

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF
SENIOR CENTRE PLANNING PRACTICE:
TOWARD AN INTEGRATED VIEW OF PROGRAM PLANNING

by

JENNIFER ANN WARREN HEWSON

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1990
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1993

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Educational Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 1998

© Jennifer Ann Warren Hewson, 1998

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date June 26, 1998

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding of the process of program planning in a senior centre. Of particular interest was the extent to which technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions of planning were represented in the planning practice of programmers. In-depth interviews were conducted with four programmers who were responsible for planning programs at one Lower Mainland, British Columbia senior centre from April 1996 to April 1997. Observations of programming meetings and documents pertaining to program planning supplemented interview data.

This exploration revealed that all three dimensions of planning were evident in the programmers' practice. When planning programs, the programmers completed four technical stages: generating ideas, selecting ideas, developing programs, and organizing details. Daily planning activities revolved around these stages and their related tasks. The way in which programs were developed at this centre was also a highly contextualized process. The programmers were influenced by a variety of contextual factors internal and external to the centre which shaped the structure, process, timing, and organization of planning as well as the selection and development of programs. When examining planning as a social-political process of negotiation, it was evident that planning practice was characterized by power relationships, interests, and negotiation. While negotiating interests was one form of action in which the planners engaged, it was not the dominant form of planning activity. Planning practice at this centre was best depicted as a highly

contextualized technical process which entailed information gathering, criteria-based decision making, negotiating interests, and recording program details.

The way in which planning occurred at this centre implies that technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions are interrelated and that the interplay between the technical and social-political dimensions is influenced by contextual factors. While much of the planning literature has focused on a single dimension, this exploration of practice suggests that an integrated way of thinking about planning is needed which acknowledges varying degrees to which technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions may be emphasized depending on the planning environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	3
Significance	3
Overview of Chapters	6
Use of Terms	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Senior Centre Program Planning	8
Leisure and Recreation Program Planning	10
Adult Education Program Planning	26
Chapter Summary	36
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	38
Research Approach	38
Site Selection	39
Gaining Access	41
Data Collection	43
Data Management	48
Data Analysis	48
Trustworthiness	51
Anonymity	56
Reciprocity	57
Chapter Summary	60

	Page
CHAPTER 4: PROFILE OF MATHESON SENIOR CENTRE	61
Model of Service Delivery	61
Facility	61
Community Characteristics	63
Membership	66
Philosophy, Mission, and Goals	69
Organizational Structure	70
Organization of Programs and Services	72
Number of Programs and Services Offered	74
Programming Trends	76
Characteristics of the Programmers	77
Typical and Unique Attributes of the Centre	77
Chapter Summary	79
CHAPTER 5: CENTRE-WIDE ASPECTS OF PLANNING	80
Division of Program Responsibilities	80
Involvement of Seniors in Planning	81
Boundary Permeability	83
Interactions Between Programmers	85
Involvement of the Supervisor in Planning	87
Process of Planning	91
Timing of Planning	92
Factors Influencing Planning at a Centre-Wide Level	94
Summary of Planning Issues	99
Chapter Summary	103
CHAPTER 6: PAM'S APPROACH TO PLANNING	105
Generating Program Ideas	105
Selecting New Ideas	108
Selecting Previous Programs	113
Relationship Between New and Repeat Programs	115
Developing Ideas	117
Barriers to Pursuing Programs	121
Challenges When Planning Programs	123
Summary of Planning Issues	127
Chapter Summary	131

	Page
CHAPTER 7: ELLEN'S APPROACH TO PLANNING	132
Generating Ideas for Educational Talks	133
Selecting Talk Ideas: Source Specific Considerations	134
Selecting Talk Ideas: General Considerations	138
Developing Talk Ideas	141
Barriers and Constraints	143
Generating Ideas for Special Events	145
Selecting Previous Events	146
Developing Special Events	150
Barriers and Challenges	155
Summary of Planning Issues	155
Chapter Summary	161
CHAPTER 8: PLANNING WHILE ELLEN WAS AWAY	162
Educational Talks	162
Special Events	167
Summary of Planning Issues	169
Chapter Summary	172
CHAPTER 9: BEN'S APPROACH TO PLANNING	173
Generating Ideas	173
Challenges to Generating Ideas	175
Selecting Trips	177
Developing Trips	186
Challenges and Barriers to Planning	189
Summary of Planning Issues	191
Chapter Summary	194
CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION	195
Planning as a Technical Process	196
Planning as Context- or Situation-Specific	201
Planning as a Social-Political Process of Negotiation	224
A Practice-Based View of Program Planning	238
Toward an Integrated View of Planning	240
Chapter Summary	248

	Page
CHAPTER 11: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	249
Summary of Research Findings	249
Limitations	250
Implications for Theory	253
Implications for Future Research	255
Implications for Practice	259
REFERENCES	262

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Organizational Structure	71
Figure 2: Planning as a highly contextualized technical process with minimal social-political activity	243
Figure 3: Planning as a highly contextualized technical process with moderate social-political activity	245
Figure 4: Planning as a highly contextualized process where technical and social-political activities are both central dimensions	246
Figure 5: Planning as a highly contextualized process where social- political activity overshadows technical aspects	247

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Average and Median Household Income for the Six Planning Areas	64
Table 2: Programming Dates and Deadlines	94

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I could not have completed this project without the support and encouragement of my husband, my mother, other family members, and close friends. I am forever grateful to the supervisor and programmers at Matheson Senior Centre for so willingly sharing their stories and insights with me, and I thank the staff and the board of directors at the centre for welcoming me so graciously. A number of teachers have also made this achievement possible. I would like to thank Dr. Tom Sork for his inspiration and guidance, as well as Dr. Wendy Frisby and Dr. Frank Echols for their direction and assistance. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Phyllis Johnson, my Master's advisor, for expressing her confidence in my abilities as a graduate student and to Mrs. Gladys Rekert, my first teacher, for instilling in me a passion for learning.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past forty years, senior centres have become vital community-based support systems which act as focal points for the provision of activities and services to seniors. While definitions vary, this type of organization for seniors is typically described as a community centre that offers a variety of programs on a frequent and regular basis to seniors who are not institutionalized and do not require constant assistance because of illness or physical challenges. As such, a senior centre differs from day care and residential facilities as well as from drop in centres for seniors. Senior centres may serve a variety of specific purposes; however, the coordination and delivery of programs is described as an essential component of senior centre operations.

Descriptions of senior centres frequently include references to typical programming areas and potential programs (Enns, 1991; Gelfand, 1988; Leitner & Leitner, 1996; Lowy & Doolin, 1990; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; Teaff, 1985). Although descriptions of programs and programming areas are prevalent, a major gap in the literature exists with respect to discussions and studies of the process of program planning in such settings.

While program planning has not been the focus of senior centre research, several studies have examined the total number of activities and services offered by centres and factors related to the number of programs offered (Krout, 1985, 1989, 1990; Leanse & Wagner, 1975; Ralston, 1981). The findings of these studies suggest that contextual factors play a prominent role in shaping planning decisions, at least regarding the number of programs offered. Unfortunately, these studies have focused on a relatively large

number of centres and have not explored in detail how such factors influence decisions about the number of programs and other dimensions of planning practice such as program selection and development. To date, researchers have not pursued these research areas and as a result, the process of planning programs in senior centres remains unexplored.

Although discussions of planning are negligible in the senior centre literature, a great deal has been written about planning in other related fields such as recreation, leisure, and adult education. In these fields, planning has traditionally been depicted as a technical process whereby programmers systematically complete predetermined steps and tasks when developing programs. Numerous technical models have been proposed which prescribe how planners should plan programs. While the technical view of planning is predominant in these fields, writers in the field of adult education have criticized this view for its idealized images of practice and its failure to focus on context. Contextual and social-political views of planning have been presented as alternatives to the prevailing technical focus. According to a contextual view, planning practice is shaped by the context in which the programmer works and is, therefore, situation-or context-specific. The way in which programs are planned is influenced by a variety of contextual factors specific to the planning environment (see Brookfield, 1983; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Knox, 1982). Cervero and Wilson (1994) propose a view of planning in adult education which emphasizes the social-political context in which programs are constructed and highlights negotiation as the central form of planning activity. These authors assert that power, interests, and negotiation should be at the forefront of discussions about planning

practice. Literature from these related fields suggests that the process of planning senior centre programs may be a technical, contextual, or social-political process.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding of the process of program planning from the perspectives of programmers who worked in one Lower Mainland senior centre. The following research questions were addressed in this exploration of planning practice: (1) To what extent is planning a technical process? (2) To what extent is planning context- or situation-specific? and (3) To what extent is planning a social-political process of negotiation?

While these questions were explored in this study, it should be noted that technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning did not frame the collection of data. I began this study with a broader question in mind, "How do programmers at this senior centre plan programs?" As I began to analyze the data and explore literature related to my findings, these views emerged as being an effective way of organizing the data and discussing the findings and implications of this study.

Significance

Although the provision of activities is considered to be an integral part of senior centre operations, little is known about how programs are planned in this setting. To date, the focus of senior centre literature has been on descriptions of typical programs and programming areas. The number of programs offered by senior centres is the only aspect of programming that has been examined by researchers. With the increasing aging population, it is expected that the need for senior centres will increase and the demand for

programs for older adults will grow (Enns, 1991). If senior centres are to keep up with changing needs and interests and effectively serve the community, a greater understanding of the process of program planning and the basis for making planning decisions is needed. This study, therefore, constitutes an initial investigation into an unexplored but increasingly important area of senior centre practice.

The fact that program planning has been a neglected area of research and discussion raises two questions: (1) Why has it not been the focus of attention? and (2) Why should it be? The process of planning may not be addressed in senior centre literature because it is discussed in related fields of study. A review of leisure, recreation, and adult education literature reveals that a great deal has been written about how to plan programs. In fact, the leisure and recreation literature refers specifically to senior centres as settings in which planning principles and models would apply.

While actual planning practice has not been the subject of senior centre research, this has also been the case in other related fields. The reason for this is most likely due to the fact that prescriptive planning models have been the focus of discussions of planning. The application of prescribed principles was considered the "right way to plan". In order to plan effectively, planners were supposed to follow certain prescribed steps and related tasks. Wilson and Cervero (1997) assert that this "dominance has limited our understanding of practice" (p. 104). This viewpoint legitimizes scientific knowledge and fails to recognize practical knowledge as a legitimate alternative to the application of prescribed principles. The only reason to conduct studies of planning practice, therefore, would be to examine whether or not planners were carrying out prescribed principles. The

impetus for such research would be to change practice not the principles. Given the legitimization of prescriptive knowledge, it is not surprising that, historically, explorations of planning practice have not been the focus of research.

As traditional planning models have become the subject of criticism, alternative views of planning have emerged. Challenges to the traditionally selective view of planning have resulted in a shift in focus towards what planners actually do when planning programs. Explorations of practice provide practical insights into program planning which help to develop a more accurate and comprehensive view of planning. Studies of planning behaviour can identify possible gaps between what has been prescribed in the literature on planning and actual practice. If the prevailing technical view of planning fails to capture the nature of programmers' activities, other perspectives could be identified that would be more suitable or additional elements could be noted that would generate a more accurate representation of practice. Planning theory developed from practice will provide program planners with a more realistic set of guidelines from which to base or examine their practice.

By exploring planning practice, this study will contribute to an understanding of how programs are developed in senior centres. It is also hoped that the findings of this study will make a contribution to the future development of a practice-based theory of program planning. This study may also contribute to discussions of program planning in other related fields of study.

Overview of Chapters

This chapter has introduced the rationale, purpose, and significance of this exploration of program planning practice. Chapter 2 situates the study within selected senior centre, leisure and recreation, and adult education program planning literature. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the methodological choices I have made related to my research approach, site selection, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, anonymity, and reciprocity. Chapter 4 presents a profile of the research site and addresses the typical and unique attributes of this centre. Chapter 5 presents centre-wide aspects of program planning. This chapter discusses planning in terms of the division of planning responsibilities, boundary permeability, interactions between programmers, involvement of the supervisor, the process and timing of planning, and factors that influence planning at the centre-wide level. Chapters 6 through 9 detail the process in which each programmer engages while planning his and her programming areas. Planning stages and related tasks are described along with contextual factors that influence their practice. Challenges and barriers which limit their planning efforts are also presented. Chapter 10, discusses planning at this centre according to three perspectives of program planning presented in the literature. An integrated view of planning is then presented which best depicts how programs are planned at Matheson Senior Centre. Chapter 11 provides a summary of findings, raises limitations inherent in this study, and explores implications for theory, research, and practice.

Use of Terms

Before introducing the next chapter, I believe there are certain terms that require clarification. First, I wish to differentiate between the terms program, programming, and program planning. In this study I use the term program to refer to a specific activity such as a course, workshop, talk, or trip. It should be noted that in the recreation and leisure literature, this term is frequently used to refer to the set of activities offered by an organization (see Kraus, 1997). Programming refers to the provision of the organization's set of programs and services. Program planning, a subset of programming, refers to the activity of program development (i.e., generating, selecting, and developing program ideas). While some writers include implementing and evaluating the program as part of planning, this study focuses on the development of programs and treats implementation and evaluation as separate dimensions of programming.

It should also be noted that I use the terms programmer, program planner, and planner interchangeably. All three terms refer to a person who plans or develops programs.

I also wish to clarify my use of the terms context and contextual factors. While context has multiple meanings, I use Sork's (1997) definition of context as "the milieu or setting" in which planning takes place (p. 12). Contextual factors, therefore, refer to attributes of the planning environment, within and outside the senior centre, which shape or influence how planning occurs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this study within current literature on program planning and to see what insight into the nature of program planning can be gleaned from the literature. Program planning literature is reviewed which pertains to senior centres, leisure and recreation, and adult education. While I have focused on these three areas, it should be noted that planning is discussed in a wide range of literature including business, government, and organizational settings. In addition, the provision of programs and services to seniors is referred to in literature pertaining to organizations other than senior centres such as care homes, day care centres, and hospital settings. Including literature from these areas could have introduced other perspectives that might have been useful for understanding planning practice. I focused on the literature pertaining to senior centres, leisure and recreation, and adult education because, in my view, these bodies of literature have the most direct bearing on exploring program planning in this research site.

Senior Centre Program Planning

Much of the literature on programming in senior centres describes the types of activities and services that are typically offered. Most definitions and descriptions of senior centres include reference to a range of possible program areas such as recreation, education, socialization, health, support and other services (see Enns, 1991; Gelfand, 1988; Leitner & Leitner, 1996; Lowy & Doolin, 1990; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; Teaff, 1985).

While descriptions of various programs are prevalent in the literature, very little has been written about planning senior centre programs. One model was proposed in the 1970s which outlines how planners should plan programs. Leanse, Tiven and Robb (1977) proposed a systems approach to planning in senior centres that enables administrators to "obtain information, make decisions and take action in order to allocate resources more effectively and efficiently" (p. 31). According to this approach, the planning process begins with the development of a statement of organizational purpose and specific goals. During this stage, the basic assumptions or beliefs of the organization are outlined and the desired outcomes to which the organization aspires are identified. The plan for achieving the goals and purpose of the centre is outlined in the implementation stage which is comprised of the following sequential steps: (1) collecting data and assessing needs, (2) developing objectives, (3) reviewing alternative strategies, (4) deciding on strategies to be used, (5) building a schedule for action, and (6) evaluating (p. 32). Leanse et al. (1977) contend that "no complicated machinery is required for a planning system to be put into effect, only an understanding of the steps involved and the persistence to address each step without skipping prematurely to a subsequent one" (p. 31).

This model depicts planning as a simple and systematic process of decision making whereby planners complete a number of predetermined steps in a sequential order to achieve desired results. These models provide guidance to planners in the form of technical skills that should be applied. While these models suggest how planning should be carried out, little has been written about the process in which planners actually engage.

A number of studies have been conducted which examine one aspect of actual practice: the number of programs offered. Researchers have found that centres vary tremendously in the number of programs made available to participants and that this variation is related to a variety of centre, user, community, and leadership variables (see Krout, 1985, 1989, 1990; Leanse & Wagner, 1975; Ralston, 1981).

Although these studies do not focus on program planning per se, they are useful in highlighting the context-specific nature of planning. The results of this research show that the number of programs that planners can offer is influenced by contextual factors specific to their workplace. Unfortunately, the survey data that has been collected does not provide insight from planners into how contextual factors influence decisions about the number of programs offered. In addition, researchers have yet to explore how such factors might influence other aspects of program planning such as program development and selection.

It is evident from the literature reviewed in this section that the process of program planning in senior centres has been a neglected area of discussion. This is surprising given that the provision of programs has been described as a central component of senior centre operations. While writers and researchers may have simply overlooked program planning or not yet explored it, another possible explanation is that it has been addressed but in a broader context.

Leisure and Recreation Program Planning

In order to explore this possibility, I turned to the literature on leisure and recreation. My initial rationale for exploring this literature was that descriptions and

definitions of senior centres identify recreation as a central programming area. As I delved further into the literature, I learned that senior centres constitute one type of leisure and recreation service agency and that they have been identified as a primary provider of recreation for older adults (MacNeil & Teague, 1987). A number of leisure and recreation books have sections or chapters devoted to senior centres (see Kraus 1985, 1997; Leitner & Leitner, 1996; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; Teaff, 1985).

My initial review of leisure and recreation literature focused on programming for older adults. I then expanded my search to include the literature on planning leisure and recreation programs for all ages so that I did not overlook pertinent planning literature that existed beyond my focus on seniors.

Leisure and Recreation for Older Adults

Like the senior centre literature, much of the literature on leisure and recreation programming for older adults focuses on descriptions of program areas and related activities and services (see Kraus 1985, 1997; Leitner & Leitner, 1996; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; Teaff, 1985;). These descriptions provide information about the range of programs that could be provided by leisure and recreation service agencies.

Literature also exists in which specific recreational programs for seniors are described and implementation plans are presented. Alessio, Grier and Leviton (1989), for example, describe a number of innovative recreational programs for older adults and Weiss (1988) outlines a plan for implementing the Feeling Great Wellness Program. These program descriptions move beyond the predominant focus on potential program areas and activities to include a discussion of programs that have been implemented.

While literature on leisure and recreation for seniors has focussed on descriptive information about programs, a few writers have deviated from this emphasis and written about how to plan programs. Heywood (1979), for example, proposed a model of recreation programming for older adults. This Creative Recreation Program Model is described as a "simple, step-by-step, eight-point flow chart in which the program planner is asked to resolve each of the major components before moving on to the next" (p. 19). The eight steps include (1) conceptualizing or explaining what the program is about; (2) assessing values to ensure that the program is worthwhile and meaningful and is compatible with agency goals and objectives; (3) determining whether or not the program is needed at the agency; (4) analyzing human, physical, time, financial, and possible alternative resources; (5) describing the potential participant group; (6) planning and designing the program; (7) deciding whether or not to proceed; and (8) implementing the program. Heywood also stressed the importance of continuous evaluation and terminating programs for which there no longer is any interest. This model guides planners through the decision making process and encourages them to evaluate each step of the process. While step seven is the formal stage at which planners need to decide whether or not to proceed, the flow chart is designed in such a way that the identification of any negative aspect in steps one through six should result in a reconceptualization of the program idea before proceeding to the next stage. The final decision to proceed should be based on finding no "negative elements" during the planning phase.

Shivers and Fait (1980) described the fundamentals of developing an effective set of activities and/or services. When establishing a program, they emphasized the

importance of understanding the human needs (expressed and unexpressed) of the older population in the community or in the treatment setting. Once needs have been assessed the "recreationist" is then ready to address program development issues which include identifying appropriate activities, determining the locations, the means, the participants, the costs, and the time of activities.

Leitner and Leitner (1985, 1996) identified skills or competencies that planners need to acquire in order to "effectively" plan recreational programs in senior centres, nursing homes, senior daycare centres, retirement communities or age-segregated housing. Three major competencies are outlined and described: (1) identify and understand the needs, abilities, and interests of program participants; (2) effectively utilize resources which can enhance recreational activities and programs; and (3) plan an appropriate program of recreational activities. In addition, a number of specific activities are outlined that, if acquired, should lead to the achievement of specific competency areas. Each activity is described using a problem approach whereby a problem situation is identified and a possible solution is presented. The authors state that these planning skills or competencies are "applicable to all of the major settings for recreational programs for elders" (p. 128-129). Leitner and Leitner's discussion of skills or competencies does not outline the process of program planning but does highlight areas about which planners should be knowledgeable.

The models and skills described above, like the model outlined in the senior centre literature, prescribe how planners should plan programs for seniors. They represent the authors' views of ideal practice and suggest a correct way to plan programs. Since none

of the authors describe actual accounts of practice to justify their viewpoints, one is left wondering whether or not planners actually engage in such practices and, if not, how they engage in the process of planning. It is also interesting to note that none of the authors address situational or contextual factors that may influence planning but rather, address planning situations in a generic way. Their work suggests that as long as planners have technical skills, their efforts will be successful regardless of the context in which they work.

While these models represent idealized images of planning behaviour, they can serve to highlight some of the planning issues that planners may in fact consider to be relevant to their practice. When examining models proposed in the senior centre, leisure and recreation literature, a number of common elements emerge. A central theme expressed by the writers is that effective planning should be based on an assessment of participants' needs (see Leanse et al., 1977; Leitner & Leitner, 1985, 1996; Shivers & Fait, 1980). Heywood (1979) and Leanse et al. (1977) refer to organizational goals as guiding or directing planning and consider evaluation to be a fundamental element of planning.

In addition to common issues, other issues emerged that were unique to particular writers. While other authors simply refer to steps or skills to be accomplished, Heywood (1979) provides insight into the thought process in which planners might engage. Shivers and Fait (1980) identify a number of program development issues that they believe need to be considered when planning.

Although the issues identified above are considered vital to planning according to the writers, researchers in these fields have yet to explore the extent to which such issues

are actually addressed in practice. Future research is needed which explores practitioners' perspectives in order to develop realistic, rather than idealized, accounts of issues central to planning.

Leisure and Recreation for All Ages

After reviewing the literature related to seniors, I then began to review the literature pertaining to all ages in search of additional insights into planning practice. I found a great deal of literature on planning, or at least substantially more than I found in the previous areas. Program planning was discussed in terms of guidelines or principles for programming, programming approaches or styles, and program planning models.

Over the past twenty years, a number of guidelines or principles for programming have been proposed. Bucher and Bucher (1974), for example, provide five basic principles that they believe represent "the major considerations for any recreation plan or program" (p. 140). According to these writers, the needs of participants and the community as well as values of society should be addressed. Programs should be diverse and well-balanced and offered at many different times of the day. Successful programming also requires competent leadership and adequate financial planning.

Corbin and Williams (1987) provide thirteen guidelines to be followed when developing a program. They contend that planners should strive to offer a program that is diversified and balanced with a varied program schedule, has continuity, offers informal and formal activities, and uses a theme to integrate activities. Planners also need to be aware of the goals and services of other community agencies; religious, ethnic, and regional factors; and their own concepts of recreation and how they are reflected in

programming priorities. Attention to details such as the title of the program, choosing an appropriate facility, developing a policy covering fees and charges, and ensuring safety should also be addressed. Planners also need to be prepared to make changes to the program when necessary.

Kraus (1985) presented fifteen guidelines which "help provide a framework for the development of recreation programs" (p. 39). In a later publication, Kraus (1997) modified this list to include twelve guidelines which he states represent "widely held professional beliefs or principles" (p. 24) of programming in leisure service agencies. Kraus (1997) asserts that community recreation should not discriminate and should be based on democratic social values. Recreation programs should provide diversity and balance, involve community residents in planning and implementing, adequately serve special needs groups, meet the needs of individuals, be flexibly scheduled, make full use of available facilities, be supervised and monitored by qualified professionals, be systematically evaluated, and be meaningfully interpreted to the public. Kraus (1997) also stresses that programming should entail dynamism and creativity.

The guidelines and principles presented in this section vary in number and scope, however, these authors share the belief that programming should be governed by guidelines for appropriate practice. These guidelines represent moral or ethical positions that planners in various leisure and recreation service agencies should adhere to when initially developing program areas and related activities as well as when monitoring ongoing provisions.

A major criticism of these guidelines is that they represent generic views of appropriate conduct but fail to consider the diverse goals and purposes of leisure and recreation settings and unique agency and staff philosophies which may in turn influence what is deemed appropriate conduct. Despite this criticism, guidelines such as these can serve to highlight moral or ethical issues that planners may face when planning.

In addition to guidelines, program planning has been discussed in terms of approaches or styles that planners use to plan programs. In the 1970s, a number of different programming approaches or styles were presented. Danford and Shirley (1970) described four common but "unsound" approaches to program planning: (1) traditional, (2) current practices, (3) expressed desires, and (4) authoritarian. Planners using the traditional approach identify programs that were successful in the past and use the same format for future programming. Weaknesses of this approach are that planners have a "blind devotion to the past" (p. 110) and fail to consider changing needs over time. The current practices approach involves identifying trends in other agencies and offering the same programs. Problems with this approach are such that what other agencies are doing may be wrong or may not be suitable for a different environment. The expressed desires approach to program planning relies on the desires and interests identified by participants and planners build programs based solely on what participants want. Danford and Shirley (1970) assert that although this approach seems reasonable, it cannot be considered a sound approach because people's expressed desires are limited by their experiences and planners should direct them towards new activities and interests. Planners or other recreation staff using the authoritarian approach base program decisions on their own

knowledge and expertise rather than on the actual needs and interests of participants.

Danford and Shirley acknowledge that these approaches are not completely valueless but state that "their weaknesses are so numerous and grave as to cause their rejection as a major form of guidance by professionally-minded leaders" (p. 111).

Tillman (1974) identified three plans used by programmers to develop programs: (1) the reaction plan, (2) the investigation plan, and (3) the creative plan. Programmers using the reaction plan do not actively seek out needs, interests, and ideas but wait until people approach them and simply react to their ideas, interests and concerns. The investigation plan, in contrast, involves actively seeking to identify people's desires and developing programs based on these desires. The creative plan includes both expressed demands and investigated desires but also adds the programmer's knowledge and experience.

Murphy (1975) outlined seven approaches to service delivery which are based on the agency's philosophical commitment: (1) direct service, (2) enabling service, (3) cafeteria service, (4) prescriptive service, (5) instrumental goals, (6) expressive goals, and (7) interactionist service. According to the direct service approach, activities are provided which will encourage immediate and direct participation. The enabling service approach views programmers as catalysts helping people implement their recreation and leisure desires and interests. The cafeteria service approach relies on providing a broad array of activities from which the public can choose opportunities that interest them. The prescriptive approach, in contrast, sees leisure service programs as "a social instrument" (p. 93) serving individuals' social and personal needs. According to the instrumental goals

approach, activities are "a means to an end" (p. 93) while the expressive goals approach focuses on activities that are ends in themselves and provide participants with immediate gratification. The interactionist service approach is a combination of the expressive and instrumental goals approaches. This delivery approach is based on a holistic view of leisure whereby individual potential, spontaneity and expressiveness are facilitated.

Edginton and Hanson (1976) developed seven operational theories of programming underlying planning practice which include: (1) trickle down theory, (2) community leadership input theory, (3) educated guess theory, (4) offer what people want theory, (5) identification of need theory, (6) indigenous development theory, and (7) interactive discovery theory. The trickle down theory is characterized by programs that are initiated at higher levels of the organizational structure and trickle down through the organization to participants. Programmers provide programs that administrators want them to offer. The community leadership theory involves an advisory council or board which represents the community and makes suggestions about the needs and interests of the community. According to the educated guess theory, activities are planned based on "someone's hunch that they will address community and individual needs" (p. 44). Offering what people want refers to designing programs based on what participants want. Identification of need theory relies on gathering demographic, leisure behaviour, and psychological factors and using this information to plan programs. The final theory, the indigenous development theory, is a process "directed towards helping individuals discover and use grassroots program opportunities which utilize innate capabilities and are directed toward individual needs" (p. 45).

Kraus (1977) presents a sociopolitical approach to program planning which proposes that programming decisions are subject to sociopolitical factors such as changing social needs and pressure from special interest groups.

These approaches provide insight into the different ways in which planners might decide which programs to offer. Although these approaches are discussed separately, Howe and Carpenter (1985) state that "many authors agree that today's leisure programmers blend or mix several approaches to form the best combination of options necessary to ensure a successful set of leisure programs and services" (p. 51). Given the range of approaches, one wonders how planners come to use certain approaches and how they decide which approach is most suitable? Edginton and Hanson (1976) contend that "there is no one correct and/or appropriate method to use in planning recreation programs. Certain program theories work better in one situation than another, and not all program theories are applicable to a given community" (p. 46). They do not, however, discuss situations for which certain approaches would be suitable. As mentioned earlier, Murphy (1975) suggests that approaches are based on the philosophic commitment of the agency. As such, programmers would use the approach that is consistent with the agency's philosophy of service delivery. Edginton, Hanson and Edginton (1992) assert that the use of program theories "should be situationally or culturally specific" (p. 45). They outline a continuum showing the relationship between Edginton and Hanson's (1976) program planning theories and two organizational strategies: social planning and community development. According to their continuum, the indigenous development, offer what people want, and interactive discovery theories are compatible with the

community development strategy. The educated guess, trickle down, community leadership, and identification of needs theories are consistent with the social planning organizational strategy.

Murphy (1975) and Edginton et al. (1992) contend that the use of program planning approaches is influenced or related to the orientation of the agency. Thus, in order to understand approaches that programmers use, one should examine the orientation of the agency in which the programmer works.

Although these approaches have been described as "commonly used" (Edginton et al., 1992) and ways in which planning has been "traditionally carried out" (Kraus, 1985), the authors who propose these approaches do not base their ideas on research findings. To date, researchers have not explored how programmers plan programs and the situational or contextual factors that might influence the approach or approaches programmers use.

While program planning literature in the 1970s focused on programming approaches or styles, writers in the 1980s shifted their attention towards more "systematic" approaches to planning and, in particular, needs identification and evaluation criteria. This shift in focus can be attributed to decreasing resources and an increased need to justify expenditures (Searle & Brayley, 1993) combined with greater concern for quality service (Kraus, 1997).

Since 1980, a number of program planning models have been presented which outline steps that planners should follow in order to plan effective and high quality programs (see Corbin & Williams, 1987; Edginton, Compton & Hanson, 1980; Farrell &

Lundegren, 1983; Howe & Carpenter, 1985; Kraus, 1985, 1997; Torkildsen, 1986; Russell 1982). These models vary in terms of the number of steps and the discussion of each step; however, they contain many of the same components. Given the similarities across models I have chosen to describe six steps that these models have in common rather than to discuss each model separately. The six elements common to many of these models are: (1) establishing a philosophical framework, (2) assessing needs, (3) identifying objectives, (4) determining the program, (5) implementing the program, and (6) evaluating the program.

Establishing a philosophical framework has been identified as the first step in models by Corbin and Williams (1987), Edginton et al. (1980), Kraus (1985, 1997), and Torkildsen (1986). The purpose of this step is to develop a philosophical framework or statement of the agency's purpose or social role regarding the delivery of recreation and leisure services. Establishing a framework provides planners with guidelines for making programming decisions. Howe and Carpenter (1985) do not include this as a separate step in their model but state that it is important to have the organizational purpose in mind when planning.

All of the models include a step related to assessing the needs of participants. Discussions of needs assessment often include references to Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs; classifications of needs such as normative, felt, expressed, comparative, and created needs; and needs related to life cycle stages and developmental characteristics. A variety of needs assessment strategies have been identified including interest and demographic surveys, pre-existing leisure instruments, advisory councils, and committees.

The general consensus is that by conducting systematic needs assessments planners are better able to make informed decisions and plan more effective programs.

All but Corbin and Williams (1987) and Howe and Carpenter (1985) include developing objectives as a fundamental step in the program planning process. Objectives refer to statements about the desired outcome of a program. Two types of objectives which are frequently discussed in the planning literature are performance or behavioural objectives and program objectives. Performance objectives outline the desired behaviour of participants as a result of their participation in the program. Program objectives refer to the desired outcomes for the organization. Kraus (1985) asserts that objectives should be consistent with participants' needs and the philosophical framework of the agency. Programming by objectives provides planners with criteria for program selection and standards for assessing program outcomes.

Decision making is considered to be the central task of determining or constructing the program. At this stage in the planning process planners make decisions about which programs to offer. Prior to selecting programs, planners need to identify the range of possible programs. Edginton et al. (1980), Russell (1982), and Kraus (1997) describe a variety of potential program areas and related activities. Kraus (1985) suggests the following ways in which program ideas can be generated: previous successful programs, programs offered by other agencies, programs requested by surveyed participants, and brainstorming. Russell (1982) also identifies brainstorming as a useful technique for generating program ideas, particularly new and novel ideas. While a variety of ideas may be generated, Kraus (1985) expresses that they are "not necessarily included in the final program plan" (p. 55).

Torkildsen (1986), Farrell and Lundegren (1983) and Corbin and Williams (1987) identify objectives as the basis for choosing programs and state that programs should be selected which are most likely to meet stated objectives. Farrell and Lundegren (1983) propose two ways of "scrutinizing" activities: activity analysis and cluster analysis (p. 62). Activity analysis involves breaking an activity down and examining its qualities and contributions. This technique enables planners to match needs and objectives with suitable activities. Cluster analysis refers to grouping activities that produce similar benefits or that are similar in other ways so that planners can make substitutions of activities. Corbin and Williams (1987) and Russell (1982) also identify activity analysis as a means of selecting suitable programs.

While these approaches may be useful in selecting activities that suit participants' needs and program objectives, the capability of the organization to offer activities must also be considered. Kraus (1985), for example, identifies the need to examine the requirements for leadership, facilities, supplies, equipment, and transportation as well as the financial feasibility of offering a particular activity. Russell (1982) also expresses the importance of examining whether or not the agency can financially afford to offer the program. In addition to activity analysis and feasibility, Russell (1982) states that when selecting programs planners need to consider the political criterion. She asserts that support from "power elites or economic notables...can significantly enhance the development of recreation program services" (p. 228) particularly in terms of attracting community support. Russell (1982) also expresses that the safety of an activity should be considered when selecting program offerings.

After selecting activities, decisions need to be made regarding program details such as the format, the date, the time, the cost, the location, and the content of the program as well as leadership (see Edginton et al., 1980; Howe & Carpenter, 1985; Kraus, 1997; Russell, 1982).

Implementing the program typically refers to the actual provision or delivery of the program to participants. Central tasks of this stage include promoting the program and attracting participants, registering participants, monitoring the program, and managing crises (see Kraus, 1997). Some writers also include program details such as program format, scheduling and leadership in their discussions of implementation.

All of the models referred to in this section include evaluating the program as a fundamental step in the program planning process. Evaluation refers to the measurement of program outcomes. Program objectives are typically identified as the criteria to which program outcomes are measured. While a number of evaluation techniques have been identified in the literature, Kraus (1997) states that in order for evaluation to be credible, it "should be carried out in systematic, objective ways, using techniques drawn from research methodology, such as the use of valid, reliable instruments, representative sampling of subjects or program elements, objective recording, and systematic analysis of data" (p. 236). Evaluation results can be used to determine the success of a program and to justify its value as well as to decide whether or not to continue, modify or terminate a program.

The models which have been summarized in the above section constitute rational, linear, systematic approaches to program planning. They describe sequential steps that planners should follow in order to plan successful and effective programs. Skilled

planners who engage in systematic planning can make informed decisions and assess program outcomes using predetermined standards. These models have been described as applicable to all recreation and leisure service agencies.

This view of planning has clearly dominated the leisure and recreation literature. Researchers have yet to investigate approaches used by planners in every day practice and whether or not planners actually apply planning models. Such a focus on how planners should plan programs has overshadowed what planners actually do, why they engage in particular planning behaviour, and how their planning activities and program selections may be influenced by unique contextual factors.

Although leisure and recreation writers have yet to criticize this view of planning, writers in other related fields have criticized technical rational models for their idealized images of planning, focus on technical skills of the planner, and failure to consider the context in which planners work. Critics have called for research that explores actual planning practice in order to generate a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of the process of planning. A more detailed discussion of these criticisms is presented in the next section.

Adult Education Program Planning

In my search for greater insight into senior centre program planning, I extended my review to include educational gerontology and adult education literature. My rationale for including this literature was that education constitutes a central programming area that is frequently included in discussions of senior centre program offerings (see Enns, 1991; Gelfand, 1988; Leitner & Leitner, 1996; Lowy & Doolin, 1990; MacNeil & Teague,

1987; Teaff, 1985). In addition, senior centres have been identified as primary providers of educational opportunities for older adults (Harris & Associates, 1981; Thornton, 1992; Ventura & Worthy, 1982) as well as seniors' preferred sponsors of education (Clough, 1990).

Educational Gerontology

A central focus of educational gerontology literature has been the educational needs of older adults. Much of the discussion has focused on categories of needs proposed by Havighurst (1964), McClusky (1971, 1974), and Londoner (1978). Several writers have stressed the importance of developing programs based on needs. Tibbets and Donahue (1953), for example, identify needs assessment as fundamental to planning gerontology programs. Hendrickson (1973) and Peterson (1983) proposed models of planning which identify needs assessment as a central task that planners should complete when planning. Peterson (1983) also expressed that adult educators need to adjust their approach to programming and develop programs that are based on the needs and interests of older adults. He contended that McClusky's set of needs could be used to determine appropriate educational experiences and he provided a number of program examples to illustrate the translation of needs into specific programs. Londoner (1990) suggested that instrumental and expressive needs could be used to develop ideal learning environments for adult learners. While needs based planning has been proposed, a number of writers have voiced concerns about whether or not programmers are adequately considering the various needs of older adults (see Griffith, 1992; Harold, 1992; Marcus & Havighurst, 1980; Walker, 1985). Despite these concerns, researchers have yet to explore how and

why planners offer the educational programs they do and whose interests are being served by programs that are offered.

To date, discussions of program provisions have been limited primarily to descriptions of educational programs for older adults (see Lowy & O'Connor, 1986; Okun, 1982; O'Hanson, Camp, & Osofsky, 1995; Thornton, 1992). While the development of specific programs has been described (e.g., Cusack, 1995; Glass, 1995; Hickson, Worrall, Yiu, & Barnett, 1996), the everyday practices of educational programmers have not been the focus of research or discussion.

Adult Education for All Ages of Adults

In the general adult education literature, the predominant focus of program planning has been on planning models. Since the 1950s a variety of models have been proposed. Sork and Buskey (1986) provide an extensive review of the program planning literature from 1950 to 1983. They identified 93 publications that contained complete planning models which they defined as "a set of steps, tasks, or decisions which, when carried out, produce the design and outcome specifications for a systematic instructional activity (p. 87). Summaries of various planning models have also been presented by Boone (1985), Houle (1992) and Langenbach (1988).

A central characteristic of planning models is the presence of elements or steps that planners should complete when planning. Sork and Buskey (1986) for example, propose a nine step generic planning model based on a synthesis of the planning literature. The planning process includes the following steps: (1) analysis of the planning context and client system(s) to be served; (2) assessment of client system needs; (3) development of

objectives; (4) selection and ordering of content; (5) selection, design, and ordering instructional processes; (6) selection of instructional resources; (7) formulation of budget and administrative plan; (8) design of a plan for assuring participation; and (9) design of a plan for evaluating the program (p. 89). Sork and Caffarella (1989) consolidate these nine elements into six steps that they believe illustrate common planning logic in the program planning literature. The steps they include are: (1) analyze planning context and client system; (2) assess needs; (3) develop program objectives; (4) formulate instructional plan; (5) formulate administrative plan; and (6) design a program evaluation plan (p. 234).

Most program planning models represent linear approaches to planning, whereby steps should be completed in a specific sequence. Some writers have, however, addressed the interactive nature of planning which acknowledges planner flexibility. Sork and Caffarella (1989), in their discussion of common planning approaches, state that "the practice of planning rarely follows a linear pattern in which decisions related to one step are made before decisions about the next are considered" (p. 234). They explain that "loops operate in practice to make it possible to skip steps temporarily, to work on several tasks simultaneously, and to make decisions that appear to defy logical sequence" (p. 234). Caffarella (1994) asserts that "planning programs is not a step-by-step process. Rather, program planners often work with a number of planning components and tasks at the same time and not necessarily in any standard order" (p. 17). She presents an interactive model of program planning that includes planning tasks and decision points.

Caffarella notes that not all of these tasks need to be addressed when "developing every program" (p. 19).

Whether interactive or linear, the underlying philosophy of prescriptive planning models is that systematic planning can result in improved practice. Planners can design more effective, efficient and relevant programs by rigorously applying planning models and judiciously completing prescribed steps. As such, planners are viewed as technicians whose primary task is to skillfully complete predetermined tasks.

Planning models proposed since the 1950s have been described as predominantly technical and rational in nature (see review by Wilson & Cervero, 1997). Although technical rational models have represented the dominant planning paradigm for many decades, this approach to planning has become the subject of much criticism. One contentious issue is the prescriptive nature of this view of planning. Discussions of steps that planners should complete implies that there is a correct or right way to plan and that planners who do not engage in this type of planning are not planning effectively. Wilson and Cervero (1997) assert that "planning theory represents a selective tradition of discourse that is dominated by a scientific ideology whose power lies in promoting only procedural kinds of activities as legitimate adult education planning action" (p. 85). They contend that the legitimization of technical rational models as the right way to plan has "selectively organized our attention to some possibilities of action while excluding others" (p. 104). Actual practice that does not fit the normative pattern is, therefore, disqualified or at least overlooked as effective practice.

Some writers have expressed that such idealized representations of practice do not fit with actual planning behaviour. Cervero (1988), for example, states that "most practicing continuing educators reject textbook planning frameworks as descriptive of how they actually work" (p. 128). Sork and Caffarella (1989) state that "although we possess no data to confirm it, we have the impression that the gap that has always existed to some degree between theory and practice has widened" (p. 243). They cite three possible reasons for this situation: (1) practitioners take shortcuts in planning in order to get the job done; (2) contextual factors largely determine how planning is done; and (3) planning theory is increasingly irrelevant to practice (p. 243). Brookfield (1986) notes that he became increasingly aware of the disjunction between theory and practice through his experiences with practitioners who were students in his classes. His students declared that program development manuals did not represent what actually took place when they planned programs in their workplaces. The lack of fit was not with the principles or steps per se but rather that contextual factors "made the adoption of certain apparently exemplary principles impossible" (p. 225).

Technical rational models have also been criticized for their apparent applicability to a variety of contexts. Sork and Buskey (1986), for example, state that the planning models they reviewed varied more in terms of contextual rather than substantive differences. They contend, however, that "while applications in specific contexts or environments are important, the major steps in planning are applicable to all contexts" (p. 92-93). According to this view, as long as planners complete certain "universal" steps their efforts will be successful, regardless of the environment in which they plan.

It is this kind of failure to address the unique contexts in which planning occurs that has been the source of criticism. Brookfield (1983), for example, asserts that assumptions of universal applicability fail to consider the reality of the environments in which planners work. He contends that the existence of contextual factors such as institutional pressures and limited resources require that educators develop "idiosyncratic, situationally-specific styles of professional performance" (p. 199). Knox (1982) also draws attention to the situation-specific nature of planning. He identifies the need for practical knowledge when developing programs and states that when making planning decisions, program administrators "rely heavily on their intuition, which is based on tacit (or private) knowledge distilled from past experience, common sense, and familiarity with people and the local situation" (p. 13). More recently, Cervero and Wilson (1994) assert that traditional planning models, with their focus on the application of technical principles, fail to consider the contexts in which planning occurs. They contend that planning is a "deeply contextual activity....planners are not free to do anything; their ability to plan programs depends on what is possible in their particular organizational context" (p. 179). Sork (1997) explains that "each planning situation is sufficiently unique that it is impossible--and irresponsible--to suggest that a particular approach to planning is applicable to all or most...planning situations" (p. 12). He remarks that "no model can adequately anticipate the complexities and challenges a...planner will face in any given circumstance" (p. 16). Criticisms such as those mentioned above provide support for a more contextualized view of planning which emphasizes the unique contexts in which programmers plan programs and the contextual factors which shape their practice.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) propose a context-based view of planning which emphasizes the social-political context in which planners act. Power, interests, and negotiation are central facets of this view. These authors refer to power as the "capacity to act, distributed to people by virtue of the enduring social relationships in which they participate" (p. 29). They assert that planners' actions are structured by power relationships. Power is distributed symmetrically (equally) or asymmetrically (unequally) and power relationships are characterized as socially ad hoc (temporary) or socially systematic (stable). Cervero and Wilson (1994) define interests as "the motivations and purposes that lead people to act in certain ways" (p. 29). They contend that programs are never constructed by a single planner but involve a number of individuals who have an interest or stake in the program. Stakeholders have particular interests regarding the development of programs and they assert their power in accordance with their own interests. According to these authors, the central form of activity in which planners engage is negotiation which they define as "to confer, bargain, or discuss with a view to reaching agreement with others" (p. 29). Programs are constructed through a process of negotiating the interests held by multiple stakeholders who are engaged in power relationships with one another. Every aspect of a program involves the negotiation of interests and each program represents the interests that were negotiated and the power relationships that shaped decision making. According to Cervero and Wilson (1994) , planning is a social-political process of negotiation whereby planners must negotiate "with" certain interests and power and "between" the interests of multiple stakeholders who are engaged in power relationships with one another (p. 29).

While planning models have been criticized for their apparent universal applicability across contexts, it is important to note that context has not been totally overlooked by the technical perspective. Sork and Caffarella (1989), in their review of common planning logic, identify "analysis of the planning context" as a fundamental step to address when planning. They also acknowledge that the planning context can "substantially" influence the planning process (p. 235). These authors identify a variety of internal and external forces that "should be taken into account when planning" (p. 253). Internal factors include: (1) the history and traditions of the organization; (2) the current structures that govern the flow of communication and authority; (3) the mission of the organization; (4) the resource limits; (5) the standard operating procedures; and (6) any philosophical constraints that limit who can be served or what types of needs can be addressed (p. 253). External factors include: (1) the relationships between the organization and others that serve the same client groups; (2) any comparative advantage enjoyed by the organization that makes it easier to respond to needs; and (3) the attitudes toward the organization held by influentials in the community (p. 253). Sork and Caffarella (1989) express that planners "usually understand how contextual factors influence their work, and they constantly assess whether decisions made are consistent with the constraints imposed by the nature of the organization" (p. 235).

Caffarella (1994), in the discussion of her interactive planning model, provides an extensive list of internal and external contextual factors that influence planning decisions. She identifies three types of internal factors: structural, people, and cultural factors. Structural factors include (1) the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization;

(2) standard operating policies and procedures; (3) the system of formal organizational authority; (4) information systems; (5) organizational decision-making patterns; (6) financial resources; and (7) physical facilities (p. 46). People factors consist of (1) program planning staff; (2) program participants; (3) top-level management and administrative personnel; (4) supervisory personnel; (5) program "stakeholders"; and (6) boards of directors (p. 46). Cultural factors include (1) the history and traditions of the organization; (2) organizational beliefs and values; and (3) organizational rituals, stories, symbols, and heroes (p. 46). External contextual factors she identifies include (1) relationships with organizations and groups that have major influence and/or control over the programs being planned; (2) the nature of interactions between and among the sponsoring organization and other providers; (3) perceptions of potential participants; and (4) the more general economic, political, and social climate (p. 47-48). Caffarella (1994) asserts that understanding the context for planning is "essential in establishing a basis for program development" (p. 45).

Although context has been addressed in discussions of planning models, it has only been viewed as an element or step in the planning process (Sork & Caffarella, 1989) or as something that must be understood prior to program development (Caffarella, 1994).

While context has not been overlooked, it certainly has been overshadowed by technical aspects of planning.

From the critique of traditional planning models has arisen a call for research that focuses on actual planning practice and the situation-or context-specific nature of planning. Researchers in adult and continuing education have begun to answer this call.

Recently, several studies have explored the process of planning and the influence of context on planning in a variety of educational settings (e.g., Cervero & Wilson, 1996; Dominick, 1990; Lewis, 1996; Mills, Cervero, Langone, & Wilson, 1995; Sloane-Seale, 1994). To date, studies of planning practice in senior centres and leisure and recreation settings have yet to be conducted. As a result, the focus of this literature continues to reflect a technical perspective of planning.

Chapter Summary

This literature review revealed that a great deal has been written about typical program areas and potential programs, but very little has been written about the process of planning senior centre programs. Examinations of the number of programs offered by centres suggests that what planners are able to do is contingent on contextual factors specific to their workplace. What planners actually do in practice, however, remains unexplored. Although program planning has not been the focus of senior centre literature, three views of planning were identified in related fields which may provide insight into program planning in senior centres: technical, contextual, and social-political.

The technical view of planning is characterized by a technical rational understanding of planning practice. Prescriptive models outline stages and tasks that planners "should" complete when constructing programs. The systematic application of technique is considered essential to effective practice. This view legitimizes academic and procedural knowledge but does not address practical knowledge and nontechnical dimensions of planning. The technical view constitutes the predominant form of discourse on program planning in leisure, recreation, and adult education. According to this view,

planning senior centre programs would essentially be a technical process whereby planners would systematically complete prescriptive stages and related tasks.

While the prevailing technical view of planning has yet to be challenged in the leisure and recreation literature, a reasonable criticism of this view has been presented in other related fields. In adult education, for example, technical rational models have been criticized for their idealized images of planning, lack of fit with actual practice, and failure to address the centrality of context. In light of these criticisms, critics have called for a new perspective of planning which emphasizes actual practice and, in particular, the context- or situation-specific nature of planning. A contextual view of planning proposes that planning practice is shaped by the context in which it occurs. Programmers do not plan in a vacuum but are constrained and enabled by a variety of contextual factors. According to this view, the construction of senior centre programs would be largely determined by the context in which they are planned.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) propose a social-political view of planning which places power, interests, and negotiation at the forefront of discussions about planning practice. These authors describe planning as a process of negotiation whereby planners must negotiate the interests of multiple stakeholders who are engaged in power relationships with one another. According to this view, planning senior centre programs would be best depicted as a social-political process of negotiation.

Each of these views represents a different way of understanding how programs may be constructed in senior centres. Rather than structuring this research according to one of these views, this study explores the extent to which each of these views characterizes planning practice at Matheson Senior Centre.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological choices I made regarding the research approach, site selection, gaining access to my site, data collection, data management, and data analysis. The techniques I used to enhance the trustworthiness of my research are also discussed as well as the issues of anonymity and reciprocity.

Research Approach

The research approach selected for this study was a qualitative case study of one Lower Mainland, British Columbia senior centre. As described by Merriam (1988), in her review of the case study literature, qualitative case studies are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. They focus on process, understanding, and context-bound interpretation and are well suited to areas for which little research has been conducted.

These characteristics are consistent with the nature and maturity of the research on the phenomenon under study. The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding of the process of program planning in a senior centre. I was particularly interested in the planning practices of programmers. This study focused on a particular phenomenon in a specific context: program planning practice at Matheson Senior Centre. This exploration of practice was designed to generate a rich, thick description of the process in which programmers engaged when planning programs at this centre. Inductive methods of analysis were used to reveal conceptual categories that emerged from the data. Emergent themes were compared to views of planning presented in the literature and a practice-based view of planning in this particular context was presented. With respect to the

maturity of the phenomenon, a major gap in the senior centre literature exists regarding program planning. In related fields, the practice of planning programs has only recently become the subject of research attention. This phenomenon, therefore, constitutes an area for which little research has been conducted.

My decision to study a single senior centre was based on the following rationale. I knew from the literature that I had read and my prior experiences that 1) senior centres offered a broad spectrum of programs from a variety of programming areas, 2) a variety of contextual factors may influence the planning of each program, and 3) in many centres, the planning cycle takes place over a one year period. For this study I was interested in exploring the complexities of program planning across the planning cycle and for all of the programs offered at the centre. I was also interested in multiple perspectives of this phenomenon. A case study of a single centre enabled me to obtain an indepth account of program planning across the planning cycle based on the perspectives of multiple informants.

Site Selection

When selecting my research site, I wanted to choose a setting that maximized both the "intensity and frequency" (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 46) of the phenomenon under study. In order to gain an indepth understanding of program planning from the perspectives of programmers at a senior centre, an information rich site had to meet the following criteria.

First, only senior centres would be considered as potential research sites. The definition of a senior centre used for this study is a community facility that 1) has a

separate space for seniors to gather, 2) offers a variety of programs to seniors who do not require assistance because of physical limitations and who are not institutionalized, and 3) offers programs on a frequent and regular basis. This definition includes multi-generational centres (service user group includes all ages) and age-segregated centres (service user group includes only those who are 55 years or older) but excludes day care and residential care facilities as well as drop in centres.

Second, during the data collection period a number of programs had to be planned so that planners' perceptions could be obtained during the process of planning. An ideal site would have programs turning over rather than simply being repeated in order to generate an understanding of the process of planning. It was anticipated that given the large number of potential sites (30), information about the turnover of programs for each centre would be difficult to obtain. A modification of this criterion was that only those centres that offered a large number of programs would be considered because of the increased potential for the development of new programs across the planning cycle.

Third, the site had to have more than one person directly involved in program planning. Interviewing, observing, and collecting documents from more than one programmer would provide an opportunity to obtain personal accounts as well as multiple insights into planning at this site. Themes and patterns across programmers as well as unique salient factors would enable me to obtain an indepth and more holistic understanding of program planning at this centre.

An ideal research site, therefore, was an age-segregated or multi-generational centre at which a number of programs were planned during the planning cycle and more than one programmer was involved in planning.

I began my search for such a site by compiling a list of 30 senior centres located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The two sources that I used to compile this list were 1) the Resources for Senior Citizens' Section of the Directory of Services for the Lower Mainland: The Red Book and 2) a directory provided by the coordinator of one Lower Mainland senior centre.

I obtained information about the number of programs, turnover of programs, and the number of programmers by visiting centres, reviewing program offerings, and speaking to centre representatives. I narrowed my search to four age-segregated centres that all offered a large number of programs in a variety of programming areas, had some degree of program turnover, and had more than one programmer. I visited all four centres and had an opportunity to meet with programmers at two centres and the supervisor at one centre.

Gaining Access

After narrowing my search to these four centres, I then sent an information package to the supervisors of each centre. This package contained an introductory letter explaining my study and asking them to participate, a letter of consent, a stamped self-addressed envelope, and copies of the letters that would be distributed to participants. In the introductory letter, I asked the supervisors to sign the consent letter and return it to me, by mail, if they agreed to have their centre participate in my research. I asked

them to have all people with the authority to make this decision sign the letter of consent. In the introductory letter I asked them to return the information package to me if they were not interested in participating.

I anticipated that I would receive favourable responses from at least two of the four centres because the supervisor of one centre and the head programmer at the other had expressed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm about participating in my study. As I had anticipated, I received letters of consent from the supervisors of both centres within a few days of my request. The supervisor from the third centre telephoned me to find out how much of her time would be required. She said that she would think about it but did not contact me again. I did not receive any response from the fourth centre.

While the two consenting centres were very similar, the centre I selected, Matheson Senior Centre (pseudonym), offered more programs and had an additional programmer. In addition, representatives from this centre told me that there was a great deal of turnover with their programs from season to season. I explained my rationale to the supervisor from the centre I did not select. He expressed his disappointment and said that they (he and the board of directors) really would have liked me to study their centre but he understood why I had selected the other centre. He offered his centre as a backup site should I need one. I felt very fortunate to have two such willing sites.

Although I knew that I had the consent of the supervisor and the head programmer from the site that I selected, I wanted to ensure that the rest of the staff and the board of directors were willing to participate in my study. I was given an opportunity to introduce my project at a staff meeting and a board of directors' meeting. At the staff meeting, I

distributed information letters and letters of consent for interviews and observations to each staff person, all of whom consented to participate in my study and appeared to be very interested in my research proposal. At the board meeting, I distributed an information letter and spoke briefly about my research project and asked if it would be possible to attend board meetings. A motion was made to allow me to attend all upcoming board meetings for the duration of my project. The board, like the staff, expressed their interest in having their centre be the subject of a research project. All of the board members were in favour and the president of the board signed a letter of consent on their behalf.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over a one year period, from April 1996 to April 1997. This enabled me to explore the process of planning across all four planning sessions (fall, winter, spring, and summer). During this period, I conducted interviews with four programmers and the supervisor; observed monthly board of directors' meetings, biweekly staff meetings, and seasonal programming meetings; and collected all documents pertaining to the provision of programs at the centre. I recorded all of my data collection activities on a calendar and kept notes in my journal regarding the data collection path that I chose.

Interviews

The primary data collection method I used was indepth interviews with the supervisor (Sue) and four staff programmers (Pam, Ellen, Ben, and Nancy) who were responsible for planning city programs during the data collection period. I was unable to

interview Ellen throughout the year as she left the centre for a period of six months.

During this time, her position was filled by Nancy, a part-time employee. Nancy began at the beginning of the summer session and was involved in the planning of the fall and winter sessions. I interviewed her in Ellen's absence and then continued interviewing Ellen when she returned in January 1997. It should be noted that the names of the supervisor and programmers as well as all other names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms. The issue of anonymity is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The approach to interviewing I used evolved over the data collection period and can be divided into two phases. The first phase took place from the first week of April 1996 to the end of May 1996. During this time I interviewed Sue twice, Pam three times and Ellen twice. Unfortunately Ben was unavailable to be interviewed during these months because he was very busy with personal commitments that kept him away from the centre. For these interviews, I used an interview guide which included a number of general questions about key topic areas. Neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions was determined ahead of time which enabled me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). Probes were used to elicit additional information and to clarify some responses.

When interviewing Sue, I asked her about topics such as the history of the centre, the membership, the organizational structure, the division of planning responsibilities, the process of planning at the centre, and factors influencing planning practice. These interviews were extremely useful in providing me with a basic understanding of planning

at this centre. Sue also provided me with suggestions about meetings to attend and documents to review which would provide me with greater insight into how they planned programs. For my interviews with Pam and Ellen, I asked them to tell me about their prior experiences, current duties and responsibilities, how programs were planned at the centre, how they planned programs, their perceptions of planning at the centre and thoughts about contextual factors and issues central to their practice. These interviews provided me with a great deal of useful information about how they typically planned programs at this centre and, in particular, how they planned programs in their programming areas.

I learned from these initial interviews that programming meetings, held once a session, were a central part of the process of planning at this centre. During these meetings, the programmers presented ideas for their programming areas and assisted one another with generating ideas for the upcoming session (these meetings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5). After attending a programming meeting for the fall session, I decided to change the direction of my data collection in order to observe and interview programmers when they were in the process of planning for upcoming sessions. I believed that this approach would provide me with a better understanding of how programs are constructed rather than how they have been developed in the past. This meeting marked the transition to the second phase of interviews which began at the end of May 1996 and continued until the end of April 1997.

After transcribing the tape from the fall programming meeting, I conducted follow-up interviews with each programmer so that I could speak to them about their

experiences while they were in the midst of planning. I used this approach of observing programming meetings and conducting one to two follow-up interviews with each programmer for four program sessions (fall, winter, spring, summer) during the year.

At the follow-up interviews, I asked each programmer to share his or her current planning experiences with me. I was particularly interested in what they had been working on since the meeting, whether they were going ahead with the ideas they had proposed, had they come up with additional ideas, and what factors they needed to consider when making planning decisions. The meetings and subsequent interviews provided me with an opportunity to obtain "snapshots of practice", that is, insight into stages of program planning for each session. They also enabled me to verify what programmers had said in initial interviews, check for inconsistencies, and identify issues not raised in initial interviews.

Over the year, I conducted eight interviews with Pam, four with Ellen, five with Ben, three with Nancy, and three with Sue. Three interviews with Pam, two with Ellen, one with Ben, and two with Sue took place during phase one. The remainder of the interviews occurred during phase two (from May 1996 to April 1997). These interviews took place a few weeks after the programming meetings and just before session deadlines. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two hours. All of the interviews were audio taped with permission. The number of times I was able to meet with the programmers depended on how busy they were, the length of time between the meeting and the planning deadline, and the particular planning session (e.g., very few programs were planned for summer). It should be noted that a greater number of interviews were conducted with Pam than the other programmers because she was the head programmer.

Observations

As described in the previous section, observations of programming meetings were a central part of this exploration of the process of program planning at this centre.

I also attended monthly board of directors' meetings and staff meetings held during each month. Although the focus of these meetings was not program planning, these observations provided me with a more holistic understanding of the context in which the programmers worked and program planning took place.

In addition to meetings, I observed various programs that were offered which included a number of educational talks, special events, fitness and dance programs. I felt that it was important to observe a variety of programs so that I could obtain a better understanding of the types of activities that the programmers were planning as well as the issues that they dealt with when making planning decisions (e.g., facility challenges, room sizes and allocations, and participants).

Document Collection

During the year, I collected a number of documents related to program planning which included 1) program schedules from summer 1992 to summer 1997, 2) program status reports (participation rates) for 1996 and 1997, 3) job descriptions and performance expectations for the programmers, and 4) all documents referred to in interviews such as planning sheets, evaluation forms, and budget details. These documents provided me with background information about program planning at this centre. I found the program schedules particularly useful in helping me to identify programming trends and changes with respect to areas, topics, fees, and the number of programs offered.

I also collected documents pertaining to 1) the philosophy and goals of the centre, 2) the mission statement, program objectives, and program goals established by the Parks and Recreation Department, 3) the organizational structure of the centre, 4) information about the board of directors, 5) minutes from board of directors' meetings, 6) minutes from staff meetings, 7) the 1996 budget, and 8) demographic information about the members and the community. These documents contributed to my understanding of the way in which the centre operates and the community it serves.

Data Management

All audio tapes were labelled, dated, colour coded and stored together for easy reference. Each tape was transcribed immediately following the interview or programming meeting. I organized incoming data in binders, with one for each data collection method. Within each binder I used dividers to further organize the data. During data analysis I left the original copies of transcripts in these binders and kept a second copy of each transcript, my working or mark up copy, in file folders located in a fire proof chest. I recorded all of my data collection activities on a calendar and kept a journal in which I recorded the data collection path I chose, my approach to analysis, and my research experiences.

Data Analysis

I engaged in a number of different stages of analysis. The first stage occurred during data collection. Immediately after each interview and programming meeting, I transcribed the audio tape. Then, I listened to each tape again to check for accuracy in my transcription. Following this, I read each transcript again, this time circling key words or

phrases. While reading the transcript for a third time I wrote key words, which became initial categories, in the margin of the each page. I then summarized each transcript, writing categories and related quotes beneath and mapping out possible relationships between categories.

The second stage of analysis began after I stopped collecting data. At this time, I read all transcripts and summaries in chronological order. I made additional notes to my summary sheets and recorded new thoughts and revised ideas. After being at my site for a year I gained insights that I did not have during early phases of stage one, particularly with respect to salient categories and themes within and across programmers. Reading the transcripts chronologically enabled me to reenact the year and explore the evolution of my ideas over time.

After completing this process, I rearranged the transcripts according to programmers and created a file of programming meetings. My decision to analyze by programmer was based on the fact that each programmer was responsible for distinct programming areas. This approach enabled me to read the set of transcripts for each programmer and uncover themes pertaining to each programmer's approach to planning his or her specific programming areas. I was also able to explore themes across programmers. During this stage of analysis I reviewed and modified my initial notes, marked coded units of analysis using "post-it" notes with the name of the category, and wrote a list of categories that emerged for each transcript. I then constructed a map of categories and their relationships on a piece of paper which provided me with an outline for entering quotes into the computer. Throughout this process, I constantly referred to

documents I had collected, observation notes, and my journal. After marking the text with "post-it" notes and drafting an outline, I was ready to type the quotes into the computer. Initially, I cut up quotes and arranged them by categories and then typed them; however, I found this process extremely slow and the quotes quickly became decontextualized. After doing this for one programmer, I changed my strategy and typed the quotes directly from the marked transcripts. The end product of this stage was a typed, summarized listing of categories and quotes for each programmer.

At stage four, I read each summary and identified subcategories and relationships between categories, at times creating new overarching categories. I then began writing drafts which expanded upon these summaries in order to provide the reader with information about how and why categories fit together. I revised initial drafts numerous times (moving and adding quotes) as I moved back and forth between the drafts, transcripts, and summaries. Each draft became a more comprehensive portrayal of what I learned in the field. The result of this process was one chapter which provides a profile of the centre; one chapter which outlines program planning at a centre-wide level, and four chapters which describe each programmer's approach to planning. Instead of describing the planners' practices separately, I could have presented them in other ways such as according to technical, contextual, and social-political views or the four planning stages they completed. In my judgement it was more effective to focus on the individual planners' behaviours and their programming areas because of the way in which programs are organized at this centre. Each programmer is responsible for his or her own programming areas which results in semi-autonomous areas of planning responsibility.

During the final stage, a more conceptual rather than descriptive level of analysis was conducted. At this stage, emergent themes were discussed according to three views of planning described in the literature. Similarities and differences were identified and discussed. A view of planning was developed which best depicted how programs are planned at this centre. This analysis is presented in the discussion chapter.

Trustworthiness

The typical criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness or quality of quantitative research are internal validity, external validity, and reliability. In many cases, these criteria are also used to judge qualitative studies. With the growing interest and acceptance of research of a qualitative nature, however, increasing attention is being directed to the establishment and discussion of criteria that are unique to and more consistent with this mode of inquiry. Three aspects of trustworthiness have been considered more appropriate for discussing the quality of qualitative inquiry: credibility, transferability, and dependability (see Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995, Morse and Field, 1995). These terms will be used instead of validity and reliability in the following discussion.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the informants' perspectives are reported as accurately as possible and the interpretations and concepts have shared meanings between the researcher and informants. I used the following strategies to enhance the accuracy of my interpretation of the data.

Reflexive analysis. Prior to and during the research process, I engaged in reflexive analysis to examine the influence of my background, perceptions and interests on the framing of questions and the interpretation of findings. The following is a description of personal biases and preconceptions of which I was aware when conducting this research.

First, as an Educational Studies doctoral student who is interested in educational gerontology, I was particularly curious about the educational component of programming in senior centres. Given that this centre offered many different types of programs I wanted to ensure that I did not focus my attention on an area in which I was particularly interested.

Second, I have heard a number of stereotypes about senior centres and have found that many people I have talked to are not clear about the definition and purpose of a senior centre. I have found myself constantly explaining and to some extent justifying the importance of this type of community organization. I am aware that I have become committed to "enlightening" people about senior centres and that I believe in the contribution that such centres can make to the lives of older adults.

Third, my previous work experience and reading of the literature has provided me with insights about senior centre operations, administration, and program offerings. I have, through these experiences, obtained insider knowledge about senior centres at a general level. As a result, I wanted to ensure that I did not make assumptions about my research site based on what I had learned elsewhere.

Finally, I began this study believing that program planning may be shaped by relationships of power and the interests held by those individuals who hold the greatest power. I constantly reflected on the questions I asked and the direction of my analysis to ensure that my interest in power and politics did not overshadow or blind me to other emergent themes.

Member checking. After my first set of interviews, I provided informants with copies of their transcripts. They told me that they were not interested in reading the transcripts because of their busy schedules. During the data collection period I used a number of other strategies to ensure that they were involved in the analysis of the data. During interviews, I paraphrased and summarized their responses to ensure that I had heard them correctly and understood the significance of their responses. I presented issues that they had raised in previous interviews and asked for verification and/or elaboration. After writing summaries of each programmer's approach to planning, I presented each of them with their chapter. I asked them to verify my interpretations, provide suggestions about changes or additions, and elaborate on issues they believed needed clarification. I also asked the programmers and the supervisor to read the chapters pertaining to the profile of the centre as well as program planning at a centre wide level in order to check the accuracy of my account. The supervisor and the four programmers responded favourably and stated that they believed what I had written was consistent with what they had told me and was an accurate portrayal of their planning practice.

Although Sue, Pam and Ellen were pleased with my account of planning at their centre, they were concerned about their use of language in the quotes I had selected. Ben

and Nancy, however, did not express any concerns about their quotations. I met with Sue, Pam, and Ellen individually to discuss this matter. All three requested that words like "um", "uh", "you know", and "like" be removed, which I did for all of the quotations (including Ben and Nancy's quotes). They also wanted redundant words omitted and, in some cases, additional words added for greater clarity. I complied with this and used ellipses points to indicate omissions and round brackets to identify words that they wanted inserted. Words that I inserted or added are indicated with square brackets.

Verbatim accounts. With the permission of informants, audio tapes were made of all interviews and programming meetings so that the exact wording could be captured. When writing up this study, verbatim accounts were used whenever possible to strengthen the authenticity of the discussion and to demonstrate the connection between my interpretations and informants' views about the phenomenon under study.

Lengthy data collection period. The collection of data over a one year period from the same informants provided me with multiple opportunities to verify my interpretations and check for inconsistencies. By spending extended periods of time with the informants I was also able to establish trust and a strong rapport with them which I believe facilitated the sharing of their stories and experiences with me.

Transferability

The intent of qualitative research is to provide unique, context-bound interpretations of phenomena rather than to generalize findings to other contexts, settings or groups. Transferability, which refers to the extension or application of understandings to similar contexts, has been identified as a more appropriate criterion in qualitative

research than generalizability (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). To enhance the transferability of my research I have provided the reader with a detailed description of the study's context. This will provide a base of information for people who are interested in transferring the findings of this study to their own or other settings. This detailed description of context will also be useful to other researchers who want to conduct additional studies of planning in senior centres, compare the findings of this study with other studies, or compile findings from several studies in an attempt to develop a theory of planning.

Dependability

Discussions about dependability include references to both consistency during data collection and the extent to which the results are consistent given the data collected (i.e, another researcher reviewing the data would come to similar conclusions). In this study, consistency during data collection was enhanced by interviewing all three programmers using the same style of discussion, in the same location, and for approximately the same number of interviews. It should be noted that fewer interviews were held with one programmer (Ellen) because she was away from the centre for several months. Despite this, I believe that the amount and content of information was comparable to that obtained from the other programmers. I believe that my style of interaction was very similar with all three programmers. In addition to consistency when interviewing, I was consistent in my observation of programming meetings and my use of the verbatim accounts to structure follow-up interviews.

In order to enhance the consistency of my results, I have described in detail the decisions I made regarding site selection, informant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Given the lack of research on program planning in senior centres, such detailed information is important for other researchers who want to conduct similar investigations in order to build upon or add to the original research.

Anonymity

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, pseudonyms were used for the centre and all people referred to in this study. While my initial intention was to ensure the anonymity of the site and participants, I realized that this was not entirely possible. For one thing, all of the participants were from the same centre and despite the use of pseudonyms they would easily be able to identify one another. In order to address this issue, I had each participant read my account of her or his practice as well as any additional quotes I wanted to include in other chapters. I asked the participant if there was anything he or she did not want other people at the centre to read. The supervisor and the programmers ensured me that they were comfortable with sharing their quotes with others and thanked me for providing them with an opportunity to voice any concerns and make any changes.

The second issue related to anonymity was keeping the site and the participants anonymous to others outside the centre. I was concerned that my detailed description of planning at this centre would enable others familiar with senior centres to identify the site. I informed the participants of this issue and asked them if there was anything that I had included that they did not want disclosed to others outside the centre. I provided them with an opportunity to read all of the chapters and inform me of anything that might

compromise their reputation. They did not express any concerns about this issue. In fact, throughout the data collection period they were impressed by my commitment to "secrecy" but expressed that they did not care if others knew I was studying their centre.

While I cannot claim that I have ensured the complete anonymity of the participants and the centre I have, through the use of pseudonyms, ensured that people who are unfamiliar with senior centres in the Lower Mainland will not be able to identify the site or the participants. In addition, I feel confident that the participants in my study are fully aware of this issue and are comfortable with and supportive of my disclosure of planning practice at their centre.

Reciprocity

While it is clear how I benefited from this study, one may ask: Why were they so keen to have me study their centre? What did they hope to gain from this experience? and How did they benefit from my study? I must admit that when I started this study I was so excited that they wanted to participate that I did not ask them the first two questions. One impression that I got was that being "chosen" made them feel special and singled out from other centres. I had also explained to them that very little was known about planning in senior centres and that their assistance would make a valuable contribution to this field of study. Perhaps they were interested in being part of my pioneering adventure. They certainly appeared to be keen to have me attend meetings and other staff events and were very accommodating when I asked if we could schedule yet another interview. When soliciting their involvement I had not promised them an evaluation of their work or recommendations for changes so I know that their involvement was not based on their

belief that I would assist them with their practice. I can only assume that they were interested in my study and what I would reveal about their centre.

At the end of the data collection period I asked the supervisor why she wanted me to study the centre and what they hoped to gain from being part of this experience. She explained,

We try really hard to support students so we often have students in the centre doing practicums, work experience, and projects. That's really important to us. Secondly, it's always good to have a new view of the centre. So if somebody comes in from the outside, fresh, and has insights to offer us, we are always interested to hear their views and their impressions of the centre...I'm looking forward to reading the report because it will be really focussed on seniors' programming and the opportunity to read the research...in the context of our centre is going to be really valuable to us.I'm sure that it will give us some...insights about what we could look at and where we're going from here because our staff is reducing, changes are being made in how we do things, and I think that there will be part of the report that will help us to prioritize what's important...Sometimes programming becomes second nature and we need reminders about the principles of the way we go about it and reminders to keep in touch with the participants and the customers. I think that this report is going to help us stay fresh. (S4-1)

When I asked her what she thought they had gained so far, she remarked

The benefits of having you here have been that we have, in order to tell you what we're doing, it's forced us to kind of examine what we're doing. (S4-1)

At the end of my final interviews with the programmers I asked them if they felt they had benefited from their involvement in my study. Pam explained,

It didn't make me do anything differently, but it's interesting to pin point ...how and why you do things and I think on more of an unconscious level, it makes you reach a little further...just taking the time to think...I think everything that we do and reiterate and discuss, it all sinks in somewhere and probably gives us a more rounded outlook...an awareness of what we're doing and the way other people do things too. (P8-9)

Ellen identified gaining an understanding and being more aware of her practice as a result of being part of my study. She commented,

I know I just do what I do and...I don't...stop and think well why did I do that? There's something in my mind but I'm not maybe always thinking of it or conscious of it. So it really is neat to step back and look and it will be interesting to read all this and say, "Well, is that why?"...I think it's been really interesting and a big help to have someone sit down and [ask questions] because you don't think about it. You just do it. (E4-11)

Ben did not feel that my study had any particular impact on him or his work.

During our interviews he was enthusiastic and willing to share his stories with me, but he showed little interest in my study. I was definitely gaining from his involvement with little apparent benefit to him. This may explain why it was difficult to schedule interviews with him.

I did not have a chance to conduct a final interview with Nancy before she completed her contract as the part-time programmer. As such, I was unable to ask her about her experience as an interviewee.

During my time at the centre I was committed to giving something back to the centre other than simply an awareness of how they were planning. During my first month at the centre I offered my assistance with a volunteer lunch they were hosting. I spent the morning up to my elbows in potato salad then donned a ring master costume and spent the afternoon serving lunch to volunteers and entertaining them (along with the staff) with tricks and bubble blowing. I was known as "Bubbles" for quite some time after that. Not only did this event provide me with an opportunity to reciprocate their kindness, but in retrospect, I believe that this situation was crucial to establishing rapport with the staff and the board. Other opportunities to assist the staff did not come up throughout the year.

In lieu of my time, I thanked the staff and the board with gifts such as a plant and card at Christmas, a thank you card and a plant for the board at my last meeting, a thank you card and gift certificates to a popular restaurant for the staff to use in an upcoming staff get together. These gifts hardly seemed enough compensation for all that they had given me but they assured me that they had enjoyed being part of my study. Upon completion of my dissertation they have asked me to give a presentation about my research findings which I will gladly do along with presenting them with a bound copy of my study.

Chapter Summary

A qualitative case study was conducted over a one year period to generate an understanding of program planning at one Lower Mainland senior centre. The data collection methods I used included interviews with the supervisor and four programmers; observations of programming, staff, and board meetings; and the collection of documents pertaining to programming, planning, and attributes of the centre. The data was kept in a well-organized, retrievable manner. I engaged in five stages of data analysis throughout the year and as I moved through these stages my original ideas were challenged and modified until a comprehensive portrayal of program planning was achieved. I utilized a number of strategies to enhance the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the study. Two issues related to anonymity were addressed and steps were identified that I took to ensure that people unfamiliar with senior centres would not be able to identify the site. Benefits to participants were discussed and efforts made to reciprocate were also outlined.

CHAPTER 4

PROFILE OF MATHESON SENIOR CENTRE

This chapter outlines the model of service delivery; attributes of the facility; information about membership; characteristics of the community and members; the philosophy, mission, and goals of the centre; the organizational structure; the organization of programs and services; the number of programs and services offered; and characteristics of the programmers. Typical and unique attributes of this centre are summarized at the end of the chapter.

Model of Service Delivery

Matheson Senior Centre is a multi-purpose, age-segregated senior centre which provides a broad spectrum of programs and services to people aged 55 years and older. The centre was built in 1972-1973 by the city with funds from the Elderly Citizens House Aid Act and the Federal-Provincial Special Development Loan Program. It is operated by the city's Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the centre's Seniors' Society. More than half of its revenue comes from tax-based sources and as such it can be classified as a public rather than privately funded centre.

This centre is one of four senior centres in the city, all of which are operated by the Parks and Recreation Department. Two of these centres are multi-generational and two are age-segregated.

Facility

The centre is situated on the corner of a busy intersection near the south east boundary of the city. The supervisor referred to the neighbourhood as a low income area in a state of transition. The streets around the centre are being redeveloped and older

houses are being replaced by masses of new apartments, condominiums, and townhouses. These new housing developments are in sharp contrast to the low income highrises beside the centre and the discount clothing stores, pawn shop, and older buildings found across the street from the centre.

The one level brick building which houses the centre is landscaped with several evergreen and deciduous trees, shrubs, and grassy areas which offer a small retreat from the heavy flow of traffic around the centre. One side of the building has a bank of large windows that look out onto a small park-like area between the centre and the low income high rises. This side of the building is where the eating area, reception desk, and staff offices are located. Large glass doors at either end of the building enable people to see through the centre but not into any of the activity rooms. The other side of the building which faces the two main streets does not have any windows. As a result, people cannot see into the centre from outside and there is no natural light. The rooms located on this side include the centre's large auditorium, the kitchen, and the food service offices. A set of stairs beside the reception desk leads to the basement which contains the centre's four activity rooms. These rooms have been recently painted to give them a fresh, modern look. They have fairly high ceilings and are bright from overhead lights but do not have any sources of natural light.

The supervisor explained that they face "*major facility problems*" (S1-3) as a result of being in a 23 year old building. Of particular concern is the fact that the activity rooms are located in the basement which means that when people walk into the building they do not see a lot of people engaged in activities. Even the doors into the auditorium were

solid so that they had to be propped open in order for people to watch the fitness classes and sports activities taking place. During the year I was there, glass inserts were added to several of the auditorium doors which provided limited viewing space.

My meetings, interviews and observations brought me into the centre at different times and days of the week. My experiences validated the supervisor's concerns. Upon entering the building, I did not immediately experience the sights and sounds of seniors engaged in activities. In fact, very few seniors were milling about the main floor except during lunch time when the centre's restaurant area was often filled with the sounds of laughing and chatting. In order to see activities in progress, I had to spy through the glass in the auditorium doors or venture downstairs and peer around an open door.

The supervisor believed that they had done everything they could to modernize the interior decor of the building. Much needed structural changes such as adding a second floor or expanding the main floor could not, however, be done without spending a great deal of money.

Community Characteristics

Census data compiled by the Parks and Recreation Department provides information about the demographic characteristics of people who live in the six planning areas which comprise the centre's target market. Data from the 1996 Census shows that approximately 20% of the population in these areas is 55 years and older. In one area, 34% of the population is 55 and over. The age breakdown for seniors in these areas reveals that a greater number of seniors are under, rather than over, 75 years of age except for one area where a large proportion of people over 55 (16%) were in the 75 and

older age category. Across planning areas, the number of seniors in the 55-64 age group was slightly higher than the number in the 65-74 age category. In five of the six planning areas, the number of female seniors is slightly higher (2-3%) than the number of male seniors. One planning area, however, has a substantially higher number of females (22% versus 12%) due to a greater number of females aged 75 years and older (12% versus 4%) than other planning areas.

1996 Census data for ethnicity revealed that British (40% to 66%) and East/South East Asian, primarily Chinese, (18% to 30%) were the primary ethnic origins identified by people living in these six planning areas. European and South Asian (primarily East Indian) origins were identified by a smaller but fairly high percentage of the population (greater than 10% in most areas). English was the principle mother tongue identified in these planning areas, followed by Chinese (10% to 25%) and, in three of the areas, Punjabi (3% to 6%). Other languages were identified by 4% or less of the population across planning areas. Age breakdowns for ethnicity were not provided.

Income data from the 1996 Census was not available at the time of this study. Table 1 provides income figures from the 1991 Census for the six planning areas. The average household income for the city was \$46,800 and the median income was \$40,388.

Table 1: Average and Median Household Income for the Six Planning Areas

Area	1	2	3	4	5	6
Average	\$40,897	\$34,362	\$51,277	\$46,032	\$33,232	\$91,991
Median	\$34,115	\$31,321	\$47,748	\$39,253	\$27,888	\$67,370

The low income cutoff level for this city in 1991 was \$25,741 for a family of four and \$13,678 for an individual. Income levels by age and planning area were not available.

The supervisor reported that the community has traditionally been a low income area. The income figures presented on the previous page do not, however, fully support this claim. Four of the planning areas have median income levels below the median for the city; however, two of the planning areas are well above this level. All of the areas are above the low income cutoff level. It should be noted that Planning Areas 3 and 6, which have the highest median income levels, are located further away from the centre than the other planning areas. Seniors who live in these areas may not be the primary target group given the distance from the centre.

While income level by age was not available, the supervisor reported that seniors who live in the neighbourhood are typically less affluent than those who live in other parts of the city. When comparing income levels and population by age, I found that the two areas with the lowest median income levels had the highest population of people 55 years and older (Area 2 had 1265 seniors and Area 5 had 1915 seniors). In fact, 34% of the population living in planning Area 5 was 55 years and older. These areas have the largest group of potential members and participants and, therefore, constitute the primary target market. Given the relatively low median income level for these areas, one could speculate that these groups of seniors may have lower income levels than seniors in other planning areas and in other parts of the city.

In summary, this demographic data shows that there is a relatively substantial group of people over 55 years of age from which to draw participants and members.

Based on this data, the target clientele for this centre appears to be: 1) people in the 55-74 age range, particularly people between 55 and 64 years of age; 2) both males and females, although there are slightly more women than men; and 3) predominantly English speakers. Although breakdowns for age are not available, one could speculate that some of the seniors in the community may be of Chinese and East Indian origin, and some may have lower income levels than seniors living in other parts of the city.

Membership

Membership is available to individuals aged 55 years and over. A yearly membership must be purchased for \$11.50 in order to participate in any of the senior centre activities. Some of the programs and services offered are free of charge to members while other activities require additional registration fees. Exceptions to the age limit are made for spouses of members aged 55 or older.

A membership profile was not available at the time of this study. Membership data is entered into the city-wide computer system but acquiring a profile of this centre would have entailed an extensive data base search of all four centres in the city by a Parks and Recreation employee. One membership characteristic, gender, had been compiled by the Parks and Recreation Department for 1996. This data showed that 64% of the members of this centre were women and 35% were men (1% of the members had not provided their gender). This finding is consistent with two of the other senior centres. The fourth centre had a substantially higher percentage of women.

The supervisor and the programmers told me that the age of members ranges from people under the age of 55 to those over 90 years of age. They believed that the average

age of members was approximately 75 years, which they said was older than the other centres in the city. Although this centre has a large proportion of older seniors, the supervisor stated that they are generally in good health and are not the frail elderly. The programmers and the supervisor reported that the centre caters to seniors with relatively low income levels and not very much disposable income. While the majority of members are of British and European origins, the supervisor identified that approximately 70 members are of South Asian origins and 10 members are of Chinese origin.

At the time of this study, the centre had 860 members. The membership size was greater than one of the other centres but was less than half the size of the other two centres in the city. Nine years ago the centre reached a membership high of 1300 seniors and although the total number has fluctuated, it has been primarily declining since then. The programmers and supervisor attributed this decline to the following interrelated factors.

One contributing factor is that the current membership is comprised predominantly of older members. In order to maintain the membership level, new members are needed to replace older members who are no longer able to attend the centre. Pam explained that when older members do not renew their memberships, they are *"not being replaced at a rapid rate"* (P2-26).

Difficulties maintaining the membership are in part due to a decline in the number of seniors living in the high rise towers next to the centre. Sue explained,

The high rise towers right beside us...started off as subsidized housing for seniors and they were built at the same times as the community centre...Over the last few years, B.C. Housing has developed a new rating scale for accepting people into their buildings....So what's happening to the high rises is that seniors are at the bottom of the waiting list...The high rise towers are now...66% seniors but...they no longer have a seniors' waiting list....So where at one time this centre had this huge population to draw from, that is really changing. (S1-4)

While younger more affluent seniors are moving into the neighbourhood, they do not appear to be interested in joining this centre. The staff believed that this group of seniors was not being attracted to the centre because of the old, less modern facility. Sue remarked,

Seniors are becoming more demanding of their facilities. Twenty years ago they would tolerate that, but they don't tolerate that today (when) they have choices. (S2-10)

In addition to facility challenges, the centre also competes with a multi-generational centre located nearby. This centre, which is approximately five minutes away by car, is modern, spacious, and bright with a number of above ground activity rooms and other facilities. Large windows provide ample natural light and enable people to observe activities in progress. Sue explained,

If people have to get in their cars to drive [here], they can just as easily drive [there]...All the rooms have...big windows. They are bright and airy. It's got a swimming pool. It's got a huge...weight room...So we sort of fight the competition from [that centre] as well as the deficiencies of our building. (S1-3)

Ellen added,

If you had a choice of going to an older building that's smaller, compared to a nice, bright, newer facility, which one are you going to go to? (E2-26)

In light of the declining membership rates two strategies were used to attract people to the centre. Given the constraints imposed by the building, the primary strategy

they used was to offer a variety of new and innovative programs. This approach will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The second strategy involved expanding the target clientele. Despite the Parks and Recreation Department's "seniors only" policy, the centre has been offering nonmember rates for some of its programs in order to increase participation rates. Although they are not allowed to offer memberships to nonseniors (except for spouses) because of Parks and Recreation policy, the staff has discussed this possibility as a means of offsetting declining membership. This change in user group is illustrated in the current unofficial name of the centre, Matheson Community Centre for Adults.

Philosophy, Mission and Goals

As stated in the centre's manual, "The operating philosophy of the centre is based on the premise that aging is a normal developmental process and that satisfying and fulfilling leisure pursuits are the right of each citizen in the community. The centre shall encourage, promote, implement, and supervise a broad spectrum of leisure activities and services for citizens over 55 years and provide an environment where members feel positive self-worth through acceptance by others, belonging, recognition, contribution and achievement".

The mission of the centre is "to provide older adults with a variety of activities that will help them to live healthy, active lifestyles so that their later years will be full of enjoyment and satisfaction" (centre's brochure).

The following goals were derived from the philosophy and mission of the centre.

1. To help maintain the well-being and health of senior adults through creative programming, offering a wide variety of leisure opportunities.

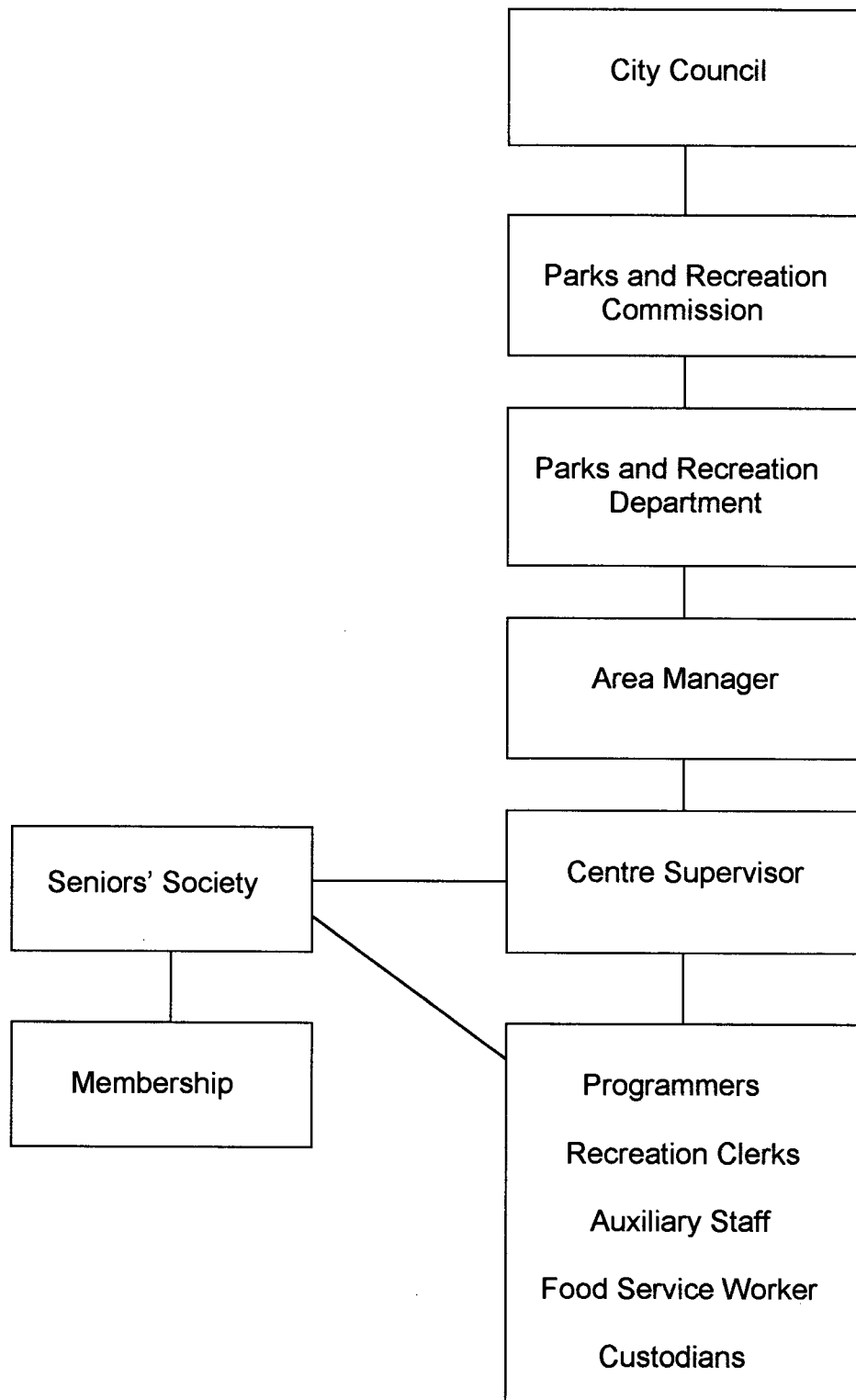
2. To meet physical, social, cultural and educational needs of seniors.
3. To improve the quality of life for seniors in the community by encouraging and supporting healthy lifestyles including active living and good nutrition.
4. To utilize the skills of senior adults of the community and to enable individuals to develop to their full potential by providing a variety of volunteer opportunities.
5. To encourage full and active participation of members of the centre and the community in identifying needs, establishing priorities, planning and implementing programs and evaluating ongoing activities.
6. To present to the community a positive image of the older adult and to encourage interaction of citizens of all ages.
7. To develop understanding of cultural differences and of various disabilities.
8. To be a vital part of the continuum of services to the senior adult by participating in joint programs and maintaining communication with appropriate agencies to enhance community information services and referrals for senior adults.
(senior centre manual)

Organizational Structure

As a Parks and Recreation facility, the centre is part of a large organizational structure which includes senior centre staff, an area manager, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City Council (see Figure 1).

During the data collection period, senior centre staff included the centre supervisor, three programmers, three recreation clerks, two auxiliary staff, the food service worker, and three custodians. The staff report to the centre supervisor who is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the centre. Her link to the Department of Parks and Recreation is mediated by an area manager who is responsible for a number of community centres within a particular geographic location. The area manager reports to the director of the Parks and Recreation Department who is accountable to the Parks and

Figure 1: Organizational Structure



Recreation Commission and the City Council which has the ultimate authority for municipal services.

The centre's Seniors' Society also plays a central role in the operation of the centre. The Society is comprised of the membership and the board of directors.

Twenty-two group directors, who represent various senior led groups, clubs, committees and program areas, are elected or appointed annually by members of each group. Three directors at large are elected by members present at the annual general meeting. The twenty-five directors elect five executive officers (president, 1st vice president, 2nd vice president, secretary, treasurer) at the first board of directors meeting following the annual meeting. The board represents and is responsible to the membership. They also provide assistance, advice, and support to senior centre staff regarding the overall direction of the centre. The programmers and the supervisor act as liaisons with the board of directors.

Organization of Programs and Services

Programs and services are grouped according to twelve programming areas:

1) social support services, 2) arts and crafts, 3) fitness, 4) dance, 5) bus trips, 6) van trips, 7) educational, 8) special events, 9) social, 10) music, 11) sports, and 12) games.

Programs within these areas can be grouped according to three different types of programs and services: 1) social support services, 2) city programs, and 3) seniors' programs. Social support services include a range of social, health, and outreach services. Groups providing services utilize space at the centre, but their programs are run by group leaders or coordinators who are not employees of the senior centre. These programs run independently of the centre's other programs. The groups consult with centre staff about issues such as room bookings, times, floor plans, and special events.

City programs include arts and crafts, fitness, dance, bus and van trips, educational, special events, and some social programs. These programs are called "city programs" because they are developed, implemented and evaluated by senior centre programmers who are Parks and Recreation (city) employees. Programmers follow Parks and Recreation policies and procedures and use funds from the senior centre's budget. Instructors, speakers, entertainment, and bus companies are contracted and fees are typically charged for participants of these programs. At this centre, program turnover is high and a variety of different programs are available each session. Since most program offerings are not fixed across sessions, programmers are constantly engaged in a process of planning.

Seniors' programs, also referred to as groups or clubs, are run by seniors who are members of the centre. These programs are offered free of charge to members and participants do not need to register (except for computer classes). Seniors' programs include all music, sports, and games programs as well as some social, dance, fitness, educational, van trips, and special events. These programs run throughout the year typically on the same day of the week, at the same time and in the same room. Most have been offered session after session and year after year. One programmer expressed the stability of seniors' programs stating, "*once they're programmed in, they're almost programmed in perpetuity*" (P2-6). It should be noted that over the years some new seniors' programs have been developed by the seniors with assistance from the staff. The programmers and supervisor did not identify any such programs during the data collection period. While seniors' programs were repeated during this period, there were occasions

where the group representatives organized events, outings, speakers, and instructors. Each group or club has a representative on the board of directors who reports their activities each month. The groups and clubs have their own accounts that are part of the Seniors' Society fund. As such, they operate separately of the centre's Parks and Recreation budget. Group representatives are not involved with city programs except with respect to presenting program ideas to programmers. Programmers, however, act as liaisons with seniors' groups and clubs and meet with them to discuss any issues or problems that might arise and to help organize specific activities or details pertaining to their programs. The degree of programmer involvement varies across groups.

Both city and seniors' programs are considered vital to addressing the needs of seniors in the community. Seniors' programs provide stable, no cost programs while city programs offer change and variety to members. While both types of programs constitute the provision of programs at this centre, this study focused on the process of planning city programs. City programs are planned by staff programmers who engage in a process of developing new programs on a regular, ongoing basis. Seniors' programs were not explored because new programs were not developed during the data collection period. Future references to programmers and program planning, therefore, refer only to city programs.

Number of Programs and Services Offered

Over the data collection period, this centre offered a broad range of programs and services. The total number of programs and services offered was 77 in spring 1996, 54 in summer 1996, 91 in fall 1996, and 79 in winter 1997. These numbers are broken down

according to social support services, seniors' programs, and city programs in order to provide a sense of the distribution of offerings at this centre.

Social Support Services

Four social support services were available during the spring 1996 and summer 1996 sessions. The number of services increased to eight for the fall 1996 and winter 1997 sessions. Examples of the types of services available at this centre include information and referral, outreach, social clubs, and health and wellness groups.

Seniors' Programs

Twenty-four seniors' groups and clubs met on a weekly or monthly basis during the year (three groups did not meet during the summer). These programs were offered at the same time, on the same day, and in the same location each session. Seniors' programs included carpet bowling, bridge, bingo, snooker, music groups, and computer lessons.

City Programs

In the spring 1996 session, a total of 49 programs were offered in the areas of arts and crafts, fitness, dance, bus and van trips, special events, educational, and social. This number dropped to 29 in the summer 1996 session but rose to 59 in fall 1996 and 47 in winter 1997. While some arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs were repeated across sessions, the majority of programs offered were new each session. As a result, there was a great deal of program turnover across sessions. Although a substantial number of programs were offered, several of these were cancelled each session due to low registration. In the spring 1996 session ten of the 49 programs had to be cancelled, six were cancelled in summer 1996, fourteen were cancelled in fall 1996, and seven programs

were cancelled in winter 1997. It should be noted that the majority of cancelled programs were in the area of arts and crafts.

Examples of bus and van trips that were offered during the year include trips to nearby islands, Washington State, and the Okanagan; local excursions to museums, galleries, theatres, and restaurants; as well as berry picking, snowshoeing, and mule treks. Educational programs included talks on topics related to history, science, health, literature, gardening, animals, world issues, and legal matters. Special events centred around festive holidays such as a Thanksgiving lunch, a holiday craft fair, a St. Patrick's Day lunch, a Robbie Burns dinner, and a New Year's Luncheon. Candle making, umbrella painting, handmade paper techniques, decorating vases, and creating herbal oils were some of the arts and crafts workshops offered along with ceramics and painting classes. Aerobics, stretching and relaxation classes, walks, line dancing, and ballroom dance workshops were also available throughout the year.

Programming Trends

When discussing program trends with the head programmer, she indicated that things had not changed very much at the centre during the fourteen years that she had been there. One change that has taken place over the years is a decline in the number of social activities led by the seniors. Pam explained that the seniors used to have more volunteer run social programs, but that they were not as popular anymore. An exploration of programs offered by the centre over the past five years, revealed that programming areas have remained the same and the number and types of programs have remained relatively stable in most programming areas. Changes are evident in two areas: education and fitness. The number of educational talks offered has increased substantially over the

past four years and an increase in the number and range of fitness programs is also evident. The reasons for these two shifts are discussed in the next chapter.

Characteristics of the Programmers

All of the programmers are city employees who hold union positions. While they refer to themselves as "programmers", the actual job titles for Ellen, Ben, and Nancy's positions are Recreation Leader 1 and 2. While these staff members are responsible for program planning, Recreation Leaders at other senior centres may not be as involved in planning duties. Pam's actual job title is Recreation Programmer and she is referred to as the head programmer. While their titles vary, in this thesis I refer to them all as programmers because that is how they describe themselves; that is how the supervisor refers to them; and this title best represents their positions at this centre. At the time of this study, salaries for these positions ranged from \$25,000 for a part-time Recreation Leader 1 to \$39,500 for the full-time Recreation Programmer. None of the programmers were seniors (i.e., over 55 years of age). Two of the programmers were in their late 20s and the other two programmers were in their late 30s. They all described themselves as Canadian. Three programmers identified British and/or European ancestral origins and one of the programmer's parents was of Asian descent.

Typical and Unique Attributes of the Centre

This centre has a number of features that are common to the four other senior centres in the city. All four centres are operated by the Parks and Recreation Department. As a result, they must all adhere to the Department's policies and procedures and are part of a hierarchical organizational structure that includes Parks and Recreation and city representatives. Although one of these centres has substantially fewer resources for

seniors' programs, the other three centres have similar operating budgets and the same number of staff. They are also similar in the number and type of areas in which programs are provided.

Although this centre has many of the same characteristics as the other centres in the city, a number of unique features can be identified. The facility is not as open or spacious or modern as the other age-segregated centre and the large multi-generational centre nearby. This centre has a lower membership rate than these centres and is struggling with a decline in the number of members. In addition, the members are believed to be older and less affluent than those who hold memberships at other centres. This centre also differs from the others with respect to programming. During the site selection phase, I found that this centre offered approximately the same number of programs and services as the other age-segregated centre but substantially more than the two multi-generational centres. A sizeable difference was evident between the two age-segregated centres with respect to educational programs. This centre offered twice as many programs of an educational nature. Although I do not have information about the two multi-generational centres, I am aware that this centre differs from the other age-segregated centre in the way that programs and services are organized and planned. At this centre, for example, there is a clear division between city and seniors' programs. Such a division does not exist at the other centre. Representatives of the Seniors' Association are responsible for developing and implementing all of the programs and services. The recreation staff simply assist the seniors with this process.

Typical and unique features of this centre can also be discussed in terms of senior centres in the Lower Mainland. Frisby's (1995) pilot study of 24 Lower Mainland senior

centres, found that the majority of the centres surveyed were age-segregated, relied primarily on municipal funds, and had memberships which were greater than 1000. This centre is, therefore, typical of the predominant type of centre and resource base identified by Frisby (1995) but has slightly fewer members than the majority of centres surveyed. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I investigated characteristics of 30 Lower Mainland senior centres. I also found that the vast majority of these centres were age-segregated and Parks and Recreation operated facilities. With respect to programs and services offered, I found that during the winter 1996 session some centres offered more than 60 programs and services in ten or more programming areas. The majority of centres, however, offered less than 60 programs and services in fewer areas. At the time of this initial investigation, this centre offered 76 programs and services from twelve programming areas. When speaking with the staff at this centre, they informed me that their centre also differed from other Lower Mainland centres in terms of the number of programmers and their programming budget.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to present a profile of this centre which would provide the reader with a context with which to consider the description of planning presented in upcoming chapters. This profile also provides a base of information for people who are interested in transferring the findings of this study to their own or other settings. The description of how programs are planned at this centre begins in the next chapter. In Chapter 5, various issues are presented which pertain to centre-wide aspects of planning. The programmers' descriptions of their practice are presented in the four chapters proceeding planning at a centre-wide level.

CHAPTER 5

CENTRE-WIDE ASPECTS OF PLANNING

At this centre, the process of planning is comprised of two levels. The first level includes aspects of planning that pertain to all programmers. This level includes the division of program responsibilities, the social dynamics of planning, the process of planning, the timing of planning, and factors that influence planning at a centre-wide level. This level of planning constitutes what someone would need to know in order to plan programs at this centre.

The second level is specific to individual programmers. This level refers to each programmer's approach to planning, the factors that influence what each programmer does, considerations programmers make, and issues that the programmers address when planning. Planning at this level constitutes what someone would need to know to plan programs for a specific programming area at this centre.

The first level of planning will be described in this chapter. Planning at the programmer level will be presented in Chapters 6 through 9.

Division of Program Responsibilities

This centre has a history of city programs being planned by senior centre staff. During the time of this study three staff members, hereafter referred to as programmers, were responsible for planning city programs: Pam, Ellen, and Ben. Pam was responsible for planning arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs. Ellen's programming areas were education and special events. Ben was responsible for planning bus and van trips. As

mentioned in Chapter 3, a part-time programmer, Nancy, replaced Ellen for several months during the data collection period.

This division of programming areas was implemented when the current supervisor, Sue, arrived at the centre in 1993. Pam explained how city programs were organized prior to the change.

The way it used to work when I first started is that...we'd have a big meeting and people would just sort of start throwing out ideas and whatever you suggested, obviously you were...interested in it. So I might do a few of the arts and crafts but I'd suggest a fitness program (and) I'd say, "Oh there's a bus trip I think we should follow up on."...It just used to balance out and you'd do a little bit of everything. So everybody would get a chance to do a special event...Arts and crafts and fitness things used to all be shared. (P1-7)

Sue explained how and why she implemented this change.

The change over to having a specific area was something I instituted shortly after I got here...It was hard for them. That was a really big change because in the past they used to sit down and they used to do a little bit here (and there)....I find it much easier because I said I want to hold somebody accountable...If (they're) all doing them, I don't know who to hold accountable. (S2-16)

Each programmer has autonomy over his or her programming areas. They have their own programming budgets and are solely responsible for generating program ideas, developing them into programs, implementing them, and then evaluating programs in their areas.

Involvement of Seniors in Planning

An examination of planning responsibilities clearly illustrates the division between staff and senior involvement in planning. Seniors are responsible for implementing senior led programs but have no responsibilities for city programs. As will be discussed in

upcoming chapters, the programmers solicit ideas from the seniors but do not involve them in any other stages of planning. This division of planning responsibilities is largely due to the way in which programs and services have been organized at this centre (i.e., seniors' programs and city programs) which appear to be the direct result of the centre's substantial staffing budget. This budget enables multiple staff to be directly involved in planning programs for seniors. With such a large staff hired to plan, develop, and implement programs, there is little need for assistance from seniors in this process. Although the staff felt that the seniors were very capable of planning their own programs, they felt that the seniors preferred having the staff plan for them. Pam, for example, remarked

We've always found that at this centre they haven't wanted to. They've been a little bit older. They've been a little less educated. This is generalizing of course...but they haven't as a rule (wanted to play a major role). (P9-6)

She explained that the general sentiment of the seniors was *"why should they take on the work when we're paid to do it"* (P9-6). Pam identified that *"lots of other places haven't had the luxury of paid staff to do that and they either do it themselves or they don't get it"* (P9-6).

The supervisor explained that there will likely be a shift at the centre towards greater involvement in planning city programs because of cutbacks to staff as well as a growing *"trend in seniors programming...to put more and more emphasis on the seniors doing their own thing"* (S4-2). She elaborated saying that at this centre they were going to alter the way they programmed so that *"when the seniors say we should have such and*

such, we're going to say 'okay, do it'. We're going to encourage the seniors to take more responsibility and we're going to work more as a liaison with them" (S4-2).

Pam questioned what the programmers' job responsibilities would entail if seniors were responsible for program planning remarking, *"I don't know what WE would do"* (P9-6). Ellen explained that at other centres, the programmers are no longer involved with program planning and that their titles have been changed to reflect their current role as community liaisons.

Boundary Permeability

Although the programming areas are distinct, programmers planned programs outside their areas from time to time. Pam described one program that fit with Ben's area that she ended up pursuing and one program that Ben planned in her area.

Ben usually does van trips and out trips and things like that. I just happened to...get a hold of a naturalist and it was something that interested me. So I went with it, but Ben and I will probably collaborate.
(P5-10)

Now here's a fitness program that really would fall under my area but Ben said, "This sounds interesting to me. I'd like to go to [a centre] and check it out." So he ended up sort of carrying the ball on that and doing it.
(P1-7)

The programmers explained that if someone decided to pursue an idea it became his or her program and was not passed back to the programmer responsible for the programming area. Ellen commented,

If somebody else were to want to do an educational program...it's theirs. If there's money involved or funds involved then I'd have to get the details for the budget but other than that it's theirs...They don't just plan it and then I look after it. It's theirs. (E2-15)

Pam also explained that

If someone really wants to go with something, they do all the research. It stays with them. (P2-4)

In some cases, programmers planned programs outside their areas because the ideas were of interest to them. For others, it simply was easier to develop the idea than to pass it on.

I know the people. It's just easier. I just find it's easy because if you pass it on to somebody else they have to redo the contact and this way I know. For me, it's just easier that way. It saves a lot of questions coming back to me: "Well, how is this person?", "Are they good?" (B2-13)

In addition to crossover between programming areas, there was also some evidence of crossover from city to seniors' programs. Ellen told me about a philosophy group that had originated as a course she had offered. People who took the course wanted to continue meeting once a month so she helped them organize a time, date, and room and assisted them with promotion. Although she was very involved at the beginning, she said that she had not liaised with them for a couple of months and remarked that *"they're doing fine on their own"* (E1-5). Ben was very involved in setting up the golf club and getting it organized. After two years of training the seniors how to run the club on their own he turned it over to them and made them responsible for it. He then took on a liaison role with the group. He explained,

Ideally that's the way you want things to run at the centre. You want to have your staff working on thinking up new programs, implementing the programs but then eventually...turn it back to them and say okay, now ...you guys run it...If you need help, that's when a staff person comes in...That's the position where you want to be, just a liaison so you can concentrate on coming up with new programs. (B1-4)

While these examples illustrate transitions between staff planned programs to seniors' programs, the programmers did not identify any programs that had been transferred back

to being staff planned. There were, however, several seniors' programs where the programmers worked as liaisons with group, club or committee leaders on administrative tasks such as floor plans, dates, times, and room allocations.

Interactions Between Programmers

Despite the fact that programmers are responsible for planning programs in their own areas, a great deal of interaction takes place between programmers. This is particularly evident at programming meetings which are held once a session. These meetings are organized by Pam, the head programmer, and attended by all three programmers and sometimes the supervisor. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss program ideas for the upcoming session. During the meeting each programmer has an opportunity to present ideas she or he has been thinking about for her or his programming areas. While presenting, the programmer sometimes asks for feedback from the other programmers about ideas and on occasion, the others ask questions about certain ideas presented. After the programmer presents, he or she sometimes asks for assistance with generating ideas. This is also a time when the other programmers are free to provide suggestions. Ellen explained the procedure in which they engaged at such meetings.

What we usually do is we go around the table and say this is what I have for next season.... We basically just talk about what we have and what ideas we want to do or what programs we want to do and (ask if) anybody (has) any other ideas or how do you think this will go, this is a new idea and I think I want to try this. Just to get feedback. (E2-16)

In addition to sharing ideas and helping one another at programming meetings, Ellen explained that they also pass along ideas that come up throughout the session.

We always give each other suggestions like if somebody calls up and says, "Oh, you know I teach this arts and crafts program" and I happen to be talking to them I'll say, "Well [Pam] looks after the arts and crafts programs. I'll let you talk to [her]." So we just pass it along or if we see something in the paper or in a magazine or something, it's like oh here, I saw this or I saw it at another centre. (E2-14)

We know what areas each person's covering so we just pass it along to the right contact and just always keep an eye open...(E2-15)

Throughout the year the programmers also demonstrated commitment to helping one another with various program related issues. Their desks are located in the same room and there was ongoing discussion about programming and other issues throughout the day. Pam explained,

At this centre we're a collaborative group. (P2-18)

It's a collaborative effort all the way around. (P2-17)

This sentiment was also expressed by Ellen who commented,

We're all pretty open. If somebody has a problem or has to make a decision and needs help...all the doors are open...(E1-21)

In addition to assisting one another with the generation of program ideas and resolving program issues, the programmers worked together to ensure that program dates and room selections did not overlap. They explained that they wanted their programs to complement one another rather than compete for participants. During the planning of upcoming sessions, the programmers checked large session calendars hung outside their office to see when other programmers were offering programs and slotted in dates and room allocations as programs were confirmed.

Involvement of the Supervisor in Planning

While the programmers are responsible for planning programs, the supervisor is also very involved in the programmers' planning activities. One of her primary roles is generating program ideas which she then passes on to the appropriate programmers. Sue commented,

I am always shooting (them) ideas...I read brochures and I'll circle a brochure if I see something interesting in it that I think we should try. (S2-17)

When I'm travelling about in the community I'm always alert for ideas. (S2-7)

The programmers included her in their brainstorming sessions at programming meetings and seemed to value her suggestions and find her input "helpful" (E2-16). Over the year a number of her ideas were pursued. The programmers did not appear to feel compelled to follow up on her suggestions but did so in many cases because they knew she had considered the idea to be appropriate for the centre and the target population. In the past, Sue had presented ideas that were then developed into extremely successful programs.

Another role she performs is that of supporter. At programming meetings, for example, Sue made comments about specific program ideas and programs that were being offered. Some of her comments included: "oh that's a good idea" (PM1-13), "oh excellent" (PM1-13), "that'll be good" (PM2-11), and "I think we have a really nice selection right now....I wouldn't mind at all if that was what we focused on" (PM3-21).

In addition to supporting programmer's choices, Sue also encourages them to try new things which she expressed keeps programming "really exciting" (S2-9) and provides participants with an opportunity to "stretch" (S2-6) themselves. At one programming meeting, for example, Sue reminded Ben to focus on new bus and van trips stating,

"Well there's lots and lots of places that are the standards. Just think of any that are new" (PM2-11). In an interview she explained,

The standard bus trips are done every year over and over again by everybody so we just have to keep looking for new ones. (S2-9)

Another example of Sue's philosophy about new programs is evident in her discussion of the development of educational programs.

The centre didn't use to do the educational programs but I was a programmer in another centre before I came here and I really did a lot of educational programs. Seniors like the opportunity to learn and to think and be stimulated that way. So I really encouraged the programmers to do the educational things. (S1-6)

In addition to trying new things, Sue believed that the programmers should take risks when planning and not be constrained by the possibility of cancelled programs.

I have a lot of trouble with (the head office counting cancelled programs) because if you worry that your cancelled courses are going to be counted by somebody you quit taking the risk because you are afraid of what they are going to...think when ...they see something like that. (S2-14)

Ellen attributed the fact that the programmers were *"willing to take a risk and try things out"* to *"the support of Sue"* who *"encourages it"* (E2-24).

The programmers explained that Sue was supportive of what they offered and was very open to program ideas. They remarked, however, that there were certain topics with which she was not comfortable.

She's supportive of some of the things that we like to try but when it comes to the more far out stuff she's a little "Oh, I don't know, aura healing, no I don't think so". (B1-13)

She's very leery about certain things...She's personally not comfortable with the occult, tarot card reading and UFOs. She's not comfortable with those...because she's concerned for the members and us leading them astray, giving them false hope or having the wool pulled over their eyes. So she will let us know that she's not comfortable with it. (P2-18)

Sue described her reaction to some of the programs offered when she first started working at the centre.

When I came here they appeared to have a heavy emphasis on the occult....That really disturbed me because there were so many of them that it looked like an emphasis...and I just thought I don't feel comfortable with this. So I definitely asked them to cut back on that....I requested change....I think they were a little bit disappointed but they didn't object too strenuously. (S2-18)

In addition to topics, Sue was also concerned about the cost of programs. She expressed her thoughts about expensive programs, stating

There's definitely at times been programs in there that I haven't felt comfortable with. Not that they were bad programs or anything I just was sort of wondering if they were meeting the needs. I like to focus on the needs of our low income people and so sometimes when (there are) several expensive trips in a row (I feel concerned)....I like to see that balance...a variety of prices (and lengths) so that there's really low cost and time cost and stuff like that. (S2-18)

I'll say if I think that the bus trips are pretty heavy on the cost...I'll say "Okay, you've had a lot of expensive ones, I want you to throw in a couple of low cost ones now." I do that periodically. (S2-18)

We always know that we are serving a low income crowd and so if we want our events to go we know we have to keep the prices as low as possible. (PM4-18)

At programming meetings, she made comments such as "*nice to throw in something that's free*" (PM1-6), "*I want [Ben] to think low cost*" (PM1-27), "*go with nonpricey*" (PM2-3), and "*when you add the play to the bus cost, it gets pricey*" (PM2-7).

While Sue was involved in planning, the programmers expressed that it was up to them to make decisions and that they did not need the approval of Sue or the head programmer, Pam, to offer programs. Pam stated that they did take Sue's concerns into consideration but did not feel constrained by her discomfort with certain topics or expensive programs.

It makes us think twice about it but again it's so open that we would never really be afraid that she'd crush it just because she doesn't believe in it. (P2-19)

It's kind of a running joke when we offer certain programs. We say, "Now here's a program Sue's going to go for!" (P2-18)

This reaction by the programmers was likely due to the following reasons. First, the programmers had worked at the centre for many years and had gained an understanding of which programs were popular and which were not. Second, each programmer was treated as an expert in his or her area and as an autonomous planner. Pam commented,

To give Sue credit too, I think she'd sometimes like to have more input, but she's very cognisant of the fact that we have to be given our leeway. (P2-19)

Sue also explained that it wasn't her role to oversee programming.

Pam as [head] programmer, she's responsible...for the overview. So she's responsible to call the programming meeting and get everybody together and talk about their ideas and sort of be aware if there are any gaps. (S2-17)

Sometimes I see their programs when they are in the brochure. (S2-17)

Third, Sue consciously did not try to impose her approach to planning on the programmers. She recognized that each person had his or her own style and that her way was simply one way, not the only way. She explained, for example,

They don't do it but when I was programming I would sit down and program the whole year....but, I know they don't do that here. (S2-16)

But that's a style, that's only a working style and I want them to do whatever they're comfortable with. (S2-17)

Finally, Sue's beliefs about programming were consistent with those held by the programmers such as taking risks and trying new things (see Chapters 6-9).

Process of Planning

At this centre, there is a great deal of program turnover which can be attributed to the centre's organizational culture as well as membership and participation rates. In the previous discussion of Sue's involvement in planning, it was identified that she encourages the programmers to try new things and take risks in order to keep programming exciting and to offer seniors a chance to try different things. This belief is also shared by the programmers who use it as a basis for making program selections. A detailed description of this selection criterion is presented in upcoming chapters.

Program turnover was also part of the supervisor and programmers' strategy to combat declining membership. By offering a variety of new and creative programs, the staff hoped to attract new members and, in particular, younger members. This planning issue is discussed later on in this chapter.

Turnover was also the result of cancelled programs. While programs were cancelled in a number of areas because of low registration levels, this was particularly an issue for Pam. The high incidence of turnover in arts and crafts programs as well as dance was largely due to low participation rates. As a result, new programs had to be planned each session in order to replace cancelled programs.

It is because of this desire and need for turnover that the programmers engaged in a process of planning rather than simply implementing programs that had been offered in the past. This process consisted of the following stages: 1) generating ideas about potential programs, 2) selecting ideas based on the application of a number of criteria, 3) pursuing and developing selected program ideas, and 4) organizing planning details.

While the sources of ideas, selection criteria, development issues, and specific details varied, all of the programmers engaged in these stages when planning. Chapters 6 through 9 will describe in detail the ways in which each programmer completed these stages when planning programs.

Timing of Planning

The process of planning revolves around dates and deadlines imposed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Planning is structured according to four program sessions: winter (January to March), spring (April to June), summer (July and August) and fall (September to December). The dates for these sessions were developed by the Parks and Recreation Department and apply to all of the senior centres and community centres in the city. Since this centre is a Parks and Recreation operated facility, the programmers must adhere to the official beginning and ending dates for each session.

City and centre deadlines influence the programmers' time lines for generating, selecting and developing program ideas. The city deadline refers to the time by which all of the programmers must have their program details confirmed and entered into the city wide computer system for community centres. This deadline is based on the length of time the Communications Department needs to publish the Parks and Recreation Leisure Guide for the city. The deadline is typically eight weeks prior to the next session's start date. Immediately following the deadline, the Communications Department downloads the information and creates a draft to be proofread by one representative from each centre. A second proofing takes place the following week before the final copy is printed.

The city deadline in turn influences the centre deadlines. Ellen, the contact for the Communications Department, sets a centre deadline approximately one week prior to the city deadline. The programmers try to have all of their program information entered into the computer by this date. Ellen then downloads the information and distributes it to the programmers who have a chance to proofread their entries and make any last minutes changes or additions before the city deadline.

A second centre deadline, which is influenced by the city deadline, is the date for which all information must be ready for the centre's newsletter. This newsletter is compiled by staff at the centre and is printed independently of the Communications Department. The deadline is shortly after the second proofing of the Parks and Recreation Leisure Guide.

There is also a centre deadline for when the programming meeting will be held. It is not actually a formal deadline but rather an approximate time when the programmers should meet to discuss their programming ideas for the upcoming session. Ellen informs Pam of the city and centre deadlines and Pam then selects a date when the three of them can meet. Pam explained that they usually schedule a meeting *"immediately after a newsletter comes out"* (P2-8) and *"at least one month in advance"* (P3-19) of the deadline. When I asked why the meeting was held so far in advance of the deadline she explained,

So that we give each other ideas and then still have the time to work on them a little bit and nail things down. (P3-19)

It just gives you more time to share some of your challenges and where you need to shore up on programming ideas. (P5-11)

After attending a programming meeting held four months prior to the start of the upcoming session, I asked Pam her thoughts about having the meeting so early. She remarked,

I think the earlier you have them the better just because if other people have different ideas they get to see where you're at and...the type of things you're looking for. It keeps your mind open to things coming up rather than at the last moment when you're kind of scrambling...to do your own things and you don't have time to think about [the fact that] Ben is having a problem with a January bus trip. (P5-10)

The following table provides the dates of programming meetings, centre deadlines, and start dates for each session during the data collection period.

Table 2: Programming Dates and Deadlines

Session	Meeting	Deadline	Start Date
Fall	May 23	July 2	September 3
Winter	September 9	October 25	January 2
Spring	January 7	January 27	April 1
Summer	March 26	April 22	July 2

These dates illustrate just how far in advance the programmers have to plan in order to meet predetermined deadlines.

Factors Influencing Planning at a Centre-Wide Level

The programmers and the supervisor identified the declining membership, the income level of members, the budget, and Parks and Recreation as salient factors shaping how they plan programs.

Declining Membership

A major issue facing programmers and the centre as a whole is that they have been experiencing a decline in membership. As discussed earlier, this decline is linked to a decrease in the number of seniors in the community, a low replacement rate, an influx of younger wealthier seniors, and competition with a nearby centre. In an effort to entice people to the centre, emphasis has been placed on creative and innovative programs. Bus and van trips, for example, are sought out which visit new destinations and attractions. Special events with innovative themes are brainstormed. A new fitness centre was added in the hopes that it *"would appeal to younger seniors and get them in here"* (S1-6) and fitness programs are selected that might attract this group of seniors. Over the past four years, educational programs have been expanded to include topics such as legal matters, philosophy, geography, literature, and current events. In their quest for members the programmers seek to offer a wide variety of new programs to *"find out what captures people's imagination"* (P2-26).

Income Level of Members

The programmers believed that the centre was located in a traditionally low income community and that members and the target population of seniors did not have a great deal of disposable income to spend on recreation. As a result of this belief, the programmers were very conscious about cost when planning programs and tried to balance innovative and creative ideas with inexpensive registration fees. The issue of income and the impact it has on each programming area is described in greater detail in upcoming chapters.

Budget

As a Parks and Recreation facility, the centre is provided with a publicly funded operating budget. For 1996 the total operating budget was approximately \$400,000. This budget is divided into different accounts pertinent to the running of the centre. Two accounts directly related to the provision of programs at this centre are staffing and programming. The staffing account comprised 78% of the total operating budget and 40% of this account was for the programmers' salaries. The programming account comprised 11% of the operating budget. This account was subdivided into \$14,330 for arts, crafts, fitness, and dance instructors; \$600 for educational talks; \$13,080 for bus trip expenditures; \$7,000 for van trips expenditures; and \$7,772 for special events expenditures. While the Parks and Recreation Department provides the operating budget, the supervisor along with assistance from the area manager determines how it is distributed.

Pam, who has been at the centre for 14 years, commented that during the centre's early years the supervisor built up the staffing and programming accounts thereby increasing the number of programmers that could be hired and the number of programs that could be offered. Pam explained that this supervisor believed that program related accounts were the most important budget items and she actively protected them from cutbacks. Any time cutbacks had to be made, she refused to cut staff and program money. According to Pam, this supervisor declared that *"no matter what happens, I'm never going to cut those"* (P1-2). As a result, this centre currently has a more substantial staffing and programming budget than many Parks and Recreation senior centres in the

Lower Mainland. They are therefore, able to offer a greater number of programs and have more staff involved in program planning. Pam remarked,

I've got so much leeway that lots of other centres don't have. (P2-12)

A lot of them don't have \$14,000 that they can play with to bring instructors in and try different things. (P4-17)

Lots of other centres have one programmer in charge of the whole spectrum...They don't have the luxury of time to follow up on all these (ideas). (P2-25)

When the new supervisor took over four years ago she maintained the existing accounts and refrained from making cutbacks to these budget items. Over the past few years, however, substantial cutbacks to the operating budget have posed a severe challenge to maintaining them. At the end of the data collection period, for example, one programmer left the centre and was not going to be replaced on a full-time basis. As a result, the number of programs the programmers could offer would have to be reduced as their workloads were expanded. The supervisor explained that additional staff cuts would have to be made in the future due to further cutbacks and that this would have an impact on program offerings.

While cutbacks are beyond the programmers' control, the success of their programs influences whether or not the program accounts are preserved. In order to maintain them, the programmers must prove to the Parks and Recreation Department that programs are being planned and that they are running. Unused amounts are subject to being withdrawn in future budgets. As a result, cancelled programs always pose a threat. Pam remarked that arts and crafts programs are not doing very well at the moment but

that she doesn't want to lose the programming budget by not offering them. She explained,

It would be great to say let's just cancel [some of the arts and crafts programs] for a season or two. See what happens. But the thing is you can't say we'll just try cancelling them this time and then we'll bring them back because once you lose them, they're gone forever. You never get the money back in the budget. (P9-3)

Pam told me that offering programs that ended up cancelling was also risky.

If I just cancelled them all it wouldn't really be a problem [to me] except that what will happen is that someone will say, "Why are we giving you this \$30,000 program budget when you're not spending any money? Looks like you're doing lots of work here but I look at the attendance and no one signed up." (P9-5)

Declining memberships and participation rates, therefore, have a potentially profound impact on the budget which explains the staff's concern about attracting people to the centre and their emphasis on innovative programs.

Parks and Recreation Department

As a result of being a Parks and Recreation facility, the programmers had to adhere to certain policies and procedures related to programming which were imposed by the Department. These included setting fees for contract instructors, completing the necessary paper work for hiring instructors and entertainers for special events, referring to policies for hiring bus companies, preparing and reconciling budgets for programming areas, and meeting planning deadlines.

Although there are a number of policies and procedures related to administrative aspects of planning which are imposed by Parks and Recreation, Sue remarked that program selections are "*really the autonomy of the centre*" (S2-19). The programmers also

expressed that they did not feel constrained by Parks and Recreation with respect to what they offered. Pam explained,

I think if we offered--I'm trying to think of an example of something really bizarre. It would be kind of interesting just to offer something extremely bizarre just to see what their reaction would be....I think because we have basic common sense here and we don't go too, too off the wall no one has ever been threatened to my knowledge from any programs here and I can't think of an example anywhere else ...Maybe from a liability issue, if we offered skydiving for seniors or bungy jumping. Those are the only type of things that I think might raise some eyebrows because of the danger involved. (P2-19)

Summary of Planning Issues

Central planning issues raised in this chapter can be summarized according to technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning.

Technical

The programmers engaged in a process of planning programs which was comprised of four stages: (1) generating ideas, (2) selecting ideas, (3) developing ideas, and (4) organizing details. In order to plan programs at this centre, a programmer would need to know how to complete each of these stages and their related tasks. This process of program planning resembles some of the steps identified in technical planning models. Other planning steps and elements which have been emphasized in the literature such as needs assessments and the development of goals and objectives were not, however, central to program development at this centre. Possible explanations for why programming centred around these four stages and implications of this approach to planning will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Contextual

A number of contextual factors emerged as central to planning practice at this centre. The way in which program responsibilities were divided determined who was involved in planning and how they were involved. Traditionally, staff programmers collectively planned city programs. This division of responsibilities was continued by the current supervisor but each programmer became solely responsible for his or her own programming areas. While other people such as the supervisor, other programmers, seniors, program providers, and the sponsoring agency were involved at various stages of the process of planning, the construction of programs was the responsibility of each programmer.

Being part of the Parks and Recreation Department determined the timing of planning. Deadlines imposed by the Department structured when programming meetings were held and when planning stages had to be completed. The Department, through its policies and procedures for programming, also influenced the development of programs.

The supervisor's beliefs about programming combined with declining membership, and facility challenges resulted in a programming emphasis on new, creative, and innovative programs. It was believed that such programs would entice new people to the centre and would provide new opportunities for members. As a result of program turnover, the programmers engaged in a process of planning rather than simply implementing previous programs each session.

Risk taking was also identified as an approved and encouraged planning practice at this centre. Despite the possibility of cancellations, the supervisor encouraged

programmers to take risks rather than focus on tried and true programs. This emphasis arose from her personal philosophy and from the need for the centre to take risks in their quest for members. It should be noted that the supervisor wanted the programmers to engage in risk taking behaviour but to do so according to what she thought was appropriate (i.e., low cost, mainstream programs).

One characteristic of the target client group had a profound impact on program selections. The programmers' perceptions about the income level of potential and actual participants resulted in an economic mandate whereby low cost programs were deemed a priority. By offering inexpensive programs, the economic needs of seniors in the community could be addressed and the organizational interest of running, rather than cancelling, programs could also be served.

The budget was allocated in such a way that a greater number of staff were involved in planning and more money was available for programming than at some other centres. Having three staff programmers enabled them to pursue and follow up on a multitude of ideas. Substantial programming budgets provided the programmers with resources to take risks and try different things.

The context in which planning occurs shaped the division of program responsibilities, the timing of planning, the focus of program offerings, the development of programs, the number of programs, and the planners' ability to be innovative. These contextual factors will be addressed in upcoming chapters along with other factors that emerge from the programmers' descriptions of their practice.

Social-Political

A central issue that arose in this chapter was the influence of power on planning. As the sponsoring organization, the Parks and Recreation Department holds a great deal of power. The centre is financially dependent on the Department which in turn influences decisions about how many programs can be offered, as well as how many programmers can be employed. Programmers' planning activities were constrained by policies and procedures as well as dates and deadlines imposed by the Department.

The supervisor held power because of her position. As the supervisor, she was able to organize planning responsibilities in a way that she was more comfortable with and express changes to planning practice that were consistent with her beliefs about what was appropriate for the centre. Her previous experiences as a planner in other centres as well as her successful planning experiences at this centre provided her with a legitimate position from which she could make suggestions about potential programs and express her concerns about program ideas. The supervisor gave up much of her control over planning by assigning programmers to specific programming areas and making them responsible for decision making in those areas.

In addition to power resulting from their positions, the programmers also held power because of their previous experiences planning at the centre and their expertise in their programming areas. As a result, the programmers did not need the approval or input of the supervisor when making planning decisions.

The seniors did not appear to hold any responsibilities for planning city programs and their involvement in this process was limited to generating ideas. As a result,

programs were planned by the programmers on behalf of the seniors. This situation seems to be due to the way in which programs and planning responsibilities were divided as well as a lack of interest by the members to be more involved in planning.

Interactions between the programmers and the supervisor were central to the process of planning at this centre. The programmers shared program ideas, provided one another with feedback and suggestions, worked together to address programming issues, and coordinated room allocations and dates when planning. Although programming areas were distinct, boundaries were permeable so that programmers could arrange to plan programs in other areas. The supervisor presented suggestions, expressed her philosophy about planning, and voiced her concerns about program ideas that she considered inappropriate. The interactions between the programmers and the supervisor appeared to be predominantly collaborative rather than political in nature. The relationships between the programmers and other people involved in planning will be addressed with respect to each programmer's approach to planning presented in the following chapters.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the way in which program responsibilities are divided, the involvement of seniors in planning, crossover between programming areas and types of programs, as well as interactions between the programmers and the supervisor. The process in which all three programmers engage was outlined and the timing which structures this process was described. Factors influencing planning at this centre were also identified. Central planning issues were summarized according to technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in

Chapter 10 along with issues identified in the programmers' descriptions of their practice.

While this chapter has addressed planning at a centre-wide level, the next four chapters describe each programmer's approach to planning programs in their specific programming areas.

CHAPTER 6

PAM'S APPROACH TO PLANNING

Pam has been working at the centre since 1982. Her positions have included contract instructor, food service coordinator, and part-time programmer and she is currently the full-time head programmer. Pam has taken courses in kinesiology but had no formal training related to seniors' programming prior to working at the centre. The program related aspects of her current position include developing, implementing and evaluating arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs; maintaining the budget for her programming areas; arranging and leading programming meetings; supervising program staff; and liaising with senior led groups.

In this chapter, Pam's approach to planning arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs is presented. A detailed description of how she generates ideas, selects ideas, and develops programs is provided. Barriers and challenges she experiences when planning are also identified. A summary of planning issues related to Pam's practice is presented at the end of the chapter.

Generating Program Ideas

When I asked Pam how she came up with program ideas she identified a variety of sources within and outside the centre. She also referred to keeping her eyes open for possibilities and reviewing programs that she had offered in the past.

Within the Centre

Sources within the centre included the other programmers, the supervisor, senior centre members, and class participants. Programming meetings provided Pam with an

opportunity to share her ideas and obtain suggestions from the other programmers and the supervisor. Pam also identified soliciting ideas at board meetings, classes and trips, and through evaluations handed out at the end of workshops and programs. She commented,

I solicit as much as possible whenever I have a board meeting or a group of volunteers or I'm down in the art classes giving any kind of talk...I'm always soliciting...ideas. (8-8)

Although Pam asked members and participants for suggestions, she felt that she was not getting a lot of input on arts and crafts. She was not certain as to why this was the case. Pam explained that having seniors more involved in the generation of ideas was an area for improvement in the future, commenting

I'd like to see more involvement...from the members as far as suggestions... I think I've made it open but maybe not enough...I'd like to have more input without putting myself out of a job...I enjoy their input but I don't think there's enough of it right now. (3-17)

When I asked her what she thought she could do to have seniors more involved she remarked,

I guess do more of what I've been doing...I don't know. Do you hand out surveys? Maybe I'll run contests and give prizes for the best new programming idea. It has to be fun and easy...so they don't have to go out of their way. (3-17)

Outside the Centre

Pam identified instructors as a primary source of program ideas outside the centre. She said that she always asks current instructors if they have any ideas for workshops or classes that they may be interested in teaching. She explained that she always gives the oil painting and water colours instructors "first dibs" (6-3) at suggesting ideas because they usually come up with "varied", "current", "alternative types of things" (6-4). Pam

also remarked that *"it's easy basically because they know the system. They don't have to be signed on. It's convenient...for me as well"* (6-4).

In addition to current instructors, Pam also explained that instructors who had not taught at the centre before often contacted her with their ideas.

Instructors themselves...will come out of the blue to me and say, "I can teach this." or "I'm a naturalist. I can take people on walks. Do you have a need for this?"...It's amazing how often they come up with stuff right out of the blue...They just show up on the doorstep intermittently and say, "This is my skill can you do it?"...We've offered lots of programs (where) it wouldn't have crossed my mind to offer (them) if they hadn't come forward and said, "I can do this." (2-7)

Less direct sources of ideas included Lower Mainland seniors programming meetings, interagency meetings, and Parks and Recreation meetings. While the purpose of these meetings was not necessarily to generate program ideas, Pam explained that they provided an opportunity to share information, ideas and possible needs in the community.

Keeping her Eyes Open

In addition to various people who may be involved in generating ideas, Pam said that she comes up with ideas by keeping up with the trends and being alert to new possibilities. She attributed this to the fact that she was responsible for planning programs in areas that were of interest to her.

Programs Offered Before

Pam identified that ideas sometimes came from programs that ran in a previous session and were requested by members, were suggested by instructors or she considered them to have renewed interest. Other ideas arose from programs that were cancelled in a previous session but members requested she try again. A third source of program ideas was programs that were run repeatedly, session after session.

Actual Sources

While ideas may stem from various sources, I found that over the data collection period certain sources were more prolific than others. Arts and crafts classes were entirely repeat programs. The vast majority of arts and crafts workshops she considered were ideas suggested by instructors and repeat programs, while the number of ideas generated by herself, staff, and members was minimal. The same was true of ideas that she went on to develop and offer as programs. Fitness programs were entirely repeated programs and dance programs were predominantly repeated programs with two suggestions made by instructors and one made by a member.

It must be noted that I knew of the ideas that were presented by Pam and the other staff but did not have access to the realm of ideas that Pam may have encountered over the data collection period. As a result, my summary of sources does not necessarily include all of the ideas she heard or read about.

Selecting New Ideas

As indicated above, ideas come from a variety of sources and a realm of possibilities. Out of the multitude of possible ideas, only some ideas actually become ideas that are pursued as potential programs while others are not selected. Over the year, Pam shared her thoughts with me about how she determines whether an idea is appropriate or not. She identified the following criteria she considers when presented with an idea: 1) Is it current? 2) Is it low cost? 3) Is it short? 4) Does it cater to the general public? 5) Is the season appropriate? and 6) Is it something that would be popular?

Current

Pam explained that she only liked to select ideas that were contemporary. Her rationale for this was based on her belief that *"seniors are up on and into anything that's current...If it captures my interest, chances are really good it's going to capture their interest"* (8-8). She did not typically offer topics that were *"passe"* remarking, *"intuitively I don't think I'll get enough people"* (3-13). Pam made exceptions to this rule if there was interest in the topic and the cost was low. She recounted an example of a time when an instructor suggested they offer a class on covered hangers. Although Pam did not like the idea, she decided to offer it because the instructor was keen, seniors had expressed interest in attending, and it was free.

Cost

The issue of cost also came up repeatedly when ideas were presented. Pam remarked that *"low cost, no cost type of things are what we're looking at"* (PM1-13). Ideas that were too expensive simply were not selected. Pam considered the cost of programs to be a crucial factor when selecting program ideas because she didn't want to *"scare people off"* (1-16) by something that was too expensive and she knew that a great deal of members and residents of the community would not be able to afford expensive programs.

In order to keep the costs low, Pam wanted to have volunteers teach some of her regular programs. She was able to do this for workshops but not for classes because of Parks and Recreation policy about instructor rates. She provided one example of a time when she wanted to try offering a volunteer led class.

It was a problem once before when I had an oil painting instructor who wanted to volunteer his time and I couldn't just [offer it] for free because...then everybody would say, "Well why are we paying for an oil painting instructor at [our centre] when you don't have to pay for one there?" So what happened in that case was that I...paid him an honorarium...but still charged the regular rate. So if it's a regularly scheduled cost...we have to stick to that. (8-3)

Length

Pam also expressed a shift towards short workshops rather than longer programs which she attributed to being more in keeping with today's seniors. She elaborated saying

The original feeling was that seniors don't take one time things. They want to be social, they want to take these long term (programs), develop their skills in painting or ceramics...But what we're finding is that's not necessarily so because they're higher educated, they have more disposable income, they're doing so many different things they want...short, more focused things. There will still always be...a niche for the long term, you know the people who like to socialize and take the long term things, but there are more and more people who want to come and...just learn something on the spot and not be tied into a whole session...A lot of members don't want to or can't find a whole slot of six, eight, ten or twelve weeks because they're going on holiday, they're busy, or they've got lots of other stuff to do. (4-1)

One example of this shift is illustrated in the following comment about ballroom dancing.

We've got a [dance] workshop being offered and I decided to go with that because our long sets of ballroom dance haven't really gone that well. (6-6)

By offering more short workshops rather than longer programs she hoped to attract more people who were unable to attend or preferred to come to short programs.

Cater to the General Public

Pam also explained that because they were part of Parks and Recreation, topics needed to be suitable for the general public. She elaborated saying,

You don't pick something that is going to be a specialized interest for people...That's not what recreation or public recreation is about...We aren't here to teach people how to be expert tennis players or sculptors. We're here to provide the general public with opportunities for bettering themselves but not to hone a skill to be a perfectionist. (1-15).

As a result, she tried to avoid specialized types of programs and focused on more general topics that would appeal to the larger community of seniors.

Season

Pam may be presented with an idea that she is interested in offering, but the season may not be appropriate. She provided an example of this stating, *"I wouldn't offer quilting in the summer time because I just can't see people wanting to sit down at a sewing machine"* (3-14). She also remarked that certain sessions were more suitable for offering new programs. The following example illustrates her thoughts about when to start a new dance class.

I just happened to have an instructor who was on the ball really, really early looking for things to do and I said to her, "We could plan it right now for spring. It's going to be a real rush. Advertising probably won't be the best and spring isn't traditionally a time when people break in and try to do something new." I said, "Summer, I can tell you right now, is really quiet. It's not really good. Do you want to plan for fall?" and she said, "Sure." So that's another way we decide things, depending on the newness. Like springtime, you can offer the same old things again, but you might not want to offer something like a dance class that's going to be a little more off the wall, that will entice...more adventurous people. For whatever reason, in the fall it's like a new generation....It's a time for resolutions and new things...Fall is just traditionally one of our best seasons. (2-30)

Popular

Pam also considered whether or not the idea would be popular at the centre and, more importantly, would it popular enough to run. I was curious about how Pam

determined the potential popularity of a program. I asked her if she conducted any kind of needs assessment and she remarked,

We don't do needs assessments...like we wouldn't hand out a survey before we offered a course to see if there's really going to be a need. Every now and then we will hand out evaluations...Now I'm just trying to think of the last time we've done it for programming. No, I don't think we've done it in a while specifically because we do it at the end of all the evaluations that we hand out in all the classes. So it comes through that way. (2-24)

Pam provided an example of a program that she had offered and stated,

Now I didn't sit back and ask, "Do you think there's a need for our seniors to be practicing this arts and crafts activity right now?" But I think it's all built in as far as common sense goes. (2-24)

One indicator that Pam used to determine whether a program would be popular was the interest level of the potential instructor and participants. She also referred to the popularity of the program elsewhere when determining whether or not an idea was worth pursuing.

I hear that it's going on in other centres and that it's been really popular. (2-23)

It was indicated to me that this was a popular program back East and that there was a definite interest and that it was something seniors could do and so I said "Sure, let's go for it." (2-24)

In addition to expressed interest and popularity at other locations, Pam said that she "*usually intuitively know[s]*" (2-25) if something is going to be popular. She elaborated saying,

You just sort of get to feel if it's something you've had a lot of requests for, if it's something that you think is going to capture (people's interest). (1-18)

Pam remarked that intuition sometimes outweighed indicators of popularity. She discussed one idea for which she had received requests but did not choose to pursue it

because *"intuitively I don't think I'll get enough people"* (3-13). She also pursued ideas for which she was uncertain about the potential interest. She explained,

Usually I know whether I want to go with it or not...If I want to try it and I'm not sure if there's interest or not, I will just try it. (3-14)

Selecting Previous Programs

Over the year, Pam thought about and offered a number of programs that had been offered before. Some programs had been cancelled, others had been run in a previous session, and some had run repeatedly session after session. Pam considered different issues depending on the type of repeat program.

Cancelled Programs

In some cases, programs had been cancelled due to low participation rates, but Pam had received requests from members to try offering them again. One session, Pam was considering offering a number of repeat ideas. She explained why.

The only reason why some of those programs are in there (for fall) is because they were ones that I had to cancel this time around (spring) but when I phoned them up and had to cancel I said, "Would you be interested in a postponement?" and they said, "Definitely!" (2-30)

I'm really torn because of all the things that didn't go this time and I had [a member] saying, "Aren't you going to carry them over because I'll do them in the fall." (PM1-2)

Pam also considered offering a cancelled program for which she had not received any requests, commenting, *"I would like to offer that again just because I think the timing wasn't great for the first one"* (PM1-3).

Programs Run in a Previous Session

The level of interest was a factor when deciding whether or not to repeat a program which ran in a previous session. For some programs, Pam received requests from seniors who wanted to take the program again. Other program ideas were suggested by instructors and supported by seniors.

Now this is an old idea. We did it years ago but [the instructor] said there seems to be renewed interest in it and I had a few people say in front of me "oh yeah I'd take that". (6-3)

Pam also explained that the popularity and attendance levels of a previous program influenced whether or not a program would be repeated.

I'll bet you I did that [program] two or three sessions in a row because after I did the first one it was just so popular and they had so much more to share...If there are tons of people on the waiting list, [that's] another good indication. (2-27)

Repeated Session After Session

Some programs had been offered session after session and, in some cases, year after year. This was the case with some fitness, dance, and arts and crafts classes but not workshops. Arts and crafts classes were repeated because of a combination of demand and tradition. She remarked,

Ceramics, oil painting, watercolours have been really quite...stable...ever since I've been here. (2-3)

Those are the traditional...ones we offer every single session and they seem to fill up. (PM1-12)

They're always offered. (2-2)

Even if these programs did not achieve their minimum attendance level in a previous session she stated,

I'd still offer them again. I'll take the chance. Although this traditionally is the busiest season, I'll take the chance that this was a fluke. (5-1)

Even if they don't go I'll probably offer them one more time. Then we take a break for the summer and I don't worry about it and then we do it again in the fall. (7-3)

Previous attendance was the major determinant of whether or not to repeat fitness and dance programs. If the minimum attendance level was achieved then a program was repeated. Programs were sometimes "carried" from one season to another despite the fact that the minimum number of participants had not been achieved. For budgetary reasons, this practice was not continued for very long. When referring to one such program Pam remarked, *"If it doesn't go this time around though I'm going to give it a rest"* (PM4-32).

Relationship Between New and Repeat Programs

Over the data collection period I noticed that a substantial number of programs were repeated session after session. There was, however, considerable turnover with arts and crafts workshops and some new dance programs were introduced. I asked Pam to share her thoughts about the relationships between new and repeated programs. Pam explained that program turnover is *"never change for change's sake"* (2-28). She elaborated saying

Anything that is popular, (where) there is a minimum of ten people (who) want to come, will always stay because there's an indication of a need. There's a real interest there. So it's never just change for change's sake and if we ever had the luxury that all the programs that we had were full and popular, chances are we wouldn't have the turnover that we have. Although we always would leave space for workshops and to put a couple of those things in, but...they wouldn't change as much. (2-28)

She described why she would always leave room for some new programs.

I think if you're not programming and changing that it's really difficult to meet the needs of new people and make them feel welcome...That's what's good about new programs because you have constant turnover and influx and...it keeps people on their toes a little bit whether they want to be or not...I think we're all the same. We'd all love to fall into our ruts...We might want to learn new things but if we don't have to meet a whole lot of new people or go out on a limb and extend ourselves (we won't)...You can't stay static. You have to shake it up. (1-20)

In addition to shaking things up for participants, she identified that she valued change in order to *"keep our job interesting. Sure we could offer the same thing every single year. It would make it simple...but it would make it particularly boring for me"* (2-26).

Pam explained that she would continue to offer new programs even if they ever had the *"luxury"* of filling up all of their programs. The reality of the current situation was such that she needed to offer new programs because attendance levels were low for some programs and the number of members was declining. Offering new programs, therefore, was an attempt to attract new members and boost attendance levels. Pam remarked,

We're on a constant quest for new members especially in this centre. If...you've already got 2000 members and you offer the same programs over and over again, why change? Here, we are struggling and we really are trying to attract newer, especially younger, (members) because we traditionally have this older population here that (is)...not being replaced at a rapid rate...We are on a constant quest to find out what captures people's imagination and how we can appeal to a wider range of people. So that's what we are really reaching for. (2-26)

In summary, Pam explained that as long as programs were popular and well attended they would continue to be offered. The primary reasons for offering new programs were the reality of cancelled programs, the need to attract new members, and

Pam's desire to "shake" things up for participants and keep programming interesting for herself.

Developing Ideas

When developing program ideas, Pam considered the number of programs, the time and day of the week, the length of classes, and the session.

Number of Programs

Pam referred to "the number of programs" in several interviews. The need to consider the number of programs offered was in part due to the arts and crafts budget. She states, for example,

I have to work within a framework. I get a budget for the whole year and I've got so many hours or dollars to work with. Then that's divided into quarters or seasons.... Winter and fall are the busiest, spring and summer are the quietest. So I would designate...so many hours or dollars here and so many there. Then I have to work within that. (2-11)

She also identified that the number of programs offered was related to the success of arts and crafts programs, commenting

Arts and crafts programs for whatever reason aren't going really, really strongly. I'd probably be happy with an average 1.5 a month. So some months I might have a couple and some months I might have one. (5-5)

Pam also stated that she didn't want to offer too many workshops and programs because

...you water down your market. There are certain people who are interested in a certain type of course and they'll only take so many...I don't think people expect one a week or one even every two weeks. (PM3-14)

Once I hit a certain point I'm afraid that every single thing I add takes away from something else. (6-14)

Time and Day of the Week

When determining the time and day of the week to offer a program, Pam had to juggle ideal program times with room availability and when instructors were available.

Pam identified the best times to offer programs.

1:00 is a good time. Right after lunch. It's good for us too because we hope that people will come for lunch and stay...So 1:00 for educational programs and arts and crafts things has worked really well or first thing in the morning like 9:30Lunch times are not good say from 11:00 to 1:00...and then anything after 3:30 is not ideal. (2-29)

I try not to program things too close to the end of the day because even seniors don't want to get caught in rush hour traffic. They want to stay away from that. They don't mind coming to things first thing in the morning. I find as a rule they don't like to stay for all day things. (2-28)

Pam commented that evenings were not ideal times to schedule programs. She had tried to offer evening programs in the past but had not always been very successful in achieving her minimum attendance numbers. She explained that if they were going to run it had to be in the summer when it was still light out in the evening. Pam believed that fear was a major reason why seniors did not attend staff planned programs in the evenings. She explained,

In this area it's a fear thing. It's a safety and security reason that they don't go out at night....and it's for good reason, too. I mean this is not paranoia on their part. (1-21)

She was not certain why seniors would attend senior led programs offered in the evenings but speculated that

They've got their social support and I guess whatever that fear is that holds them back is overcome by the feeling of knowing that once they get there they'll be among friends. Whereas arts and crafts classes, you're going out to a group of strangers and what if you don't like it when you get there.

...It's because they have social contacts and I think not many of them probably come on their own, well some might but I think lots of them do pair up and come to the cards and group things whereas an arts and crafts class you probably aren't going to. (1-21)

While most programs were offered during the day from Monday to Friday, Pam noted that there had been some demand for Saturday programs. One example of this is when students

...asked the instructor to offer [a workshop] again...but they asked her if she could teach it on a Saturday when they could bring some of their working friends. So we are getting some requests for Saturday programs. (6-4)

When selecting a day and time to offer something, Pam was limited to what was available at the centre. Because they are "really tight for spaces", dates and times were restricted to those that were "free" (6-9). Pam explained that there were days for which she could not offer programs because other things were being offered in the arts and crafts room. After determining when space was available, instructors were given possible time slots from which they could choose a time that was best.

It should be noted that programs that had been offered session after session were scheduled for the same time and day of the week.

Length of Classes

Workshops were typically one or two sessions while classes varied in length from four to nine weeks. Pam expressed that she liked to keep new classes short in order to "capture people's interest" (3-10) and keep the costs down.

I'm forever arguing with instructors who say, "I'd really like to add an extra hour to this course and show them these things." I tell them that I'm really trying to balance...getting them interested (with the number of sessions and the cost)...If they take it once we can offer another course, but if we charge too much right off

the bat it's going to be cancelled and they're never going to know whether they like it or not. So that is...a constant consideration and most instructors will say, "We'll bow to your supposed knowledge. We'll try it your way."...Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but I think we do get a lot more people by keeping very conservative on the time scale and definitely on the supply costs scale. (1-16)

While new classes were initially kept short, the number of sessions for repeat classes was shortened if attendance was low in order to reduce the price. Pam explained,

A normal arts and crafts class was usually about ten sessions. Now I think I was just trying to be frugal and at some point we dropped back to nine and I kind of left it down there. It makes the prices just a little bit lower. (1-17)

This time I'm offering watercolours...at six to make it...more appealing for people who maybe don't have time (to devote to more classes) and want it a little cheaper. (4-8)

Session

Pam reported that *"the timing of things is really important"* (PM3-14). She explained why she doesn't typically offer things at the beginning of the fall session.

Any time we offer things too early they're just not in a mode of getting back in and starting the first week of September. Traditionally we start half way through it. (PM3-14)

You've got to offer them in the early fall because once you get into late October or November people are in the Christmas (rush) and they say, "No, I can't take that. Are you crazy? I'm doing this, this and this." (You can) use the angle of having Christmas presents done and made....I might offer arts and crafts things related to Christmas whereas I wouldn't offer a dance class starting too close to Christmas. (2-30)

Pam identified why she doesn't like to start winter programs too early in the session and under which conditions she will make exceptions.

Lots of things centre around...mid February just because January traditionally is not a get up and go kind of month. Although I'll do the greeting card thing because it's cheap and people are trying to clean up and hopefully they'll buy into that one. (6-6)

I might not even have one in January because traditionally it's not a great time unless it was something that I really knew (had) a following...[One] instructor sort of has her own following so if I did decide to go with one of the classes, I'd put hers up front. (5-6)

In addition to considering the most appropriate time of the session to offer programs, Pam said that she tries to space her programs out across the season.

I try and shake (it) up. If I've got four workshops going on I try to make sure they're not all on two days but it comes down to room availability. (2-28)

Basically I tried to even it up so I had a few in July and a few in August. (8-4)

Money is a real issue for most of the members....That's why we try not to program things all at once because...they've only got a limited amount of disposable income that they can use for recreation. (3-16)

Pam also tries to make sure that her dates do not conflict with programs in other programming areas at the centre.

We try not to load too many things in one day. Sometimes it's inevitable but...once we know something we slot it in on these calendars so that we can all take a look and see and as I say not plan things on a bus trip day or I would never try to plan something when Ellen's doing an educational program because it draws a lot of interest. Although we'll sit back and say, "Will this program really interest (a particular group)?"...We have to think (about) who usually comes and the arts and crafts people are usually a different set of people than [those who] go on bus trips but they might be the same people who go on walking trips or van trips. We get our own little groups of people and that really influences us as well. We might say we're offering a card tournament and it's...at the same time as a van trip or bus trip, but card people...as a rule, won't go on bus and van trips although they like arts and crafts. We intuitively know for the most part...which groups of people like to do which types of things. So we try not to overlap. (2-29)

Barriers to Pursuing Programs

During the data collection period, there were no examples of situations where the considerations discussed in the previous section impeded whether or not a program would

be offered. Pam did experience barriers that made it impossible for her to offer certain program ideas, particularly with arts and crafts programs.

Arts and Crafts Programs

Over the data collection period I recorded the reasons why arts and crafts ideas Pam was interested in pursuing could not be developed into programs. The primary barrier to developing ideas was related to instructors. Reasons were given which included

- (a) the instructor was too busy (x2),
- (b) the instructor was going to teach a different workshop (x2),
- (c) she could not find an instructor to teach the class (x2),
- (d) the instructor did not want to teach it after all,
- (e) the instructor who came up with the idea was fired,
- (f) the instructor would not give a firm answer,
- (g) she could not get a hold of the instructor, and
- (h) she did not hear back from the instructor.

With these kinds of barriers, Pam had no control over whether or not an idea could be developed. Although she could have tried to recruit a different instructor to teach, all but two of the ideas had been suggested by the instructor and in many cases it would be difficult to find someone else with the specific skill. The following example illustrates this kind of scenario. Ben told Pam about a workshop idea and she said,

"Get me the instructor's name...that sounds great." He never did and never did and then the deadline sort of came and went...That really captured my imagination but that's something that I had no idea where to go for an instructor other than this person he had heard about. (3-13)

While this idea was *"something obscure"* (3-13) Pam commented that she would be able to recruit an instructor *"if it's something that's current such as paper making...I can phone the school board. I can phone whomever. I'll find somebody"* (3-13).

Other reasons Pam gave for not developing ideas were that she confirmed other ideas instead and did not want to offer too many (x3), the program did not run in the previous session, the programs were going to be offered as educational talks (x2), and she decided to leave the idea until the fall session.

Fitness and Dance Programs

All of the fitness and dance ideas that Pam was interested in pursuing were offered with the exception of one dance class. This idea had been suggested by one of the members but Pam was unable to offer it because it was being offered at another centre. Pam explained why she "could not" offer it.

I phoned [the centre] for the contact person and they're offering it again. The workshop was so successful that they're going to offer a short session so I didn't want to...conflict with her. (4-12)

I don't really feel the market is big enough to offer it in conjunction. (5-9)

The fact that Pam did not experience many barriers when developing fitness and dance programs was because all but two of the ideas she pursued were programs that had been offered in previous sessions.

Challenges When Planning Programs

Pam identified the high incidence of cancelled programs and the need to plan so far in advance as challenges that made it more difficult for her to plan programs in her area.

Cancelled Programs

Over the year, participation rates for some arts and crafts classes were so low that minimums were not reached and a high number of arts and crafts programs were

cancelled, particularly workshops. Pam commented that this decline in participation was not specific to their centre but was happening at other centres as well.

I don't feel so badly about it. It's awful looking at all these cancellations but I was talking to [other centres] and they're in the same boat. They're cancelling lots of arts and crafts for the first time around. (3-7)

It's just bad luck right now because it's across the board. If (other centres) all said, "What's wrong with you? We've got waiting lists of people." then I'd say I think we're off track here. But that's not what's happening. They're saying, "We're cancelling as well." (3-15)

Pam expressed a great deal of uncertainty about why arts and crafts programs were cancelling, stating

There's still so much research that could be done. What is capturing people? Is it the topic? Is it the cost? Is it the location? Is it the time? What is it? You know so many parameters come into play there. (1-8)

It's funny, sometimes two sessions in a row we had a ton of people and then all of the sudden nobody. So, you just never know. (6-15)

She was convinced that this problem was not due to the types of arts and crafts programs she offered, stating

I honestly don't think it's a reflection of what we're offering....I feel that in my heart. It's not us as programmers...(3-15)

My deep down feeling is it's not for lack of variety or that we're not offering something because I still get centres calling up from all over saying "Wow, you guys offer such different things." I'm always on the look out. I always read what Lewis Craft is doing to see what the current craft trends are and that's what we're trying to offer. (5-7)

While Pam stated that "it's just bad luck right now" (3-15), she mentioned the seasons and the timing of things a number of times when explaining why things might have cancelled.

The only thing we're blaming it on right now is just the time of year. This season's tough. People are on holiday. People have colds. It sounds like kind of a weak excuse. I don't know if it's true or not but---(3-8)

We've been asking people about the [fitness room]...A lot of them have gone through the orientation but...they're not coming back. We've just started to put together a questionnaire and that's what we're hearing is that they're busy. It's the summer. They've got outdoor things to do. They have company. They're going on holiday. (4-1)

It was interesting when I spoke to our [arts and crafts] rep...she said, "Don't you remember last spring?...We had to cancel lots of things last spring too." She said, "Spring is traditionally bad. The better the weather, the harder it is because people don't want to come out to arts and crafts." I forgot that, but it does make sense to me and I know if we followed the stats back it would probably be the same. Fall is THE number one best (session) followed by winter, spring and summer. (3-7)

Pam also mentioned that the nature of arts and crafts programs combined with the current economy may be contributing to cancelled programs.

I mean we have to face reality here that it's a "fluff" kind of thing. People take arts and crafts when they're already feeling pretty good about the economy and themselves and they've got a little spare cash. It's not number one on the ...hierarchy of needs to do arts and crafts...I think it's maybe just a reflection that the economy...isn't great right now especially in this area. (5-8)

After reading over these reasons for cancelled programs Pam remarked that it is easy to speculate about possible causes, but she would never know for sure because she did not have time to really examine why they cancelled. She commented,

It's so easy to say I know it's not the cost because it's really cheap. I know it's not the instructors because I've had them before...So what else is there? It's got to be the weather. You know it's too easy to say that. It could be a million other things but I don't have the luxury of being able to sit down and analyze that because I'm too busy putting out fires and working on a hundred million other things. So you tend to not analyze things as much as could be done because you simply don't have the luxury of time. (9-2)

Despite the number of cancellations, Pam referred to "*never giving up*" (3-16) and said "*I don't think that means you can give up and not try*" (5-6). As a result of the relatively high number of cancelled programs, Pam aimed to offer fewer arts and crafts workshops and focussed on inexpensive workshops and short programs. She also mentioned changing the way in which arts and crafts programs were advertised.

Advance Planning

Another challenge that Pam had to deal with when planning was the need to plan so far in advance. In particular, this made it difficult to repeat programs from one session to the next. As Pam explained,

What makes it really hard though is the way we program. We're always so far in advance. So I never know. I have to have the next session planned before this (session) has even gone. (2-26)

We don't really have time to see how they go before (the deadline). (PM4-32)

I can't offer it concurrently with summer. I might be able to offer it in the fall but we're getting really close (to the deadline)....So that's really frustrating. (2-27)

It's tough to do two concurrent sessions just because of the way we do our advertising....So usually what happens if something's really good...it usually ends up skipping a session. (2-27)

She identified that planning for spring was particularly difficult to do over Christmas holidays and in early January.

Christmas is a really hard, down time. It's hard to get motivated. The centre funnily enough is quite often quiet but it's more of a social time and you're busy talking to people and...then everybody's on holidays...It's almost impossible trying to program things over Christmas because people aren't around or they're just not into it. (7-8)

Summary of Planning Issues

A summary of issues related to Pam's planning practice is presented in the following discussion. These issues are organized according to technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions of planning.

Technical

Pam's planning practice centred around tasks related to generating, selecting, and developing program ideas. Generating ideas involved a process of brainstorming and collecting ideas from a variety of sources within and outside the centre. A central issue that arose at this planning stage was the limited input of seniors. Pam explained that she received very little input from seniors despite her attempts to obtain suggestions through evaluations and soliciting ideas from members and participants. No attempt was made to obtain information about the interests of the larger community of seniors. Pam said that she wanted to increase seniors' input but was unsure of how to achieve this. As a result of the seniors' limited involvement, Pam focused on other sources of ideas, particularly instructors and programs that had been successful in the past.

When selecting new ideas, Pam considered criteria related to attracting people to the programs. She believed that seasonal, current, low cost, short programs would entice people to the centre. Since she did not have direct input about participant's interests, she relied on her knowledge of the membership, her previous experience, her beliefs about what would interest them, and input from instructors to determine what would be popular. Given the low participation rates and high number of cancelled programs, it appears as

though a central criterion is missing from her list such as meeting the expressed needs or interests of the target client group.

The decision to repeat a previous program was based on previous and potential participation rates. Tradition also appeared to influence her decision. Pam, for example, continued to offer certain arts and crafts programs session after session despite low attendance levels in the busiest session and even after they may have been cancelled in one session. Rather than examining the popularity of these programs and the extent to which they address the interests of seniors in the community, she attributed their cancellation to external reasons and continued to offer them.

The central tasks related to program development included determining the number of programs to offer; the month, day, and time that the program would be offered; and the length of the program. These decisions, like the selection of programs, focused on attracting people to the programs.

Contextual

Contextual factors provide an understanding of why Pam planned in the manner she did. Her concern about attracting people, for example, appeared to be derived from the low participation rates and relatively high number of cancelled programs she was experiencing in her areas. She was trying to find a way to offset this situation by speculating about what would be attractive to potential participants. As discussed in Chapter 5, Pam needed to attract people in order to maintain her budget. The organizational need to bring people into the centre may also explain Pam's focus on

attracting people. As a programmer, she played a vital role in bringing people into the centre which would help to develop the membership.

Pam demonstrated an overwhelming sensitivity to the cost of programs which influenced which programs were selected and how much she charged participants. She knew from experience that if she didn't price programs below a certain threshold for seniors in this particular neighbourhood, she simply would not be able to attract participants. As a result, she spent a great deal of time thinking carefully about issues related to cost. Pam gave examples of programs she could not offer because they were too expensive and discussed the need to offer shorter sessions because she did not want to *"scare people off"* (1-16).

It is evident from Pam's description of her practice that programs are planned "for" rather than "with" seniors. Seniors were only involved in the generation of ideas. Pam had the authority to make planning decisions without the input of others because of the way in which planning responsibilities were divided at the centre. She was considered an expert in her area and was solely responsible for generating, selecting, and developing arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs. Although actively involving seniors in planning was a written goal for the centre, it was not practiced by Pam. She explained that she would like more input about program ideas but did not mention being concerned about greater involvement at other stages of planning.

Being a Parks and Recreation operated facility had an impact on the way in which Pam planned. She identified advance planning as being a challenge to constructing programs. Having to plan so far in advance made it difficult to repeat programs because

she could not obtain attendance figures in time to make the decision. Pam also mentioned being constrained by the Department's policy about volunteer instructors.

Social-Political

Issues related to power did not emerge as central to Pam's practice. Her ability to plan programs seemed largely unrestricted. The Parks and Recreation Department and the supervisor held positions of power which provided them with authority over programming. Pam did not express being constrained by the supervisor when making planning decisions. As mentioned above, the Parks and Recreation Department controlled planning deadlines and held policies about fees and rates, but Pam appeared to work within these constraints rather than challenge them. Pam did express being constrained by instructors. Although she made decisions about which programs to offer, her ability to actually offer them was controlled by the availability of instructors. This is clearly exemplified in the discussion of barriers to pursuing programs.

While Pam interacted with others when generating ideas, these interactions were characterized by a sharing of ideas rather than negotiations about the types of programs that should be offered. When selecting programs, participant/member interests, organizational interests, and Pam's personal interests were considered. Although different interests were identified, negotiations with other people did not emerge as the central form of activity at this stage. Programs were selected if Pam thought they had the potential to attract people. The primary activity Pam engaged in when developing programs was negotiation. Pam's planning activities centred around negotiations with instructors about offering programs, scheduling times, and determining the number of

sessions. Negotiations about sessions was a particular issue with instructors because of Pam's concern about low cost programs. She identified this as something she was "*forever arguing*" (1-16) about with instructors.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Pam's approach to planning arts and crafts, fitness and dance programs was described. Sources of ideas, considerations about new and repeat ideas, the relationship between new and repeat programs, issues when developing ideas, barriers to pursuing programs, and challenges when planning programs were discussed. Central planning issues were summarized according to technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10. The following chapter outlines Ellen's approach to planning educational programs and special events.

CHAPTER 7

ELLEN'S APPROACH TO PLANNING

When I began collecting data, Ellen had been working at the centre for three years. Prior to this job, she had been involved in programming and teaching in a number of multi-generational settings but did not have any experience planning programs specifically for seniors. Ellen had a diploma in recreation and physical education and had taken kinesiology courses. She had not received extensive formal training in program planning but had taken a special events marketing course and had learned a great deal from others she had worked with and from teaching classes.

The program-related aspects of her position at the centre included developing, implementing, and evaluating educational talks and special events; informing the staff of upcoming planning deadlines; running off brochure reports and proofing downloads of the brochure; publicity and promotion of all programs; maintaining the special events, educational talks, and publicity and promotion budgets; supervising program staff; and liaising with senior led groups.

In this chapter, a detailed description of how Ellen generates, select, and develops educational talks and special events is provided. Barriers and challenges she experiences when planning are also identified. Her approach to planning talks and events is presented separately due to substantial differences related to planning programs in these two areas. A summary of planning issues related to Ellen's practice is presented at the end of this chapter.

It should be noted that Ellen was away from the centre for the winter 1997 planning period and part of the spring 1997 planning period. This chapter, therefore, includes information about Ellen's approach to planning prior to her departure and after her return to the centre. Her approach did not appear to change when she returned.

Generating Ideas for Educational Talks

When asked where educational talk ideas come from, Ellen identified a variety of resources in the community and sources within the centre as well as ideas or themes pursued in previous sessions.

Community Resources

Ellen stated that she relied a great deal on Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and the Vancouver General Hospital speakers bureau lists. She also identified the People's Law School as "*a great resource*" (1-12) offering free classes on a variety of topics (1-12). Ellen indicated that ideas also came directly from people who wanted to speak at the centre. She commented,

A lot of my resources come from people who just phone and they say, "I've got this coming up and I've done it at another senior centre and it worked out there. How would you like to run it at your centre?" and I'm bombarded by financial places...tons of those wanting to do talks. (1-16)

There are always people coming forward and new resources and contacts. (2-11)

Ellen said that she also gets ideas from reading a variety of seniors' publications.

Sources Within the Centre

Ellen hands out evaluations at every educational talk and uses the feedback from participants to come up with ideas for future talks. She explained,

One of the questions on the evaluation is, "What (programs) would you like to see (offered)?" and those are excellent. I get a lot of good ideas from that and if you see it over and over again you know there's interest there and I'm not filling that need. (1-9)

Programming meetings also give Ellen an opportunity to share her talk ideas and ask for suggestions from the other programmers and the supervisor. At the fall 1996 meeting, for example, six of the twenty-three ideas presented came from Pam and Sue.

Repeat Idea or Theme

At two of the programming meetings Ellen attended, a number of her ideas were talks that had been held in a previous session or were themes derived from previous talks.

Ellen expressed,

A lot of times if somebody's really good we'll get comments "have them back, have them back" and a lot of the speakers do different topics as well so if they're popular and their first one was well attended--like Audrey's been here for her third one. (2-9)

Selecting Talk Ideas: Source Specific Considerations

Given the variety of resources and sources of ideas, I was curious about how Ellen decided which ideas to pursue. I learned, over the course of my interviews with her, that different considerations come into play depending on the source of the idea.

Speakers Bureau

When selecting talks, Ellen would review the list of topics offered by the speakers bureaus. On numerous occasions she remarked that certain ideas simply "*jumped out*" (2-5) at her. After exploring this more deeply, it became apparent that she selected ideas based on her knowledge of seniors who attend the talks, their expressed interest in certain topics, and things that were of interest to her.

Ellen explained that over the past three years at the centre she has come to know what educational talk participants are interested in attending. She remarked,

Just knowing what they're interested in. Just being here you learn. (1-16)

...knowing what their interests are, knowing the needs of the community... (1-14)

In particular, Ellen has learned which topics are popular.

Over time I've figured out what educational programs go, although sometimes I get surprised, but I know health is a big issue with them and I've learned that history is popular. They love history. (1-14)

She has also determined, through trial and error, the types of talks they are most interested in attending.

I tried one on summer coolers, nonalcoholic drinks...and that didn't go. I've tried cooking classes and chocolate making....They didn't go. So I just thought well, I'll stick to the lecture type things and discussion. (1-18)

That's what they're interested in...some of the light hearted well not light hearted...not quite as stimulating maybe...they go but...they don't have the numbers. (1-17)

They really like this mental stimulation thing and it's big with them and the learning. (1-17)

It is this knowledge of their interests that enables her to go over the list of topics and make selections that she believes will be well attended and meet the interests of participants. She remarked, "*I kind of have this idea now of what they like to do [so] I can sit down and go okay, this*" (1-15).

In addition to "knowing" the interests of talk participants, Ellen keeps summaries of evaluations from previous talks and makes "*mental notes of what evaluations have said and what people have wanted*" (2-29). When reviewing speakers bureau listings, she tries

to match participants' expressed interests with available topics. An example of this is provided below.

We did a course and I can't remember what it was about but a lot of the evaluations I got back were interested in volcanoes...I got three or four back with...something about volcanoes...I just happened to be going through my speakers bureau (lists) and I thought that [talk on volcanoes] sounds really interesting and I just thought they would like it. I don't know, it just kind of jumped out at me. (2-5)

Some of the ideas Ellen selects are talks that are of interest to her. When explaining why she decided to pursue two talks about dogs Ellen commented,

It's near and dear to my heart and I wanted to run the program badly. I didn't think it would (go but) there were 22 people. I thought wow, that's a surprise. (1-14)

It's close to my heart. (1-18)

Ellen remarked that this was not always the case and explained that there were certain topics and even sets of talks that she was not particularly interested in offering.

I just hate the subject. I just feel awful having these (death oriented) talks. (4-4)

I don't know why but this season...there's nothing that's "oh I can hardly wait 'til that lecture"...I think they should all go. They're all interesting topics and everything, but I'm not jumping up and down about them. (3-12)

I'm usually really excited about some programs...and there are some I'm not too crazy about but usually those ones go too. (1-19)

Contacted by a Speaker or Organization

A central issue that Ellen said she considers when contacted by a speaker or when she follows up on an idea that did not come via the speakers bureau is the nature of the talk. Ellen expressed that she does not offer any sales related talks but only those that are

"informational". The following quotes illustrate measures she takes to ensure that speakers "keep the sell job down" (2-17).

If a financial institute or somebody's come forward with their own private company or something and they want to (give a talk) and I'm not too sure (about them) I'll ask around...One of the main things with our educational programs, if it's a company, we ask them to keep the sell job down. It's not a sales pitch. You're here to give information. If anybody wants more you can give them your card. (2-17)

We talked about providing information, safety tips and not doing a sales pitch at all, and he totally agreed to that. (3-3)

We've talked to him about that and he's done lectures at other centres....and I've written that in his confirmation letter. Anything that has to do with sales would have to be kept during business times. (PM1-14)

This is a different agency that I'm having (come and speak) this time and Sue just warned me to be careful. I think she had some experience with them and they take people's names at the lecture and if anybody is interested they get a free visit at home and then they get this complimentary estate planning kit...I'm going to ask that they not send a (list around)...We're concerned about some of...our regular members who might get taken in by this sales pitch and so we're just going to check who's there that day and have a chat with them...I try to really stress that this isn't a big sales thing and it's just for education only and they're like "yeah, yeah, yeah". You're still a little careful especially (with) our members here. Some of them are pretty vulnerable. (4-5)

In some instances Ellen did not pursue an idea that seemed too sales oriented. She remarked, "If I don't feel comfortable about it, I just won't do it" (2-17). Ellen described her feelings about a speaker who wanted to give a talk about a paid service for seniors.

It kind of scares me, just something I don't feel comfortable with...the seniors having to pay for their services to help them out. So I just thought no, I don't even want to bother with them. (4-7)

Repeat Idea

Several of the talks Ellen selected were repeat talks from previous seasons or themes based on previous talks. When deciding whether or not to pursue a talk that had

been done before Ellen identified the following issues she considers: 1) previous and potential turnout, 2) timeliness, 3) interest level, and 4) popularity of the speaker. These issues are illustrated in the following quotes.

We had a good turnout for that one last time and I think it will be good to have that since there's been a little earthquake talk lately....I thought it was timely because of the earthquake down in Seattle. (3-2)

We ran it once in the evening and I ran it at a loss. I lost money. Then we decided to do it again and do it during the day...I thought we could do it one more time because he had these contacts and we figured it might be easier to fill this time. (3-2)

A lot of people showed up at the one that he had on walking shoes and there was a real interest in that. (PM1-14)

If they're popular and their first one was well attended, like [that instructor's] been here for her third one. (2-9)

Selecting Talk Ideas: General Considerations

In addition to source-specific considerations, Ellen identified the following general issues she considers when selecting educational talks: cost, variety, taking risks, and the number of talks to offer each session.

Cost

Offering free talks or those with a minimal fee was a major issue Ellen considered when deciding about which ideas to pursue. Ellen explained that by selecting ideas from the speakers bureau lists and the People's Law School she did not have to worry very much about cost because most talks were offered free of charge.

While Ellen tries to run "*mostly free ones*" she has an educational budget which

...covers honorariums where speakers need to get some sort of compensation and then we would charge a fee for those programs but that doesn't happen very often. It's for the rare speaker. (1-6)

The maximum honorarium she budgets for is \$50.00 which is based on the minimum expected number of participants (twelve) and a minimal fee per person (\$4-\$5). She has budgeted for three honorariums per session. Ellen did not like to risk paying more than \$50.00 because 15 was the maximum number of people who would probably attend a \$4.00 to \$5.00 talk. She said that whenever there's a cost involved *"I always negotiate"* (1-11) and if the speaker does not request a \$50 honorarium *"they get \$25 or whateverI try to keep it down and they understand why"* (1-12). Exceptions to the \$50 budget have been made for special courses and talks. Ellen explained why she agreed to a talk for \$65.00.

I made an exception for her...I could do that with her because I know she's got nonsenior friends who are going to come to it and they pay \$5 and she's got seven people that follow her around so I know I can do that. (1-11)

Variety

In addition to cost, Ellen also considered maintaining variety when planning educational talks.

Just keeping the variety and also you don't want to beat anything to death and do topics too much. (2-18)

I just try and keep a mixed bag...I'll have a science one, a history one, some health ones so I don't have them all on the same topic. I try and mix them up. (2-7)

Taking Risks

Taking risks and trying unusual topics were also considerations. Ellen expressed that one of the strengths of programming at the centre was *"we're willing to take a risk and try things out"* (2-24). She offered the following examples as illustrations of risks she has taken with some educational talks.

There (are) some programs I've offered and you think it's not going to go. We offered a program (about sex and seniors)....It went. That totally blew me away. (1-14)

I love this story. I was approached by [a memorial service company] and they wanted to do a lecture...I thought okay, sure, we'll run it and (we had a) huge response. Tons of people showed up and...I guess one of the other centres ...phoned (the speaker) and said we want you to come here because all our seniors came up and said "why don't you have that program here?" (The programmer at that centre) couldn't believe that it went...You know sometimes you've just got to take chances like with that, there's just some that you think well nobody wants to sit and listen to this, but it's reality and a fact of life and that just blows me away that the other seniors from other centres (said) you should offer this and they did. (1-16)

Number

When selecting educational talks ideas, Ellen explained that the number of talks she offered varied according to the session.

Fall and winter are extremely busy. I plan tons and tons there. I love fall and winter. Spring kind of eases off a bit although this spring is pretty good for talks and then summer's way down. (1-18)

Ellen remarked that since she started at the centre "*educational programs have gone nuts they've blasted, they're doing really well*" (1-4). This dramatic increase in educational programs appears to be a direct response to demand from participants as well as Ellen's enthusiasm about planning in this area.

We were just blown away by the response and said okay, they want more give it to them....It's just grown and grown and grown and...I get so excited every time I start planning it. I love planning educational programs for them....It's exciting for me and the variety of topics is just so wide and there are just so many things. (1-17)

Because of her enthusiasm and the increasing demand for talks, Ellen remarked that she has to keep an eye on the number she offers and make sure that she is not doing too many. She commented, for example, "*I go crazy sometimes.*" (3-10), "*I have to go*

whoa that's too many, you can't do that many." (1-17), and "I usually have to watch myself and not overdo them." (2-11). Ellen explained that she had to keep an eye on the number of ideas she pursued because "you don't want to overkill it. People can only do so many things in a week" (1-17).

In addition to concerns about offering too many, Ellen also expressed a concern about not offering enough talks.

Okay if all these go I'll have nine plus philosophy plus computer plus investment....[and] the eight week session. That's not great for me but.... I've got two in September, three in October, one, see I have one in November so I've got to fill up November...and in December I might run one during the first week of December but other than that it doesn't really count too much as a month because people are too busy....So I mean that's three a month and that's low...lower than the past but---(3-11)

Developing Talk Ideas

Tasks related to developing talks included requesting speakers and selecting a date, time, and room.

Requesting Speakers

In instances where a talk idea did not come directly from a speaker, Ellen first had to contact the speaker and ask if he or she was interested in speaking at the centre. This was typically the case with the Vancouver General Hospital, Simon Fraser University, and University of British Columbia speakers bureaus. Ellen had to adhere to different procedures for contacting speakers listed with each of the speakers bureaus. With the Vancouver General Hospital speakers bureau, for example, Ellen said *"I'd have to hand in a request list and then I'd have to wait for them to phone the prof and then they'd get back to me and with my deadlines it made things really difficult"* (1-12). With the Simon

Fraser University speakers bureau Ellen also had to speak to a contact person first and put in a request for a talk. Ellen commented that this person *"usually says here just phone them, here's their number"* (2-11). Unlike the hospital and Simon Fraser University, Ellen was able to contact University of British Columbia speakers directly. Their phone numbers were provided on the list and the speakers bureau simply asked that she inform them of who she booked for a talk. Ellen remarked, *"I find that's so much more convenient than having to go through somebody"* (2-11). The procedure for requesting a talk was very simple with the People's Law School. Ellen simply let the contact for the speakers bureau know which topic(s) she would like to have someone come and talk about and the contact person arranged a speaker. Speakers were available for all topics listed so it was not a matter of finding out whether or not a speaker was interested, as was the case with the speakers bureaus.

Selecting a Date, Time, and Room

Once speakers agreed to give a talk, the next step was to work out dates, times and rooms. Ellen explained the strategy she used to choose possible dates and times.

What I do at the beginning of every planning session...we have a report that we can run off to see what times and rooms are available and I just go through and I know what's upstairs if I want to use the room downstairs. I think okay, when is the most quiet time I can have these rooms and I just highlight those ones and then I try and work it out with the speakers. (2-8)

Arranging dates and times for talks offered by the People's Law School did not require a lot of coordination on Ellen's part because she simply had to tell the contact person the dates and times that would work best at the centre. Ellen explained,

My contact at the People's Law School is really good. I send (my request) to her much earlier than her deadline is...She understands where I'm coming from so she just says "the dates you sent me are great, fine" and she just fills them in with people. So closer to the date I'll find out who is going to be doing the talk. (3-2)

Ellen had to present other speakers with possible dates and times and ask them to pick something that fit with their schedules. She remarked that for "*people who aren't prof's it's fairly flexible*" (2-8). The task of arranging dates and times with professors was more challenging, however, because of her need to plan so far in advance.

That's the main problem. You're phoning for these things and people say, "What? We don't have our fall schedule yet." So that's the toughest part. (4-11)

Mostly with the professors...a major thing is when can they fit it in with their schedule and a lot of the time they're guessing because for fall I'm programming now [in May] and they say, "I don't know my schedule."...and so we just guess ...I've been really lucky and only had to change a few of them in the entire time I've been here. (2-7)

Sometimes Ellen experienced difficulty getting speakers to commit to a date.

He's the fellow that I've been trying to call and he wants to do it but he doesn't want to commit a date. So we'll just go ahead and pick one for him and say as soon as you find out your schedule just phone me back. (3-3)

I've got a contact with a fellow at the Vancouver College of Chinese Medicine and ...he wants to do it. I sent him a whole bunch of dates to pick from and told him to get back to me. I called him a couple of times this week and he hasn't returned my calls. So it's one of those ones I'm just waiting for him to see. (3-4)

Barriers and Constraints

Ellen experienced some obstacles when trying to develop talk ideas and also had to work within constraints of the centre.

Barriers to Developing Talk Ideas

When I asked Ellen why some of the ideas raised at programming meetings were not developed into talks she identified speakers as the major barrier. Ellen explained that

in some instances speakers simply were not available.

Sometimes the topics just don't work out. I might request something and they're on sabbatical or they can't do it. (2-11)

When I talked to the People's Law School there they don't want to do anything over the summer. (4-7)

I've got a call out to the Podiatrists of BC to come and do something on foot care....They don't really have a speakers bureau there so she's doing some phoning for me to find out. She said the doctors don't really like doing something like that because they're so busy. (PM1-14)

Ellen also remarked that sometimes speakers just were not interested. She said, "*Usually once a season I get a request where the prof just isn't interested*" (3-3). She also provided examples of situations when speakers simply could not be reached.

He won't even return the calls of the girl at the speakers bureau...He's really hard to get in touch with and so I just said "okay, forget it". I'm really disappointed because I thought that one sounded really neat but there are some profs that are like that. They're just so busy and they have their names on the speakers bureau list but the commitment isn't that great for them. (3-3)

There are some that I'd really love to do but I know I've tried them before. One on sea monsters I thought would be so interesting but the prof never, ever, ever gets back to me. I think I've tried him three times for three seasons. (3-12)

Another situation she faced was that sometimes speakers did not get back to her before the planning deadline. Ellen explained what she does in such situations.

If our deadline's July 10th and I haven't heard anything I'd just skip it or phone and leave a message and say I'm sorry but this is my deadline can we possibly try for next season. You know if it's something I really want to do I'll just keep trying them long before my other deadline and just try to set it up then but there are always some ideas that I end up dropping every time so. (3-5)

I usually keep a...program list and I'll try and do it next time. (3-6)

While obstacles related to speakers were the primary reasons for not developing talk ideas, other reasons were also given such as potential overlap with another program area and the organization did not have its programs ready.

Constraints She Has To "Work With"

Ellen identified facility related challenges that she simply must *"work with"* (2-19). One problem was finding a quiet room for talks. Since the activity rooms are located in the basement, you can always hear people moving around upstairs. While holding talks in the auditorium would solve this problem, Ellen explained that the acoustics were not very good and it was hard to find a time when the auditorium was free. It was sometimes available around lunch time but the kitchen and eating areas next door made it too noisy. Ellen concluded, *"I've tried to do some educational talks in there and...it doesn't work"* (2-19). Ellen has also received a lot of complaints about the room she typically uses for the talks. She remarked,

We get lots of comments "it's stuffy down there in the room, there's no natural light, there are no windows".... We get that a lot and especially people who are coming from outside the centre. The people who are members here are kind of used to it but...there's a real problem with it and what can I do. It's frustrating because you're hoping these people are going to come back even though the room was stuffy and the lighting wasn't great. (2-19)

Ellen resolved that you have to *"work with what you have"* (2-19). She said that, to date, there have not been any talks that she could not offer because of facility constraints.

Generating Ideas for Special Event

At the programming meeting for fall 1996, Ellen presented six ideas for events. Five of the ideas were events that had been offered in the fall of 1995 and one was a

dinner dance idea that Ellen had come up with while watching performers at Granville Island. Pam and Sue each presented a theme for a dinner dance if space permitted.

A different approach to generating event ideas was implemented for 1997 events. At the fall programming meeting, Sue encouraged the programmers to hold a meeting specifically to plan special events for the upcoming year. Her rationale was that some traditional special events were forgotten or remembered at the last minute. Throughout the fall programming meeting Sue made comments such as

It always comes along and we miss it. (PM1-23)

If we did a year round plan then we'd know that because that picnic always seems to sneak up on us. (PM1-24)

And last year was a year that we all forgot about it. Last year was a rushed job. (PM1-24)

If we planned the year's schedule in advance this thing wouldn't sneak up on us all the time and we'd be able to put it in the Newslite. (PM1-25)

Although the programmers did not think it was necessary to plan events so far in advance, they agreed to meet and plan all of the 1997 events. At this meeting, the supervisor and the three programmers went through each month identifying popular and traditional events that had been held at the centre the previous year. They also reviewed a holiday book, a religious calendar and a 1997 calendar to generate ideas and check possible dates.

Selecting Previous Events

The decision to repeat events was based on how popular they had been in the past and whether or not they were "traditional" events.

Popular

Throughout the year the centre offered a number of dinner dances which had been extremely popular over the last few years. Ellen explained,

It's just been really popular and the band, we always use the same band...There are a lot of nonmembers who come to that...It starts to get known by the people who attend...We had it one year and [a band member] said that people were asking "oh when are you going to be at [the centre] for the...dance?" (3-7)

You want to do [them] because they're really popular and you want to have [that] band in because they're so popular. (3-13)

Ellen also offered a festive brunch once a year for which the attendance had risen dramatically each year. When presenting this idea Ellen remarked that the brunch was "growing and growing so we should do that again" (PM1-19).

Tradition

In addition to popular programs, a number of events have become traditional programs at the centre. Ellen explained that "tradition is extremely important in this centre because so many of the members have been here forever, like 20 years" (2-21) and "I know it's really important to them" (2-21). When planning the year in advance, these types of events were simply slotted into the appropriate month. There was no question as to whether or not they would be included because they were offered every year "without a doubt" (2-21). Ellen explained that members have come to expect that certain events will be offered year after year.

The volunteer lunch (is a) tradition. The staff will look after you. They will entertain you. It's a big deal and if we ever did one where...the staff didn't serve them you know it would be a big deal like, "What's going on here?" (2-21)

When I first came (here I knew that) every summer they (did) a picnic. It had been going for a few years and one year I didn't do it. I did something different. I heard about it! It was like okay, I'll do the picnic every summer. (2-21)

It's like oops, something clicked in my head and I said "I can't do that again." They expect this. (3-13)

At a programming meeting Pam also mentioned the expectations held about repeating the picnic.

I've had people phoning about that already. There was one woman who wanted to know exactly when it was and she was telling all her friends...and she (said), "You know, if you didn't have that, there would be an awful lot of disappointed [people] out there." (PM5-3)

Struggle Between Repeat and New

Although certain events have become popular and some are traditions at the centre, Ellen said that she felt somewhat frustrated with repeat events, remarking *"I struggle with these traditional programs that we do year after year after year and sometimes I feel like it's just the same old, same old"* (2-21). She explained why she liked to include new events.

You have to have a good balance. You've got to have these traditional things that ...you know work and are wonderful programs and keep people coming back but then you have to have the new stuff to keep it interesting because then you keep up to date with the trends and everything like that. (2-25)

For the sake of the members...You want...to expose them to different things...It gets a bit dry doing the same thing season after season and year after year. I can do (this) with my hands tied behind my back and blind folded but...I try and do different things and keep it interesting...It's just like for yourself, you don't want to go out and do the same thing every night. You've got to have some variety in there to spice up your life a little bit...I think that's important and for drawing nonmembers....You want to have that variety and get something new in there. (3-14)

The major challenges to offering new events included the number of events that could be offered per month, the amount of money participants had to spend, and the importance of traditional events. With respect to the number of events, one "big" and two "small" events were considered *"reasonable"* per session. Offering three events would mean that Ellen would not be too *"overwhelmed"* when implementing the events but there would still be a *"good variety"* offered. The number they actually offered varied from month to month. Some months had more events because they were going to be planned by member groups or they were *"small"* or *"easy"* events. Other months had significantly fewer events planned because other things would be going on in the centre, it was the beginning of a season, or they were going to be short staffed.

Another challenge to offering new events in addition to repeat events was the income level of participants. Ellen explained that *"you can only charge for so many events because there is only so much money there"* (PM1-22).

Ellen had learned that compromising traditional events for new events was not an option. She said that she'd *"get in trouble"* (PM5-12) from the members if she didn't do a particular traditional event because there is *"this expectation that there will be [that event] every year"* (3-13). She explained that *"it could be done but there's always people that might get a little disappointed right and they're the members that are coming to it"* (3-13).

Despite these challenges, Ellen offered some new events which she described as

...something cultural, something different where it's an evening with a show and that tends to work. I know there are people who make comments afterwards like "oh that was great" and "cultural stuff is wonderful". (3-13)

When planning for 1997, new events were slotted in as space permitted, that is, once popular and traditional events were entered for each month.

Since the number of events that could be offered was limited, Ellen was committed to giving old events a new image. She explained how this was accomplished.

It's really important to jazz it up. Keep it different. Keep it new. Change something so it's exciting for them so they aren't going to come year after year and go okay now we're going to have roast beef and we're going to watch this band I think that it's really important....to change it every year, like change the menu, change the entertainment, change what you're going to do. (2-21)

Developing Special Events

When developing ideas for events that included a meal, Ellen had to make decisions about the size and cost of the event which in turn influenced choices she made about the menu, entertainment and decorations. Arranging dates, times and rooms were issues she considered when developing all types of events. Organizing details and adhering to policies were also tasks Ellen had to complete when developing events.

Size of Event

The size of the event was a consideration for special events that involved a meal. "Big" events were lunches or dinners with paid entertainment, decorations and a fee greater than \$5.00. "Small" events were lunches with volunteer entertainment and minor decorations and a fee of \$5.00 or less.

For repeat events, the programmers simply referred to what they had done in the past. For new events, however, consideration was given to the type of entertainment, whether it should be a dinner or a lunch, and the number and size of events already

planned. Decisions about the size of new events were largely influenced by what was already planned for the month.

The size of the event influenced the room selection. While all dinners and "big" lunches were held in the auditorium, "small" lunches were planned for the centre's restaurant. The room location sometimes changed closer to the event depending on how many people registered. "Small" lunches planned for the restaurant were moved into the auditorium if more than 30 people signed up. "Big" lunches planned for the auditorium were changed to "small events" if registration was too low for the auditorium. Ellen explained,

I don't like to do too many events under 30 in there...The whole atmosphere just dies because you (only) have five tables or four tables...especially if you have a choir...I've had choirs of 20 performing for an audience of 15. (2-1)

When downsizing an event, the cost would be reduced, volunteer rather than paid entertainment would be used, and decorations would be minimal. Ellen provided an example of a time when this had to be done for a tea she had planned.

It was going for \$7.50 for members and \$8.50 for nonmembers....We had 24 people signed up and...my entertainment was \$100. So it's not even close to breaking even and in the big auditorium with 24...people in there. So we thought well, we'll cancel the entertainment. Have them come into the [eating area]. We'll charge them \$5.00. We'll have a...piano player or something and they still get the same lunch and we'll make it special and have prizes and some decorations. (2-1)

Cost

Ellen identified cost as a major consideration when planning special lunches and dinner dances. She explained,

We have to keep the cost down and your creative part wants to go nuts and do really neat things but (your practical side) says can you do it for five dollars per person. (2-24)

If we try to do this outrageous party with great entertainment and a beautiful seven course meal it's not going to go because it's too expensive. So cost is definitely... something you have to look at when you're doing your entertainment contacts because those skyrocket...It's unfortunate, but cost is a big one. (2-18)

The following quote illustrates Ellen's concern about entertainment costs.

I was down at Granville Island a few weeks ago and I saw this Brazilian kind of martial arts group and I thought they were so incredible and so we talked about having a Brazilian night and talked about menus and things like that and then I finally got a hold of the entertainment and they wanted \$400 dollars for 45 minutes...and I was like whoa I can't do that. That's not in my budget. (3-9)

She remarked that other centres in the area,

...can do some different things. They can get the big bands and pay more money for their events because they'll get the registration. (2-23)

...can have a dinner dance and sell tickets for \$18.00...I wouldn't even think of doing that. I think \$12.00 is my limit, \$12.00 to \$13.00 and that's it. (1-11)

Ellen had tried to offer "big" lunches in the past but lately had not been getting enough people registered. As a result, she decided to focus on "small", more inexpensive lunches instead. She remarked,

These low cost events are where it's at definitely. I mean we're getting 80 people out for some of them where there's no way I could get 80 people to an \$8.00 or \$7.50 lunch. (1-11)

We've learned that a lot of events...were just too much. Like a lunch at \$8.00 or something is pretty pricey for them...We weren't getting the numbers out and [the events] were just kind of dying unfortunately and we started offering the inexpensive lunch for special occasions...We were having them out in the [restaurant] rather than in the auditorium and we'd get volunteer entertainment and so they're paying \$5.00 and they're getting...a really nice lunch. It's all decorated, they usually get some little treat and then they get entertainment and those are going crazy...That's what their needs are. They need something inexpensive, something they can afford and they'll come out for that. (1-10)

Ellen tried to "sneak" (1-10) in a big lunch just to test her theory about expensive lunches. She elaborated saying, "I took a chance at running this one. I wanted to try and

do a \$7.50 lunch just to prove to me that yes it's not going to go" (2-2). When registration was low for this event she remarked "that totally proves to me that it's price because...for \$5.00 we would have had tons of people" (2-1).

Date of Event

The majority of lunches planned were festive holidays such as Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, and Thanksgiving. In many instances they were not able to offer the event on the actual day because the special day was on a weekend or a statutory holiday when the centre was closed. They planned to offer them on Fridays instead. Some events were intentionally not offered on the actual day so that they would be better able to get entertainers as expressed in the following discussion.

Sue: *Okay, so we should miss it. We shouldn't be on the day.*

Ellen: *Right.*

Pam: *If we want entertainment. (PM2-3)*

Dinner dances were typically planned for Friday nights when *"more people would probably come out"* (PM2-9) and according to Pam, *"it's always a little more festive"* (PM2-9).

For some events the week and day were based on when they *"usually"* offer it. The month and the week for which the event was planned were simply based on previous years as illustrated by the following comments made by Ellen at the special events programming meeting.

The picnic is usually the beginning of August. We usually do that on a Thursday so August the 7th. (PM2-14)

Remembrance Day we do the Sunday before the actual day. (PM2-16)

It's always the last Saturday in November. (PM2-19)

The spacing of events is a major consideration when selecting dates for special events.

Ellen explained her approach.

I try and space them apart. I don't like to have too many evening ones too close together and just looking at the whole calendar and seeing what's going on this week. (2-12)

I have a calendar, my planning calendar and I just look to make sure I'm not squishing anything too close together. I don't like to do two events in two weeks. (3-10)

Organizing Details

When planning special events, Ellen used a checklist which she developed in order to suit the specific requirements of planning events at the centre. She used this planning sheet to record details such as the budget and cost of the event, entertainment, the menu, promotion, the floor plan, and decorations.

For events that included a meal, Ellen and the kitchen coordinator met to discuss the menu.

As far as the menu goes, Kelly and I sit down every time we plan and we go over all the events and we think of menus and how we want to do it. Is it going to be a buffet? Is it going to be served? We try to mix that up too like we always try and do something a little different as far as the menu goes. (2-12)

An additional planning sheet was completed for food events which recorded *"all the details for the menu, what exactly we're having, everything so there's an understanding between us on exactly how the night's going to go"* (1-13). Ellen stressed the importance of using checklists stating, *"You've got to be organized. Details, details, details, you have to look after every detail. If one detail gets lost you're in trouble"* (1-13).

Adhering to Policies

In addition to keeping checklists, Ellen had to complete specific tasks outlined by the Parks and Recreation Department. She explained,

It's just understanding all the policies and procedures. For events you have to fill out certain forms to get a cheque cut from city hall for performers. There are a lot of procedures for that. (1-13)

Barriers and Challenges

During the data collection period, Ellen did not experience any barriers that prevented her from offering the ideas presented at programming meetings and interviews. This was likely due to the fact that the majority of ideas were events that had been repeated year after year. Ellen was, however, unable to generate many new ideas because of the limited number of events she could offer.

The only challenges Ellen mentioned were related to cost. She was unable to have expensive decorations, menus, and entertainment because the members were unable to afford such expensive events.

Summary of Planning Issues

Central issues related to Ellen's planning practice are presented in the following discussion. Issues related to educational talks and special events are presented separately. Technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning provide the structure for this discussion.

Educational Talks: Technical

Like Pam, Ellen's planning activities centred around the completion of technical stages and tasks. Ellen looked to community resources, sources within the centre, and

previous programs to generate talk ideas. Speakers bureau lists and potential speakers were her primary sources of talk ideas. Ellen was very committed to obtaining input from participants. Evaluation forms provided an opportunity for her to obtain information about topics of interest to them.

When selecting talk ideas, Ellen considered source specific and general criteria which she had developed over her years of experience planning programs in this area. Ellen selected talks that were on topics she knew would interest regular participants, were informational rather than sales oriented, were low cost or no cost, and offered variety. She was not afraid to take risks and try things other programmers might not consider.

The primary tasks related to developing ideas were requesting speakers and selecting a date, time, and room. Ellen had to coordinate speakers' schedules and room availability.

Educational Talks: Contextual

Ellen explained that having a good understanding of the participants was central to selecting talks. Over the years, she believed she had become very knowledgeable about the group of seniors who regularly attended the talks. She learned, from her planning experiences and evaluations, which topics were popular and used this information to make suitable selections. Like Pam, Ellen did not base her selections on any form of assessment of the target client group. Instead she made judgements based on the opinions of instructors and regular participants as well as her own beliefs. Collecting information from the community may not have been a concern of Ellen's because her talks were well-attended.

The emphasis Ellen placed on variety and taking risks when planning was based on her personal commitment to trying new things. She strived for a "*mixed bag*" (2-7) of talks and took chances offering talks on unusual topics. This practice was supported by the supervisor who encouraged innovation, creativity, and risk taking.

One characteristic of the community which had a profound influence on the selection of talks was income level. Like Pam, Ellen was aware that programs above a certain threshold would not be suitable for this particular neighbourhood. Low cost, no cost programs were within the budget of the low income seniors who comprised the community. Facility constraints, particularly with respect to the room used for talks, made it difficult to attract more affluent seniors from other communities.

Demand from participants played a major role in determining the number of talks Ellen offered. As attendance levels and requests increased so did the number of talks she planned each session. Ellen had the flexibility to offer as many talks as she wanted because they were free or so low in cost that she did not have to worry about her budget. While the budget was not a constraint, Ellen was conscious of balancing supply and demand. She wanted to offer enough talks to satisfy demand but not so many that participation rates might decrease.

While Ellen appears to have greater input from seniors than Pam, the way in which she plans is also "for" rather than "with" seniors. The goal of involving seniors in planning was also not put into practice by Ellen. While seniors were asked for suggestions and their interests were considered central to planning, Ellen made all of the program

decisions without their assistance. The way in which program responsibilities have been divided and the availability of staff to carry out planning activities supports this practice.

Educational Talks: Social-Political

Very few issues of a social-political nature were evident. Ellen was solely responsible for making decisions about educational talks. She did not identify any constraints imposed by the supervisor or the Parks and Recreation Department which might limit her capacity to plan. Speakers, however, did limit her control over developing ideas. While Ellen had the power to select talks, she had little control over whether or not a talk would be offered. She provided examples of various situations where speakers had been barriers to the development of ideas. There appeared to be certainty with the People's Law School but a lot of unpredictability with other sources of talk ideas.

As mentioned earlier, participants' interests were a top priority when selecting programs. An issue that clearly concerned Ellen was the possibility that a speaker she brings in will raise his or her interests over the interests of the participants. She related several cases where she was worried about the possibility of speakers presenting sales pitches rather than information sessions. She had a very clear "no sales" policy when selecting talks in order to protect seniors from being enticed into something they may not need.

Ellen revealed that her personal interests, as well as participants' interests, influenced the selection of talks. She explained that she sometimes selects talks that are "*near and dear*" (1-4) to her. Ellen's power as the programmer enabled her to offer things that may be of interest to her but not necessarily to the participants.

Negotiation emerged as the central form of activity when developing programs but did not characterize activity at other stages of planning. At this stage, Ellen's planning activities centred around negotiations with speakers about offering talks, checking their motivations for speaking, and scheduling times. Although most talks were free, Ellen sometimes had to negotiate prices with speakers.

Special Events: Technical

While there was a great deal of turnover with educational talks, special events were predominantly events that had been offered the previous year. As a result, planning centred around tasks related to developing events such as determining the size, cost, entertainment, decorations, menu, date, and time of the event. Generating and selecting ideas was primarily a process of identifying popular and traditional events held the previous year that would be repeated. A few ideas were brainstormed for new events that might be added.

Special Events: Contextual

The income level of members and potential participants influenced the number of events offered. Ellen offered a set group of events each session which had been popular and well-attended in previous years. She wanted to offer a greater number of new events but believed that seniors in the community could not afford to come to additional events. As a result, new events were only offered in months where the number of previous events was low.

The income level of the community also influenced Ellen's decisions about the cost of programs. She had learned from previous experience that there was a price limit that

she simply could not cross in order for events to run. Decisions about the size and location of the event as well as decorations and menus were all contingent on this price threshold.

Special Events: Social-Political

A central issue for Ellen was reconciling her interests, organizational interests, and participants' interests. Ellen wanted to offer a greater number of new events in order to expose the members and other seniors to different things and also to attract new people to the centre. She did not feel she could replace previous events with new ones because they had become traditions, and she knew that the members looked forward to them and would be disappointed if she did not run them again. Although Ellen had the power to offer what she wanted and could do away with previous events in order to serve her own and organizational interests, she felt compelled to address the expressed interests of participants. Ellen compromised by offering previous events but changed the format to keep things somewhat new and interesting. It should be noted that while Ellen considered different interests when selecting events, she did not actually negotiate with people.

Other situations in which interests were negotiated were not evident. Ellen interacted with other programmers, the supervisor, and the kitchen staff. The nature of these interactions was not, however, characterized by negotiations but rather collaboration and sharing ideas. Ellen discussed availability, cost, and dates with entertainers. Negotiations about interests were not identified perhaps because she simply chose someone else if the entertainer was not available, not suitable or too expensive.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Ellen's approach to generating, selecting, and developing educational talks and special events was described. Barriers and challenges she experienced were also addressed. Central planning issues related to Ellen's practice were summarized according to technical, contextual, and social-political views of planning. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10. The next chapter describes how programs were planned while she was away from the centre.

CHAPTER 8

PLANNING WHILE ELLEN WAS AWAY

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ellen left the centre temporarily to work at a nearby multi-generational centre. Nancy was hired to work two and a half days a week while Ellen was away.

Nancy had recently completed a recreational leadership program which included recreational planning courses and she was taking several human performance courses. Her previous work experience included planning and teaching programs for a range of ages, including seniors, in community recreation settings. While working at the centre, Nancy was also working on a part-time basis at two other Parks and Recreation facilities.

As a part-time programmer at the centre, Nancy was responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating educational talks and some special events. The impact of Ellen's absence on planning talks and special events is described in the following sections. Planning issues related to Ellen's absence are outlined at the end of the chapter.

Educational Talks

Although Nancy had not worked at the centre before, she seemed to be very knowledgeable about planning educational talks at this centre. She was well aware of the resources Ellen used to generate ideas and the considerations she made when selecting ideas and developing ideas into programs.

Generating Educational Talk Ideas

Ellen informed Nancy of the resources she used when planning and this was evident in the sources of Nancy's talk ideas which included Simon Fraser University and

the University of British Columbia speakers bureaus, the People's Law School, speakers who contacted the centre, promotional information, talks that had been offered before, and ideas that stemmed from participants' interest.

Nancy also received guidance from the supervisor. At the winter 1997 programming meeting, for example, Sue made the following suggestions about the type and number of talks to offer.

Write down two financial talks. (PM3-23)

Try and set up one on-campus event at Simon Fraser. (PM3-24)

Now the other thing is the Public Legal Education Society....Have you looked through their brochure?...I'd find maybe two of theirs to run. (PM3-28)

Pam also made sure that Nancy was aware of the typical resources used by Ellen to generate talk ideas.

Selecting Educational Talk Ideas

Nancy identified having an understanding of the participants as an important consideration when planning. She referred to the need to "*know your community, know your target group and what works for them*" (1-13). Nancy learned, through her discussions with Ellen, about the characteristics and interests of participants as well as talks that had been offered in the past and topics that were popular.

Nancy was well aware of the income level of seniors in the neighbourhood and the need to consider this when planning. She explained that

...it's such a low income area that we just do not have the money and the participants don't have the money to pay for elaborate...courses. (1-14)

Nancy also identified the need to know what kinds of programs are acceptable when starting at a new place. She indicated that you need to

...sort of feel it out and see. Like I know some centres may be you know, "we don't do that sort of thing". Basically...get a general feel from the staff of what's happened and why not. Is that the type of thing that people go for in this neighbourhood? (1-8)

When selecting talk ideas at this centre, Nancy explained that

...it's pretty open. Ellen did one on sex and the older [adult] so I mean sure, why not, go for it. I mean if you get people great. You never know I think is the thing so just feel free to try to do different things. (1-7)

Nancy knew that any of the speakers bureau ideas were appropriate and that she was free to choose any of the topics. When she reviewed the lists, she selected topics that seemed to be "different", "interesting" or "good". She stated, for example,

I just went through the UBC speakers bureau and the SFU one looking for something a little different that we hadn't really had and something with interest. (1-5)

No I just saw it and thought that looks like something that would be different. (1-6)

Looks like it might be interesting. So I said okay let's try this one. (2-4)

I was just looking through [the speakers bureau list] and I thought that sounded kind of interesting. (2-6)

That sounded like something that would be good. (PM4-26)

When contacted by a speaker or organization, Nancy was aware that she should stay away from sales related talks and ensure that all talks were informational rather than sales pitches. Nancy provided an example of how she applied this knowledge when considering an idea.

Somebody had contacted or was interested in doing things and I talked to her because we didn't want her to come in with one particular line. (1-5)

The only change related to selecting ideas that resulted from Ellen being away was the number of talks planned. While Ellen sought to offer three to five talks per month, Sue told Nancy to start off with two per month and then pursue more talks if she had the time and other possible ideas. While the number of educational talks Ellen offered the previous winter was fifteen, Nancy was told to aim for six. She remarked, *"I mean if I can get eight then that's pretty good"* (3-2). She ended up offering ten.

Developing Talk Ideas

As identified by Ellen, the central tasks when developing talks were requesting speakers for speakers bureau ideas and selecting a date, time, and room. When developing talk ideas from sources other than speakers lists, Nancy first had to see whether or not a speaker was available. While at this stage in the planning process Nancy commented *"I'm playing the waiting game now. There's nothing more frustrating"* (1-10). Closer to the deadline when she still hadn't heard from speakers, she expressed *"just trying to get word back from a lot of people. It's just been really hard"* (3-1).

Once a speaker agreed to offer a talk, the next step was to arrange a date. Like Ellen, Nancy identified room availability as a central factor when choosing dates.

I just sort of looked at room space. I mean I have Tuesday morning to pick from, Wednesday afternoon to pick from and Thursday morning to pick from. That's what rooms are available. (1-4)

She also considered the spacing of talks.

Well I'm kind of looking at where I don't have anything....Pretty much every other week there is either an event or a talk because I tried to spread them out. (2-5)

Available space, spacing of talks, and speakers' schedules needed to be coordinated.

Nancy explained how she arranged a date with one of her speakers.

I basically said well this is what we've got and...in their proposal they had said a Wednesday or Friday afternoon was something that they envisioned. I said well I've got a Wednesday afternoon at this time if that works for you and I had a couple of other weeks they could go up one or down one. (1-2)

Nancy identified advance planning as a challenge when trying to arrange dates with professors. She remarked

Sometimes they don't know too far in advance and that's why I say just give me a tentative date...like I told him I needed to know by October 18th. (1-6)

The following quote best illustrates the challenges Nancy experienced when developing program ideas.

I think this [area] would be the hardest one to...program in because it's not like I can just phone up and say I want to book this for this time and this is what I'm doing. It's "Okay, I would like you to come. Now can you come?" and ...it's so dependent on other people....and their schedules and it just makes it so hard. (3-3)

Summary of Educational Talks

Since Nancy was simply filling in while Ellen was away, she followed in her footsteps when planning. She was informed about how educational talks were planned and what considerations were made when planning. Nancy engaged in the same planning process and made decisions about programs in the same manner that Ellen had rather than introducing a different approach. As a result, the process she engaged in and the things she considered did not differ from Ellen's approach to planning. The only observable difference, as mentioned earlier, was the number of talks for which Nancy was told to aim and the actual number of talks offered.

Special Events

When planning special events for winter and spring 1997, Nancy did not have to generate ideas or make decisions about which events to offer because events for these two sessions had already been selected at the 1997 year-in-advance programming meeting held in June 1996.

At winter and spring programming meetings, Sue and the programmers reviewed the list of events and questioned whether or not any events needed to be added or deleted. Sue was particularly interested in deleting "*unnecessary*" events because Nancy would not be able to plan or implement very many given that she was only working on a part-time basis and Pam and Ben were busy with their own programming areas.

The following issues came up when deciding whether or not to offer an event: tradition, attendance, amount of work required, dates of other events planned, and requests. One annual event, for example, had declining attendance over the years and was considered to be a lot of work. Despite these reasons for not offering the event, they decided to offer it again because attendance had been around 50 and it was a traditional program. Sue remarked,

Let's do it until we have one bad year and then say that's enough....It's a tradition right? They would be very disappointed. I guess we'd better do it.
(PM3-4,5)

The programmers and supervisor also discussed whether or not to offer a particular dinner dance that they have offered before. Although they were hoping to have this dinner dance twice a year they decided not to offer it in the spring session because other events

were planned close to it, it required a lot of work, and they *"don't get people coming in saying when are you going to have [that band] next?"* (PM3-7).

When deciding whether or not to offer an April Fool's lunch, Pam remarked *"it could be fun. I see a lot of possibilities"* but added *"it would be a lot of work"*. Ben noted that *"there's a lot happening then"* and Nancy identified *"Easter's the weekend before that like that's coming right off Easter Monday"*. Pam concluded, *"Oh well it doesn't make a lot of sense then does it"* (PM4-2).

After deciding which events would be pursued for the upcoming session, they were divided among Nancy, Pam and Ben and they were each responsible for planning the menu, decorations, entertainment, and/or other aspects of their assigned events. Although Pam and Ben had been responsible for planning some events during the year and there had been some talk about greater sharing of events, this equal division of events was a direct result of Ellen's absence. Pam expressed her thoughts about this change to planning special events.

It's okay. It used to be the way we did it....I think it's good in a way because everybody gets to keep their hand in it. In another way it's hard because you forget all the steps that there are and you're not always quite on board with...volunteers and which ones have been used in the past and same with entertainment...There are pros and cons to both approaches. I think, overall, it's going fine. To tell you the truth, it's easier if it all goes back to one person because it's hard to keep switching hats. But at the same time, it's challenging and I enjoy it because you get to be more hands on with your volunteers...If you are creative, it's your place to shine a little bit and show it, but if you aren't, it's a challenge. (P7-6)

This is turning out to be a lot more work than I expected...It just means that you have to cut back some place else which I find really hard to do. We all pick our favourite things to do and we put our energies where our interests are. So it's just a reorganization of priorities. (P7-7)

I asked Pam what she thought would happen when Ellen returned and she remarked "*I can't foresee but I would guess that Ellen would probably take a lot of them back*" (P7-7).

When planning the details of events, Nancy referred to previous planning sheets to see what had been done in the past, obtained assistance from Pam, Ben and Sue, and contacted Ellen when she had questions. Nancy sought to develop ideas according to how it was usually done and, as a result, her approach to planning did not differ from Ellen's.

Summary of Special Events

As a result of Ellen's absence, the number of events was examined and "unnecessary" events were deleted. In addition, events were divided equally among the three programmers and each programmer was responsible for developing their events. When developing ideas, the approach that Nancy used was the same as Ellen's. She did, however, rely more heavily on the advice of other staff which Ellen would not have needed to do given her years of planning events at the centre.

Summary of Planning Issues

The following discussion presents technical, contextual, and social-political issues related to planning while Ellen was away.

Technical

When planning educational talks, Nancy completed the same stages and tasks in the same manner as Ellen had done. Nancy was aware of the resources Ellen relied on when generating ideas, the criteria she considered when selecting talks, and the development issues that needed to be addressed. It was interesting to note that Nancy emphasized the importance of knowing the community and the target group but did not

try to obtain information about their needs and interests. Nancy simply continued Ellen's planning practices rather than using her own approach. This is likely due to the fact that Nancy was only working at the centre for a few months and on a part-time basis.

A different approach to planning special events was implemented while Ellen was away. Events which had already been selected at the 1997 year-in-advance programming meeting were subject to an additional screening by the supervisor and the programmers. The selection criteria included tradition, attendance, amount of work required, dates of other events planned, and requests. Issues such as the size, date, time, and cost were also discussed by the supervisor and the programmers. The selected talks were then delegated to each of the programmers who continued to develop them and organize the planning details.

Contextual

Ellen's absence clearly illustrates how closely the number of programmers is linked to planning practice at this centre. Two and a half rather than three programmers resulted in a reduction in the number of talks and special events that were planned. Ellen was only expected to offer six rather than fifteen talks. Since Pam and Ben were busy with their own programming areas and Nancy was only part-time, the supervisor wanted to delete "unnecessary" events that they would not have time to plan and implement. In addition to the number of programs offered, Ellen's absence also affected the way in which special events were planned. The supervisor and the programmers jointly made decisions about events rather than leaving this up to a single programmer.

Social-Political

Despite the fact that Nancy was new, she was immediately given the power to make planning decisions because of her position at the centre. Her previous experiences at other centres and the fact that she had recently completed an academic program were probably also sources of power. The only noticeable change with respect to planning educational talks was the involvement of the supervisor. While Sue gave Ellen suggestions, she told Nancy how many talks to offer and what types of talks to include. This appeared to be in the form of assistance rather than an exertion of control over Nancy but was, nevertheless, an obvious change in Sue's role.

As mentioned above, a major change took place with respect to power and planning special events. The selection of events became a group process which involved Nancy, Pam, Ben, and Sue in deliberations about whether or not to offer an event. When deliberating about events, seniors' interests were weighed against the potential workload required by the event. The interests of seniors took precedence over the interests of the staff. The fact that traditional events were not eliminated demonstrates the power that members and participants have despite their lack of direct involvement in planning decisions.

It should be noted that there were no instances of conflicting interests during the staff's deliberations about which events to offer. The supervisor and the programmers considered the criteria and seemed to agree about whether or not to offer the event. This process resembled collaborative decision making rather than stakeholders negotiating with

and about interests. This is likely due to the fact that all of the programmers wanted to reduce their potential workload but still offer a range of events to participants.

While Ellen had been solely responsible for decisions about events, decision making power was now dispersed between the programmers and the supervisor. All of these people appeared to have an equal voice in negotiations about selections. Not only were they involved in decisions about which events would be offered, but they were also responsible for making decisions about the format of events that were assigned to them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the impact of Ellen's absence on planning educational talks and special events. Nancy's approach to planning talks was presented and the staff's temporary strategy for planning events was outlined. Issues related to planning during Ellen's absence were also presented which will be discussed again in Chapter 10. The next chapter describes Ben's approach to planning bus and van trips.

CHAPTER 9

BEN'S APPROACH TO PLANNING

Ben began working at this centre in 1989 and has worked in the Parks and Recreation area since 1984. He has had experience working in multi-generational centres where he was involved in programming for a range of ages. Ben worked at the centre until the end of March 1997 when he left to work at another age-segregated senior centre in the city.

The program related duties of his position as programmer included developing, implementing, and evaluating bus and van trips and Sunday brunches; implementing an outreach program; and liaising with senior led groups. Ben was also responsible for planning some special events throughout the year.

In this chapter, Ben's approach to generating, selecting, and developing bus and van trips as well as Sunday brunches is described. Challenges and barriers to developing these programs are also discussed. A summary of issues central to Ben's planning practice is presented at the end of the chapter.

Generating Ideas

When generating Sunday brunch ideas, Ben expressed that a lot of potential locations came from *"word of mouth...or tried and true"* (2-10). Ideas for bus and van trips came from a variety of sources which included community contacts, staff, other centres, promotional material, requests, and previous trips. Ben described the process of generating ideas as *"just putting feelers out"* (1-11).

Community Contacts

Ben identified friends and people he knows in the tour and recreation industry as major sources of trip ideas.

I've got a lot of community contacts. I'm very well connected within the community ...knowing other people who work in recreation, other people who work in other jobs. So...I usually have an idea of what's new and what's happening. Then [you can] also pick up the phone and phone the bus company and say do you have anything new? (1-11)

A lot of things I just hear from friends or people I know. A lot of people who are in the tour industry. A good friend of mine she works for Tourism Vancouver so she's got her finger on a lot of stuff. If I get really, really dry, I just give her a call....I find just talking to people, because one person gets to know me and especially social events and you go to parties or whatever and people say, "What do you do for a living?" "I'm a recreational programmer." "Oh do I have a trip for you or do I have a program for you." (1-12)

Staff

The other programmers and Sue were also involved in the generation of ideas for trips. At programming meetings, Ben invited them to share any ideas they had saying, for example, *"I'm open to other ideas for bus trips"* (PM4-24). At times, they were asked to help him come up with ideas for certain months.

Pam: So you just need something for October and November.

Ben: October and November

Pam: So are you soliciting ideas or have you got some things on the back burner?

Ben: I'm soliciting ideas. (PM2-3)

Pam: Okay, we can keep our eyes open for other October and November things. (PM2-9)

Other Centres

In addition to community contacts and staff, Ben reviewed senior centre brochures when generating trip ideas. He used brochures to identify trips that had not been done

recently and also to see what new trips were being offered in other cities and what the trends were. During the year, for example, there were two trips that had been run at other centres that he decided to offer. Ben described his decision to offer one such trip.

It seems like Costco all of the sudden is really big. Everybody is sending van trips to Costco....So I thought I'd jump on the bandwagon. (PM4-20)

Promotional Material

Brochures outlining tours, packages, and upcoming events as well as advertisements and newspaper articles were also sources of trip ideas. During the year, Ben offered several trips which had been inspired by such promotional material.

Requests

Although formal evaluations were not typically conducted on bus and van trips or brunches, participants were encouraged to provide feedback and make suggestions for future trips. A couple of trip ideas came from people who attended a bus or van trip and put in requests for upcoming trips.

Previous Trips

Another source of ideas came from trips that Ben had offered before. Nine of the eighteen van trip ideas Ben considered over the year were previous trips and eight of the sixteen bus trip ideas had been offered previously.

Challenges to Generating Ideas

While sources of ideas were plentiful, Ben identified certain months and advance planning as challenges he experienced when trying to generate new ideas. Ben appeared to come up with bus trip ideas quite easily, however, he expressed some degree of difficulty coming up with a January trip. At one of our interviews held close to the deadline for

winter programs he remarked, *"I'm scrambling right now to find a January one"* (3-4).

When I asked him why, he expressed that *"January is always a hard one"* (4-5). He elaborated saying

January is the hardest month to plan for because after Christmas nobody really wants to get involved in anything. So if you do plan a trip, it has to be something really cheap because nobody has any money....and the weather is, you don't know if it's going to snow or be like this (sunny) or whatever right so it gets a little hard. But something will definitely come up. (3-3)

In addition to challenging months, Ben found some sessions more difficult to generate new ideas than other sessions because of advance planning.

I always find from September to December the hard one. September is fine but when you start phoning people in July [and ask] "What are doing at Christmas?"[They respond] "Get out of town I'm not even thinking about [it]. So...I find that especially for trips because things are not organized and people are not in that mode and you're trying to pull it together. So I find that's the hardest one. (4-5)

Ben expressed his frustration with having to plan so far in advance.

It's nuts because we plan for our Christmas [programs]...in the summertime. Well you phone up these people and say, "What do you have planned for Christmas?" They say, "Christmas, let's get through Halloween first."...That's one thing I don't understand and I've been doing it for a long time. You ask questions, they just go (he shrugged his shoulders). You know you're working on everyone else's deadline. That's a problem. One thing with Rec., when you work Rec., you've got to plan so far ahead. But it's this time of the year right now (October) when the people are gearing up for Christmas and all the good Christmas stuff comes out....So I phone the people up and I say...we do our planning here in summer and they just, they laugh at you and say well that's good for you....To get in on all the good deals and all the fun stuff that's happening for Christmas it's really hard and then when the stuff does come in and you put a notice board up, [people say] "I'm doing this, I'm doing that". So it's quite hard. (2-8)

One strategy that Ben used to deal with such early planning was to hold off on confirming all his trip ideas in case something else *"popped"* up. He remarked, *"I like to leave some things open because if you plan too far ahead then you kind of miss out on*

some good stuff" (2-7). He did, however, have to make a decision by the deadline in order for the trip to be advertised in the brochure.

Selecting Trips

With ideas coming from so many different sources, I asked Ben how he decided which ideas to run. He explained that

When I think up an idea...I can think up a number of reasons why I should do it but I try to ask myself why shouldn't I do it....Well you do the list thing and a lot of times you come up with a couple but if...there's nothing there totally outstanding....go ahead with it. (1-23)

Ben explained how he knew whether or not an idea was going to work.

I just get a feeling for something, just get a feeling for something. A lot of times you see something and say no, it's not going to work. (1-11)

Over the course of the data collection period I obtained a better understanding of the questions Ben asked about trip ideas and how he got "*a feeling for something*". At programming meetings and during our interviews, Ben identified the following issues he considers when planning trips: 1) Is the trip something new and different? 2) If it is a repeat idea, when was it last offered? 3) Is it a trip that members could afford? 4) How far away was the location? 5) How many trips can I offer? and 6) Can it be offered that season?

New and Different

Ben expressed a very strong belief in offering trips that were new and different. This is evident in the approach he used to come up with new ideas.

I was going through some old brochures. See a lot...of times when I program especially a bus trip and Pam laughs at me. She says, "Why are you going through the brochures?" I'll go back like three years...on brochures and I say I'm looking for places we haven't been and you go through the brochure and you look through...Okay we've done it. We've done it. We've done it. It's been repeated. We've done it or [another nearby centre has] and what I do, I look over it and I make a mental note....So you look for the things that haven't been done because it's easy to program for summer time. Just stick in what works. Whistler works, you know offer a trip to Whistler it's going to go. Even Harrison is a bit of a cop out. Offer a trip to Harrison in the summertime...It costs you 10 bucks for transportation, you go up and buy your lunch and have a nice day walking around the park. You know it's going to go, it's a bit of a cop out, you look for something a little bit different. (5-10)

When I asked him why he was so committed to offering "new things, different things" (1-12), he explained

It's a personal philosophy. Let's be creative. We're programmers. That's our job. (1-26)

There's no fun in [offering the same things], no fun, there's no adventure...there's no digging....Boring, boring, boring. (1-27)

You've got to keep variety, keep variety. (5-11)

Ben commented that after years of programming,

Bus trips and van trips or arts and crafts or educational, any programming can be really easy and when you've done this job long enough it's very easy. You open up a book and go summertime, let's do something on a boat, let's do something in the park and let's do one summer night time thing. Great, we're on the boat it's summer time, they're happy, it's outdoors--bang, done, put it away. If you want to, you could make programming in your job [so that] you don't even have to think. (1-26)

If I wanted to, I have files downstairs from 1990, a whole year of bus and van. If I wanted to I could go downstairs, pull the file, open it up and copy. Do what I did in 1990. (1-27)

I think a lot of [programmers] have gone into that. They've become uncreative. See when people start in recreation they come in and go this is a chance to be creative and I know myself, when I started [I thought] we can do this and we can do that and they'll want to do this and you get really creative and your creative juices are just flowing and flowing and then after you know a year or two it's kind of uhhh I'm not as creative as I used to be and then after three years or four years it's oh, maybe I'll open up the book and a lot of times you have to poke--let's be creative here, remind yourself let's try something new, let's try something different. (1-27)

As a result of offering trips that are new and different, Ben has become a trend setter. He remarked that programmers at other centres had used him as a resource for trip ideas.

Once every three months we just get together and bounce off ideas. It's funny because it's the situation now [where] the other two centres pick Ben's brain. I don't tell them. I used to and the first couple of meetings, yeah do this, do this and we can do this and...every trip that I listed they did, every trip. (1-15)

Ben provided the following examples of trips that he started which then became popular across centres.

We were the first centre to do [a certain trip]. Now you look back in the brochures, almost every other seniors centre in the Lower Mainland has done [this] tour. But where did they all get the information from? They phone me and then I told one person and they told two people and they told two people....and then everybody's doing [it]. (5-11)

A lot of people say when they look at [this centre's] trips they...say they're always different, they do something different...Like a perfect example of that is [one trip I offered] and the other centres said, "Oh that's not going to go with seniors." I said, "Don't worry, it's going to go." We sent two groups down on two different nights. We had such a waiting list....So now this year we went to the bus and van trip meeting for the summer and I sat back and they said, "Are you going to run [it]?" and I said "I don't know yet." and [one programmer] said "Well we want to do it." [Another programmer] said "No I want to do it." It's just a popular trip right....It's just like we started it and then everybody else picks up on [it]. (1-9)

He also identified one of his upcoming trips that he thought would become popular at other centres once he had offered it.

Nobody's been [there] before. So you watch. We'll do it in May. You watch, in September, October, November if you get a chance look at seniors brochures I'll lay \$10 right now there'll be two other senior centres in either [this city] or through the Lower Mainland [which] will be going [there]. (5-11)

Repeat Ideas

Although Ben was committed to offering new and different trips, there were a few examples of trips that he offered session after session or year after year because of demand from participants. When asked, for example, why he offered a theatre trip each session he responded,

I try to do one theatre each session...because there is a group that likes to go to the theatre and see live performances. So we've taken care of that group. (2-2).

A number of other trips were things that he or other centres had done in the past. While this may seem to contradict his philosophy, his rationale was in fact consistent with his commitment to new and different trips. He considered programs that had not been offered recently and were, therefore, "new" to many participants. He explained,

I'll look through [brochures] and I'll look for a trip...and I'll say that trip hasn't been done in four years. Why hasn't it been done for four years? Did it go? And I'll do the research. Yeah, it went. Well why hasn't anybody offered it? Offer it again and everybody comes in "hey it's a brand new trip" well actually [another centre] did it five years ago but nobody knows because people forget that. (5-10)

There are always programs people haven't done. We did a trip here, Pam and I were just amazed at how many people said they had never been there before. I forget. Was it last summer? Pam and I had planned this trip constantly. We let it die and then we brought it back. I can't remember what it was, and how many people said, "You know I've always wanted to go there and never have but now you've offered it." We thought everybody in the world had gone, but we ended up sending two van loads.

I wish I could remember what it was but we were just amazed...I mean one I'm planning this summer, right these people have done [it] but come next summer we have a whole new group of people. (1-24)

References he made to repeat programs he was considering included

It's just one of these that just sits on the back burner and we haven't done it in a long time. We haven't done it in about three years. (2-1)

Nobody had offered a trip to Bowen Island in a long time. Whistler has been done a couple of times last summer and in October it was done. So something different. (4-3)

Ben described two trips that he considered because there was a new "hook".

They're opening up a [new exhibit]....I thought it would be a nice change because we've gone down [there] before....It's a nice guided tour but this, with the new hook...it's hands on and that would be something different to see. (1-8)

We sent a trip there I think it was last year or the year before and they've upscaled. They're in a brand new big plant...So they've relocated. (PM4-20)

Cost

Cost was a major consideration when planning Sunday brunches, van trips and bus trips. Ben explained the approach he used when considering Sunday brunch ideas.

What I try to do...each month is one pub and one restaurant so that way the pub meal is cheap, inexpensive and the restaurant meal would be more expensive. So those who want to go on a Sunday outing and say can't afford the restaurant, can go at least once a month to the pub because it's only going to cost them anywhere from \$1.00 up to maybe \$5.00 for their meal plus they get an outing and the whole nine yards...Say the meal costs \$5.00 then the most they are looking [at is] \$11.00 for the day. (2-10)

Upon reviewing the costs of 25 van trips offered during the year, I found that fourteen were under \$10.00, four were between \$10.00 and \$13.00, four were between \$16.00 and \$17.00 (which included lunch or rentals), and three were \$25.47 (theatre trips). The low cost of most van trips was made possible by focusing on free tours and

places with inexpensive admission fees. For seven trips, the only cost was \$6.00 for transportation.

Cost was a central and sometimes contentious issue when considering bus trips. At programming meetings, cost was always discussed and ideas that were not "*expensive*" were a priority. Comments were made such as

Pam: *How expensive is that?*

Ben: *It's not going to be too expensive.* (PM2-2)

Pam: *But you're right we don't want a really expensive one.*

Sue: *When you add the play to the bus cost it gets pricey.* (PM2-7)

Sue was particularly concerned with keeping the cost of bus trips low. She stated, for example, "*I don't know what Ben's already started bus trip wise. I want him to think low cost*" (PM1-27). Her concern about keeping costs low is also illustrated in the following quote about bus trips.

Pam: *Did you have some [ideas] Sue? Oh you just mentioned that you wanted to see a good balance between pricey and nonpricey or do we want all nonpricey?*

Sue: *Go with nonpricey.* (PM2-3)

Ben indicated that he needed to keep bus trip costs low because of the lower income level of the membership. He explained his rationale for setting \$50 as the maximum for bus trips.

Our membership doesn't have the money to spend on the bus trips. I like to keep it down, \$50 max. Usually \$50 is a twelve hour day going some place with a lunch....Now if you take somebody who is on income assistance or has a budget say, out of a session...they want to take one bus trip. Now a session is three months. The average person who is coming in here can afford \$50 in three months. In three months they take one trip. So looking at the big picture, we can keep it at \$50 and they can afford one big trip and some van trips. So the opportunity's there. (1-6)

Upon reviewing previous bus trips he had offered I found that they ranged from \$11.00 to \$48.00. I asked Ben if he tried to keep them closer to \$11.00 and he responded *"No, the average price for a bus trip we're looking at anywhere from \$25 to \$35 in that range"* (1-6). He explained that this was considerably lower than the average price at other centres in the area.

The other centres, you look at their bus trips they are constantly up around the \$40 to \$60 range....They have the membership that can afford it but also what happens too by us keeping our trips lower, we get their people coming to ours. (1-6)

During the data collection period Ben made one exception to his \$50.00 limit, a train trip for \$80.00 including transportation to and from the station. At the programming meeting when this idea was discussed (before the rate was determined) Pam commented,

It's an expensive one but it's during rotten weather...It's comfy, cozy, you're on the train...It's usually around \$50 to \$60. It's been popular. We've sold out of it in the past. (PM3-16)

Once the rate was determined, the supervisor did not want Ben to offer such an expensive trip. Ben described her reaction to his decision to go ahead with it and his rationale for offering it despite her concerns.

I'll tell you, Sue and I almost came to blows over the price of it. She said, "Nobody will sign up for a trip for \$80." I said, "Yes they will because it hasn't been done in a long time." [She responded], "It's too expensive. It won't go." I told her, I said "Let's just offer it."....So we offered it...Pam came to me [and said], "She's really upset that you offered the trip." and I said, "It's going to go." It sold out plus we're using the van to do the overload. We're sending 60 people right 60 people. It's something new, it hasn't been done and we made a profit...Well that's my mind set. Other people's mind set is "oh it's too expensive". How can you count on one individual to speak for the whole population. There are 60 people out there who 80 bucks is fine. (5-11)

I'm not saying we go every trip [for] 80 bucks. They're not going to afford that every session. But...you tried something else. (5-12)

Distance

Another major issue when generating trip ideas was distance. Only those places that were not "too close" to the centre were considered. The reason for this was so that they offered trips to places that people might not be able to get to on their own. At a programming meeting, Pam explained, *"the thing is you make them too short and they say well I could drive there on my own"* (PM2-8). When discussing a brunch idea, for example, Ben remarked *"I haven't sent a group there before because it's so close but we'll try it and see what happens"* (2-10). Ben even changed one of his brunch locations in order to offer participants *"more of a trip trip"* (4-4).

In addition to making sure that trips weren't too close, having too many long trips was also a consideration as illustrated in the following discussion.

Sue: *It'll have to be more local I guess.*

Pam: *Yeah because that'll be a long one. Seattle's a long one.*

Ben: *Seattle's twelve hours. The winery will be at least twelve or fourteen.*
(PM2-5)

When selecting bus trip ideas, Ben was limited by Parks and Recreation policy regarding the maximum number of hours a trip "could be".

What a lot of our seniors want now when it comes to trips is they want to do overnights....but the city once again has a policy. We can't do overnight trips because any bus trip that staff organizes, staff has to go on and it comes into money and quadruple money. (1-24)

It would cost way too much....Exactly, so no overnight trips but then we tried to get the seniors to plan it and they're just--forget it....So instead, for getting around things like that, I run bus trips they say should only be twelve hours, well if you notice some of the trips I run are fourteen. Just a little bit further away, a little bit more. (1-25)

Thus, when coming up with trip ideas, Ben considered how close the locations were and how many long trips he was planning. Despite requests, Ben was unable to plan overnight trips but offered long day trips instead.

Number of Trips

The number of trips offered per month was fixed and had been consistent over the past few years. As a result, Ben had to consider the following predetermined numbers when generating trip ideas: one bus trip per month, two van trips per month, two brunches per month. When I asked Ben how the number of trips had been determined, he explained,

Well it comes down to the budget. Bus trips are 100% cost recovery but the way the city works it's 100% recovery so what goes out must come in. Okay, but on the other hand, we're given a budget, an expense budget so we're allowed \$16,000 for the year for our bus trips. So it comes down to budgeting. Basically what it works out to is 12 trips a year. (1-20)

Well the van account is also 100% recovery but the van is owned by the board ... We rent the van from the board for each trip. So what happens is that we've got a budget of \$7,000, \$8,000 and basically that's for expenses. (1-20)

I asked Ben if he wanted to offer a greater number of trips per month given the popularity of bus and van trips run from the centre. Ben commented that for van trips, he was restricted by the number of volunteer drivers.

It would be nice to offer more but what happens with the van is that we rely on volunteer drivers and you have your core group of drivers and they only want to drive so many per month or so many per week or every other week and so you have to be careful that you don't have more trips than drivers. (1-20)

Between van trips and brunches, drivers are needed four times a month, and sometimes more often if other programmers have planned "out trips".

Ben explained that he has offered more than twelve bus trips but that the Parks and Recreation Department does not agree with the practice.

It's budgeted for twelve trips a year but I program fourteen thinking two won't go and if they all go I don't worry about it because I can justify it....But when it comes down to the budgeting part of it [Parks and Recreation] looks at it, they say well we're budgeted for twelve. You programmed fourteen. You overspent in the bus trips account. But in reality, we didn't overspend because we brought in extra money. So it all balances out in the long run. (1-20)

Season/Weather

Ben also had to take into consideration whether or not a trip would be appropriate depending on the weather and/or season. Some trips could only be offered during certain months such as a trip to a berry farm, apple orchard or Christmas craft fair. Other trips were limited by road conditions. When thinking about going to the Okanagan, for example, Ben asked the other staff "*What are the roads like in that area in October? Would there be snow?....Yeah maybe we could do that in October*" (PM2-4). During times of the year when the weather was wet and cold, indoor ideas had to be generated as mentioned by Pam and Sue.

Sue: *It sort of has to be indoor.*

Pam: *I was trying to think of something where they don't have to go outside too much. (PM2-6)*

Developing Trips

The tasks Ben had to complete when developing trips included booking tours through contact people, organizing dates, arranging transportation, and on occasion, negotiating costs.

Booking a Trip

Ben telephoned contact people to find out whether or not the destination was going to be open and offering tours during the month that he wanted to run the trip and whether his group could be accommodated. They also discussed dates, rates and tours where applicable. At times, this entailed a number of calls back and forth, with the confirmation of details sometimes taking a long time. Ben talked about one such incident.

We were playing telephone tag and so I said I NEED to know what's going on. So he's going to be looking into that. But he says there should be no problem. (2-7)

Trip Dates

The amount of control and flexibility Ben had over when to offer a trip varied across trips. Sunday brunches, for example, were always offered on the second and fourth Sunday of each month and did not vary over the year. As a result, Ben knew exactly how many brunches to offer per session and on which days they would be offered.

When planning dates for bus trips, Ben said he planned them for the end of the month "*just because*" (1-30) or whenever they could do the tour. He said, for example, with the train ride he was "*mainly at the mercy of the BC Rail on that one*" (2-9).

Ben commented that he liked to plan van trips for the beginning and end of the month, preferably on a separate week from the Sunday brunches. When determining which day of the week a trip would be offered Ben noted that he did not have a particular day of the week in mind but tried to mix up the days of the week for each trip. When contemplating the day for one of his trips he remarked, "*I'll probably pick another day for that because we've got three on Wednesday so it kind of bombards Wednesdays*

for this session so maybe a Thursday or Friday" (2-4). Ben explained that for some trips, he was limited to when tours and shows were offered.

I'm bound to this one because for the show that I want, it's only playing on a Wednesday. The theatre shows are all Wednesdays. [This] tour was Wednesday because [the person] who does the tours could do the tours Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and I have an outreach program so I have to look at my schedule too. Wednesday just seems really popular. (2-5)

Transportation

When developing van trip and brunch ideas, Ben did not have to worry about transportation. The centre had a van that he used for such trips and volunteer drivers were available.

A major issue with bus trips was which bus company to use. Ben explained that the city had a policy about selecting bus companies.

Ideally what you are supposed to do on each bus trip is phone three bus companies. You get three quotes and then you take the middle quote....When you look in the policy manual, how to plan a bus trip, that's the way you do it. (1-5)

Ben disagreed with this policy for the following reason.

We want to offer bus trips for seniors, we want to get the cheapest price we possibly can for good service so I would rather go with one bus company. (1-5)

One company gets all the city's business, prices come down, more people are happy. (1-7)

Although he had tried to get the city to allow the centres to go with one company,

...the powers that be didn't want to go for it. They said no, no we're a city and we can't show favouritism for one side because blah, blah, blah....But then again you turn around and say we're not showing favouritism which is fine but then...the taxpayer turns around and says what's going on here? (1-7)

Negotiating a Good Price

Another issue that Ben discussed was negotiating a "good price". Ben provided an illustrative example of how he obtained a cheaper rate for an expensive trip.

Well actually it was a very interesting story. Over Thanksgiving I was having dinner up in Salmon Arm and the gentleman who was sitting next to [me] worked for VIA Rail and so I said, "You know, your price for the train trip up to Lilloet is just too expensive." and I told him my tale of woe. He said, "When you get back to work, phone me." Which I did. The regular price was \$114 a person...I phoned him up and he gave it to me for \$68 a person including tax. (3-3)

He explained to me that he would not have been able to offer the trip at the regular price because the members would not have been able to afford it.

Ben did not describe other situations where he had to negotiate the price which may be because he filtered out expensive programs during the selection phase. This trip was an exception because he had offered it in the past.

Challenges and Barriers to Planning

Although developing ideas seemed to run smoothly for Ben, he did experience some challenges and barriers while planning.

Challenges

The following example illustrates a challenge Ben experienced when planning a trip to a nearby island. He had originally thought of going to a farm and/or vineyard he had read about but after making a few calls found out that he had to change his plans.

Actually I phoned the vineyard and they're not set up yet. They're still in construction. The sheep farm they sold. So that family doesn't own it any more and a developer bought the land and they're going to develop houses and a residential area on the farmland. (4-3)

He ended up planning a trip to the island but to a different attraction than his original idea.

When planning an animal trek, Ben had to work with the owner of a farm to custom design a trip. Ben had read an article about a farm that offered one day picnic treks as well as longer term excursions. Ben explained what happened when he phoned the owner of the farm.

I phoned him up and he said, "Yeah, I could do that." I said, "Have you ever done this before?" "No." I said, "Well in this article it says you do this." "No, I haven't done any of that" yet he goes "I've taken week excursions up in the mountains with people, but a picnic, a one day picnic, no I haven't done that." Great, so here we are, we're going to organize it for him....It says right here (he showed me the article) it's hilarious, it says right here "whether it's taking clients on a one day picnic ride or a two week". He's done lots of two week trips but he's never done a one day picnic. I'm talking to him and he said, "No, never done that before." "Okay dude, you are now." (4-6)

By helping the owner develop a one day picnic, Ben was able to offer his original idea.

Barriers

Although Ben experienced some challenges when developing trip ideas, he was able to offer most of the ideas he pursued. There were, however, two trips that he wanted to offer but could not for the following reasons. On one occasion, Ben was unable to develop a trip idea because his group could not be accommodated during the summer. He tried to organize a day trip to a camp or a resort in order to offer people a chance to have an outdoor experience although they were unable to stay overnight. When he contacted an outdoor school *"they said no, not for the day. They wanted \$210 if we did that in the summer because they have summer camps"* (5-3). He also called several resorts and lodges and found that *"in the summer they don't...want to see us but in the winter*

months, come on. In the summer time that's when they're busy" (5-3). Ben remarked, "I didn't think I'd get the resistance you know from the resorts" (5-6).

The second trip was an idea that Ben had expressed at a city-wide bus and van trip meeting. Apparently, Ben told the other programmers that he was still deciding about the idea. One of the programmers believed he was not offering it and decided to plan it for his centre. By the time Ben heard about it, the program had been booked and organized. He recalled being disappointed about this but did not want to offer the same program, especially since it had been offered in the past. Instead, he selected a trip that had not been done before.

There were also some other ideas that Ben chose not to pursue at the time. When discussing one such idea he remarked, *"I haven't really worked on that....Just another idea. Just sort of see what happens with that one" (2-6).*

Summary of Planning Issues

The following discussion presents a summary of technical, contextual, and social-political issues which were central to Ben's planning practice.

Technical

Ben offered very few trips that had been offered before. As a result, his planning practice centred around generating and selecting ideas as well as developing them and organizing details. It is evident from this description that Ben is planning "for seniors". Members and participants were invited to make suggestions, however, very few ideas were presented. Ben relied a great deal on community contacts and promotional material for ideas. Like Pam, Ellen, and Nancy, he did not conduct assessments of needs and

interests of the community. The fact that he was proud of being a trend setter and his programs were very successful may explain why such assessments were not part of his planning practice. When selecting trips, Ben made judgements about what seniors would like based on his expertise, previous experiences, knowledge of the membership, personal philosophy about programming, and policies outlined by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Contextual

When selecting trip ideas, Ben was guided by a strong commitment to offering trips that were new and different. Ben felt compelled to plan in this manner in order to keep his job interesting and to provide variety to the participants. He also indicated that it was what being a programmer was all about. The fact that Ben has become a trend setter and a resource for other programmers suggests that this approach to planning may not be practiced in other centres. It was clearly a belief that was supported at this centre and adhered to by all of the programmers.

Cost was also a central issue when planning trips. Like Pam, Ellen, and Nancy, Ben was very much aware of the need to offer low cost programs. He established maximum prices for his trips based on his beliefs about what the membership could afford. An interesting ethical issue exists with respect to the pricing of trips. While seniors in the community around the centre are perceived to have predominantly low income levels, Ben's trips also attracted seniors from other communities who may have more disposable income. Since Ben's trips were very successful and attracted seniors from other centres, he could offer more expensive trips and still achieve desired participation

levels. This practice would provide Ben with greater latitude when planning but might deny access to many of the seniors in his community and would offer no financial advantage to Ben or the centre.

Being a planner in a Parks and Recreation operated facility also influenced the way in which Ben planned. He provided examples of how the timing of planning, the length of trips, the number of trips, and the choice of bus companies were guided by Parks and Recreation policies.

Social-Political

Ben provided a number of examples where his ability to plan was constrained by policies of the Parks and Recreation Department. He was clearly frustrated with having to plan so far in advance, not being able to plan overnight trips, having to stick to predetermined numbers for trips, and not being allowed to select the most inexpensive bus company. The interests of the Department limited Ben's ability to address the interests of seniors. These examples illustrate the power relationship between Ben and the Department and also highlight ethical concerns about whose interests are being served and why.

A central activity when developing programs was negotiating with representatives from companies providing transportation or tours. Examples were provided where Ben negotiated whether or not a trip could be offered, the cost, the dates, and the times. He described his ability to plan as being "*bound*" by when tours and shows were offered. Negotiating with service providers and being dependent upon them appears to be a common theme across programmers at this centre.

Although Ben was conscious of the price of trips, Sue's comments suggest that his definition of low cost was not always consistent with what she thought was appropriate. While Sue tried to impose her definition on Ben, he did not always do what she wanted. An excellent example of this is when Ben offered an expensive trip despite Sue's protests. Ben exerted his power as a planner and challenged her authority as the supervisor. His ability to do this stemmed from the power given to him by his position as well as his years of experience planning trips. In this case, Ben was successful in offering the trip and it put him in a more powerful bargaining position for the next time he and Sue disagreed on costs. It would have been interesting to see what would have happened to his power as a planner if the program had not been successful.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Ben's approach to planning bus and van trips as well as Sunday brunches was described. Sources of ideas, challenges generating ideas, considerations about ideas, issues when developing ideas, and challenges and barriers to developing ideas were discussed. A summary of issues related to Ben's planning practice was also presented which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 10.

This chapter constitutes the last of five chapters which have described planning at Matheson Senior Centre. Chapter 5 presented centre-wide aspects of planning which affected all of the programmers. Chapters 6 through 9 described how each programmer planned programs in his or her programming areas. The next chapter provides an analytical and conceptual discussion of these descriptive findings.

CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION

Three views of program planning were presented in the literature review chapter. The classical or traditional viewpoint depicts planning as a technical rational process. Prescriptive planning models outline steps and tasks that planners should complete when developing programs. This viewpoint represents the predominant view of planning which has characterized adult education literature and which prevails in recreation and leisure literature. An alternative view of planning focuses on the context- or situation-specific nature of planning. According to this view, the context in which planners work influences the construction of programs. Critics of prescriptive planning models claim that context rather than technique should be at the forefront of discussions about planning. Cervero and Wilson (1994) support a context-based view of planning but propose that one dimension of context, the social context, is central to understanding planning practice. These authors contend that, when constructing programs, planners engage in negotiations about interests in contexts characterized by power relationships.

Each of these views provides insight into how senior centre programs might be planned. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extent to which these views of planning characterize planning practice at Matheson Senior Centre. The following questions provide the framework for this discussion: (1) To what extent is planning a technical process? (2) To what extent is planning context- or situation-specific? and (3) To what extent is planning a social-political process of negotiation?

Planning as a Technical Process

While the prevailing view of program planning focuses on technique, to what extent is planning at this centre a technical process? It is evident from the programmers' discussions that much of their planning practice reflects a technical approach. A comparison of the programmers' practices demonstrates that they completed four stages when planning which included generating, selecting, and developing ideas as well as organizing details. A number of tasks were also performed related to each of these stages.

During the first stage, the central planning task was to identify a variety of possible program ideas. The programmers relied on various sources within and outside the centre. They actively sought out ideas, were approached by people, engaged in brainstorming sessions with other staff, and reviewed previous programs. While the programmers solicited information from participants, most of the ideas generated came from other sources. Pam, for example, relied heavily on instructors' ideas, Ellen relied primarily on speakers bureaus for talks and previous programs for special events, and Ben used a variety of community contacts to come up with bus and van trip ideas.

The next stage was characterized by narrowing the range of program ideas through the use of selection criteria specific to the centre and their programming areas. When choosing among new program ideas Pam, Ellen, and Ben considered criteria related to their beliefs about programming and what would interest participants, the income level of seniors in the community, the budget, the cost of programs, and the season. Nancy identified the culture of the centre and characteristics of the target population as important considerations when selecting programs. One criterion that Ben considered which was not

relevant for Pam, Ellen or Nancy was the location or distance of a trip. When deciding whether or not to repeat a program Pam, Ellen, and Ben considered the expressed desires of seniors. Pam and Ellen were also influenced by previous attendance levels and tradition, while Ben considered when a trip was last offered and whether or not there was a new feature.

Although generating ideas and selecting ideas are portrayed as separate stages, it should be noted that there was a great deal of overlap between them. The programmers, for example, were aware of their selection criteria when generating programs and as a result, many of the ideas were generated and selected simultaneously.

When developing programs, the programmers had to deliberate with program contacts (e.g., instructors, speakers, tour operators) about a number of details. Tasks completed by all of the programmers at this stage were confirming availability, coordinating dates and times, negotiating costs, and spacing program offerings. Since Ben's programs were "out trips" he had to arrange transportation for participants but did not have to worry about room availability at the centre which was a central consideration for the other programmers.

The final stage of the process involved organizing details of planned programs. All three programmers recorded their planning details on planning sheets. Once programs were confirmed, the programmers wrote the information on wall calendars outside their office and entered details into the Parks and Recreation Department's computer system.

The programmers completed these four stages each session. It should be noted that throughout the session, the programmers were at various stages with program ideas.

While many ideas were generated and selected prior to the programming meeting, there were occasions where program ideas were still being generated close to the deadline. Ben, for example, refers to leaving some trips "open" until much later in the session in case new ideas arise. In addition, some programs were confirmed and the details organized by the time of the programming meeting, while others were still being developed just days before the deadline.

Having explored the stages and tasks completed by the programmers at this centre it is now interesting to compare them with those prescribed in the planning literature. In the senior centre, leisure and recreation literature, central elements of planning models include establishing a philosophical framework, assessing needs, identifying objectives, determining and designing the program, implementing the program, and evaluating the program. The central elements of adult education models are analyzing the planning context and client system, assessing needs, developing program objectives, formulating an instructional plan, formulating an administrative plan, and designing a program evaluation plan.

A comparison of the programmers' planning practice with prescriptive models revealed that the programmers engaged in a process of planning which had a number of technical elements identified in the literature such as identifying the range of possible programs; selecting appropriate programs; making decisions about the date, time, location, and cost; and organizing program details. The process in the which the planners engaged did not, however, include all of the clearly defined stages outlined in planning models. In fact, all four stages described by the programmers fit within a single stage or

element of typical planning models: determining and designing the program (leisure and recreation) or formulating a plan (adult education). None of the other stages presented in planning models were represented as formal stages in the actual planning practice of programmers at this centre. The programmers were guided by beliefs about programming, the needs and interests of the clientele, program objectives, and other characteristics of the planning context when generating, selecting, and developing ideas. They did not, however, establish a philosophical framework, assess needs, and generate objectives every time they planned a program.

One explanation for this is that many of the models were developed for planning students and new programmers who may be unaware of the types of tasks required of planners. Unlike the audience of many planning models, the programmers had been planning at the centre for many years and were engaged in planning the same types of programs each season. As a result, they did not need to complete formal stages when planning each program because they had internalized pertinent information and had developed a personalized system for planning programs.

In addition, the focus of many recreation models is to guide planners with the development of a new set of programs rather than ongoing program offerings. While many of the programs changed from session to session, the programming areas remained the same as did the general nature of the programs. The completion of multiple stages outlined in planning models may not be conducted in planning environments where the process is routine and predictable. Kraus (1985), for example, states that the eight step model he describes

...applies most meaningfully to the task of developing an overall plan for an agency, comprising of many subelements. The task of planning and carrying out a single event tends to be much simpler and is usually broken down into very specific leadership tasks. (p. 62)

Another finding was that not all of the four stages were completed for each program. The programmers bypassed stages one and two for programs that had become traditions and those that had been offered in the previous session. Since the programs had been generated and selected previously, the programmers did not need to go through these stages again. This finding suggests that technical stages outlined in planning models may be less suitable in planning environments where programs are extremely repetitive.

The explanations presented above suggest that the completion of complex sets of stages may not be as applicable when planning has become routine. An alternative explanation is that programmers at this centre may not be aware of the stages outlined in planning models or do not know how to apply certain planning principles. A lack of knowledge would explain why the programmers did not conduct needs assessments or develop objectives, despite the emphasis placed upon such stages in planning models. Pam, for example, referred to not knowing how to obtain greater input about program ideas from the seniors. It should be noted that none of the regular programmers had any formal training with respect to program planning. Their knowledge about the process of planning had been acquired on the job and through their various experiences as planners. While practical knowledge is valuable, technical knowledge would provide the programmers with other ways of planning that they might not have been exposed to in practice. When discussing planning models with these programmers, they explained that they did not adhere to a particular model and they could not identify particular models

outlined in leisure and recreation or other related literature. They were familiar with the names of various planning stages (e.g., needs assessments and developing objectives) but not with actual techniques or strategies they could use. These programmers could, therefore, benefit from professional development courses that would provide them with knowledge about how they might effectively plan programs in their setting, particularly how to identify needs and interests of the community. It is one thing to deliberately use a narrow range of technical skills; however, it is quite another issue if the programmers do not address certain planning tasks due to a lack of awareness. One would expect that a lack of knowledge about issues so central to planning would certainly contribute to the declining membership rate and problems with cancelled programs.

Summary

Planning at this centre clearly has a technical dimension. The day to day activities are comprised of a number of tasks related to generating, selecting, developing, and organizing programs. These stages and their related tasks do not, however, completely represent those identified in the literature. One explanation for this is a lack of knowledge about central tasks related to planning. Another explanation for this appears to lie in the context in which the programmers plan. Contextual factors also influenced the way in which the programmers carried out these four stages.

Planning as Context- or Situation-Specific

While the process of planning at this centre has technical characteristics, simply focusing on these aspects would fail to capture the essence of program development. A variety of contextual factors emerged as central to the way in which planning takes place

at a centre-wide level and the individual approaches that programmers use. These factors and their impact on planning are discussed in the following section. Issues and implications for practice related to each factor are also presented.

Organization of Planning Responsibilities

At this centre, planning responsibilities have traditionally been organized in such a way that staff programmers are totally responsible for generating, selecting, developing, and organizing city programs. The arrival of the current supervisor resulted in a division of the programmers' responsibilities so that each programmer became solely responsible for certain programming areas. This division of responsibilities provided the programmers with the power to make all decisions pertaining to their areas.

Not only are the programmers responsible for planning, but they constitute the group of people who are most directly involved in all stages of planning. Other people are involved, but in a very limited way. The supervisor, for example, is invited to attend programming meetings, but her involvement in planning is limited to generating program ideas and expressing any concerns she may have. Other programmers are also involved in the generation of ideas but do not play a central role in the other stages of planning. Program providers may or may not be directly involved in the generation of ideas but are completely involved in program development issues and are totally responsible for developing program content. While the interests of seniors are at the forefront of planning decisions, seniors play a minor role in the process of planning city programs with their involvement limited to the generation of ideas. Pam mentioned wanting greater input from

seniors when generating program ideas but none of the programmers discussed senior input at other stages of the planning process.

The finding that seniors were not substantively involved in the development of city programs appears to contradict one of the centre's goals (see p. 70): "To encourage full and active participation of members of the centre and the community in identifying needs, establishing priorities, planning and implementing programs, and evaluating ongoing activities." Limited senior involvement also contradicts the general consensus of the planning literature. Kraus (1997), for example, asserts that a "widely held" professional belief or principle about program planning in recreation is that community residents or organizational members should be involved in "setting policies, and planning and conducting activities" (p. 26). This guideline is based on democratic values about civic involvement and the belief that systematic needs assessments will result in greater acceptance of programs. In the field of adult education the belief that "adults ought to participate in the planning of programs in which they are involved" has become an imperative (Sork, 1989, p. 29). Cervero and Wilson (1994) and Wilson and Cervero (1996) extend this belief to include all people who are affected by the program. According to these writers, democratic planning requires that legitimate representatives of all stakeholders should be substantively involved in decisions pertaining to the construction of programs.

Given that the programmers have the power to determine who is involved in planning, why is it that seniors have such limited involvement? The programmers and the supervisor did not directly address this issue; however, a number of explanations can be

provided. One obvious reason is that the centre has always had the funds to hire a number of staff to plan programs. As long as the centre has staff available to plan programs, seniors are not needed to conduct planning activities. The supervisor, for example, referred to a shift towards greater senior involvement in the future necessitated by budget cutbacks which would limit the amount of money available for staff programmers. Seniors would, therefore, have to take on planning responsibilities if programs were to continue being offered.

In addition, it is evident that the development of city programs has not been guided by a community development perspective whereby seniors are encouraged to develop programs based on their perceptions of their own needs (see Edginton et al., 1992). The programmers have traditionally planned such programs "for" rather than "with" the seniors. While the seniors have limited involvement in planning city programs, it should be noted that the seniors' programs provide them with opportunities to identify and address their own needs and interests. Most of the groups implement their own programs and organize activities independently of the programmers. They receive advice and assistance from the staff when they request it. Over the years, new senior led programs have also been instigated and developed by seniors in collaboration with the programmers. In these situations, the programmers act as facilitators assisting the seniors with program details, funding, leadership, publicity and promotion, and other issues. Over time, the amount of programmer involvement is reduced as the group becomes increasingly independent. Thus, while city programs are developed "for" seniors, programming at this centre is also characterized by programmers working collaboratively

with representatives of senior led programs and seniors being responsible for their own programs. The programmers may not extensively involve seniors in the planning of city programs because the seniors have their own programs to run. The supervisor explained that there was a growing trend in seniors programming to encourage seniors to play a central role in all aspects of program planning. Greater involvement of seniors in the future would result from budget cutbacks as well as a shift in beliefs about programming.

Another reason may be that the programmers believe they are informed about the needs and interests of seniors who use the facility. The fact that they have worked at the centre for many years and interact with the members and participants on a daily basis provides them with an understanding of programs that would appeal to this group of seniors. Thus, although the programmers plan "for" seniors, they are informed "by" them, and plan "with" their needs and interests in mind.

A lack of interest on the part of seniors to plan programs may also explain their limited involvement. Pam, for example, remarked that at this centre the seniors have not expressed an interest in playing a major role in planning programs. It is difficult to determine whether this is because they like having programs planned for them and do not want to be involved or because they have not been encouraged to be part of the process.

Maintaining power and control over planning may also explain this practice. The involvement of seniors in the generation, selection, development and organization of program ideas would alter the degree of control programmers have over their programming areas. It may also alter the nature of their duties and perhaps even threaten the stability of their jobs. Pam, for example, questioned what the programmers would do

if seniors were more involved in planning. If seniors take a more active role in planning, it may be harder to justify the need for nonsenior programmers.

These programmers are probably not alone in planning "for" rather than "with" participants. Sork (1988), for example, in his discussion of ethical issues in adult education, remarks "although many authors extol the virtues of client involvement in planning, conversations with practitioners suggest that such direct involvement is rare" (p. 44).

Not involving seniors in program development does, however, have a number of implications for practice. In terms of practical consequences, not involving the participants in planning may diminish benefits to the participants in the way of efficacy (see Sork, 1989). Limited involvement of seniors may also have an organizational impact. Since seniors are not very involved in the process of planning, they may feel less committed to or accepting of the programs that are offered. If there was greater senior involvement in planning at this centre, registration rates may be higher because seniors may be more committed to programs planned "with" rather than "for" them. Planning in this manner also puts the programmers in a position where the success or failure of a program rests largely on their shoulders. Ethical implications of this kind of practice can also be identified. Sork (1988) questions whether or not "direct involvement of the client in planning is a moral imperative that should never be violated" (p. 44). Wilson and Cervero (1996) assert that "all people who are affected by the program should be involved in the real choices of constructing the program, not just called upon as information sources or used to justify already-made decisions" (p. 22). Decisions about who is and

who is not involved in planning is an ethical decision. According to these authors, failure to substantively include legitimate representatives of seniors would be unethical and undemocratic practice.

Since involving participants in the planning process is considered to be such an essential element of effective practice, the programmers at this centre might want to reflect upon why they do not substantially involve seniors, what the implications of this practice are for their centre, and how they could involve them in the process of planning. At least one of the programmers at this centre is struggling with how to obtain greater input from the seniors about their programming interests and how to draw more people to the programs. All of the programmers are concerned about the declining membership and the need to attract people to the centre. Although the programmers did not identify a link between the lack of senior involvement and declining membership, to an observer, it appears as though there certainly would be a connection. Not involving seniors when planning city programs means that the programmers are relying on others, such as themselves and content experts, to identify the needs and interests of the community of seniors. They may want to consider the legitimacy of these sources of information about the client group. Cervero and Wilson (1994) would argue that "legitimate representatives" of the larger community of seniors should be substantively involved in the planning process. Rosenblum (1985) contends that participants do not have to be directly involved in planning as long as there can be a "proxy planner" who has a good understanding of the client group and who can represent their needs, interests, and desires. The programmers at this centre are knowledgeable about which programs have been

successful, what regular attenders want, and which programs are current. They do not, however, appear to be concerned about identifying the needs and interests of the larger community and they do not have contact with seniors who do not attend their programs. While they may believe they are effective proxy planners, an observer might question the degree to which 20 and 30 year old programmers, who do not conduct any form of needs assessment outside the centre, and who do not substantially involve seniors in the process of planning, are in fact the best or most suitable proxy planners. Content experts (i.e., program providers) may be knowledgeable about popular programs in other centres or communities but may also be limited in their specific knowledge about the context of seniors who constitute the target clientele for this centre. The adult education literature discusses a wide range of approaches for involving people more directly in the planning process (e.g., advisory councils, planning committees). The programmers at this centre might want to take a closer look at these approaches in order to see how seniors could be more involved in the process of planning and what the practical and ethical implications of involving them would be.

Economic Need to Attract People

The approach to planning at this centre is clearly guided by the need to attract people to the centre. This organizational imperative is the result of a declining membership, low participation rates for some programs, and a number of cancelled programs. Other contributing factors are the challenges imposed by the facility as well as competition with other centres. Low membership and participation rates pose a great

threat to the operating budget and the relatively substantial staffing and programming budgets which explain why attracting people is such a central focus of planning.

In an effort to entice people, particularly younger seniors moving into the neighbourhood, the programmers have sought to offer a variety of new and innovative programs. This focus on new programs was evident in the selection criteria used by all of the programmers. Pam was particularly concerned about attracting participants because of the high cancellation rates of her arts and crafts workshops and low attendance levels in some of her other programs. Attracting people underlies all of her selection criteria as well as program development issues such as the number of programs (e.g., not watering down your market), time of day (e.g., ideal times), length of classes (e.g., short and sweet), and the dates of programs (e.g., ideal times of the season).

It is interesting to note that despite their focus on attracting people, the programmers have not conducted any kind of needs assessment of the community. When generating ideas, the programmers relied on a number of other strategies to determine what would interest seniors in the community. One strategy they used was to rely on their own perceptions of the seniors' interests. The programmers had worked at the centre for many years and had experience regarding the types of programs that had been well-attended in the past. They had also become experts in their areas and were very aware of programming trends and current programs. As a result of their acquired knowledge they believed that they had a good understanding of the membership and the participants as well as their programming areas. This knowledge guided their selection of programs.

In addition, the programmers relied on "experts" outside the centre to identify ideas that would be suitable for seniors. Ellen was frequently approached by representatives from organizations who wanted to speak about various topics pertinent to seniors. Pam had instructors come from "*out of the blue*" (see p. 107) with ideas they thought would work at the centre. Ben relied on contacts in the community and also referred to offering a program that was being offered at a number of other centres.

Previous attendance levels were used to determine whether or not programs would be repeated. Although the programmers focused on new programs, a number of programs were offered that had been successful in the past. This was particularly the case with arts and crafts, fitness, dance, and special events.

Another strategy that the programmers used was to obtain input from the seniors at the centre. Evaluations provided feedback about other programs that the participants were interested in attending. At times, members and participants approached the programmers with suggestions. Overall, input from members and participants was limited.

These strategies closely resemble programming approaches described in the 1970s leisure and recreation literature but do not represent any of the strategies prescribed in the 1980s and 1990s literature. The general consensus of the adult education, leisure and recreation literature is that programs should be based on systematic assessments of the needs and interests of the target population. If systematic needs assessments are considered to be crucial to effective programming, why is it that programmers at this centre do not engage in such practices?

One possible explanation for this is that attendance levels are used as a primary indicator of success. As long as minimum attendance levels are achieved, what they are offering is considered to be consistent with the interests of participants. Since participation rates for talks have been increasing, most bus and van trips sell out, and the number of people attending events has been relatively stable, Ellen and Ben may believe they have no reason to conduct any kind of assessment of the target population. Focusing on the number of people enrolled in programs means that they are relying on market forces to measure the success of their program offerings. While attendance levels and the financial viability of programs are indicators of success, the programmers need to be careful not to think too narrowly about how success is measured. The programmers might want to reexamine their notions of success so that they focus more on the needs of the community than on the needs of the centre. There might be, for example, some important needs in the community related to income, ethnicity, and disability that they could be addressing with these programs that might not attract a lot of people but might be directly addressing important issues for some of the people in the community. It would be interesting to see how planning practice might change if success was measured in other ways. One might expect that a greater emphasis would be placed on assessments of the target population if success, for example, was based on attracting new groups of seniors to the centre, implementing a certain number of ideas obtained from the larger community of seniors, or addressing specific needs of the community.

It is surprising that despite low attendance levels for arts and crafts workshops, formal needs assessment strategies have not been considered. The primary reason why

Pam continued to use her current strategy was that she felt confident that her programs were representative of current arts and crafts trends and were suitable for the community of seniors. She did not, therefore, feel that low attendance levels were a reflection of her programming efforts but rather were due to "*bad luck*" (see p. 124) and the economy. Her theory was validated by the fact that other centres were experiencing similar challenges with their arts and crafts programs. Pam provided two other explanations for why she did not conduct needs assessments. She explained that she was not sure how to obtain greater input from seniors in the generation of ideas which suggests that greater training about needs assessment strategies might be needed. Pam also referred to not having the "*luxury of time*" (see p. 125) to analyze why some of her programs not attracting people. Implementing and developing programs combined with other responsibilities of her job made it challenging to find the time to conduct assessments.

Planning in this manner puts programmers in a particularly vulnerable position for having their programs fail. Relying on input from participants and members means that the programmers only obtain information from a very select group of seniors. This information is then used to plan programs specifically for this group or to extrapolate to the larger clientele. Unless these seniors have been selected as representatives of the interests of the larger community of seniors, attracting other people to the centre may be difficult. Relying on expert knowledge can also be problematic because current, innovative, and trendy programs that appeal to the programmers and the instructors may not be relevant to their particular clientele. The programmers use what Murphy (1975) refers to as a cafeteria style approach to program delivery whereby a broad array of

activities are provided from which the public can choose those programs that interest them. Rather than assessing the needs and interests of seniors in the community and designing programs specifically for this group, the programmers offer various programs to see what *"captures people's imagination"* (see p. 95). As a result, there is a great deal of trial and error taking place which is reflected in Pam and Ellen's references to being surprised by certain programs that ran or were cancelled and their "try it, you never know" attitude. The fact that the programmers have not conducted assessments of the larger community of seniors may be one reason why participation and membership rates have not improved.

Commitment to New Programs

In addition to the organizational imperative of offering new programs to entice people to the centre, the programmers expressed a strong personal commitment to offering new programs. When describing the relationship between new and repeat programs, Pam explained that offering new programs helped to keep her job interesting and was necessary in order to meet the needs of new people and keep members *"on their toes"* (see p. 116). Ben considered program turnover to be a central part of his programming duties. While he could have simply offered trips that were successful in the past, he considered this to be a *"cop out"* (see p. 178). As a result, he focused on trips that he and other centres had not offered before. Trips were repeated that had a *"new hook"* (see p. 181) or had not been done in a while and would, therefore, seem new to some people. Ellen was committed to trying new things *"for the sake of the members"* in order to *"expose them to different things"* and *"keep it interesting"* (see p. 148). The supervisor also shared the

programmers' beliefs about programming and encouraged them to try new programs and take risks in order to keep programming "*exciting*" and to provide participants with an opportunity to "*stretch*" themselves (see p. 87).

Comments made by the programmers suggest that their expressed commitment to trying innovative programs and willingness to take risks are not shared by programmers at some other centres. Ellen, for example, described a risk she took offering a talk on memorial services and states that the programmer at another centre could not believe that it ran. Ben identified himself as a trend setter and referred to several trips that he had developed which were later offered by other centres. He also remarked that a lot of programmers, excluding himself, have become uncreative after years in the job.

While the programmers expressed their commitment to offering new programs, an examination of their program offerings revealed extensive turnover in some programming areas, but a great deal of stability in other areas. Ben, for example, selected very few trips that had been offered before. The trips that he repeated had not been offered for many years, had a new "*hook*", or were specifically requested by members. The vast majority of educational programs offered by Ellen were on new topics; however, special events were primarily repeated year after year. While Ellen expressed her commitment to offering new events, she felt obligated to repeat those events that had become "*traditions*" and were well-attended and expected by the members. Pam offered a number of new arts and crafts workshops each session but repeated fitness, dance and arts and crafts classes. Her decision to repeat fitness and dance classes was based on reaching minimum attendance levels. Tradition appeared to be the primary reason for repeating arts and

crafts classes. Pam explained that she had always offered them and they were regulars in her program portfolio. She continued to repeat them session after session despite low attendance levels in some classes and no participants in a few arts and crafts programs. Whether or not they ran in a previous session did not appear to affect whether they were offered again. Thus, while Pam expressed her commitment to new programs this clearly was not evident in her selection of programs. It is likely that Pam was unable to stop offering these programs because she was not sure about which programs to offer instead. Obtaining a better understanding of the larger community of seniors would provide her with greater insight into the kinds of programs that would attract more participants.

Characteristics of the Client Context

The programmers' practice is strongly influenced by their perceptions of the income level of potential participants and members. The generation, selection, and development of programs is governed by an economic mandate derived from the staff's beliefs that seniors living in the community have relatively low income levels and not a lot of disposable income. All of the programmers identified cost as a major consideration when selecting programs. They knew from experience how much participants would pay and they used this to determine price thresholds for their programs. Pam focused on "*low cost, no cost*" (see p. 109) arts and crafts workshops and inexpensive programs. Programs that were above her price threshold were simply not developed. In order to keep costs down Pam also negotiated the number of sessions with instructors so that fewer sessions could be offered at a lower price. Ellen relied primarily on sources that offered free talks. While she offered some talks with fees, this was not the norm and the cost to participants

was typically between \$4.00 and \$5.00. Ellen explained that she always negotiated with speakers to keep the cost low. When planning events, Ellen had learned that low cost events were the most popular. She provided a particularly illustrative example of how she had tried to offer a more expensive lunch but had to cancel due to low registration. She attributed this to the cost, not the type of event. The cost of events influenced Ellen's decisions about decorations, the menu, and entertainment. Nancy also asserted that costs had to be kept low because participants did not have the money to attend expensive courses. In order to provide participants with inexpensive trips, Ben focused on cheap pub meals, free tours, and low admission prices. He also negotiated costs with tour operators in order to keep costs within his price range. Ben offered bus trips that ranged from \$11.00 to \$48.00 dollars with average prices in the \$25.00 to \$35.00 range. He explained that these rates were much lower than trips offered at other centres. Ben made an exception to his \$50.00 maximum rate (e.g., \$80 train trip) because he felt that participants could afford a more expensive trip once in a while.

Several issues related to this economic mandate were raised. Ben, for example, was faced with an ethical decision when determining the cost of bus trips. Unlike Pam and Ellen, his trips were extremely successful and often had waiting lists. They also attracted seniors from other centres. Although he kept his prices much lower than other centres he could have raised them and probably still achieved minimum attendance levels because of the trend setting trips he planned. Ben focused on lower priced programs so that members and residents of the local community could have access. Sork (1988) identified this kind of situation as an ethical issue in program planning. He explained that

the pricing policy of the organization can determine the types of participants who are served. Some organizations, for example, establish higher fees in order to generate income but, in doing so, deny access to low income groups. This would be the case if Ben made his prices more competitive with other centres. As long as trip costs are recovered through registration fees, Ben has no financial motivation to do this because he works in a non-profit organization. While not an ethical issue, Ellen was constantly confronted with the practical issue of offering attractive special events on a low budget. Cost and appeal had to be carefully balanced in order to attract people. While Pam focused on inexpensive programs, registration was still a problem for many of her workshops. This finding suggests that cost is not the predominant issue for participants and that the problem lies in other areas, most likely the nature of the programs.

Although the low income level of seniors in the community influenced the cost of programs, none of the programmers identified income as a factor they considered when selecting the types of programs offered. The programmers did not, for example, focus on topics that might assist low income seniors or be particularly pertinent to their economic situations. An implication of this type of planning is that the programs may be appropriate financially but not in terms of the needs and interests of the community residents. As a result, the programs offered may not be serving the group of seniors most in need of programs to assist them with daily life.

When reviewing income statistics from the 1991 Census, it was evident that the median household income was not as low as the programmers and supervisor led me to believe. The supervisor was also very surprised at how high the figures were particularly

in two of the planning areas. She again reported that this community was traditionally a low income area and that seniors living near the centre had lower income levels than seniors in other parts of the city. Without income levels by age, one could only speculate about the income level of seniors. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the two planning areas with the largest population of seniors had significantly lower median household incomes than the city. The amounts were still higher than the low income cutoff for a family of four. One could surmise that seniors living alone, supported by pension cheques would have income levels well below the median level for these areas. Without accurate information about actual income levels, the programmers would be unable to determine whether or not this selection criterion is valid. Simply basing their judgements on the members, current participants, and their beliefs about the community does not provide them with a very good understanding of the financial situation of the neighbourhood. The programmers could benefit from analyzing income figures for the community and, in particular, trying to obtain income figures for seniors living in the area. They could also meet with a representative group of seniors to discuss various issues related to income. This would provide them with more accurate information on which to base their planning decisions.

It is interesting to note that while the income level of seniors was a salient factor shaping the selection of programs, a relatively neutral tone was adopted regarding other demographic characteristics of seniors in the community such as age, sex, ethnicity, and disability. As mentioned in the discussion of the economic need to attract people, there is an emphasis placed on attracting younger seniors who have moved into the

neighbourhood. This has had an obvious impact on the selection of fitness programs but is not as evident in the selection of other programs. Pam selects current, trendy arts and crafts ideas and is not keen on stereotypical arts and crafts programs or passe topics but she did not address younger seniors as her target group for arts and crafts programs.

While the membership is predominantly female, a fairly equal number of men and women under 75 years of age live in the planning areas around the centre. If the centre is hoping to attract more people, particularly younger seniors, one might expect that greater emphasis would be placed on enticing men to the centre. A number of senior led programs are offered which attract men. Ellen, however, was the only programmer who referred to offering some city programs that would be especially appealing to men.

One can speculate from the 1996 Census data that a small proportion of seniors living near the centre may be of East/South East Asian and South Asian origins. Several senior led programs are offered which address the needs of South Asian seniors.

Ethnicity, however, was not identified by the programmers as a consideration when generating and selecting ideas for city programs. A few talks, trips, and fitness programs were offered which reflected these cultures; but, they appeared to be selected because of general interest rather than targeting a particular group of seniors.

Members of this centre were reported to be generally in good health and not the frail elderly. The fact that seniors with disabilities and challenges related to aging were not typical members is consistent with the literature on participation in senior centres (see Krout, Cutler & Coward, 1990). At this centre this may have something to do with the fact that the programmers appear to plan for an active, able and healthy senior rather

than a less active and more frail senior. As a result, they may be excluding a group of seniors who do not believe they could benefit from the current program offerings or who may be excluded due to issues related to access.

During the discussions I had with the programmers and my observations of their practice, they did not seem to give adequate attention to the potential diversity of the older population particularly with respect to age, cultural differences, and ability/disability or the effect such diversity might have on seniors' interest in and willingness to participate in their programs. While they focused on income level, they did not take into account other characteristics of the seniors' context. This appears to be linked to the fact that they do not interact with or have any direct input from seniors who do not attend the centre. In order to be more inclusive and better informed about the larger community of seniors, the programmers could consider different ways of generating insight about this community's needs, interests, and desires. Rather than focusing on their own circle of influence, it would appear that the programmers could benefit from reaching out to people in the community to try to determine why their programs are not attracting more and different people, why their membership is declining, and who they are excluding from their programs. If they are not going out into the community they may not be aware of changing conditions and changing needs. By obtaining information from the people who attend their programs, they may not be sensitive to the needs of people who are not coming and the barriers to their participation. Information about the community could be obtained in a variety of different ways which might include interest inventories, demographic analysis, advisory councils, planning committees, and focus groups. Pam

reported that she did not have the luxury of time to find out why her arts and crafts programs were not well-attended. Strategies such as those mentioned above will take time and additional resources. If meeting a variety of seniors' needs (see p. 70), improving the quality of life for seniors in the community (see p. 70), and drawing more people to the centre are high priorities, then more time needs to be allocated to obtaining information about the seniors' context.

Programming Budget

While beliefs about new programs were the most central factors guiding decisions about program selections, programming area budgets also influenced planning practice. Ben, Ellen, and Pam identified their budgets as a major factor shaping the number of programs they could offer. Ben was particularly constrained by the number of programs outlined in his budget. Despite the fact that his bus trips typically sold out, he was not able to offer more than twelve trips a year because the Parks and Recreation Department did not allow him to do so. While most of Ellen's talks were free and did not have to be budgeted, her educational budget directed the number of paid talks she offered. Ellen explained that when selecting talks she had only budgeted for three paid talks per session. Pam also based the number of workshops and programs she offered on what she had outlined in her budget. Although the programmers had considerable freedom when planning because of the substantial programming budget, they still had to be careful not to over or underspend their area budgets. As Pam mentioned, underspending may result in a reduced budget the following year.

Seasonal Structure of Planning

Pam, Ellen, and Ben also identified the seasonal structure of planning as shaping the way in which they selected programs. Pam was particularly concerned about which season would be the best time to attract people to a program. She provided examples of delaying new programs until a busier season and not offering programs suited to the fall and winter during the summer. Since Ellen's events were based predominantly on festive holidays, the seasons dictated which events would be offered in a particular session. Ben also identified the appropriate time of year as a criterion for selecting programs. Planning in the fall and winter required him to generate a greater number of indoor trips.

In addition to influencing the nature of program selections, the seasons also directed the number of programs offered. While the number of trips Ben offered remained the same throughout the year, Ellen and Pam explained that they offered the greatest number of programs in the fall and winter sessions, fewer in the spring, and only a few in the summer. The variation in program offerings across sessions is a response to seasonal fluctuations in participation levels. In an effort to balance supply and demand, the programmers must weigh potential attendance levels with program offerings.

The Parks and Recreation Department

The Parks and Recreation Department directly influences the timing and organization of planning as well as the development of program ideas. As the sponsoring agency, this Department determines the dates of program sessions and the deadlines for planning programs. Deadlines imposed by the Department are approximately two months prior to the beginning of a session and as a result, the programmers had to plan much

further in advance than if they were not part of Parks and Recreation. All of the programmers identified advance planning as a challenge. Pam found it particularly difficult to repeat programs in an upcoming session because early deadlines meant that, at times, she was unable to determine the success of a program before having to decide whether or not to offer it again. When developing educational talks, Ellen and Nancy found it challenging to coordinate dates with speakers, particularly professors who did not have their schedules finalized. Ben identified advance planning as a challenge to generating trip ideas, especially coming up with festive or seasonal trips sometimes up to five months before the trip date. As a result of having to plan so far in advance, the programmers had to abandon ideas if they had not heard back from contacts in time, could not repeat some programs, and missed out on programs that were not advertized prior to the deadline. The Parks and Recreation Department provided structure in terms of the completion of planning steps but constrained the programmers when developing program ideas.

The Department was the primary influence on how programmers organized their planning details. A requirement of the Department was that all programs had to be entered into the city wide computer system so that they could be downloaded for the production of the program brochure and for registration purposes. As a result, the programmers completed planning sheets which included information that needed to be entered into the computer.

Policies about instructor rates, the length of bus trips, the selection of bus companies, and the number of programs were identified by the programmers as factors that constrained their ability to develop programs. The Department was not directly

involved in the selection of programs but the programmers were knowledgeable about programs that were not appropriate. Pam, for example, referred to physically dangerous activities and programs that did not cater to the general public.

The operating budget provided by the Parks and Recreation Department enabled the centre to hire a number of programmers to plan programs and provided the centre with the financial resources to offer a range of programs. As described by the supervisor, cutbacks imposed by the Department will have a substantial impact on the number of staff hired to plan programs and the amount of money available to offer city programs. This in turn, will influence who is involved in planning and how many programs are offered.

Summary

It is evident from this discussion that planning at this centre is shaped by a variety of contextual factors which include the organization of planning responsibilities, the economic need to attract people, commitment to new programs, the economic level of seniors, the programming budget, the seasonal structure of planning, and the Parks and Recreation Department. These factors influence various aspects of planning such as who is involved, how and why programs are selected, the timing and organization of planning, the technical process of planning, and program development issues. These findings demonstrate the context-specific nature of planning and the importance of examining context when exploring planning practice.

Planning as a Social-Political Process of Negotiation

Cervero and Wilson's (1994) view of planning focuses on the social context of planning. According to these authors, programs are constructed through the process of

negotiating the interests of key stakeholders who are engaged in relationships of power.

This view of planning places power relationships, interests, and negotiation at the forefront of discussions about planning practice. In this section, the findings of this study will be discussed according to each of these components.

Power Relationships

Cervero and Wilson (1994) refer to power as "the capacity to act, distributed to people by virtue of the enduring social relationships in which they participate" (p. 29). They assert that "planners' actions are structured by the power relationships of their institutional and social contexts" (p. 29). According to these authors, power is distributed symmetrically (equally) or asymmetrically (unequally) and power relationships are characterized as socially ad hoc (temporary) or socially systematic (stable). Although Cervero and Wilson do not refer to different sources of power, it is evident from the programmers' descriptions that people involved in planning have derived their power from different sources. The following discussion addresses the distribution of power, the sources of power, and the nature of power relations at Matheson Senior Centre.

The following people or groups of people are involved in planning city programs at this centre: the programmers, the supervisor, the sponsoring agency, program providers, and participants/members. The power to plan is distributed asymmetrically with the sponsoring agency at the top of hierarchy, followed by the supervisor, the programmers, and then the participants/members.

As the sponsoring agency, the Parks and Recreation Department holds the ultimate authority about programming by controlling the operating funds for the centre (economic

power and power by authority). This Department constrained the programmers' actions through its policies about program details (i.e., instructors, number of trips, length of trips) and by regulating the timing of planning (i.e., advance planning) and the organization of planning details (i.e., according to the computerized system). Pam's comment that physically dangerous activities might *"raise some eyebrows"* (see p. 99) implies that the Department also held certain expectations about appropriate programs. The programmers did not, however, express feeling constrained by the Department with respect to their program selections or identify any situations for which this had been an area of conflict.

The supervisor, as a result of her position, has decision making authority over all aspects of the centre, including program provisions (power by authority). Although she is ultimately responsible for the programmers' actions, she has deferred much of her authority over planning decisions by appointing each of the three programmers as responsible for specific programming areas. The supervisor views the programmers as experts and leaves planning up to them (expert power). This is clearly illustrated in her comments, *"sometimes I see their programs when they are in the brochure"* (see p. 90) and *"that's only a working style and I want them to do whatever they're comfortable with"* (see p. 90). While the supervisor has given the programmers the autonomy to plan programs, she continued to utilize her power as the supervisor to influence the types of programs that were offered such as low cost and mainstream programs. Examples of this will be discussed later on in this section (see negotiation).

Although the sponsoring agency and the supervisor have the ultimate control over programming, the programmers hold a tremendous amount of power with respect to program planning. The sources of their power stem from their formal positions as programmers and the authority delegated to them by the supervisor (power by position), combined with their years of experience at the centre and successful planning efforts (expert power). The authority they have enables them to make planning decisions about their programming areas without needing the approval of other people such as the supervisor, other programmers, the seniors, or the Parks and Recreation Department. As a result, planning is very centralized with limited input from others.

The seniors held no formal position of power with respect to planning city programs. As discussed in the previous section, the programmers made decisions, on behalf of the seniors, about which programs would be offered and when. They were enabled to do this because of the division of planning responsibilities but also because the seniors allowed them to plan in this way. Members and participants appeared to have some degree of informal power derived from their role at the centre (i.e., why the centre operates) and because programs will only run if they attend (market power). The programmers were influenced, for example, by the expressed desires of members and participants. Ellen referred to "traditional" programs that were always offered and were not subject to change without disappointing participants. Pam described programs that she repeated for a second session because of the demand from participants. She also referred to programs that she was not keen about but offered them because of requests from seniors.

While the power relationships the programmers have with the sponsoring agency, the supervisor, and the seniors can be classified as asymmetrical, a more symmetrical distribution of power is evident with respect to the relationship between the programmers and the program providers (e.g., instructors, speakers, tour operators). The programmers have the authority to select programs; however, they do not have control over whether or not programs they select will be offered because of their dependency on instructors, speakers, entertainers, and tour operators. Program providers enable the programmers to plan by agreeing to give a talk, teach a course, provide entertainment, or offer a tour. At times, program providers made it difficult or impossible to plan a selected program. Ellen provided a number of examples where her ability to offer a talk was dependent on whether or not the speaker was interested and available. When taking over for Ellen, Nancy was clearly frustrated by having to be so dependent on speakers. Ellen and Pam identified barriers related to program providers as the primary reason for not offering programs. While Ben was able to offer most of the trips he selected, he also provided an example of not being able to offer a trip because of barriers imposed by tour operators.

The nature of the power relationships in which the programmers are engaged can be classified as socially systematic. They are ongoing and stable relationships of power which have been in place for many years and which exist across planning situations.

Interests

Cervero and Wilson (1994) define interests as "the motivations and purposes that lead people to act in certain ways when confronted with situations in which they must

make a judgement about what to do or say" (p. 29). Planning at this centre was "motivated" by a variety of stakeholder interests.

The primary interest of the Parks and Recreation Department was financial in nature. Representatives from this Department were particularly concerned about how the operating budget was being spent and whether or not the budget was balanced. The staff's concerns about attracting people to the centre and not underspending their programming area budgets suggest that the Department was looking for ways to reduce the financial resources they distributed. Pam's reference to dangerous programs implies the Department's concern about safety and liability. Ben's reference to selecting bus companies also illustrates the Department's interest in public accountability and proper ways of spending public funds.

When selecting and developing programs, the organizational interest of attracting new members was at the forefront. Increasing the membership, or at least the number of participants, had a financial impact on the centre which was particularly important during times of budget cutbacks. As a result, emphasis was placed on new, innovative programs that would entice people to the centre.

Personal interests also directed the programmers' practice. Pam, Ben, and Ellen referred to offering new programs in order to keep their jobs interesting. When selecting programs, they were also guided by their own interests related to program topics. Ellen, for example, referred to two talks that she selected simply because they were *"near and dear to my heart"* (see p. 136). Pam remarked that *"if [an arts and crafts idea] captures my interest, chances are really good it's going to capture their interest"* (see p. 109).

Nancy referred to selecting talks that she thought sounded *"interesting"* or *"good"* (see p. 164).

Program providers such as speakers, instructors, entertainers, and tour operators held personal interests with respect to the programs that were offered such as the fee to be charged, the topic, the length, as well as commercial interests such as promoting a business or product. The interests of the program providers had to be consistent with the various interests represented by the programmers or else their programs were not offered.

The programmers were motivated by a variety of interests related to the seniors. First and foremost was attracting them to the programs. As discussed in the previous section, the programmers had developed selection criteria based on what they thought might be appealing to seniors such as low cost programs, short courses, full day bus trips, weekday hours, and innovative topics. The programmers were also motivated by their beliefs about programming for seniors such as providing them with new opportunities so that they could extend or stretch themselves and offering them diversity. Ellen and Nancy were particularly concerned about the vulnerability of seniors which guided their selection of educational talks. The programmers were also motivated by the expressed desires of the members and participants.

Negotiation

Cervero and Wilson (1994) contend that planners act in a social world and the central form of their actions is negotiation, a term they define as "to confer, bargain, or discuss with a view to reaching agreement with others" (p. 156). According to these authors, "negotiation occurs when a course of action is chosen through the social

interactions among people" (p. 157). Planners negotiate interests within relationships of power. A number of situations were described by the programmers which depict the negotiation of interests within power relationships.

Pam, for example, explained that she was "*forever arguing*" (see p. 119) with instructors about the number of sessions. The instructors wanted to offer a certain number of sessions in order to cover all of the content. Pam wanted them to offer fewer sessions in order to attract people by keeping the cost low and the length short. The instructors ultimately went along with what she recommended. Pam explained that most of the instructors said they would "*bow*" to her "*supposed knowledge*" (see p. 120). If they wanted to offer their program at this centre, they did not have much choice in the matter. Pam had the authority to decide which programs would be offered.

Ellen referred to deliberating with program providers about cost. She explained that if there was a fee involved, she would "*always negotiate*" (see p. 139) with the speaker to bring the price down. Ben also provided an example of a situation where he negotiated a price with a tour operator so that he could offer a particular bus trip.

Ben provided an illustrative example of a negotiation that took place between himself and the supervisor over the cost of a bus trip. He wanted to offer a relatively expensive bus trip, while Sue thought it was too expensive and did not want him to offer it. Both of them represented the interests of the seniors. Ben wanted to provide them with an exciting trip that had not been done in a while that he thought they could afford. Sue was concerned that the price was too expensive and would not attract people. The fact that Ben offered the trip despite Sue's protests illustrates his power as a planner accrued

to him because of his position and probably because of his prior experiences. While Sue could have stopped him from offering the trip because of her position of authority, she abided by the power structure that she had created. Given the success of the trip, Ben attained additional bargaining power for future negotiations with the supervisor. While other specific examples were not described, Sue constantly encouraged Ben at programming meetings to think about keeping the cost of his trips low.

Coordinating dates with program providers involved reconciling available dates at the centre with when the speaker was available. Ellen, Nancy and Pam provided instructors and speakers with times that were available at the centre. The program providers then had to select a date and time from the list that fit with their schedules. This process of reaching an agreement about dates and times was sometimes quite challenging, particularly with professors who could not easily commit to a date so far in advance.

Before selecting an educational talk, Ellen and Nancy took steps to ensure that the commercial interests of speakers would not be raised over the interests of participants. These programmers were particularly concerned about business ventures that might lure vulnerable seniors. In order to prevent this from happening, they discussed this issue with speakers prior to confirming the talk and included it in their confirmation letters. Speakers that seemed suspect were simply not selected.

When discussing the selection of special events, Ellen described how she felt pulled between her personal beliefs about offering new events and the participants' demands and expectations for events that had become traditions. She wanted to expose the seniors to different things but felt compelled to do as they wished because she did not

want to disappoint them. Ellen was faced with two competing interests but placed the seniors' interest above her own. She was able to exercise her own interests to some extent by changing such things as the entertainment, decorations, menu, and activities each time.

The situation about occult programs, described in Chapter 5, illustrates a conflict of interests between the programmers and the supervisor. Sue was opposed to the emphasis that appeared to be placed on occult programs at the centre and so she asked the programmers to stop offering such programs. She was concerned about misleading the seniors. The programmers, however, were motivated by offering seniors a variety of programs and letting them choose what they wanted to attend. They apparently did not feel that the seniors were as vulnerable as the supervisor believed. The programmers are aware of her concerns but continue to offer some programs of an occult nature. The programmers and the supervisor appear to have reached a compromise.

While Ellen was away, the supervisor and the programmers engaged in deliberations about which events to offer. It should be noted that this situation was unusual and only took place because of Ellen's absence. Discussions about whether or not an event would be offered centred around interests of the staff (i.e., workload), organizational interests (i.e., attendance), and interests of the seniors (i.e., tradition, requests). These interests appeared to be prioritized differently depending on whether or not the event was a tradition or something relatively new. While the staff had decision making power, the interests of seniors prevailed over organizational and staff interests with respect to traditional events. The opposite was true for events that were new or had not yet become traditions.

Cervero and Wilson propose that the purpose, the audience, the content, and the format comprise central issues about which planners negotiate. To what extent are the examples provided above illustrations of negotiations about such issues? At this site, negotiations about the audience were not identified which is not surprising given that programs are planned with a specific clientele in mind. The content of programs was also not identified which is likely due to the fact that the programmers do not appear to be involved in developing content and leave this up to the program providers. Day to day issues seemed to centre around the format of programs, such as the cost and the schedule. Ellen and Nancy's concern about sales oriented talks dealt with the issue of the purpose of the program (i.e., to sell or inform). Other negotiations dealing with the purpose of programs were not described which is probably due to the fact that the programmers have a strong sense of what programs are suitable for this context. Two of the examples focus on the type, but not the purpose, of programs to be offered such as new versus repeat events and occult versus mainstream programs. It is important to note that issues related to the type of program are considered each session but are not negotiated per se every time the programmers plan. Deliberations about special events that took place while Ellen was away focused on which events to offer rather than the purpose or type of event.

While examples were provided which support Cervero and Wilson's belief that the central form of planning activity is negotiation, other examples suggest that this view of planning does not accurately depict planning at this centre. Several situations were identified, for example, which demonstrate non negotiable planning issues. Pam felt particularly constrained by the Parks and Recreation Department's policy about instructor

rates for regular classes. In order to keep registration costs down (i.e., participant interest) she wanted to use volunteers for arts and crafts, fitness, and dance programs but was not allowed because of departmental policies about rates that had to be applied across centres. Non negotiable issues for Ben included not being able to offer overnight trips and more than twelve bus trips per year. Ben expressed that the limits imposed by the Department did not enable him to adequately address the interests of seniors attending his programs. Ben was particularly opposed to the Department's policy about selecting bus companies. While the Department must engage in fair practice when spending public funds, Ben believed that this was in conflict with the interests of low income seniors who attended the centre. The selection of the lowest, rather than the middle quote, would satisfy both taxpayers and low income members of the centre. The Parks and Recreation Department, however, did not allow him to do so. Another example of a non negotiable issue can be found with the timing of planning. Although the programmers expressed their frustration with advance planning, none of them challenged the early deadlines determined by the Parks and Recreation Department. They simply worked within the time lines imposed upon them. As a result of the hierarchy of power relationships, the programmers were not in a position to challenge departmental policies. Issues such as those raised above were simply not negotiable.

Another contradiction of Cervero and Wilson's view of planning is that the programmers completed a number of central planning tasks without interacting with others. It is true that the programmers made decisions with certain interests in mind and were enabled and constrained because of power relationships; however, the programmers

chose a particular course of action without "conferring, bargaining, or discussing" their choices with others. Many of the programmers' decisions were made without involving other people. This was particularly the case with selecting programs and organizing details.

When carrying out their planning responsibilities, the programmers interacted with a number of different people. Not all of their interactions, however, were conducted for the purpose of "reaching agreement" about a program. The programmers, for example, telephoned program providers and community contacts to inquire about upcoming events, tours, and program trends; talked to members and instructors about program ideas; met with each other and the supervisor to share possible program offerings, obtain feedback, and discuss various programming issues. Interactions such as these are better characterized as simply social, rather than political, in nature.

If Cervero and Wilson contend that negotiations of interests are the central form of action in planning, what explanations can be given for the general lack of such activities at this centre? One reason has to do with systemic and stable relationships of power. The programmers have tremendous control over planning decisions and do not need to have them approved by the supervisor, the head programmer, the seniors, or the sponsoring agency. The programmers make decisions about which ideas are selected, developed, and offered. With very little input from people in terms of planning decisions, the potential for deliberations about power and interests is limited.

In addition, the programmers have worked at the centre for many years and are aware of the constraints imposed upon them by the Parks and Recreation Department.

They appear to work within these constraints rather than challenging the policies and procedures imposed upon them.

Clearly defined boundaries within the centre also influenced the nature of interactions between people. Programmers are responsible for city programs and seniors are responsible for senior led programs. The supervisor voices her concerns about programs but considers the programmers to be experts in their programming areas and, therefore, gives them autonomy to make decisions. In addition, programming areas are distinct. There are times when programmers plan outside their areas but when this happens, that programmer becomes totally responsible for the development and implementation of the program. Given the boundaries around programs and each programmer's domain, the programmers have little need to engage in deliberations about interests with the seniors, the supervisor, or other programmers. As a result, the social dynamics between these people are largely characterized by a sharing of knowledge and helping one another rather than reaching agreements.

Another reason for the lack of negotiations is that those who are directly involved in planning decisions at the centre share their beliefs about programming. They are all committed to offering new programs, attracting seniors, and meeting the low income needs of the community. Since there is consensus among the programmers and supervisor there is no need to deliberate over the interests which direct planning practice.

Summary

Planning at this centre is clearly motivated by interests and characterized by relationships of power. A number of examples were provided which illustrate negotiations

about interests within power relationships when planning. Not all of the programmers' social interactions, however, appear to fit with Cervero and Wilson's definition of negotiation. When planning programs, the programmers are involved in a variety of interactions with people where the focus is not to "reach agreement" and where interests and power relationships are not central to these interactions. While social interactions are prevalent, the programmers make a number of decisions without conferring, discussing, or bargaining with others (i.e., negotiations were not evident). Several examples were also provided of non negotiable planning issues.

A Practice-Based View of Program Planning

At the beginning of this chapter, the following questions were posed which were derived from three views of program planning: 1) To what extent is planning a technical process? 2) To what extent is planning context- or situation-specific? and 3) To what extent is planning a social-political process of negotiation? The degree to which each of these views characterizes program planning at Matheson Senior Centre is presented in the following discussion.

This exploration of practice demonstrates that a very strong emphasis is placed on technical aspects of planning at this centre. When constructing new programs, the programmers engage in four stages of planning. Before a program is offered, an idea has to be generated and then selected. The selected idea is then developed into a program. As development issues are finalized, planning details are recorded. For programs that have been offered in the past, only the final two stages are typically completed. The day to day planning activities in which the programmers engage focus on these stages and their

related tasks. The fact that the programmers systematically complete planning stages is consistent with the technical view of planning. Contrary to this view, only one of the prescribed stages outlined in traditional planning models was represented in the programmers' practice. What the programmers do when planning programs appears to be predominantly a technical process, but not the technical process so often depicted in the planning literature.

The construction of programs is clearly a highly contextualized process. The way in which programmers planned programs was influenced by a variety of contextual factors internal and external to the centre such as the organization of planning responsibilities, the economic need to attract people, commitment to new programs, the economic level of seniors in the community, the operating budget and program accounts, the seasonal structure of planning, and the Parks and Recreation Department. These factors shaped the structure, process, timing, and organization of planning as well as the selection and development of programs. These findings demonstrate the pervasive nature of context and provide support for critics' claims that context needs to be at the forefront of discussions about planning.

When examining planning as a social-political process of negotiation, it was evident that planning practice was characterized by power relationships, interests, and negotiation. The programmers' "capacity to act" was structured by relationships of power. Their ability to plan programs was enabled and constrained by the supervisor and the Parks and Recreation Department who have legitimate authority over their practice. The programmers' planning practice was also contingent on the program providers and the seniors. While the programmers were engaged in power relationships with others, they

held tremendous authority with respect to planning decisions and did not need the approval of others when making decisions. As a result, power and authority to plan programs were centralized and pivoted around the programmers. When constructing programs, the programmers' actions were guided by the interests of multiple stakeholders. While organizational interests pertaining to maintaining the budget were at the forefront of planning decisions, the programmers were also guided by personal interests as well as those pertaining directly to the seniors. Interests of program providers were considered in light of other stakeholder interests. Several examples were provided which illustrated negotiations about the format, the purpose, the type, and the number of programs offered. While power relationships, interests, and examples of negotiation were identified, the social-political dimension of planning did not emerge as the dominant feature of program planning at this centre. Other contextual factors and forms of activity appeared to be just as central to the programmers' practice.

Toward an Integrated View of Planning

It is apparent that all three views make a valuable contribution to understanding planning at Matheson Senior Centre. What is also clear is that simply focusing on one of these views would not adequately capture the essence of program development. Each view highlights different dimensions or aspects of planning and together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of how programs are developed. A combined view, therefore, best depicts program planning at this centre. The following discussion explores how the unique contributions of these views can be integrated to provide a more holistic portrayal of planning practice.

An obvious starting point for this discussion is with the technical dimension of planning. The construction of programs clearly revolves around four technical stages: generating ideas, selecting ideas, developing programs, and organizing details. The daily activities of planning centre around these stages and their related tasks. At this level, planning is simply depicted as a technical process.

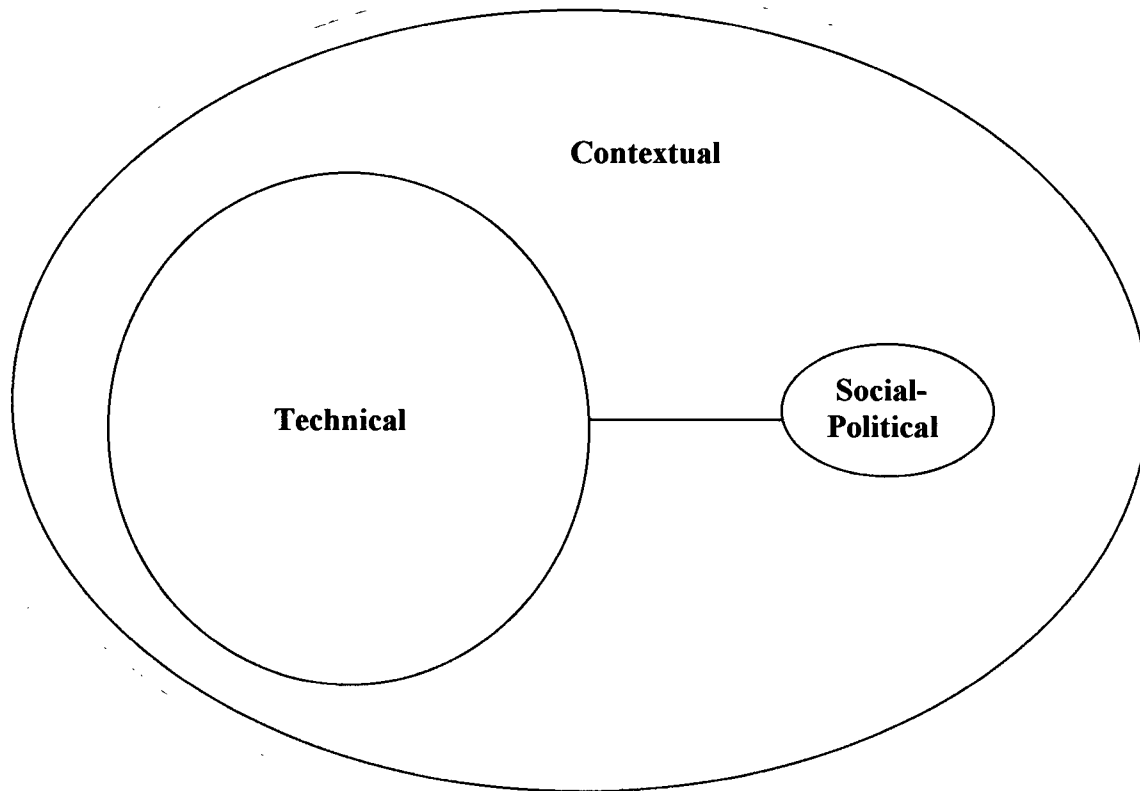
In order to plan programs at this centre, however, one must have an understanding of the context in which planning takes place as well as knowledge about which planning steps to follow. Context provides the key to understanding why these stages are emphasized while others are overlooked; when these stages are completed; how they are completed; who is involved in this process; and who makes planning decisions. The centrality of context shifts this view away from simply a technical process towards a highly contextualized technical process. It should be noted that "highly contextualized" may mean different things to different people. In this thesis, the term refers to the finding that multiple factors shaped the planners' practice and influenced their decisions. They did not complete technical tasks in a vacuum but were influenced by a variety of factors internal and external to the centre. If one were to interpret contextual as the degree to which planners were aware of and consciously incorporated characteristics of the context in which they planned, planning practice at this centre would appear to be significantly "less contextualized" because the programmers overlooked a number of characteristics of the seniors' context which may have altered their planning practice.

Integrating the social-political dimension into this view of planning requires one to explore the forms of activity which characterize planning behaviour at this centre. The programmers described several different forms of activity which comprise their practice.

Generating ideas was characterized by information gathering. The programmers interacted with others in order to generate potential program ideas. While this step was characterized by social interactions, negotiations were not evident. When selecting ideas, the programmers engaged in criteria-based decision making. Each programmer selected programs based on criteria specific to the centre and their programming areas. When developing programs, the central form of activity was negotiation. At this stage, the programmers negotiated with program providers about the format (e.g., length, cost, date, time) and sometimes the purpose of the program (e.g., informational rather than sales related). Organizing details, like selecting ideas, was an individual rather than social activity carried out by each programmer. This stage was characterized by recording program details. Incorporating forms of activity extends the depiction of planning at this centre to include a highly contextualized technical process which entails information gathering, criteria-based decision making, negotiating, and recording.

Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic summary of the integration of the technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions of planning at this centre. The placement of the contextual dimension around the other dimensions emphasizes the contextual nature of planning and indicates that the interplay between the technical and social-political dimensions is contingent on the context of planning. It should be noted that if the contextual dimension simply represented the planners' attention to contextual factors in the community, this dimension would be less pronounced. As depicted in this diagram, the social-political dimension is substantially smaller than the technical dimension. This reflects the fact that technical details related to program planning took precedence over interactions of a political nature. While negotiations were part of the planners' practice,

Figure 2: Planning as a highly contextualized technical process with minimal social-political activity.



they were only evident in the development of program ideas but not at other stages. In addition, these negotiations focused on program details and did not address issues about the way in which programs are planned at this centre (i.e., who is involved in planning, how the process is carried out). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the centralized distribution of power enabled each planner to make decisions about his or her areas without a great deal of input from others. As a result, there was little need or opportunity for interactions whereby negotiation might be the central form of activity. At this centre, paid programming staff held decision making power about planning issues in their areas. The same interplay of technical and social-political dimensions might also be found in

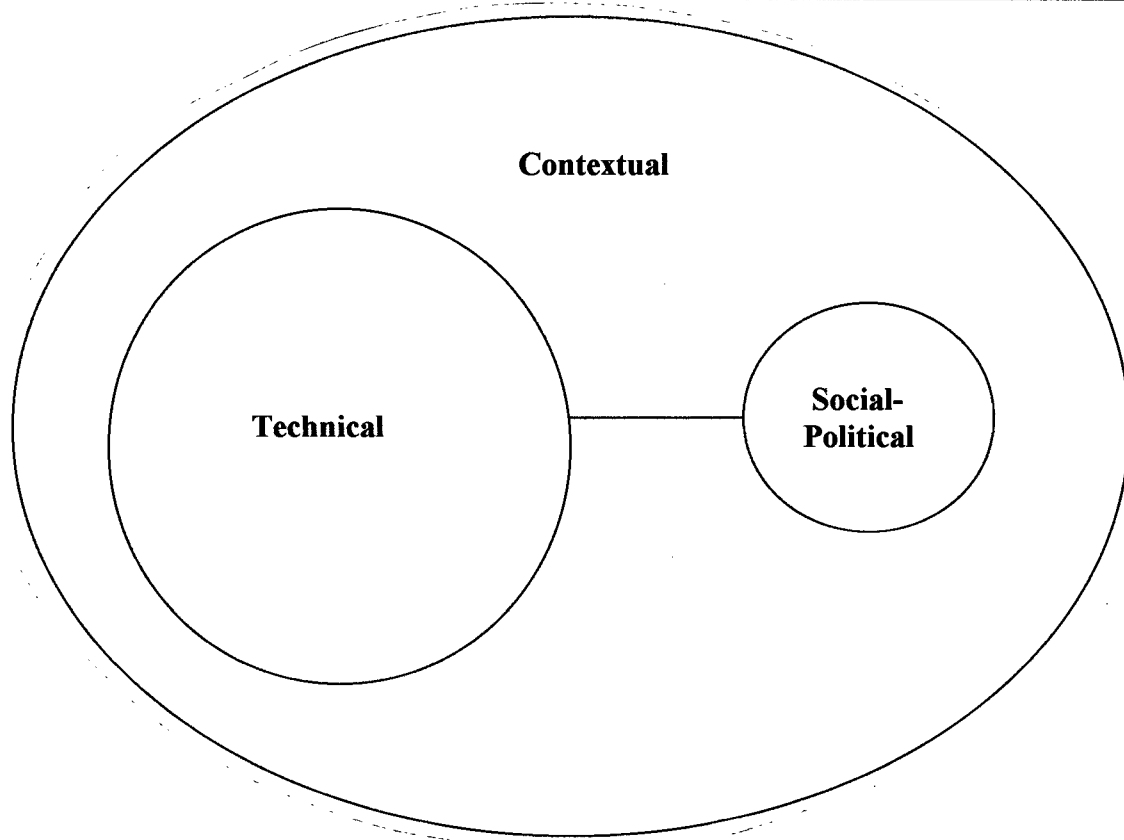
other sites where one person (e.g., a supervisor, a senior representative) is responsible for making planning decisions without substantial input from others.

While this diagram best depicts planning at this centre, one can speculate about how the interplay of the technical and social-political dimensions may change in different contexts. At this centre, the way in which power was distributed and decisions about who was involved in planning had a tremendous impact on the relationship between these two dimensions. Figures 3, 4 and 5 show how this relationship might look when more people are involved in decision making and the distribution of power is shifted.

In Figure 3, the technical dimension is more dominant than the social-political dimension; however, interactions of a social-political nature are more prevalent than in Figure 2. This type of relationship might characterize planning at Matheson Senior Centre if, for example, the planners continued to be responsible for making planning decisions but obtained greater input from seniors in the community about their programming needs and interests. Greater input from others would require the planners to negotiate interests during the generation and selection of ideas as well as the development of ideas. As a result, the social-political dimension would play a more prominent role in characterizing planning practice. As long as an individual planner has the power to make program development decisions, one would expect that the social-political dimension would continue to be suppressed because negotiations were controlled by the planner and limited to decisions about program details (e.g., topics, schedule, cost).

Figure 4 depicts the possible relationship between technical and social-political dimensions when power is decentralized and multiple stakeholders are substantively involved in program planning. An example of this would be a context where planners are

Figure 3: Planning as a highly contextualized technical process with moderate social-political activity.



part of a larger matrix of power relationships. Other stakeholders such as advisory committees, the board of directors, the supervisor, members and participants, representatives of the sponsoring agency, and/or representatives from the community may all play a central role in programming decisions. Each stakeholder would represent his or her interests and these interests would then have to be negotiated in order to construct programs. Negotiations might address issues related to program details as well as larger planning issues related to the involvement of people in planning, the process of planning, the nature of programs, and the objectives or goals of programming. In such a context, one could speculate that the social-political dimension and the technical dimension might both be equally represented in planning practice.

Figure 4: Planning as a highly contextualized process where technical and social-political activities are both central dimensions.

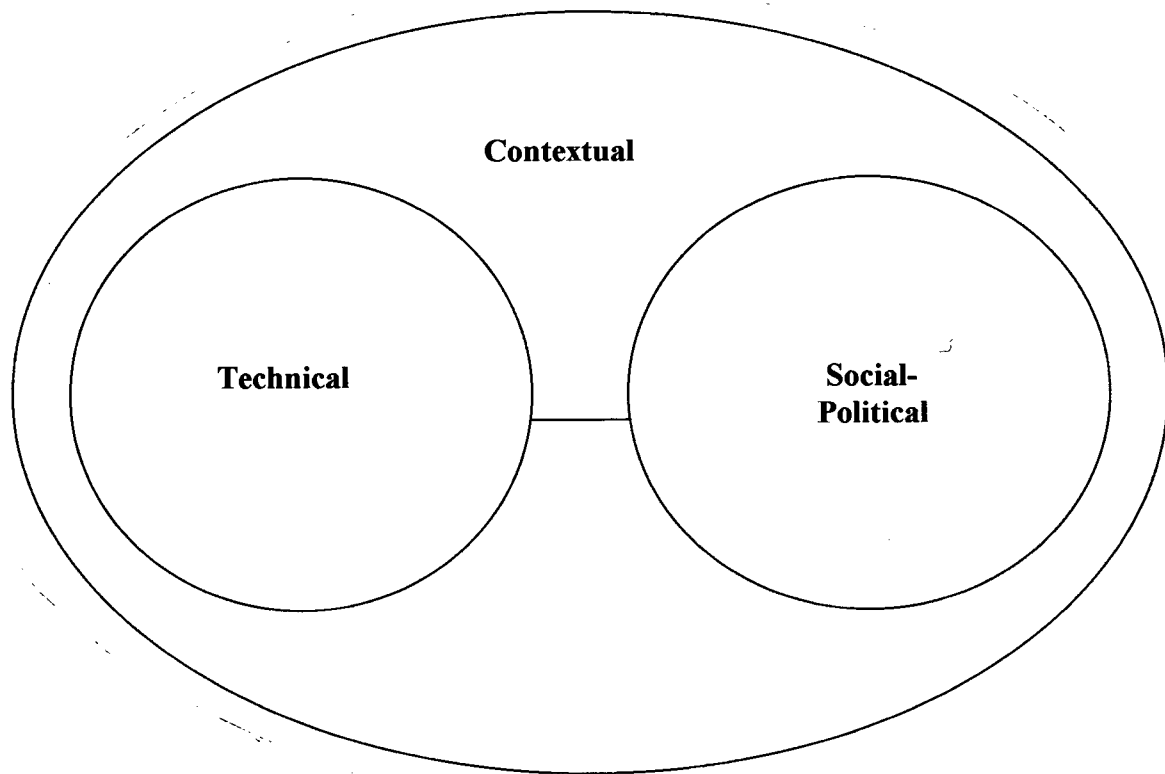
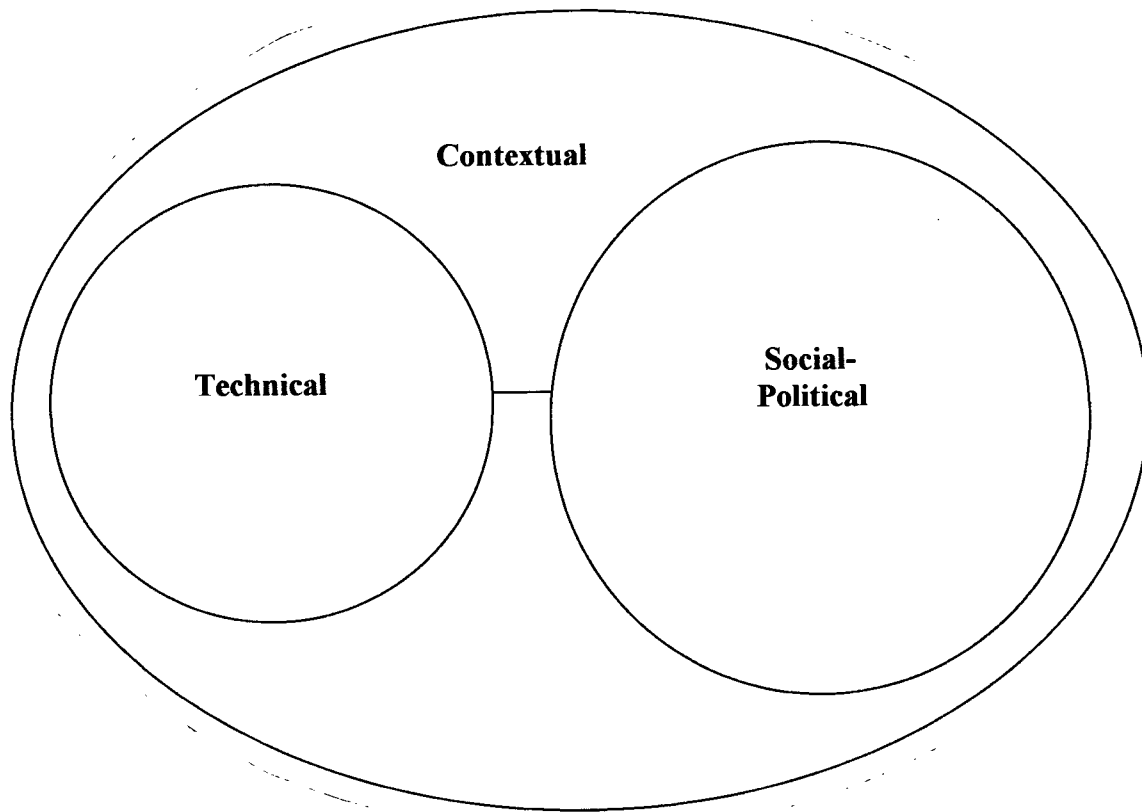


Figure 5 represents a possible relationship between the two dimensions whereby the social-political dimension overshadows the technical dimension. One could speculate that such a relationship might exist in a context that is characterized by power struggles and conflicting interests. Planners may have limited decision making power and be constrained by upper management, sponsoring agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders. As a result, planning would take place in a controversial or challenging environment. While the technical dimension would continue to be an essential element of program construction, planning behaviour would centre around interactions of a political nature.

Figure 5: Planning as a highly contextualized process where social-political activity overshadows technical aspects.



In all four figures the technical dimension remains static while the emphasis on the social-political dimension shifts. The reason for this is to emphasize the central role of technical elements when planning. Regardless of variations in context, programs cannot be offered unless certain technical issues have been addressed. While the centrality of this dimension is portrayed as static in these diagrams, it should be noted that the elements included in this dimension will likely vary across contexts. At Matheson Senior Centre, for example, planning was routine, predictable, and simplified and the planners had years of planning experience. As a result, a narrow range of stages and technical skills was required. A broader range would be needed if, for example, greater emphasis was placed

on obtaining information about the interests and needs of the community, evaluating the extent to which goals and objectives had been met, and including more people in the planning process. Planners at this centre would need to have an understanding of how to survey or assess the community, develop program goals and objectives, conduct evaluations, involve more people in the planning process, and negotiate interests of various stakeholders.

The above examples constitute variations in context which may influence the interplay between the technical and social-political dimension. Additional contextual factors would need to be included in such models in order to fully capture the nature of the relationship between these two dimensions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the extent to which technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions of planning characterized the way in which city programs were planned at Matheson Senior Centre. Elements of all three dimensions were evident. An integrated view which combined the technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions emerged as the most representative depiction of program planning at this centre. Three examples were provided which illustrated the potential interplay between the technical and social-political dimensions when contextual factors were altered.

CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the research findings of this study; identifies limitations inherent in this research; and addresses implications for theory, research, and practice.

Summary of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding of the process of planning programs in a senior centre. Indepth interviews were conducted with four programmers who were responsible for planning programs at Matheson Senior Centre from April 1996 to April 1997. Observations of programming meetings and documents pertaining to program planning supplemented interview data. This exploration of planning practice revealed that program planning is comprised of two levels. The first level consisted of the centre-wide aspects of planning such as the division of program responsibilities, the social dynamics of planning, the process of planning, the timing of planning, and factors that influence the way in which programs are planned. This level of planning constituted what someone would need to know in order to plan programs at this centre. The second level was specific to individual programmers and referred to the way in which each programmer planned programs in his or her areas. While all of the programmers completed four planning stages, each programmer generated ideas, selected ideas, and developed programs in ways that were specific to their areas. This level of planning constituted what someone would need to know in order to plan programs for specific programming areas.

In addition to describing planning practice at Matheson Senior Centre, this study discussed planning issues according to three views presented in the literature: technical, contextual, and social-political. Planning at this centre reflected aspects of each of these views. The programmers' daily planning activities revolved around four technical planning stages. The way in which they completed these stages was largely influenced by economic, organizational, social, and political factors related to the planning environment in which they worked. When constructing programs, the programmers engaged in four different types of activities, one of which was negotiation. A view of planning was presented which integrated elements of each of these views. Planning at this centre was best depicted as a highly contextualized technical process which entailed information gathering, criteria-based decision making, negotiating, and recording details. The potential impact of contextual variations on the interplay between technical and social-political dimensions was also discussed.

Limitations

Various strategies were used to limit threats to the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study. Reflexive analysis, member checking, verbatim accounts, and a lengthy data collection period were used to enhance the accuracy of my interpretations of the data. A detailed description of the centre was presented in order to provide a base of information for people who are interested in transferring the findings of this study to other settings. I engaged in consistent data collection practices and provided a detailed description of the decisions I made regarding site selection, informant selection, data

collection, and data analysis in order to enhance the dependability of my findings. Each of these strategies has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

A number of limitations related to the site I selected can be identified which have not been addressed in previous chapters. I chose, for example, to study program planning in a single senior centre. This enabled me to obtain an indepth account of planning across programming areas over a one year period. The practice-based insights into program planning are limited, however, to the way in which programs were constructed at one of thirty Lower Mainland senior centres.

This study also explored planning in one of four types of senior centres: age-segregated and publicly-funded. Other types of centres found in the Lower Mainland include age-segregated privately-funded centres and multi-generational publicly-funded centres. The findings of this study are also limited to a specific type of service delivery model.

As discussed in Chapter 4, this centre is typical of the predominant type of centre (age-segregated), resource base (publicly-funded), and sponsoring agency (Parks and Recreation Department) found in the Lower Mainland. It is similar to two of the centres in the same city in terms of the operating budget, the number of staff, and the number and type of programming areas. It should be noted that these centres have substantially greater resources than other Lower Mainland centres. The findings of this study represent a single age-segregated senior centre with a great deal of available resources for program planning. This study's contributions must be considered with respect to the typical and atypical features of this centre.

When selecting this site I had an opportunity to choose between two age-segregated centres. While the centre I selected offered a greater number of programs, had more program turnover, and had more staff programmers, the other centre had greater senior involvement in programming. Although other studies of Lower Mainland senior centres have not been conducted which explore who is involved in planning, my experience in the field has shown me that some centres have staff plan programs, some have seniors responsible for planning, and others use a combination of staff and seniors. By highlighting one approach, however, I have not addressed other forms of planning which would provide a different view of planning practice.

In addition to limitations related to the site selected, one may question why the voices of seniors are not heard if the study is about senior centre programs. This study sought to generate an understanding of the process of program planning from the perspectives of programmers. At the time of this study, seniors were responsible for implementing seniors' programs and organizing certain activities pertaining to their programs. While seniors are involved in the development of new seniors' programs at this centre, they did not engage in a process of program development during the data collection period. As a result their perspectives were not included.

It should be noted that the insights gained from this study do not necessarily represent effective or successful practice. The view of planning presented in the previous chapter constitutes one view of planning that best characterized how programs were planned at this centre. This view does not claim to be representative of the right way to plan or the only way in which programs are planned.

The intention of this study, and this type of research, was not to generalize the findings to all senior centres or even any other senior centre. The fact that this study has only explored the planning practices of staff programmers in one age-segregated senior centre should not be seen as a limitation per se, but rather one piece of a developing perspective about program planning in senior centres and the general practice of planning in related fields such as adult education, leisure, and recreation.

Implications for Theory

This study provides insights about program planning which may contribute to the development of a practice-based theory of planning senior centre programs. This exploration of practice demonstrates that different levels of planning as well as different dimensions of planning should be considered in such a theory. Planning at this centre revealed centre-wide aspects which affected all programmers as well as individual approaches to planning that were specific to programming areas and programmers. In addition to two levels of planning, the process of planning was characterized by technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions. The context in which the programmers worked shaped the technical stages and tasks completed by the programmers as well as the forms of activity in which they engaged. Since very little has been written about senior centre planning, these findings suggest that future theoretical development should address different levels and dimensions rather than simply focusing on the technical dimension which has characterized planning models in other related fields.

The findings of this study may also make a contribution to the growing discussion about planning practice in related fields. Leisure and recreation planning literature

continues to depict planning as an idealized technical process. Writers in adult education have proposed contextual and social-political views of planning as alternatives to the technical view which has also dominated the planning literature in this field. While these three views represent different ways of thinking about planning practice, this research suggests that all three dimensions need to be addressed in discussions of planning. The way in which planning occurred at this centre implies that technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions are interrelated and that the interplay between the technical and social-political dimensions is influenced by contextual factors. Rather than pitting one view against another, an integrated way of thinking about planning would acknowledge varying degrees to which technical, contextual, or social-political dimensions may be emphasized depending on the planning environment.

Given that each view is based on seemingly incompatible assumptions, one may question whether an integrated theory is possible. This analysis indicates that these dimensions are occurring simultaneously in practice and that they are not mutually exclusive. A new set of assumptions, therefore, is needed on which an integrated view would be based. While the purpose of this study was not to develop a theory of practice, future theoretical development could elaborate on what those underlying assumptions might be.

The findings of this study raise a number of questions that should be addressed in an integrated theory of planning such as 1) What technical activities do planners engage in when planning? 2) What forms of action characterize their practice? 3) Who is involved in planning and how are they involved? and 4) Why is planning conducted in this manner?

Asking multiple questions reveals multiple dimensions which would, therefore, provide a much more comprehensive view of planning than each view can provide.

This study sought to generate an understanding of the way in which planning was carried out by programmers in a senior centre. While I have framed the analysis according to three views of planning and discussed the findings according to pertinent literature, there are a number of other theoretical perspectives that could be incorporated in order to develop an even deeper understanding of planning at this site, such as frame factor theory (see Elgstrom & Riis, 1992; Schon & Rein, 1994), negotiation theory (see Elgstrom & Riis, 1992), and critical theory (see Forester, 1993), as well as the notion of proxy planners and participation in planning (see Rosenblum, 1985; Sork, 1989). Future analyses of the data I collected could be framed by perspectives such as these in order to enrich the theoretical contribution of this exploration of planning practice.

Implications for Future Research

This study constitutes an initial exploration of program planning in a senior centre. Additional research is needed which continues to explore how programs are developed in these settings. Explorations of what planners do will be useful in developing a practice-based theory of planning which provides a more accurate portrayal than idealized views of practice. A number of interesting issues were raised by this study which could be the focus of future explorations of planning practice.

Research is needed, for example, which explores how planning is conducted in other publicly-funded age-segregated centres. Researchers could continue to examine

technical steps, contextual factors, and forms of activity, and also look for other dimensions of planning. Themes which emerge across centres could be compared in order to identify planning practice that is consistent and incongruous in centres representing one type of service delivery model. One would expect to see a greater emphasis placed on the social-political dimension in centres where more people are involved in planning such as planning committees, advisory councils, and senior representatives. If planners pay more attention to the seniors' context, a broader range of technical skills may be used to generate an understanding of the needs, interests, and desires of the target group. Contextual factors related to the timing and organization of planning may be similar in other Parks and Recreation publicly-funded centres; however, unique factors may also emerge which influence the way in which programs are developed.

Future explorations of planning are also needed which explore other types of service delivery models such as age-segregated privately-funded centres and multi-generational publicly-funded centres. Such research is needed in order to identify features of planning practice that are similar and different across senior centre models. If practice is substantially different across centres, guidelines could then be developed which reflect the kinds of issues which are appropriate for specific types of centres. One might expect to find a greater focus on the client context in privately-funded centres because of the need to attract seniors in order to generate operating funds for the centre. Since private centres are not affiliated with the Parks and Recreation Department, one could speculate that a greater number of people and groups outside the centre may be involved in various facets of senior centre operations. As a result, there might be a greater focus on

negotiation and the social-political dimension. In multigenerational centres, one would expect to see more people involved in planning because such centres have to share space with other age groups which would require interactions with other programmers, coordinators, and client groups. In such centres, the social-political dimension may take precedence over technical planning issues.

The issue of planning for, with, and by seniors was raised in Chapter 10. Programmers at this centre clearly planned on behalf of seniors because of the way in which planning responsibilities were divided and the programmers' beliefs that the seniors did not want to play a major role in planning. The way in which planning was conducted may have had an effect on membership and participation rates. It would be interesting to explore the rationale for and the impact of planning environments where different forms of senior involvement occur. One could, for example, compare practice at this centre with planning at the other age-segregated senior centre in the city at which planning committees comprised of seniors are directly involved in planning and the staff programmer's role is simply to implement their ideas.

While technical, contextual, and social-political dimensions emerged as best depicting planning practice at this centre, other dimensions may be revealed in different planning contexts. Sork (1997), Cervero and Wilson (1994), and Wilson and Cervero (1996) refer to planning as having an ethical component. At this centre, a few examples of ethical issues were identified which suggest that an ethical dimension may also be part of an integrated theory of planning. Future research could explore the degree to which ethical issues are an important part of planning considerations.

Another area for future research is the extent to which risk-taking occurs in senior centre planning. The programmers at this centre were personally committed to taking limited risks and trying new and innovative programs. It was indicated, however, that this practice may not take place in some other centres. This may explain why some centres offer more traditional or conventional programs for seniors while other centres are considered to be trend setters in terms of their program offerings.

The findings of this study revealed that several contextual factors were very powerful in shaping the planning practice of these programmers. Their perception of the seniors' income levels, for example, was a particularly influential factor even though census figures did not necessarily support this belief. There were also a number of issues that the planners considered to be non negotiable such as policies about bus trips, instructor rates, dangerous programs, and dates and deadlines. It would be very interesting to explore the degree to which some of the factors that influenced the planning behaviours of the programmers were in fact unalterable. They may actually have a lot more latitude in planning than they think. Research on this issue, guided by frame factor theory, might be useful in helping planners realize the degree of latitude that they have in planning.

Finally, this study did not seek to evaluate the programmers' practice but rather to generate an understanding of planning practice in a senior centre. A number of issues were raised about their practice that did not fit with the normative literature about effective practice. Future research could explore the notion of successful practice. Some interesting questions could be raised about the forms of practice that seem to most likely

result in successful and effective programs. Different perspectives and definitions of success could be addressed including Cervero and Wilson's (1994) reference to "responsible planning".

Future research on various types of centres, different forms of involvement, other dimensions of planning, risk taking, frame factors, and successful practice could be pursued in order to obtain a better understanding of planning practice in senior centres and other related organizations.

Implications for Practice

Implications can be identified regarding the training of new programmers as well as professional development for experienced program planners. This exploration of practice suggests that new programmers may need to acquire the following different types of knowledge and skills:

- 1) technical knowledge and skills about how to generate and select ideas, develop programs, and create a program plan as well as other technical stages and tasks such as needs assessments and the development of objectives that may be carried out in other centres;
- 2) contextual knowledge about how programs are planned in their particular planning environment, especially the economic, organizational, social, and political context in which they plan as well as an indepth understanding of the client group for whom their programs are designed; and
- 3) knowledge about different forms of activity in which they might engage such as brainstorming, collaborating, criteria-based decision making, and negotiating.

Simply providing program planning students with technical knowledge based on idealized practice may not adequately prepare them for the realities of planning.

Several issues were raised which suggest that experienced programmers could benefit from professional development courses. Workshops may need to be offered which assist programmers with planning successful programs. At this centre, none of the programmers conducted any type of assessment of the needs and interests of the larger community of seniors. It would appear that these programmers could benefit from workshops which provide them with knowledge and skills to ensure that their programs are meeting the needs, interests, and desires of a diverse population of seniors living in the community; that barriers to participation have been identified and addressed; and that they are aware of who they are attracting and who is being overlooked.

Professional development courses could also be offered which provide strategies for involving seniors in planning. Pam, for example, expressed that she wanted greater input from the seniors about program ideas but did not know how to achieve this. In addition, the supervisor explained that there is a growing trend in seniors' programming to encourage seniors to play a major role in planning programs and that there will be a shift towards this at their centre in the future. Making a transition from planning "for" to planning "by" seniors would constitute a major transition at this centre and other centres where programs are predominantly planned by staff. The staff and seniors could benefit from opportunities to learn more about how to shift the responsibilities of planning so that seniors can become more responsible for identifying and addressing their own needs and interests.

Programmers may also benefit from having an opportunity to critically reflect on their practices. Pam and Ellen indicated that being part of my study made them more aware of how they planned programs and why they planned the way they did. As Ellen expressed, *"I think it's been really interesting and a big help to have someone sit down and [ask questions] because you don't think about it. You just do it"* (see p. 59). Sue also explained that *"programming becomes second nature and we need reminders"* (see p. 58). Without constantly reflecting on one's practice, it is easy to fall into a routine and not be aware of the ever changing context in which one plans. Professional development workshops could be designed which would help programmers become more conscious of how they actually construct programs, identify strengths and weaknesses of their planning behaviour, and develop strategies for enhancing their practice.

REFERENCES

- Alessio, H. M., Grier, L. J., & Leviton, D. (1989). Trailblazing recreational programming for the elderly: High risk activities. Activities, Adaptation and Aging, 13, 9-16.
- Boone, E. (1985). Developing programs in adult education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1983). Adult learners, adult education and the community. Milton Keynes, England: Open University.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1986). Understanding and facilitating adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bucher, C. A., & Bucher, R. D. (1974). Recreation for today's society. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Caffarella, R. (1994). Planning programs for adult learners: A practical guide for educators, trainers and staff developers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cervero, R. M. (1988). Effective continuing education for professionals. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cervero, R. M., & Wilson, A. L. (1994). Planning responsibly for adult education: A Guide to negotiating power and interests. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cervero, R. M., & Wilson, A. L. (Eds.). (1996). What really matters in adult education program planning: Lessons in negotiating power and interests (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education #69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clough, B. S. (1990). Learning activities in later life. Unpublished master's thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Corbin, H. D., & Williams, E. (1987). Recreation: Programming and leadership (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cusack, S. A. (1995). Developing a lifelong learning program: Empowering seniors as leaders in lifelong learning. Educational Gerontology, 21, 305-320.
- Danford, H. G., & Shirley, M. (1970). Creative leadership in recreation (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Dominick, J. E. (1990). How adult educators make program development decisions in practice. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia.

Edginton, C. R., Compton, D. M., & Hanson, C. J. (1980). Recreation and leisure programming: A guide for the professional. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders College.

Edginton, C. R., & Hanson, C. J. (1976). Appraising leisure service delivery. Parks and Recreation, 11 (3), 27, 44-46.

Edginton, C. R., Hanson, C. J., & Edginton, S. R. (1992). Leisure programming: Concepts, trends and professional practice. Duburque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

Elgstrom, O., & Riis, U. (1992). Framed negotiations and negotiated frames. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 36 (2), 99-120.

Enns, B. L. (1991). Senior centres in Canada. Ottawa: Canadian Institute of Senior Centres, Health and Welfare Canada.

Farrell, P., & Lundegren, H. M. (1983). The process of recreation programming: Theory and technique (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Forester, J. (1993). Critical theory, public policy, and planning practice: Toward a critical pragmatism. New York: State University of New York Press.

Frisby, W. (1995). A strategic analysis of senior centres: Coping with the future. Report prepared for the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, School of Human Kinetics.

Gelfand, D. E. (1988). The aging network: Programs and services. New York: Springer.

Glass, J. C. Jr. (1995). A university's multidimensional educational program for older adults: From conception to birth. Educational Gerontology, 21, 555-568.

Graham, P. J., & Klar, L. R., Jr. (1979). Planning and delivering leisure services. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

Griffith, W. S. (1992). Adult educator's response to the challenge of education in the Third Age. In J. E. Thornton & S. A. Harold (Eds.), Education in the Third Age (pp. 53-66). Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Educational.

Harold, S. A. (1992). The social construction of aging: Policy implications and issues in later life education. In J. E. Thornton & S. A. Harold (Eds.), Education in the Third Age (pp. 74-87). Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Educational.

Havighurst, R. J. (1964). Changing status and roles during the adult life cycle: Significance for adult education. In H. W. Burns (Ed.), Sociological backgrounds of adult education (pp. 17-38). Chicago: Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults.

Hendrickson, A. (1973). Planning programs and using resources. In A. Hendrickson (Ed.), A manual on planning educational programs for older adults (pp. 135-177). Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University.

Heywood, L. A. (1979). Recreation for older adults: A program manual. Ontario, Canada: Ministry of Culture and Recreation.

Hickson, L., Worrall, L., Yiu, E., & Barnett, H. (1996). Planning a communication education program for older people. Educational Gerontology, 22, 257-269.

Houle, C. (1992). The literature of adult education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Howe, C. Z., & Carpenter, G. M. (1985). Programming leisure experiences. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Information Services. (1994). Directory of services for the Lower Mainland: The red book. Vancouver, BC: Information Services.

Knox, A. (1982). Leadership strategies for meeting new challenges. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kraus, R. G. (1977). Recreation today: Program planning and leadership. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.

Kraus, R. G. (1985). Recreation program planning today. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.

Kraus, R. (1997). Recreation programming: A benefits- driven approach. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45, 214-222.

Krout, J. A. (1985). Senior center activities and services: Findings from a national survey. Research on Aging, 7, 455-471.

Krout, J. A. (1989). Seniors centers in America. New York: Greenwood.

Krout, J. A. (1990). The organization, operation and programming of senior centers in America: A seven year follow-up. Washington, DC: AARP National Gerontology Resource Centre.

Krout, J. A., Culter, S. J., & Coward, R. T. (1990). Correlates of senior center participation: A national analysis. Gerontologist, 30, 72-79.

Langenbach, M. (1993). Curriculum models in adult education. Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Leanse, J., Tiven, M., & Robb, T. B. (1977). Senior center operation: A guide to organization and management. Washington, DC: National Institute of Senior Centers.

Leanse, J., & Wagner, S. (1975). Senior centers: Report of senior group programs in America. Washington, DC: National Council on the aging, ERIC document 134 885.

Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1985). Leisure in later life: A sourcebook for the provision of recreational services for elders. Activities, Adaptation and Aging, 7, 1-337.

Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1996). Leisure in later life (2nd ed.). New York: Haworth.

Lewis, C. (1996). Insights from the inside: Practitioner perspectives on planning. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Londoner, C. A. (1978). Instrumental and expressive education: From needs to goals assessment for educational planning. In R. H. Sherron & D. B. Lumsden (Eds.), Introduction to educational gerontology (pp. 75-92). New York: Hemisphere.

Londoner, C. A. (1990). Instrumental and expressive education: From needs to goals assessment for educational planning. In R. H. Sherron & D. B. Lumsden (Eds.), Introduction to educational gerontology (3rd ed.) (pp. 85-107). New York: Hemisphere.

Lowy, L., & Doolin, J. (1990). Multipurpose senior centers. In A. Monk (Ed.), Handbook of gerontological services (pp. 342-376). New York: Columbia University.

Lowy, L., & O'Connor, D. (1986). Why education in the later years? Lexington, MA: Lexington.

McClusky, H. Y. (1971). Education: Background issues. Washington, DC: White House Conference on Aging, ERIC document 057 335.

McClusky, H. Y. (1974). Education for aging: The scope of the field and perspectives for the future. In S. Grabowski & W. D. Mason (Eds.), Learning for aging (pp. 324-355). Adult Education Association of the USA and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education.

MacNeil, R. D., & Teague, M. L. (1987). Aging and leisure: Vitality in later life. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Marcus, E. E., & Havighurst, R. J. (1980). Education for the aging. In E. J. Boone, R. W. Shearon, E. E. White, & Associates (Eds.), Serving personal and community needs through adult education (pp. 22-46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1995). Designing qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). Toward a psychology of being (2nd ed.). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mills, D. P., Cervero, R. M., Langone, C. A., & Wilson, A. L. (1995). The impact of interests, power relationships, and organizational structure on program planning practice: A case study. Adult Education Quarterly, 46 (1), 1-16.

Morse, J. M., & P. A. Field. (1995). Qualitative research methods for health professionals (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Murphy, J. F. (1975). Recreation and leisure service: A humanistic perspective. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

O'Hanlon, A. M., Camp, C. J., & Osofsky, H. J. (1995). A multi-institutional educational program for older learners. Educational Gerontology, 21 (6), 543-554.

Okun, M. A. (Ed.). (1982). Programs for older adults. (New Directions for Continuing Education Series #14). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peterson, D. A. (1983). Facilitating education for older learners. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ralston, P. A. (1981). Educational needs and activities of older adults: Their relationship to senior center programs. Educational Gerontology, 7, 231-244.

Ralston, P. A. (1987). Senior center research: Policy from knowledge? In E. F. Borgatta & R. J. Montgomery (Eds.), Critical issues in aging policy (pp. 199-234). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rosenblum, S. H. (1985). The adult's role in educational planning. In S. H. Rosenblum (Ed.), Involving adults in the educational process (New Directions for Continuing Education #26, pp. 13-25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Russell, R. V. (1982). Planning programs in recreation. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby.

Schon, D. A., & Rein, M. (1994). Frame reflection: Toward the resolution of intractable policy controversies. New York: Basic Books.

Schumacher, S., & McMillan, J. H. (1993). Research in Education. New York: Harper Collins.

Searle, M. S., & Brayley, R. E. (1993). Leisure services in Canada: An introduction. Winnipeg, Canada: Venture.

Shivers, J. S., & Fait, H. F. (1980). Recreational services for the aging. Philadelphia: Lea & Tebiger.

Sloane-Seale, A. (1994). Program planners' practical knowledge. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Sork, T. J. (1988). Ethical issues in program planning. In R. G. Brockett (Ed.), Ethical issues in adult education (pp. 34-50). New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Sork, T. J. (1989). Of shibboleths and shenanigans: A critical review of research on participation in planning. In C. C. Coggins (Ed.), Proceedings of the 30th Annual Adult Education Research Conference (pp. 290-295). Madison: Department of Continuing and Vocational Education, University of Wisconsin.

Sork, T. J. (1997). Workshop planning. In J. A. Fleming (Ed.), Designing and implementing effective workshops (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education #76, pp. 5-17). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sork, T. J., & Buskey, J. H. (1986). A descriptive and evaluative analysis of program planning literature. Adult Education Quarterly, 36, 86-96.

Sork, T. J., & Caffarella, R. S. (1989). Planning programs for adults. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (Eds.), Handbook of adult and continuing education (pp. 233-245). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Teaff, J. D. (1985). Leisure services with the elderly. St. Louis: Times Mirror/Mosby.

Thornton, J. E. (1992). Lifelong education and the Third Age. In J. E. Thornton & S. A. Harold (Eds.), Education in the Third Age (pp. 31-38). Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Educational.

Tibbitts, C., & Donahue, W. (1953). Development in education for later maturity. Review of Educational Research, 23 (3), 202-217.

Tillman, A. (1973). The program book for recreation professionals. Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.

Torkildsen, G. (1986). Leisure and recreation management (2nd Ed.). Cambridge, England: University Press.

Ventura, C. A., & Worthy, E. H. (1982). Education for older adults: A synthesis of significant data. Washington, DC: National Council of Aging, ERIC document 303 607.

Walker, J. (1985). Older people as consumers of education. In I. F. Glendining (Ed.), Educational gerontology: International perspectives (pp. 195-224). London, England: Croom Helm.

Weiss, J. C. (1988). The "Feeling Great!" Wellness Program. Activities, Adaptation and Aging, 12, 1-218.

Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (1996). Who sits at the planning table: Ethics and planning practice. Adult Learning, 8 (2), 20-22.

Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (1997). The song remains the same: The selective tradition of technical rationality in adult education program planning theory. International Journal of Lifelong Learning, 16 (2), 84-108.