixed. As Smith and Lipsky (1993:152) noted, "...the State only pays for what it gets..." therefore youth shelters have an incentive to maintain the numbers it serves.

a "back up" or "secondary" network to the formal system. As described by a YWS front line worker:

> I think we catch them when child welfare missed or just didn't work for them, say they were gonna stay home and have this in-home worker come in for family counseling and instead they [kid] left, I think we're about there. I think we're good for that...I think we are right in the middle...where they are a little too old for CAS to help and they're too young to get the adult help, general welfare... (February 17, 1999).

By the time CAS graduates near their 16th birthday, "...they want to be free, they don't want to be told what to do, they don't want the CAS who has ruined their lives, in their opinion, still having control over them..." (CH staff, May 25, 1999). As such, a new system composed of youth shelters, perceived by street youth as more alternative and less controlling, has emerged as the primary caregiver for a population who continues to be at risk, bitter and mistrustful of the traditional system of care.

While CAS workers are eager to "lose" difficult cases to youth shelters, they are repeatedly slow to respond to street youth aged 13 to 16. As shown earlier, front line workers experienced various struggles to engage CAS workers with selected minors.[100] A YWS worker provides a telling portrait:

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[100] Based on these struggles, both CH and YWS have begun to strongly encourage CAS-affiliated youth to continue their relationship with the formal system, in order to receive material and social supports. As explained by a CH worker:

> What we are trying to do generally is to negotiate on the kids' behalf with the CAS worker to try and keep the Wardship going...If they stay with CAS then they have more opportunities for housing, more money, more funds for all kinds of things, plus they have the support of having some adult who's attached to you (May 25, 1999).

> Usually when we call [CAS], we get transferred a lot to different people, eventually someone gets on the phone and they say I'll call you back and you have to be very demanding. Basically you have to say someone has to come out here [to the Shelter], basically you have to give them the directions on what they have to do otherwise it doesn't happen. And usually, if someone comes at all, it's usually hours later (March 24, 1999).

Perceived by youth as "outside the system," shelters attract many individuals who are "system shy" and would not have otherwise developed a relationship with the formal system (e.g., a first time runaway from home). Both Shelters acknowledge that a segment of their residents are younger youth who are "new to the system." In this sense, shelters not only provide these youth with much needed services, but also protect the formal system from having to intervene when resources are so scarce: "I think it is easier for kids to want to leave abusive situations, because they know there is a resource [shelter] which is good, because if something is really bad, we're [shelters] a great system to have..." (YWS staff, February 4, 1999). Shelters have always attracted hard-core street populations (i.e., punks, prostitutes, and squatters) that the formal system would have much difficulty handling, thus acting as a "buffer."[101] Front line shelter workers believe they are more "in touch" with street culture than the Police, the courts, hospitals and the CAS. As noted by a CH worker: "CAS just doesn't have a good sense of what's going on with these kids [street youth]

[101] However, my analysis demonstrates that youth shelters are finding it increasingly difficult to service this segment of the population.

on the street...the prostitution and drugs...I don't think they understand that" (May 31, 1999). At present, immigrant populations and youth with mental health issues have joined the ranks of the hard-core category. Shelters not only "buffer" youth from the bureaucratic system, but also, the bureaucratic system from particular youth. As such, the youth shelter permits the formal system to maintain its bureaucratic ways.

Within this "partnership," the formal system maintains its status as the more legitimate and professional apparatus in contrast with the shelter's alternative reputation. In this vein, many shelter workers voiced the opinion that the formal system perceived them as incompetent and "amateurs" in the field: "I don't think they [CAS] know a thing about us [CH]. I think they think that we don't know what we are doing. I think that they think they're the experts" (CH staff, May 27, 1999). Many of the practices performed by youth shelters are dictated by the formal system: for example, the CAS mandates the manner by which youth shelters deal with minors; the Police prescribe how youth shelters handle delinquents; hospitals provide information regarding how youth shelters should proceed with psychiatric youth; and, Probation officers recommend ways to service young offenders. Within this context, the youth shelter is clearly the less powerful actor, responding to the wishes and demands of

stronger players in the youth-in-trouble network.[102] There is little wonder why the majority of shelter workers assumed that most formal system organizations had little respect for shelter operations.

Finally, the formal system receives some very practical gains by "partnering" with shelters. By allowing youth shelters to provide direct services to troubled youth, formal child welfare agencies are removed from the day-to-day administration and operation problems (such as fiscal shortfalls or staff turnover), and are not visibly responsible for the often inadequate service delivery (for example, that youth shelters are overcrowded and have questionable client outcomes). A symbiotic relationship allows government or quasi-government agencies (like the CAS) to "diffuse conflict" (Handler, 1996) by passing responsibility onto voluntary youth shelters. As noted by Kirsten Gronbjerg (1992:95): "Non-profit organizations that rely heavily on government grants and contracts risk becoming part of an 'institutional sink' in which government submerges its problems." Nevertheless, youth shelters cannot avoid interaction with the formal system, and, as discussed below, have found some gratification by such an arrangement.

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[102] In contrast to YWS, CH is a prominent and influential organization that has maintained much autonomy in its day-to-day activities due to fundraising capacities, an association with the Catholic Church, and membership within CH International (likened to a social movement concerned with rescuing troubled street youth throughout the world). Within Toronto, CH is a massive street youth organization with one hundred beds, a drop-in center, education and employment programs, and second stage housing. These operations allow the organization its own "mini" referral network. In this regard, CH has more options available regarding client case management than most social service agencies. These impressive characteristics lead to a certain "high status" within the human services sector. CH has been able to create strong ties (at a managerial level) with the CAS, the Police, and Probation services, and thus, enjoys a "less unequal" symbiotic relationship with most formal system players. However, regardless of its status, CH remains a youth shelter and must accept its lower caste identity (i.e., "dumping ground"). For example, despite the Shelter's objections in accepting youth who are given "time outs" by group homes, it continues to receive these clients.

Why youth shelters need the system

Despite their lower status, shelters benefit from their partnership with the formal system. Shelters desire to be perceived by their client base (street youth) as alternative, non-professional and non-bureaucratic apparatuses. However, in order to survive within the present social service environment, shelters had to shed their "fringe" status, attempting to be seen by the community and other agencies as "official" or "professional" partners of the formal child welfare system. Youth shelters procure a degree of legitimacy by being connected with the formal child welfare system. At one time, youth shelters' residents were primarily characterized as hard-core and deviant (drug users, prostitutes, uncontrollable youth, and criminals). By allowing their premises to fill up with immigrants, refugees, youth experiencing mental health issues, and CAS graduates/Wards, youth shelters now consist of more "legitimate populations."[103] According to Handler (1996:20), organizations "...favor those clients that will enhance legitimacy and garner or preserve resources and avoid or somehow marginalize 'undesirable' clients." Due to the influx of these new populations, youth shelters' relations with many formal system organizations have become less strained. For example, the Police had always maintained a tenuous relationship with youth shelters. While admitting that the type of relationship depended a great deal upon individual personalities, shelter workers believed that

[103] It is debatable whether psychiatric youth are any more "legitimate" than hard-core street kids in the eyes of the public.

many Police Officers "think we [shelter workers] are bleeding hearts" and provide "too much" to a questionable population (YWS staff, March 8, 1999). An example of past Police perceptions of youth shelters is related by a long-time YWS worker: "They [Police] would come in [the shelter] and say - 'oh this is the life, you guys [residents] have everything here, gel, toothpaste, tooth brushes...they [Police] think we [YWS] do way too much and they think we house criminals..." (March 1, 1999).

Over the years, both CH and YWS have made considerable attempts (collaborative projects, open-houses, and sharing information) to build positive working relationships with the Police and the CAS. During its genesis, CH reputedly sought little consultation or approval from the formal system. Similarly, YWS, until recently, was perceived by the Police as "...a pain...because we house the bad kids, kids with criminal records" (YWS staff, March 8, 1999). Most workers now agree that the Police are more supportive and have a better understanding of youth shelter operations. This emerging positive relationship is largely based upon each Shelter's attempt to build more in-depth relationships with such formal organizations (as well as taking in many of their clients). Washton (1974) explored this phenomenon in her account of Project Place, an alternative shelter for street kids in Boston that secured legitimacy once connected to formal institutions such as the Police department and child welfare. CH's and YWS' present acceptance and popularity within Toronto communities as well as the media stems largely from their status as "legitimate" partners of the formal child welfare system in the struggle to protect "legitimate" (or deserving) youth in trouble.

In addition to acquiring a more legitimate and professional status, shelters gain clients from the formal system (and thus per diem allowances) and at times, a link to a multitude of system services (for example, job training programs or long-term housing):

> We [CH] are the house for a lot of their [CAS] kids, for a lot of their graduates...and sometimes they [CAS] can be very cooperative with us if they have a kid that they need a place. And sometimes they have a lot of information or a lot of different services that would be helpful... (CH staff, May 25, 1999).

Gaining "formal system" clients has provided benefits to shelters. Youth shelters now receive more stable and predictable funding, especially in light of residents staying longer. As such, youth shelters are financially rewarded for being full; the formal system "supplying" the shelter with many of its residents.

In summary, both systems accrue benefits from being interrelated. The formal system is indeed dependent upon youth shelters for service delivery, and youth shelters have maintained some autonomy in what they do. As Handler (1996:92) explained, within an environment of mutual dependency, "close monitoring doesn't pay" and non-profits have retained much sovereignty within a contracting arrangement.[104] However, in the final analysis, the formal system has accrued a servile and needed receptacle for its clients. Mutual dependency is not equally divided among partners. Milner's

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[104] Voluntary agencies are fairly autonomous (latitude in exercising discretion) bodies within the State. According to Handler (1996:28): "When an upper-level unit of government mandates one of these [voluntary] agencies to do something, the lower-level agency will attempt to respond in terms of their own organizational interests. It will consider what level of compliance will maximize its survival chances."

concept of "symbiotic inequality" is a more precise description - addressing the power struggle between unequal actors. Being the weaker partner, youth shelters pay a heavier price: their ability to turn away clients deemed incompatible with their mandate (e.g., psychiatric youth and group home kids) is weakened, they must follow official service standards (Hostel Standards); maintain a continuous positive reputation in the community (for both government and private funding), and adhere to government administrative procedures (e.g., timely submission of documents). The following section discusses the consequences for youth shelters as they join the ranks of the formal child welfare network.

Consequences

Youth shelters were envisioned by their architects as "buffers" from the impersonal and bureaucratic formal system. However, the role of "dumping ground" has presently assumed the principal function of the youth shelter within the youth-in-trouble network. The original goals and aims of CH and YWS have been watered down in order to reach a suitable partnership with more entrenched formal system actors. This partnership has led to significant consequences for both Shelters:

1. CH and YWS no longer possess an internal environment to only house their earlier clientele - "traditional" street kids (for example, "squeegee" kids, prostitutes and drug users). While those entrenched in street life continue to arrive at both Shelters, they no longer have the luxury of invariably obtaining a bed; a principle once upheld by youth shelters (in the name of "open intake"). Due to their high census, CH

and YWS cannot automatically "buffer" street kids as they once did.[105] The ramification of this new situation is that more young people find themselves living on the street. Throughout 1999, Toronto newspapers consistently reported an increase of young people living in squats and local parks. While street kids routinely access drop-in centers and outreach workers in downtown Toronto, these services cannot and do not provide any form of stable housing. Adult shelters have become the "last" possible housing resource for street kids.[106] Despite the disheartening reviews of the adult shelter by residents, social service workers, and the public, youth shelter workers are becoming increasingly desperate for any resource that will accept clients whom they cannot house.

2. CH and YWS originally defined themselves as short-term emergency crisis centers for "traditional" street youth. This identity no longer exists. Forming close relationships with larger, more powerful partners elicits the risk of voluntary agencies becoming co-opted (in terms of structure, operation and service delivery) by the formal system. Both Shelters have strayed from their original mandates. Two decades

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[105] Due to its impressive financial situation, CH has maintained a link with "traditional" street kids through its outreach and drop-in services.

[106] Adult shelters, while accepting individuals aged 18 and older, are generally perceived by youth shelter workers as inappropriate venues for adolescents due to their environments and clientele. Adult shelters have been referred to as the "bottom line" and a "wake up call" for youth. As explained by a YWS front line worker: "I know a couple of residents that they only know this shelter [YWS] and then they've been to Seaton House or YMCA (adult shelters) as well, and they came back saying I don't want to go back out there" (March 1, 1999). In the 1980's, North York Comptroller Barbara Greene provided an apt description of the adult shelter system which continues to remain true:

> I took a tour of the hostel facilities operated by Metropolitan Toronto as well as a sample of some of the facilities operated by non-profit groups in the City of Toronto. It was shocking to discover the number of young people who were surviving in environments, such as Seaton House and All Saints Church, that provide no special consideration to them as young people. They were living in barracks or sleeping on floors with habitual alcoholics and confirmed indigents. In my view, such an environment offers youth during a period of crisis and depression a debilitating role model... (YWS Archives).

after their inception, CH and YWS have already begun to neglect their once-envisioned clientele. The consequence has been that these organizations are slowly surrendering their "alternative" aura. From the local histories, there is a sense that throughout their evolution, both CH and YWS have developed more formal mandates, procedures, policies and structures - becoming slightly more institutionalized as they develop clearer and more positive relationships with the Police, the CAS, Probation, the courts, schools, and, business and community sectors. Neither youth Shelter exists in its earlier form - unstructured, isolated, and unknown. As discussed in Chapter Four, there is concern that once voluntary and formal systems develop close relations, voluntary agencies could lose their unique qualities and become government agencies once-removed. The result is a welfare state with a more limited range of responses to a specific social problem (Lipsky and Smith, 1989-90).[107]

The rumblings of such a situation is evidenced by the present lack of housing services for "traditional" street kids. By accepting "system kids," the youth shelter has defined itself as an important member of the youth-in-trouble network, and like other organizations within this network, have turned their back upon youth living on the street. Proponents of the organizational-interest camp can argue that CH and YWS have chosen this path out of self-interest. Both Shelters gain more stable and reliable

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[107] Gidron and Hasenfeld (1994:169) argued that the pressure for isomorphism is greater on the voluntary agency due to the power disadvantage vis-a-vis the formal organization. Hooyman, Fredrikson and Perlmutter (1988) addressed this issue in their case study of an alternative agency serving those infected with and affected by AIDS. The authors acknowledged some of the risks involved in accepting external funding, for example, goal displacement and change in structure, philosophy and focus.

funding by choosing to serve clients over a longer time span. At present, CH and YWS need not worry about filling beds. In their study, Smith and Lipsky (1993:143) showed that non-profits accrued higher reimbursements for taking in clients referred by government. While youth shelters gain a consistent per diem rate, they do not receive extra funding from formal system organizations in return for housing their clients. However, many of the auxiliary programs developed by CH and YWS to serve formal "system-kids" (e.g., education services and job training projects) received seed money from government agencies (such as Human Resources and Development Canada). As mentioned in YWS' local history, the Shelter has recently applied for government grants to secure a community support worker position.

3. It is important to note that many workers at CH and YWS are not content with their Agency's present direction. As explored in Chapter Four, the shelter movement has been inspired (and continues to operate) within a humanistic and social justice framework. In addition to their innate quest for survival, CH and YWS are rooted in and driven by classical charity - a philosophy of care, protection and unconditional love. This philosophy separates the youth shelter from more formal and bureaucratic organizations. Despite more stable funding arrangements, and longer term clients, my analysis illustrates the struggles and frustrations that shelter workers experience with these new dynamics. Many workers lamented the fact that they can no longer provide services to street kids as easily as before. Instead, front line workers are currently struggling with immigrant/refugee populations, younger residents and psychiatric

youth.[108] What concerns many shelter workers is "negative dumping" coupled with a sense of "frustration" linked with feelings of "powerlessness" in working with these new populations. As one CH worker noted: "A lot of time, because either someone's waiting on [immigration] papers or [psychiatric] assessments, there's nothing for them to do...and nothing we can do either" (May 25, 1999). In addition, the longer residents stay at a shelter coupled with the "meshing" of populations has led to increased in-house violence and "acting out" behavior. Many youth shelter workers (both front line and managerial staff) desired to return to what the shelter once proffered - short-term, immediate care. The internal and external dynamics of present day youth shelters have forced older adolescents and "traditional" street kids into adult shelters and/or the streets.[109]

While these feelings may stem from workers' fear of change (or more importantly, fear of being replaced by more specialized staff) as well as normal organizational "growing pains" (as CH and YWS contend with their new environments), they are nonetheless honest portrayals of present-day shelter workers' perceptions.

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[108] However, shelter workers acknowledge that the street youth population is a heterogeneous body (much more so than during the early years of each Shelter's evolution) and is currently well reflected in both Shelters' resident population. Workers are adamant that their organization's thrust has always focused upon "the needs of kids" and at present, the street kid population consists largely of psychiatric individuals, refugees and immigrants, and CAS graduates/runaways/Wards.

[109] For example, "squeegee kids," a current hard-core segment of the street kid population, rarely present themselves at youth shelters, choosing the streets instead of crowded shelters (or waiting for a bed to become available).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

> The lack of adequate resources, coupled with already burdensome state Social Worker caseloads often result in the predictable misuse of shelters by state workers... (Alleva, 1988:33).

Alleva (1988) contends that the "misuse" of shelters (since they are primarily geared towards runaway and homeless individuals) and "maltreatment" of youth (since shelters do not have the resources to assist youth)[110] has caused "considerable tension" between the two organizational systems (Alleva, 1988). A 1991 Report of the Metro Youth Task Force asked: "Who is responsible for youth, anyhow?" and concluded that:

> The answer is far from clear. Efforts to meet the needs of youth and their families are fragmented. In Metro [Toronto], youth policies and services are delivered by levels of government, various large institutions like the CAS and the school boards, and many community agencies. There are few efforts at coordination.

Shelters emerged in the 1980's as a response to the growing number of young people "fleeing" from home and the street, yet presently, they include a large number of individuals "escaping" or "graduating" from foster, group, or institutional care. In the United States, the 1980 Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) stated that youth shelters, "...shall serve as alternatives to the law enforcement, child welfare,

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[110] Apart from the inherent difficulties involved in working with new populations, youth shelters presently lack adequate resources, skill base, and legislative power to deal with immigrants and refugees, youth experiencing mental illness and/or addictions, and CAS clients.

mental health and juvenile justice systems" (Staller and Kirk, 1997). However, the present day shelter picture has led the two investigators to conclude that:

> It is relatively safe to conclude that shelter youth are "systems" kids rather than the distinct class of rebellious youngsters originally envisioned by the RHYA legislation. Thus they have already been filtered through the protective and corrective nets established by the State to take care of kids at risk (Staller and Kirk, 1997:239).

While shelters gain additional clients, they are restricted in the amount of work they can do with these "formal system kids." As noted by the Child Welfare League of America (1991:3), emergency shelters often lack "...the capacity to provide necessary counseling and permanent housing resources." Similarly, shelter workers in my analysis regularly voiced their feelings of having their "hands tied" when it involved working with child welfare system runaways, psychiatric youth, and immigrants/refugees. Alleva (1988:33) argued that presently, shelters exist "...without the adequate resources or authority to successfully mediate presenting problems."[111]

Proponents of the institutional-interest camp would argue that youth shelters have deliberately set this course and thus, the notion of "youth shelter misuse" is unfounded. Instead, youth shelters, such as CH and YWS, are *meant* to be "dumping

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[111] To illustrate this point, a recent article in the Globe and Mail (October 11, 1997) reported that Toronto's homeless shelters, lacking adequate resources, have become dumping grounds for the severely mentally ill discharged from psychiatric hospitals. A psychiatrist interviewed noted: "Where else in medicine do you find the most ill people cared for by the least trained and resourced?"

grounds" for the formal child welfare system - that was the "arrangement" for partnering with more dominant organizations. Moreover, the survival of CH and YWS is a direct result of symbiotic inequality. Both Shelters conformed to the institutional rules set out by high-status organizations. Any forms of tension that exist within CH and YWS are best explained as organizational "growing pains."

On the other hand, supporters of the mission-focused perspective would undoubtedly argue that youth shelters are being "misused." The philosophies of CH and YWS act as highly prevalent guides to their day-to-day functioning - similar to religious doctrine - espousing humanitarian services to "all who come." However, "all who came" were not simply street-entrenched youth, but a myriad of formal "system kids." Unable to restrict entry on humanitarian grounds - these youth are in need of shelter and support - youth shelters have filled up with a radically different population. It has always been the intention of youth shelters to work with hard-core populations who are neglected by other agencies. At present, they continue do so, however, in conjunction with a radically diverse population - immigrants, refugees, psychiatric youth, and CAS wards/graduates/escapees. These youth are the "new" hard-core shelter clients, and shelters have adjusted their programs to meet their new residents' needs. As explained by an upper level manager at CH: "We will never become a warehouse because this agency [CH] values relationships. I think that when it's a warehouse, that's when you don't value or treasure who it is that you're taking care of" (May 27, 1999). Similarly, a YWS worker submitted: "I think that shelters should be more than just holding pens for people" (March 2, 1999).

Regardless into which ideological camp one falls, the consequences of being "dumped" with "system-kids" are significant - youth shelters are no longer able to give as much attention to "traditional" street kids as before - leading many of them to either adult shelters, squats, or the street; youth shelters are slowly losing their "alternative" nature and identity; and finally, the stresses and strains of working with a new clientele in a resource-sapped environment, has resulted in workers feeling overwhelmed and worse, ineffectual.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are complex mechanisms that strive to maximize their survival within environments composed of numerous forces. They are rational beings - attempting to accrue as many benefits with as few costs as possible. In order to persevere, they search out allies while holding rivals at bay. Part of this strategy involves creating an aura of "legitimacy." Organizations also are creatures of symbols - gaining as much support and resources through the dissemination of rituals, stories, and values that "make up" the organization's "culture." For example, both CH and YWS espouse a humanitarian, altruistic nature that is reinforced by stories of its trials (e.g., YWS barely surviving financially in the early 1990's) and tribulations (e.g., CH dealing with its internal scandal). Organizational forms like youth shelters emphasize an "ethic of service" coupled with an "ethic of efficiency" (Lefton and Rosengren, 1966:802), and, as seen in this analysis, the balancing of humanitarian values with economic considerations can be problematic.

The claim has often been made that social workers ignore power issues inherent in the worker-client relationship, and rather, assume that the relationship is based upon mutuality of interests and power equality (Hasenfeld, 1992a). Similarly, there is a perception that social service agencies "collaborate" in the best interest of their clients. Milner's notion of "symbiotic inequality" better describes the relationship between youth shelters and the formal child welfare system - an unequal yet reciprocal

partnership between powerful and not-so-powerful actors. The argument follows that the formal system needs youth shelters in order to maintain their superior position, and are able to maintain this position by "dumping" unwanted clients. In return, youth shelters accrue legitimacy and needed resources by aligning with the formal system.

While this analysis did not incorporate the voices of youth shelter residents, they play an instrumental role in my discussion. For youth shelters, clients are a source of both resources and burden. Clients bring legitimacy to the organization ("the community needs us") and financial resources (through fees paid by government). However, clients also consume agency resources, staff time, and scarce facilities. It can be said that as a result of these burdens, youth shelters "cream" in order to obtain the "best" clients (i.e., easiest to handle; most legitimate in the eyes of the public and other organizations in their environment). The underlying basis of most interorganizational inequality rests upon the differentiation between desirable and undesirable clients (Milner, 1980:72). By taking in more "legitimate" clients, CH and YWS have abandoned their claim as "alternative" street kid environments, and adopted a more legitimate and professional formal system status. Within the youth-in-trouble network, "system kids" are more desirable than "street kids" in terms of youth shelter survival.

My analysis elucidates two powerful forces that guided both Shelters' transformations - the dismal state of social service resources in the community; and, the unequal partnership that emerged between formal organizations and each Shelter. The "organizational-interest" perspective adopts the latter focus, arguing that in order to survive, YWS and CH needed to carve out specific niches within their

environments, and thus, internalized the role of "dumping ground" in order to "fit in" with and support their more dominant neighbors. This became the essence of their symbiotic and unequal relationship with formal child welfare players. Both Shelters adopted "non-lateral" and "longitudinal" interests in their clients as a way to accrue legitimacy and stable funding.

On the other hand, the "mission-focused" perspective describes the manner by which CH and YWS were primarily shaped by their external environments (i.e., a resource-sapped social service community). Each Shelter was heavily impacted by a lack of community resources and a new disadvantaged youth population. CH and YWS adapted by reinventing themselves as long-term venues for "formal system kids."

As noted in Chapter Seven, the "mission-focused" perspective represents the way in which participants explain their Shelter's evolution. Conversely, the "organizational-interest" perspective emerged from the inconsistencies presented within the data, and thus, provides a more comprehensive understanding of how organizations "behave" throughout their life stages. CH and YWS were chosen for this analysis because at first sight, they appeared to be very different types of youth shelters. However, it was their similar approaches to organizational survival that attracted my curiosity. I was amazed at the striking commonalties regarding how both organizations explained their evolution, as well as their current struggles and frustrations. The majority of participants wished that the youth shelter would become *more* of a "buffer" or "alternative haven" for street youth, and *less* of a "dumping ground" for other child welfare organizations. This led me to wonder - why doesn't CH and YWS return to what they once proffered, or do these organizations gain some

benefits from their new arrangements? The "organizational-interest" perspective, rather than the "mission-focused" perspective, best answer these queries.

I have included both perspectives because each presents a distinct portrait of the organizations under study. According to naturalistic thought, social phenomenon is understood, interpreted and explained in various ways, depending upon how the individual makes sense of, or gives meaning to, specific events. In other words, rather than discovering an objective, universal, and singular "truth," this analysis presents two distinct perspectives that help us understand how CH and YWS evolved. If there is a "true" explanation of the lives of CH and YWS, than perhaps it lies somewhere in-between these two stories.

Regardless of the means by which CH and YWS have reached their present state, the end results are clear. Both organizations have dramatically transformed throughout the decades, and as such, their original goals have become displaced: they no longer serve "traditional" street youth; they are no longer short-term emergency crisis centers; and, they have increasingly become "dumping grounds" for "formal system kids" rather than "alternative" venues for hard-core youth populations. The following section provides some recommendations concerning the present circumstances of youth shelters in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Coalition of Youth Shelters (YSIN) must continue to demand higher government per diem rates. The fact that youth shelters were primary venues for hard-core street youth, and, are presently important players with "formal system

kids," attests to their significance within the youth-in-trouble network. CH, being the most reputable Toronto shelter, should become more involved and possibly take a front line role in this charge. In addition, YSIN should advocate for more government funding regarding diverse programs, such as CH's educational department and YWS' day project.

2. Each Shelter, in response to institutional isomorphism, must search out ways to maintain its operation's uniqueness and distinctiveness within the youth-in-trouble network. As noted earlier, organizations are living and evolving structures participating in shaping and reconstructing their environments. The local histories, albeit emphasizing the institutionalization process, also demonstrate CH's and YWS' creative (flexible) characteristics. Youth shelters, as voluntary organizations, must continue to provide a caring, open, and safe environment for their residents. In order for this to happen, youth shelters need to balance a legitimate and professional image (in order to accrue legitimacy and resources) with an alternative reputation (in order to attract marginalized youth). This would mean that places like YWS and CH need to advocate for greater government responsibility with regards to various community resources such as job training programs, mental health clinics, immigrant and refugee centers, and longer-term housing. Youth shelters, in order to comply with their mandates, must have sources in which to refer their residents.
3. If youth shelters continue to be used as "dumping grounds" by the formal system, then new organizational forms must emerge to house a growing number of hard-core street kids. Montreal's Dans La Rue can be used as a model for such a

setting - a relaxed and unstructured environment that has been very successful in attracting hard-core youth and providing them with needed resources. Dans La Rue has fused short-term shelter with drop-in and outreach functions. It is imperative that some organizational form emerge to look after hard-core street kids, who are increasingly finding the street as their only housing and support option. However, as my analysis suggests, as time progresses, organizational forms such as Dans La Rue will likely become co-opted by the formal system, and thus, there must continually be newer informal apparatuses to take their place.

4. In order to break this cycle of developing newer and more alternative settings for the most marginalized youth-in-trouble, existing youth shelters must make every effort to accommodate hard-core street kids. One suggestion would be for youth shelters to set aside each night several beds for hard-core street youth needing short-term support. CH could arrange such procedures through their outreach program. YWS, being a smaller agency, would no doubt have difficulties reserving bed space, but could develop protocol that would allow worker office space (or mats) to be used for hard-core clientele. YSIN could be instrumental in this regard, advocating for special funding allowances (in addition to per diem rates) to specifically serve hard-core street youth.
5. Lastly, some of the innovative programs existing (or being planned) at CH and YWS are attempting to "free up" space and thus lessen the current "bottle neck" shelter environment. CH's Second Stage housing initiative (being similarly planned at YWS) provides a number of youth with long-term independent living arrangements. Not only does this project allow youth to leave the shelter

environment and live independently, it also provides shelter bed space for others in need. In this light, CH and YWS are creating their own external resources in which to refer residents. These types of programs need to be implemented, perhaps in collaboration with existing group homes, co-ops, and mental health/immigration centers. For instance, in December 1999, the Federal Government earmarked a considerable amount of funding (approximately five million dollars) to such initiatives. Several Toronto drop-in clinics are presently constructing work programs and job training sites primarily for hard-core street kids (named the "Squeegee Projects"). In a collaborative spirit, CH and YWS could provide needed shelter for some of these projects' participants.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Youth shelters have unequivocally emerged as vital and necessary adjuncts to the child welfare system. Some critics (or optimists) argue that the entire voluntary welfare sector will contribute to a more democratic and decentralized welfare state that is more responsive to the needs of marginalized populations (Henry, 1987, Kramer, 1981, Lipsky and Smith, 1989-90). By providing alternative modes of delivery, the voluntary agency has altered the child welfare environment. However, there is evidence that shelters are being altered as well, becoming overcrowded and "misused" apparatuses within a resource-scarce child welfare network. In fact, they have become resources for the interests of other organizational structures. As a CH social worker warned:

> It seems to me that this [shelters] is really a growth industry, this is one of the few growth industries and that is a sad thing because it is really band-aid services...It's [shelters] the beginning of the work, it's not the middle and it's not the end. And if there is nothing to do in the middle and the end, then what is going to happen to all these kids who really need it? There's not as many group homes, there's not as many places for them to go, so we are the entry and then from here we try to make sure we connect them to the strongest services that are there, and that's getting much harder, it takes for ever (May 25, 1999).

In the prologue to "When Corporations Rule the World," David Korten (1995:1) pronounced that "[e]very where I travel, I find an almost universal sense among ordinary people that the institutions on which they depend are failing them." This observation haunts the formal child welfare system, such as Toronto's CAS. Whether youth shelters will soon be similarly described is yet to be decided. At present, youth shelters are overflowing with individuals who should be staying in various resources other than the shelter - like mental health clinics, group homes, immigration and refugee centers, and independent living arrangements. It is now time for other resources to bear some commitment. Smith and Lipsky (1993:223) cautioned:

> We write in a period of severely diminished revenues for many of the social services. Non-profit organizations are being asked, and their own inclinations toward altruism dictate, that they cushion local, state, and federal fiscal crises by treating more clients and more difficult clients without compensating reimbursement. The saints of the non-profit world must be admired for their

> selflessness in the face of severe budget reductions, but asking providers to do with less and seeing more service providers sink under budget reductions do not bode well for public policy in the long run.

The current situations of CH and YWS bear striking resemblance to Smith and Lipsky's pronouncement. At the same time, my analysis also questions whether CH and YWS are indeed "saints" performing "selfless" work. Without the implementation of the above-noted recommendations, youth shelters' strengths, in the eyes of marginalized, hard-core street populations, will be undoubtedly compromised.

APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. My research interests include community development, organizational theory and poverty/homelessness issues. I am commencing a study of the relationship (or lack thereof) between the child welfare system and street kid shelters. My experiences while working at several alternative street kid agencies (in Toronto and Montreal) caused me to recognize the overwhelming number of street kids that have traveled throughout both systems. Similarly, numerous studies have highlighted how shelters and child welfare systems make up an integral part of street kids' lives.

However, the research lacks a clear account of how both systems function to care and protect street youth. Do they collaborate, and if so, what forms of collaboration occur? Are the systems partners or separate and distinct entities? These questions make up the background orientation of my investigation.

Field study will involve a qualitative analysis of two street kid shelters. I will be exploring their "local histories" in order to document the evolutionary processes, especially vis-a-vis the child welfare system. This will involve an analysis of agency documents and semi-structured interviews with upper and middle management regarding how the shelter evolved and what type of relationship (if any) existed during this time with the formal child welfare system.

I will also recruit a number of front line staff (five to ten) in order to interview them regarding their day-to-day contact with the child welfare system? Does it occur during their day? If so, how? More specifically, what procedures are in place when dealing with youth who are under 16? How do they feel about these procedures?

Interviews will be performed in a private space (if possible at the shelter), in a relaxed and casual manner, employing open-ended, semi-structured questions, and will last approximately one hour. If agreed upon, I would like to audio-tape each interview. All interviews will be confidential, anonymous, and conducted on a voluntary basis. Letters of consent (that will include the nature of the study) will be provided and all research methods will be scrutinized by a Research Ethics Committee at Wilfrid Laurier University. I hope to discuss my findings (and receive feedback) with all participants at a later date. This research will be used for a dissertation report in partial fulfillment of my DSW degree at Wilfrid Laurier University.

I hope that you will be interested in this research topic.

Jeff Karabanow
Wilfrid Laurier University (416) 922 3651

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you describe the Shelter's philosophy?
2. Has it changed over the years?
3. Can you describe the types of residents that come here?
4. Have they changed over the years?
5. Where do they come from?
6. Where do they go?
7. Can minors sleep here?
8. What's your relationship with other services - the CAS, the Police, other shelters, etc..
9. How do you think they perceive your Shelter?
10. What are the similarities/differences between your Shelter and other organizations?
11. Where does the youth shelter lie within the youth-in-trouble network? (What is the role of youth shelters?)
12. Can you describe the day-to-day activities of the Shelter?
13. What do you find most satisfying about your experiences here?
14. What do you find most frustrating about your experiences here?

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT

I understand that I am being asked to participate in a research study which is being conducted by Jeff Karabanow under the supervision of Dr. Eli Teram and the faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how street kid shelters and the formal child welfare system work on behalf of the street kid. The data collected in this research will be used to promote this understanding.

The following procedures will be used: Agency documents will be reviewed in order to provide a historical context. Participant observation (in the form of participating in group activities, staff meetings, and generally "hanging out" at the shelter) will allow for an understanding of "shelter life." In addition, one hour audio-taped semi-structured interviews with staff will be employed in order to highlight experiences and feelings regarding the shelter and the child welfare system (for example, what do you think is the role of the shelter?). Initial findings will be reviewed/discussed with participants approximately four months later.

I understand that I am free to contact the investigator at the telephone number listed below if I have questions.

The following are benefits which I may derive from my participation in this study:

to learn first-hand about research in social work

to gain knowledge pertaining to shelters and child welfare systems

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate in this study without penalty to me. I may also withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I would ordinarily be entitled. I may omit the answer to any question. If necessary, counselling can be made available prior to interviews.

I understand my research records will be kept confidential (tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet; without identifying labels; Jeff Karabanow will be the only person to listen to tapes; and all material will be destroyed after completion of study). Moreover, I will not be identified in any publication or discussion.

I understand that direct quotations may be used in reporting the data. The use of these quotations will be limited to those that do not disclose my identity. The researcher will obtain my consent to use quotes that may disclose my identity. The researcher (Jeff Karabanow) will have sole access to the data.

I understand that I have a right to all questions about the study answered by the researcher or research advisor in sufficient detail to clearly understand the answer.

I understand that I can receive feedback on the overall results of this research by phoning the researcher. In addition, I can meet the researcher four months after initial interview to discuss preliminary findings. I will be given a copy of the overall findings by the summer of 2000.

This project has been approved by the research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University. If I have any questions about the research, the procedures employed, my rights, or any other research related concerns I may contact the investigator (Jeff Karabanow 884-0710, ext. 2688), his supervisor (Eli Teram 884-0710, ext. 2198), or the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, (Dr. Linda Parker 884-0710, ext. 3126).

I acknowledge receiving a copy of this informed consent.

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