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I Helped Build That: A Demonstration Employment Training Program for Homeless Youth in Toronto, Canada

In this case study I present preliminary findings on the development of Eva's Phoenix—a pilot project designed to provide housing and employment-training opportunities for homeless youth in Toronto, Canada. I focus on the construction-training program for youth and explore some of the tensions that can arise in a project of this nature. These include consulting youth about the project's directions and facilitating their participation, representational authority in relation to how the project is promoted, and the need to reconcile different values and expectations for delivering the program on the part of partnering organizations and the youth themselves. I challenge perceptions of welfare and welfare reform in relation to youth and offer some insights into what types of services and interventions can potentially help homeless youth. [homelessness, youth, housing, employment training]

In this case study I present preliminary findings on the development of Eva's Phoenix—a demonstration project undertaken by Eva's Initiatives designed to provide transitional housing as well as training and employment opportunities for homeless youth in Toronto, Canada. The project addresses the needs of an ever increasing number of homeless youth in a major Canadian urban center. Explored are some of the processes involved in developing a pilot project believed to be unique in Canada (Sarick 1999). The employment training is intended to lead to long-term careers (not just minimum-wage jobs or jobs that end when placement is over).

The article concentrates on the early phases of the project's construction-training program. Considered are the ways in which some of the youth have challenged the conditions under which employment and life-skills training were provisionally offered to them. With grounded attention to the "small" and the "everyday," this article considers some of the barriers that homeless youth face and offers insights for understanding what types of services or interventions can help them. These are vital questions requiring further research, as has been suggested by Glasser and Bridgman in their review of anthropological research on homelessness (1999:23).

The article is organized as follows. Stressed is the importance of documenting processes involved in developing a pilot project for homeless youth. A discussion of research methods is followed by the theoretical inspirations underlying the research together with its potential contributions. These include both an appreciation of *agency* on the part of youth and an appreciation of the *multiple perspectives* of many different actors (e.g., government officials, service providers, private sector partners, media personnel) that influence the development of any project.

An overview of themes that pervade the interdisciplinary scholarly literature on homelessness and youth complements a discussion of some of the recent changes in Canadian social assistance programs for youth. These broader contexts provide a backdrop for the ethnographic section featuring some of the processes involved in developing Eva's Phoenix. In a discussion of several tensions that arose during the development and construction of Eva's Phoenix, three key issues are explored: consulting youth on the project's directions, representational authority in how the project is promoted, and reconciling different values and expectations for delivering the program. Finally, the article concludes with a summary of some of the lessons being learned from the project, and suggestions for future research directions are offered.

Documenting Processes

Generally speaking, relatively little attention has been given to documenting the *processes* of developing housing or programs for the homeless. Nor have there been many attempts in the scholarly literature to draw together the multiple and "partial perspectives" (Haraway 1988) of the many players involved in bringing such projects to fruition, although researchers may devote a final chapter to housing "solutions" to the problem. Typically these describe

proj-ects briefly but do not necessarily reveal the social processes by which they have come into being. As Martha Burt (1997) suggests, much of the homelessness research to date has concentrated on describing the homeless population, rather than giving needed attention to documenting effective interventions for preventing and alleviating homelessness. Novac, Brown, and Gallant point out that "widespread funding constraints, which necessitate the development of small local projects and low cost solutions, diminish opportunities for documentation and information exchange regarding the strengths and weaknesses of new projects, service innovations, and integration of multiple services"(1999:3).

The present study represents an extension of my ongoing program of research on homelessness in Toronto. That research has involved documenting the life histories of innovative housing models for alleviating homelessness, including two generations of a housing project for chronically homeless women and men in Toronto, known as StreetCity and Strachan House (Anderson 1997; Bridgman 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999c, 2000). StreetCity and Strachan House, developed by the Homes First Society, have both received international attention for their success in helping to house homeless women and men. StreetCity has been cited as an example of one of Canada's ten "best practices" for alleviating homelessness (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 1999). Strachan House, designed by Levitt-Goodman Architects, won the 1999 Governor General's Award for Excellence in Architecture. My research has also involved an in-depth study of the development of a safe haven shelter (named Savard's), again developed by the Homes First Society and designed by Levitt-Goodman Architects for chronically homeless women in Toronto (Bridgman 1999b, 2001).

Several other researchers have documented the processes of developing programs for the homeless, including Culhane (1992), who has studied an innovative housing model named Women of Hope. This project was started by a group of nuns in Philadelphia and was designed to help chronically homeless mentally ill women transition from the street. Fitzgerald (1993, 1995) has also documented a long-term residential program in Nova Scotia for homeless youth.

As well, there is a training manual for an interesting construction-related U.S. training program for young people who have dropped out of school (YouthBuild USA 1999). The program began in 1978 and after much lobbying received federal funding as of 1992. YouthBuild offers construction skills training and assists youth in completing their high school educations. Youth also receive leadership training, while they construct or renovate vacant city-owned buildings as housing for low-income or homeless people. The YouthBuild manual outlines steps for start up and management, recruiting and working with young people, managing the construction project, rules and regula-tions of construction site work, and follow-through with job placement and support.

Some of YouthBuild's published material has been helpful for my own analysis of the Eva's Phoenix develop-ment. For example, challenges when working with unions and union culture can clash with the youth empowerment model of YouthBuild. Discussed are stages of transformation youth go through in the program and the tensions that arise in teaching youth about standard on-the-job expectations and behavior, together with allowing youth to have a say in the program.

Comparison between the YouthBuild initiatives and Eva's Phoenix, however, can be problematic because of their apparently differing mandates and scales. YouthBuild USA is an extensive program with substantial federal government funding and numerous sites throughout most of the United States. There are presently 145 operating YouthBuild sites in 43 different states. The program is geared to youth living in poverty who have not yet completed high school. Eva's Phoenix, by comparison, represents a very small pilot project being developed specifically for homeless youth by a single organization, in partnership with public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Driving my own research project are two overarching questions: What lessons are being learned? and How do participants conceive of the processes in which they are engaged? Preliminary analysis of research materials has focused specifically on ascertaining the degree to which the youth were directly involved in the early development processes of the project and how their participation was facilitated throughout these processes. Of particular interest have been points of tension or conflict highlighting different understandings of how best to address the needs of youth. The larger study of which the present article forms a part is ongoing. This article, however, is only based on data from the first seven months of fieldwork. It considers initial developmental phases of the construction-training program.

Research Methods

The research began in January 1999. At the time of writing this article, design and working drawings had been completed, funding was partly secured, construction was well under way, and the first four-month training program for nine youth was about to finish. The project was scheduled to open in spring 2000.

The opportunity for documenting the early stages of the development of Eva's Phoenix was facilitated by the fact that I had worked closely with the architectural firm, Levitt-Goodman Architects, during my independent research on two previous housing projects for homeless women and men. (As mentioned above, Levitt-Goodman Architects also designed Strachan House and Savard's.) The primary research data for this article were gathered

through extended participant-observation over a seven-month period. Detailed field notes were taken during weekly design and development meetings, weekly site and construction meetings, monthly meetings of advisory and resource groups (from January to August 1999), and construction-training sessions for the youth (during the period May to August 1999). These sessions involved life-skills training (e.g., setting goals, conflict resolution, anger management, budgeting, workplace conduct) and on-site construction training (e.g., carpentry, painting, tiling, drywall and taping skills, workplace safety, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Field notes written up after leaving the site document informal conversations with administrative staff, youth, municipal officials, architects, and consultants, training supervisors, and construction managers responsible for the project's directions. Excerpts from these field notes have been used in this article. Unstructured taped interviews (approximately one hour in length) with several of these key players were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed as well.

At meetings, my research assistant and I were introduced as researchers interested in documenting some of the lessons that were being learned at Eva's Phoenix so that others elsewhere could build on their insights. Eva's Initiatives was concerned that the needs and views of the youth be protected and that the organization's own internal operations be respected, and the organization took on a gate-keeping role and prescribed what meetings or training sessions we, as researchers, could attend. According to our research agreement, copies of earlier drafts of this article were circulated to Eva's Initiatives staff for their comments. Two of the youth were also interviewed for their feedback on earlier drafts of the article. These additional insights were then incorporated. Care has been taken to change names and identifying details to maintain confidentiality.

Agency, Multiple Perspectives, and "A City for All"

Of great utility to the conceptualization of this research has been an edited collection by Amit-Talai and Wulff (1995). The volume's main theoretical concern is "to show how young people are active agents—in different ways and with varying force—in the construction of the meanings and symbolic forms which make up their cultures" (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995:1). Explored are the complex definitional, conceptual, and methodological issues that arise when we study "anthropology's silent 'others' " (Caputo 1995:19), namely, youth and children. The contributors' collective understanding of youth as *active agents* challenges conventional representations of youth as *passive receptors of adult culture* or *objects of adult activity*. Youth and children are acknowledged as playing active roles in their own futures.

These ideas also permeate the work of Ruddick, a geographer, in her study of the dilemmas faced by homeless young people and the development of services for homeless youth in Hollywood, California. She argues that agency is continually denied adolescents. Her research examines how homeless youth (particularly punk squatters) attempted to negotiate their marginality and to subvert their stigmatized identities through their use of urban space. That homeless youth have helped to build Eva's Phoenix is deeply symbolic of the processes by which "social subjects are created and create themselves in and through the social space of the city" (Ruddick 1996:3–4).

Desjarlais (1997:201–205) offers a comprehensive review of anthropological theorizing on human agency, social actors, resistance, and everyday practices in his study of the experiences of homeless women and men living in a Boston shelter. An interesting collection of essays edited by Smith (1995) also focuses on how the "dominated" and "marginalized" defy regulatory domination through their spatial practices (e.g., the homeless take over public space or reclaim "vacant" land as their own through land squatting). Wright and Vermund (1996:123–124) develop these same ideas in their theoretical discussion of power, urban space, and resistance tactics on the part of homeless people. Finally, an excellent transdisciplinary overview of theorizing on resistance has also been undertaken by Ferrell (1995) in an article on the collective production of youthful graffiti writing.

In keeping with the traditions of organizational ethnographic research and its appreciation of multiple perspectives and social processes, this research considers the ways in which "interaction among groups is limited by structural constraints such as resources, authority structures, and broader institutional arrangements" (Morrill and Fine 1997:431–432). Key in this kind of research is the task of understanding the perspectives of different groups and "organizational cultures" (see Wright 1994).

Hutson and Jones's (1999) study of multi-organization cooperation and self-building as a solution to youth homelessness confirms the usefulness of these directions for research. Their study highlights how potentially different agendas and understandings of how best to address the needs of youth in a pilot project can make "working together slow and, at times, conflictual" (Hutson and Jones 1999). Low and Crawshaw's (1985) analysis of the belief systems of those who define problems of youth and shape policy and Liddiard and Hutson's (1991) close examination of organizations' definitions and processes affecting the social construction of youth homelessness have also informed ways of approaching the analysis of Eva's Phoenix development. Riemer's excellent critical ethnographic study (1997) of quotidian resistance and accommodation practices in employment-training programs for the poor also complements my own interest in understanding the

lived realities of participants engaged in a demonstration project.

The research is in keeping with working toward a city that is indeed *just* for all (Beall 1997). I therefore interpret "welfare" not only in the sense of that messy complex of governmental and private "safety net" initiatives related to education, health, housing, and employment policies and programs. These are most often targeted to particular, bounded, so-called deserving groups of people. In this article, "social welfare" (literally *to fare well*) is understood in the broadest possible terms, with reference to the well-being, needs, and interests of youth. The study thus contributes to understanding welfare and welfare reform as entailing more than the narrow and conventional understanding of welfare, generally defined in Canada and the United States as that "complex of financial assistance and in-kind goods that sustain those [in need] without income or savings" (Glasser 1994a:3). That said, this more narrow definition features later in the discussion on youth, poverty, and social assistance.

The research is infused by my ongoing interest in "utopian pragmatics," by which I mean exploring the relationship between an alternative proposal (the *vision* or *ideal*) and the *pragmatics* of implementing that alternative (Bridgman 1998a). My focus is on "bringing 'lived life' into closer proximity to our understanding of society and history, and with utilising this knowledge for the practical amelioration of current social conditions" (Gardiner 1995: 90). The broader mission of the research seeks to place in context the expectations, the perceptions, the experiences, and the hopes of street youth and those who seek to help them within a tangled web of social values, institutionalized social policies and structures, and decisions and actions taken by others.

Homeless Youth: "Problems" and "Victims"

There is a growing body of literature concerning homeless youth—literature primarily from social work and psychological or medical perspectives (e.g., Bronstein 1996; Cauce et al. 1994; McCarthy and Hagan 1992; Teare et al. 1995). Anthropologists generally do not appear to have looked at homelessness among youth to the same extent that they have looked at homelessness among the adult population. For an important exception, see Liddiard and Hutson's (1991) study from Wales of the "homeless careers" of 115 youth evicted from their homes or forced to leave foster care.

The importance, indeed, the urgency, of this research can be understood from the fact that, as of 1994, an estimated 12,000 young people were living on the streets in Toronto or "close to the street" in inadequate housing arrangements (City of Toronto Department of Public Health 1994; see also Caputo et al. 1997:7). As of 1996 more than one in four people using shelters in Toronto were between the ages of 16 and 24 (Daly 1996:136). Webber, author of *Street Kids: The Tragedy of Canada's Runaways*, wrote in 1991: "A disturbing number of youngsters—possibly as many as 200,000—have no fixed address other than Main Street" (1991:137). That the actual number of youth (generally defined as being between 16 and early twenties) who are homeless remains undetermined nationally is due in part to definitional issues.

Definitions of the word *homeless* shift in relation to concepts of adequacy and affordability. The self-appellation of the homeless themselves and cross-cultural concepts of homelessness further complicate fixed definition. Glasser and I offer an overview of some of the acute definitional and methodological problems that can arise in homelessness research (1999:2–6, 11–13). Data collection is hampered by the transient lifestyle that many homeless are forced to adopt. Bentley (1995) provides an overview of research concerning measurements of homelessness and the problems associated with statistical collection and analysis. As well, David Hulchanski (1987) emphasizes the volatile political dimensions involved in defining homelessness and who is or is not homeless, while Brannigan and Caputo (1993) lay out conceptual and research design issues involved in working with street youth in Canada.

Classifications of homeless youth often distinguish between *runaways* (who have left home without their parents' consent), *throwaways* (who have been forced to leave), *system kids* (who are leaving social service placements, e.g., foster care or group homes), and *street kids* (youth who are sleeping rough on the street) (Glasser 1994b:68–69). Classifications of youth may also vary based on age. Residents of Eva's Phoenix were to be between the ages of 16 and 24. Those employed in the construction of Eva's Phoenix were required to be 16–29 years old, according to the mandate of the federal Human Resources Development Canada employment program.

I have found the following definition of "homeless youth" useful, for its appreciation of the many and varied adverse living arrangements that youth may face. Here again the word *youth* is defined somewhat differently:

> An individual between the ages of 15–24 who is not living in a family home or "in care" ("in care" meaning currently residing in a foster home or a Children's Aid Society arranged living environment) and is in an unsafe or temporary living environment. This includes all youths termed as curbside, entrenched, runaways, throwaways, in and outers, street kids and independently living youth. This definition incorporates youth who have been out of the home (family home, group home, foster home, etc.) for 24 hours or more and are uncertain as to where they will go or what they will do next. [McCall 1992:7–8, cited in Fitzgerald 1995:721]

While age would seem but a minor matter, classificatory rigor can have a profound impact on individual lives. Susser's (1993) research on how family forms are "created"

through excluding men and teenaged boys from families in the New York shelter system explores such issues. The discussion on youth, poverty, and social assistance in this article demonstrates further how definitions of "when is a youth a 'youth'?" (see Munday 1979, cited in Aarre 1998; Ruddick 1996:129–130) permeate policies that very directly impact the everyday lives of youth: "From the cradle to the grave, people are classified, shaped and ordered according to policies" (Shore and Wright 1997:4).

Numerous studies of street youth in Canada and the United States have highlighted their vulnerability to hunger (Antoniades and Tarasuk 1998), violence (Janus et al. 1988; Janus et al. 1995; Whitbeck and Simons 1990), substance abuse (Smart and Adlaf 1991; Smart and Ogborne 1994; Windle 1989), sexually transmitted diseases (Clatts and Davis 1999; Forst 1994; MacDonald et al. 1994; Rosenthal et al. 1994), and health problems (Canadian Paediatric Society 1998; Gaetz and Lee 1994) and their difficulty in finding gainful employment (Baron and Hartnagel 1997; Doyle 1998; McDermott 1985; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 1998). Highlighted in the literature on homeless youth is an overarching theme of delinquency, a theme linked to concepts of individual deviance, pathology, and "blaming the victim" (Bronstein 1996). The literature thus generally denies larger systemic forces that affect individual lives and denies any entrepreneurial spirit that youth may have.

Youth have only very recently been officially recognized, in fact, as an important and growing subgroup among the homeless population in Toronto (Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force 1998, 1999). Local newspaper coverage in 1996 of the five-day occupation of City Hall's Nathan Phillips Square Peace Garden by a group of homeless youth, who were protesting their eviction from a vacant rundown building in the downtown core, brought the issues to public attention (e.g., Infantry et al. 1996; Steed 1996). A group of youth-serving agencies and municipal staff began to look at housing issues for homeless youth. Since that time, many news articles, television specials, and radio talk shows have attempted to come to grips with why so many young people are homeless. At the time of completing this article, the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2000:156) had just recently funded a new project, Environmental Scan: Youth Homelessness, in order to assess types of effective housing interventions that have benefited homeless youth and to provide an overview of shelter support issues that homeless youth in Canada face.

Much of the media attention on homeless youth has focused in particular on the activities of "squeegee kids" (young people who clean car windshields on downtown street corners), many of whom live on the street or illegally in "squats" (vacant buildings). Perceptions of squeegeers as drug-addicted, violent criminals, perceptions shared by the general public and many of the city's politicians, have resulted in many squeegeers being fined and arrested (*Toronto Sun* 1998:14). The recent passage of the Safe Streets Act (2000) has also resulted in many homeless people being "swept" from Toronto's streets, despite the protests of antipoverty activist groups such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. Such legislation testifies to the increasing tendency toward *crime control* in relation to homelessness in Toronto.

In contrast to perceptions of street youth as "problems," Eva's Phoenix represents part of the response in Toronto to *structural* concerns about the lack of employment opportunities for many homeless young people. Within the spectrum of coordinated efforts in the city among community agencies and government officials to address employment barriers for youth living on the streets, Eva's Place, a nonprofit emergency youth shelter operated by Eva' Initiatives, promises a model of long-term transitional housing and a career-oriented employment-training program. Those involved in its development hope that key components of this demonstration project will be transferable to other jurisdictions (Community and Neighbourhood Services, City of Toronto 1998).

Youth, Poverty, and Social Assistance

The story of Eva's Phoenix has unfolded amid shifting labor markets, federal devolution, provincial downloading, cancellation of social housing construction, welfare cuts, mental health reforms, the implementation of workfare, rent control changes, and evictions.[1] The numbers of those who are homeless have swelled. Media coverage in Canada on homelessness has grown, particularly as the United Nations conducted its formal five-year review and evaluation of Canada's compliance with basic human rights in 1999. In its report released April 7, 1999, the U.N. Human Rights Committee was highly critical with regard to many domestic human rights issues in Canada, including violations against aboriginal peoples and refugees, violations of the privacy rights of people on social assistance, Ontario's act to prevent unionization of workfare recipients, violations of children's rights and benefits, and a disproportionate number of women in poverty.

Recent scholarly attention on homelessness in Canada has explored the complex linkages between the stories of homeless individuals and larger structural forces (e.g., Daly 1996; Layton 2000). Economic restructuring and fiscal restraint (leading to an increase in the prevalence of part-time and temporary jobs available within the service and manufacturing sectors), as well as a growing lack of affordable housing, particularly with the cancellation of government-subsidized housing programs across Canada, have all resulted in increasing hardship for a number of people, including youth. There has also been an increasing official tendency to paint youth poverty and homelessness

in terms of pathology, criminality, and deviance. Meanwhile, the state has increasingly withdrawn from the provision of services to the young and blamed consequent increases of homelessness and poverty on the most marginal youth themselves.

Canada has historically been well known for its "universal" social programs that guarantee a minimum standard of living. Increasingly, however, such programs are being reshaped or dismantled entirely. A brief look at some of the complex relationships among youth, poverty, and existing social assistance programs offers insights into some of the reasons why more and more youth are becoming homeless. In what follows I consider particularly the *changing* requirements of social assistance programs for youth in Canada.

Many youth, 16 to 18 inclusive, are vulnerable to homelessness because they fall "between the cracks" of the child care system in Canada. The system does not provide for adolescents over the age of 16 or provides such support only within strict parameters. As of 1995, youth aged 16 and 17 are no longer eligible for social assistance except for "special circumstances" (e.g., abuse). Applications are accepted for consideration only after it has been proven that there has been severe abuse. As well, applicants must be attending school. Should they leave school for "unjustified reasons," they cannot reapply until they are 18 (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto 1998).

At age 18, it is usual for youth to be "discharged" from care, but in some provinces admission to the ranks of those supported is not possible after age 16, leaving some youth in what Fitzgerald (1995) terms *never-never land.* From 18 to 20, restrictions also apply. Those in this age group cannot receive assistance directly but must work through a third party, leaving them open to potential exploitation at the hands of an *adult* third party. Youth must negotiate these shifting conditions for eligibility, amount of subsidy, and duration of support.

Massive social assistance cuts of 21 percent were introduced in 1995 in Ontario at the behest of the then newly elected provincial Conservative government, headed by Mike Harris. The government's identified mandate was to arrest welfare fraud and to encourage those who were employable to move into jobs (*Toronto Star* 1998:A6). In 1999, a single person received $520/month (Canadian dollars), of which a maximum of $325 (63 percent) was to be allocated to rent and utilities. The remaining $195 was to provide food, clothing, and other essentials. Yet private rental bachelor apartments averaged $555/month, two-bedroom apartments were approximately $900/month, and the vacancy rate in Toronto stood at 0.8 percent (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto 1998:7; Wong 1999).

It is self-evident that many social assistance recipients are unable to compete for housing in Toronto unless they engage in "under-the-table" and illegal activities to supple-

ment their income. Many street youth squeegee, panhandle, work in fast food restaurants, do telemarketing, work in the sex trade, and sell drugs in a continuum of income-generating activities, some of which are more or less socially sanctioned.

Workfare programs, also introduced in 1995, require recipients to search for work, take employment-training programs, or undertake volunteer work in a community placement for 35 hours a week. Within such a system, it becomes a moral obligation to accept any and all work, even if that work does not provide a living wage.

The Ontario provincial government was pleased to report that, as of 1998, over 300,000 fewer people were on welfare than there were three years previously (Provincial Task Force on Homelessness 1998). Implied was that those 300,000 took up gainful employment, yet to date no methodologically rigorous conclusive follow-up study has ever been done to ascertain whether former welfare recipients have indeed moved into jobs.

The federal unemployment insurance program (renamed employment insurance) was also substantially revamped in January 1997. The number of hours of work now required to qualify for assistance ensures that insurance is no longer within the reach of many part-time and temporary contract workers—despite the fact that premiums are deducted automatically from their pay stubs. The effect of these changes has been particularly hard for young workers, who often only have access to part-time and temporary positions, and women, who provide the largest part of the casual labor pool (Canadian Labour Congress 1998).

The model being developed by Eva's Phoenix challenges these conditions through the approach of *long-term* transitional housing and a *career-oriented* training program. This mandate contrasts with the majority of programs available to youth. One of the Eva's Phoenix administrators explained:

> We're not just interested in mailroom jobs, dead-end jobs that won't sustain our youth. How can they be self-sufficient if they're making crap dollars? You've got to raise the bar. The dollars don't add up. It's not too late for these kids. They've still got hope and optimism. [interview, February 17, 1999]

According to Eva's Initiatives Executive Director Maria Crawford, Eva's Phoenix should be seen as a "last stop on leaving the shelter system, the welfare system and moving on to the payrolls of the corporate sector" (1999). Part of the underlying philosophy of the project can be understood from Eva's Phoenix's adaptation of the old Chinese proverb: "Give a child a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a child how to fish and she'll eat forever."

Having now established a broader context for issues that many homeless youth and those who would help them must face, discussion turns to Eva's Phoenix. In what follows, I describe the project and some of its history.

Eva's Phoenix

Eva's Phoenix has been developed by Eva's Initiatives, an organization serving homeless youth in Toronto. In addition to developing the Phoenix project, Eva's Initiatives operates a nonprofit emergency youth shelter, Eva's Place, plus the satellite shelter program to reach homeless youth who do not traditionally use the shelter system. Key components of Eva's Phoenix include transitional housing to accommodate 50 young people (ages 16–24 years), emphasis on skills development to help find and keep employment, assistance with educational and employment opportunities, follow-up as youth settle into the accommodation/ employment of their choice, and involvement of homeless youth in the development, construction, and management of the project.

Funding for the nonprofit project has involved commitments from multiple constituencies—including all levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal), together with businesses and labor unions. Project costs for construction and the youth-training component were estimated at $3.8 million.

The City of Toronto donated the vacant 20,000-square-foot warehouse garage building. The building, featuring steel trusses, sawtooth skylights, and large open spaces, was built in the 1920s and had been used to repair fire trucks. It had undergone minimal renovations for use as an overnight hostel in 1998 and subsequently was used on a temporary basis as a shelter for homeless women. The city also provided $500,000 capital funds for renovation through its provincially allocated Homelessness Initiatives Fund, as well as staff support for the development phases, and was to provide ongoing operating funds through Hostel Services once the project opened.

Federal Human Resources Development Canada provided funding for the development stages, and the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation made contributions toward capital funding for construction. A number of labor unions and private businesses have helped to set up mentoring programs. The Canadian Auto Workers set up a $1 million fund for housing projects across Canada as part of its millennium project and donated $325,000 to Eva's Phoenix (DeMara 1999).

An auto dealership, Midtown Saturn, took on 26 unemployed youth to train in bookkeeping and clerical positions as well as mechanics and was to help them find permanent jobs in the industry. A printing business was being funded by Rotary International. A film documentary about Eva's Phoenix was being undertaken by a film company named Youthview, and (pending funding) there were plans to train youth in filming, editing, and other skills needed for film and video production. Yet to be developed were permanent housing partnerships.

Plans for Eva's Phoenix represent a departure from many of the programs and services that are generally available for youth living in poverty, not only in their career-oriented mandate but also in the scope of their programming (e.g., addressing criminal justice concerns). Discussions with other youth agencies in the city were held to clarify what kinds of programs are already operating and how those programs could complement the plans for Eva's Phoenix. In the process, the issue of *turf protection,* as one Eva's staff member termed it, reared its head. Other agencies have clearly stated, "But we have programs for youth aged 16 to 24. Why aren't they [homeless youth] accessing these programs?" (field notes, July 27, 1999).

Eva's staff related how they then asked those at the table:

> Do you have staff that are prepared to deal with issues around outstanding criminal justice issues? Do you have staff that can deal with the real core issues around anger management stuff, mental health issues for homeless youth, substance abuse? One of our team leaders spent an hour at the Don Jail yesterday with one of our participants who was finally picked up on outstanding warrants. OK, do you have a staff person that's prepared to do that? Do you ever do that as part of your youth employment programs? No. They don't. We know they don't. [field notes, July 27, 1999]

Eva's staff said after relating this anecdote, "We may be able to draw on programs already in existence, *but* frankly, I also think that other organizations are going to have to see what we're doing and recognize that it's different than what they are doing" (field notes, July 27, 1999).

Criteria developed for the "target" group of youth to be trained on the construction site were as follows: unemployed, eligible to work in Canada, homeless or at risk of being homeless (e.g., living in a shelter), *substance free* (underlined in the original job announcement), physically able, willing to learn, grade ten or equivalent, with an interest in the building trades as a career, available to start work as early as 7:00 a.m. Youth were recruited by referral from a number of youth-serving agencies in the city. Three teams of 10–15 youth were to undertake the 15-week training program in sequence, with the idea that some of them would then embark on a four-year apprenticeship with one of the unions (7,200 hours or 1,800 hours/year).

The first crew of youth hired numbered nine and was all male. (Of the nine, one left the program due to problems with asthma, and one was fired from the program due to excessive lateness and absenteeism, after many discussions and mediation.) Of ongoing concern to organizers was the fact that women were not applying in the same numbers as men. Although the job coach, part of the development staff, was a woman who had extensive experience in the construction industry, construction work is generally a highly gendered occupation.[2]

The seven trainees ranged in age from 19 to 24.[3] Of the seven, three had high school diplomas (of those, one had attended college part-time for a year), while four had not

completed high school. One had come to Ontario from the east coast six months previously with the hopes of finding work. Several carried long histories of unstable housing with them. One was living intermittently in a shelter but admitted to not feeling safe there. Another was living in a city shelter and during the program moved to a room in a rent-geared-to-income rooming house. One of the trainees had never been homeless and currently lived with his mother. Another was living with his mother as well. The fifth and sixth both lived in houses with their girlfriends and their children, and the seventh had almost been evicted from his apartment in recent months. Four were black and had been born in the Caribbean, Jamaica, or Grenada; one was Latino; and two were Anglos.

Participation, Representational Authority, and Values

There were several tensions that arose during the early development and construction of Eva's Phoenix. *Participation, representational authority,* and *values* summarize in key word form the tenor of the discussion to follow. The first focuses on consulting youth about the project's directions and facilitating their participation. The second concerns representational authority in how the project is promoted and presented to others. The third explores the need to reconcile different values and expectations for delivering the program on the part of partnering organizations and the youth themselves.

"The Experts That You Should Be Talking To"

In strategic planning sessions held to develop concrete plans for the youth-training component of the construction phase, there were representatives from cooperating youth agencies, Human Resources Development Canada, the housing division of the City of Toronto, the construction company, and trade unions. Although there were no youth in attendance at these planning sessions, several focus groups with residents at Eva's Place had been conducted to get their feedback on directions for the project.

How best to involve youth and have them play a key role in the design of programs was an ongoing issue. At a Resource Working Group meeting attended by representatives from different youth agencies in the city, the possibility of setting up a separate youth resource working group through referrals from youth agencies was suggested. One person pointed out, however, "I worry that if we start segregating the youth now, it will be a segregated process. Which makes me wonder who the building is for. The youth need to be integrated." Another at the table piped up: "There is the issue of meeting the youth to death." Another suggestion was to invite three youth representatives to sit on the Resource Working Group of repre-

sentatives from youth-serving organizations. To this, another responded:

> My concern is not that the kids will not be able to understand. I am sure that you will recruit kids that are articulate. But we all bring a level of expertise to the table. The kids will have a vested interest, and we don't want the youth coming in here and saying that all the rooms should be painted black just because that is the latest thing. The youth cannot represent all youth. [field notes, June 29, 1999]

The issue was then raised that youth often feel that they do not have a place in organization-led committees and that in this kind of forum it can be difficult for their voices to be heard. In the words of one of the service providers, "In my experience, it is not effective for youth to try to work with professionals. They don't want to talk because they don't feel they have the knowledge." Another responded, "That would mean that we would have to change the entire structure of meetings so that they would be more accessible." The first had turned the issue of not talking, or feeling silenced, inward to "they don't feel they have the knowledge." The second highlighted the conventional accepted format of meetings themselves as a potential barrier to youth involvement and was conscious of the ways in which homeless youth may be excluded, even if unintentionally, from the "table." It was raised that meetings would need to be held at times appropriate for young people's schedules (e.g., early in the morning before they have to be at school) and that an honorarium should be offered for their participation. One of the administrators of a youth shelter advocated, "We are all getting paid to be here, so the youth should be paid to be here as well" (field notes, June 29, 1999).

A meeting of youth contacted through several youth-serving organizations was also called to consider some of the programmatic and policy issues for Eva's Phoenix once it would be open. At first the youth were adamant that they should be at the same table as service provider representatives from the Resource Working Group, but later they decided they would be reluctant to talk about some issues in front of staff people from agencies. They decided it would be best to keep their group separate.

In seeking to involve youth with the acknowledgment that "the people who are living here are the experts that you should be talking to" (in the words of one of the administrators of a youth shelter [field notes, June 29, 1999]), a host of issues are raised, issues not easily resolved. Involving youth in projects from the outset requires flexibility on the part of organizers and a willingness to think creatively about ways of facilitating their participation. Issues of power, knowledge, and social status would all have to be addressed if youth really were to sit at the "decision-making" table, and the way meetings are run would potentially have to change.

Respect, Trust, and "Selling" the Project

Excerpts from field notes highlight another tension inherent in the project—a tension associated with the obvious necessity of praising the project for fund-raising purposes and for the project to raise the political consciousness of complacent citizenry. In the process of promoting the project, an ongoing commitment to building trust on the part of the youth is required as well. The balance may be threatened at times. Issues of representation, agency, and control over presentation of self figure prominently in the events that follow. My analysis explores the perceptions and perspectives of youth trainees juxtaposed with those of the Eva's Phoenix administrators and staff.

Briefly, the opening celebrations for the start of the renovation of the building included a wall-breaking ceremony. A city councilor and the president of the Canadian Auto Workers donned construction helmets and brandished their sledgehammers. Symbolically the tearing down of the interior wall was likened by one of the politicians to "knocking down the walls of apathy . . . walls that have stood in the way of justice for the homeless for the last decade" (DeMara 1999:B3). As part of the ceremony each youth was presented with a tool belt by the politicians (tool belts that they themselves had helped assemble earlier that day).

I documented a discussion about the opening that occurred about a week after the ceremony. The discussion was part of life-skills training sessions facilitated by staff and ensued after the group had been warned that three of them had been seen smoking a joint by a construction manager on the property of Eva's Phoenix. One of the staff stated:

> We look at you guys as being *adults*. We don't tell you what to do in the privacy of your own home. But there are repercussions for your actions that you must deal with as adults. . . . You should be able to get through eight hours without smoking drugs or drinking. . . . I don't want you to lose your chance through something that is avoidable. [field notes, July 4, 1999]

Concerns about alertness and safety on the construction site obviously precluded use of drugs on-site. As the staff member declared later at an orientation for new recruits to the program, "There is zero tolerance on this site. If you are drunk or stoned, you are gone. You have to be in full control of your faculties at all times in construction. It is a dangerous job" (field notes, August 14, 1999).

After the reprimand about using drugs on-site, one of the youth, Fred, spoke angrily:

> Fred: So some bigwig sees some black people smoking drugs. They are probably upstairs doing coke. They all say one thing and do another. They said they wouldn't call us homeless and then they did.

Tom: Yeah. The reporters kept asking us if we are homeless.

Steve: That lady in the purple. She was asking me if am homeless or I am just doing this as a project. I said that I am doing this through an agency, to get a career. I wasn't listening to any of their propaganda.

Foster: No offense to homeless people, but that is not the image that I want to pursue. I don't want my friends that I knew in high school to see me on TV and think that I am homeless.

Bob [staff]: That has to be respected.

Ash: Why didn't you tell us about the presentation? We didn't know that was going to happen.

Sam: It made it look like we wanted handouts.

Rebecca [staff]: Charlie [another staff member] didn't tell you anything?

Foster: No. Charlie didn't know I think. It was the people upstairs who said to do it that way, without us knowing.

Isaac: They didn't tell us that the politicians and media were going to be there.

Fred: I didn't appreciate looking like 12 fucking lollipops with T-shirts. So some fat-ass politician giving me a tool belt can make me look like a welfare case. Or look like a homeless case.

[Everyone started talking at the same time.]

Ash: I told everybody that I didn't want to be on TV, looking like a welfare case. We didn't have a choice. We tried to sit in the back, but they kept making us go out in front, throwing T-shirts at us.

Rebecca: So they weren't respecting you?

Foster: It was all for the money, for their reputations. They didn't listen to us. They didn't care. It's bullshit. I don't mind cameras, but don't lie about who I am.

Tom: We should have known about all that stuff before it happened, to have a choice.

Isaac: We did have a choice.

Ash: No, I didn't. I was on TV, and I didn't want to be. Those T-shirts . . . [voice trailing off]

Isaac: The T-shirts were okay. Eva's Place is helping us, so I didn't mind wearing that shirt.

Fred: They made us wear that shirt so that we would stick out.

Isaac: You could have all walked out or not gone to take the tool belt. And who should have told us anyway? Everyone acted like it was okay. You all joked around with [staff] afterwards and didn't say anything all week. Now you come here and you complain. That is not fair. It is like acting like a little kid . . . [trailing off]. [field notes, July 4, 1999]

Although there was disagreement expressed, it was clear that some of the youth were upset at being labeled. Troubleshooting media coverage in a high-profile project requires careful management and sensitivity to the needs

of the youth involved in the project. A staff member subsequently remarked in one of the development meetings:

> This project is being watched by the media. We have received numerous requests for interviews. . . . Last week we got a call from someone from the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] who wants to do a story on the project following three participants. She wanted to get the whole life story of three people. We said *no*, because the guys were not comfortable with that. [field notes, July 21, 1999]

Some of the trainees in the group had made comments about "welfare cases" and "homeless cases." In general conversation after the life-skills training session, three of the youth said they had nothing against homeless people or people on welfare. They all knew someone on welfare. One in the group had grown up on welfare with his mother, and one had been on welfare himself. They did not blame people on welfare for their situation; it was understood to be a product of unemployment or bad luck. They were aware that there is a general perception in society that "welfare people" are "bums," and they, themselves, resented being labeled that way by others. The youth were expressing their dissatisfaction and resisting constructions of themselves as homeless.

In another instance, everyone was asked to fill out "intake referral forms." These had not been done when they originally had applied for the position. There was lots of complaining and protest. Much of the information requested was general in nature: name, social insurance number, employment history, and the like. Some, including Fred, Tom, and another youth named Daniel, felt that the information they were being asked to provide was too personal. There were questions about their criminal records (this in particular made them uncomfortable) and whether or not they had any "psychiatric experiences" or other "barriers to employment." Tom said that they were being asked to provide this information because they were young and not expected to stand up for themselves. He felt that the information they were being asked to provide was "inappropriate." Tom pointed out that a question asking if they had any outstanding warrants was not a realistic question to ask. If they answered yes, then the cops could be called and they could be arrested. In the end, many of them simply did not fill out the section about criminal record. Clearly flexibility is required on the part of agencies to accommodate the fears that youth may have about giving out information about their personal histories or information that they feel could injure their chances at obtaining employment. This flexibility translates to the necessity of easing requirements on the part of governmental funding agencies that may require that such forms be completed.

Issues of authority, representation, agency, and control over the presentation of self resonate throughout these events. That the youth attempt to resist constructions of themselves as homeless, as seeking handouts, or as crimi-

nals speaks directly to the critical analysis of ethical, epistemological, and political questions that surround fieldwork relations, text, writing, and representation debated at length within the annals of general anthropological theorizing (e.g., Clifford 1986; James et al. 1996) and theorizing in feminist anthropology (e.g., Behar and Gordon 1995; Bridgman et al. 1999; Cole and Phillips 1995). Ever cautious of overromanticizing the "heroic," and disavowing power structures that may be invisible but nevertheless palpable, analyses focusing on such small acts of "resistance" link individual so-called subversive action and broader agendas that challenge dominant, hegemonic forces. Such small acts of defiance in everyday practices (de Certeau 1984), "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985), the "struggles of the downtrodden," or "subtle forms of subaltern rebellion" (Brown 1996:729–730) are often characterized as *resistance*. In their apparent attempts in these ethnographic moments to exercise "negative power" (see Breton 1994)—that is, to exercise the ability to withhold their support, participation, consent, or involvement in a program initiative designed by others for them—the youth building Eva's Phoenix were attempting to communicate their need to step outside the bounds of structures and limits set by others.

As they reviewed drafts of this article, Eva's Phoenix staff, however, were very concerned about these perceptions on the part of some of the youth and clarified that the youth had indeed been informed about the format of the media event. One of the Eva's Phoenix administrators stated:

> Nowhere does it make it clear that not only were the youth informed about who would be there and what would be happening at the event but also that they could choose whether or not they participated. . . . Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not an accurate reflection of what happened and paints an unfair picture of the level of skill and commitment that were in evidence daily by the frontline team on this project. . . . The real issue to me, and one that is not addressed here at all, is the challenge we all have on a daily basis to bridge the gap between our two worlds—that of service provider and that of homeless youth. The example used here completely contradicts all the work we do daily to incorporate youth into all aspects of our decision making. It looks like we not only don't have a commitment to that philosophy but that we go out of our way to insensitively exploit their involvement. [personal communication, August 23, 2000]

Two of the youth reviewed the same drafts and confirmed, during an interview with both of them at the same time (March 4, 2000), that this part of the article (drawn directly from field notes) indeed reflected clearly what they felt they had experienced and remembered:

> The first half [of the article], no offense, was pretty fuckin' put you to sleep [laughter]. I said, "Buddy, read from here on." I read the whole thing from top to bottom. It was just, the first few pages would put you [pause] it was more stuff I

didn't care about. You know what I mean? It had to do with other people.

The other reflected: "But I think a lot of the quotes were portrayed fairly accurately. Regarding what the crew felt about how we were being treated and that. I appreciated that. That was pretty accurate."

Bridging these disparate perspectives becomes crucial in any kind of project. Complex are the pressures to demonstrate success with innovative programming—to encourage youth to develop further their knowledge and skills, to attract future funding for the project, to expand the scope of participating partners, *and* to negotiate the everyday pragmatics of balancing different participants' perspectives. "The challenge we all have on a daily basis to bridge the gap between our two worlds—that of service provider and that of homeless youth," highlighted by one of Eva's Phoenix's administrators, is rendered all the more poignant in the differing interpretations of a media event.

"If They Were in a Real Job . . ."

Some of the tensions inherent in the Eva's Phoenix construction-training program inevitably involved reconciling the demands of construction schedules and the mores of "construction culture" with the mandate to support and train the youth. One of the managers of the construction company responsible for building Eva's Phoenix and running the construction-training program for the youth was excited about this opportunity: "The kids are getting jobs. The construction industry is getting the badly needed workers to replace our aging workforce" (field notes, March 29, 1999). Yet, within the constraints of a construction schedule—in the words of one construction manager, "We've got to get this baby up"—time is money, and any delay in a project can be costly, particularly when multiple trades are being coordinated. The youth construction-training component inevitably increased these costs. There were ongoing discussions about how to keep the training in line with the overall construction schedule and budget.

Addressing issues around lateness and attendance was part of this process. On the one hand, as a counselor put it, "They shouldn't get kicked out for being five minutes late because this is a learning program." Then he put it another way: "This is not just about putting up a building" (field notes, March 29, 1999). On the other hand, construction work requires that work proceed on schedule. A crew depends on teamwork to do the job. In the words of a construction supervisor, "We're not just running a day care. The guys have to earn their pay. . . . You've got to buy into the program. It's not going to work otherwise. You want to play or you don't want to. Behavior modification is all very well, but . . . [trailing off]" (field notes, March 29, 1999).

After some of the trainees were late or absent without notice, Eva's Initiatives administrators and staff decided to

institute a pay penalty in order to encourage everyone to make it to work on time. If people were late, they were to be docked pay:

> We are not trying to take money out of their mouth, but they have to learn. If they were in a real job, this would happen. Their boss will not care why they late. You could be taken hostage and be late for work. They won't fire you, but they won't pay you for that time either. [field notes, July 4, 1999]

In response, one of the trainees declared: "If he is going to get uptight about lateness, he can blow me. He needs to understand that this is a class of kids that have not been working for a while" (field notes, July 4, 1999). He expressed the concern that in order to get to the job site, many of the crew were having to leave early in the morning, several by 5:30 a.m.

In being prepared for "construction culture," trainees were advised that the construction site could be brutal: "Some people will scream at you on a site, and you just have to let it roll over your back. There are some older guys who haven't figured out that you can't scream at people and get productivity out of them" (field notes, July 4, 1999). In another such session, staff advised:

> Those of you with thin skins had better be prepared. There will be a lot of yelling. You can't be late. . . . That is the culture. Racial names are very common so don't freak out. . . . It is not going to be just "nigger," you will hear "monkey this" and "[another indistinguishable racial slur] that." I'm not saying that it is right. That is the reality. We are trying to change it . . . [trailing off]. [field notes, July 4, 1999]

Discussion ensued, and one of the youth asked, "If someone calls me a nigger, I'm just supposed to take it?" Staff asked, "How will you deal with it when it happens?" Isaac answered, "If you need the money, you go with the flow." Another asked, "Why would they want to cuss us out?" to which Fred answered, "Because they are ignorant and racist." Ash added, "You guys want a little lesson? If they can say, as long as they can take it back." Tom piped up, "We don't want to get in trouble or get our pay docked. If we want to get into the union, we need [the foreman] to give us a reference." The youth were well aware of the power hierarchies within which they were resisting racist or ageist behaviors.

There was a lot of work needed to develop the relationships between those doing the construction and involved in training the youth and those helping youth with life skills. Some of the construction workers on the site apparently made fun of the trainees because they were going to see the "shrinks in the trailer" (life-skills counseling staff offices were in a trailer on-site). Staff suggested to the youth that because the trainees themselves were calling them the "shrinks in the trailer," the other laborers would have no respect for the counseling portion of the program. One of the Eva's Phoenix staff mused:

You can't expect a group of construction people to understand what is involved in counseling. Some days they can respect that piece, but other days they make offhand comments about the "Coconut College." The kids tell us about the comments they are hearing, but then when they are on-site, they join it because they do not want to look weak. They are working with some big, burly guy who has never needed counseling or therapy who will look down on them for talking to a counselor. We are really asking the kids to carry a big load. [field notes, July 10, 1999]

Perceptions began to change gradually, however. As one of the life-skills counselors explained:

I don't think there is a lot of respect for what we do. Not by [pause] by some people, like some [have] come a long way. To the point that now, [they'll] come to us and [say], "So-and-so is having a problem, you'd better talk to them because I don't know if they have a place to stay. Would you look after that?" [interview, December 3, 1999]

One of the construction-training coordinators spoke about the "fine line" required to balance conflicting needs, to educate other workers about some of the histories that homeless youth may carry with them, and to prepare youth for the realities of on-the-job training in construction:

It goes back to getting the right journeyman who can work with somebody, who can understand that somebody is homeless and they have to understand [pause] they were made aware that some of the reasons that these people were homeless was because they were abused and authority is a real problem with the project. Maybe somebody left home because their mother or their father always screamed at them, "You'll do it my way or go to hell." So we couldn't take that approach here. At the same time, if you're too nice to somebody, when they finish this project and they go to another construction company, all of a sudden the foreman says, "Just do the damn job or you're fired." "Oh, screw you! I quit." And that's it. So you have to prepare them. [interview, December 4, 1999]

It is clear that the organizers and staff of Eva's Phoenix are determined to recognize the difficult realities facing many homeless youth. They seek to treat them with dignity and respect and to involve them as much as possible in the development of the project and its representation. There is a sincere effort to respect and encourage these young people to exercise social agency. On the other hand, organizers are faced with the reality that they are trying to "train" young people who may have limited education, skills, and resources to enter highly organized and unionized occupational fields such as construction. Given the marginal position of these young people, the likelihood is that they will enter the construction industry at the very bottom of the hierarchy of skills and authority in this sector. As one of the youth who reviewed an early draft of this article stated it,

Like when you first go on a site with a new company, you're a garbage man. I don't care what you are, you are picking up garbage. And you can do it anywhere from a month to a year.

Like Carlos there, a second-year apprentice. He's been there two years with the company, he's still picking up garbage and shit. That's just a waste of time. [interview, March 4, 2000]

The reality is that the staff of Eva's Phoenix have to prepare their young charges for a future situation in which the youth are unlikely to have great prospects for exercising much agency (at least not immediately). As one staff person put it, once past Eva's Phoenix, the young person that has been trained (with such careful attention to dignity and respect) is likely to encounter a foreman who says, "Just do the damn job or you're fired."

Conclusion

Systematic documentation, evaluation, and dissemination of pilot projects can offer concrete guidance about the strengths and weaknesses inherent in various approaches to addressing urban poverty and to helping homeless youth. Ethnographic research into the daily workings of relations between the different players involved in any one project leads to an appreciation of the "details of expressive culture" (Morrill and Fine 1997:437). More such studies are required for the additive depth that each ethnography provides to form broader-based empirical understandings of development processes.

In this article, I have considered a number of challenges for any organization that may wish to develop such an innovative project—in particular, challenges related to youth participation, representational authority, and potentially conflicting values. Ensuring the full participation of youth in a project requires flexibility on the part of organizers and a willingness to think creatively about how to facilitate their participation. This flexibility may extend, for example, not only to intake procedures but to accommodating different rates of learning (e.g., in helping youth acquire the math skills required for the job) and to adapting the rhythms of learning construction skills. With such a high-profile project, sensitivity to the privacy and needs of the youth and careful management of media relations are required. Inherent contradictions may also arise when an organization's mission is to help youth develop a sense of agency, yet youth are groomed for positions in the workforce that may belie such a sense of agency.

With these cautionary lessons, Eva's Phoenix, as a pilot project, represents an experiment, a vision that is in the process of becoming. That Eva's Phoenix has had some success already in helping those for whom it is intended is evident—one youth who was interviewed praised Eva's Phoenix for the commitment of the staff and the positive impact of the work: "I think they do an excellent job. Like they're always out there helping you out, regardless of what it is. They know the situations that can happen. And, you know, I've learned a lot through a lot of the guys, like the foreman" (interview, July 9, 1999). A second offered the following testimonial:

I don't consider it a job, I don't consider it work. I consider it fun. 'Cause I like working with my hands. I like constructing things. Like you know [pause] when that's done, I'm going to go down there and say, I helped build that. . . . Construction. I love it. I can't, you know [pause] if you will, it's like a wife to me. I'm serious. It's like a wife. It's the best companion I could ever have. I like mechanics, I like carpentry, I like construction. Period. I like anything to do with building things with my hands. [interview, July 9, 1999]

Another of the youth who commented on earlier drafts of this article said during an interview:

When my thing was done, and I found a job with a bullshit company. You know, staff seemed to go out of their way after the fact to make sure that we got jobs. There were a lot of opportunities that they, when they heard, they would call us down. They would make sure no matter what we knew and get us in there for sure. They were really good about stuff like that. [March 4, 2000]

There is considerable potential in marshaling the resources that many labor unions command, both for their capacity to offer training opportunities and in their capacity for fund-raising. Eva's Phoenix represents one of the first Canadian experiments with drawing multiple sectors together around a common concern—the alleviation of youth homelessness. Unions should be encouraged to step forth and help provide opportunities for youth to access training and apprenticeships. In similar fashion, other institutions, such as banks or real estate boards, should be encouraged to follow suit.

This follows from a key word that is current in so many of the eligibility criteria for project funding, *partnership*. Partnerships between different agencies, privately and publicly funded, and different levels of government are presently a sine qua non in many funding proposals for social services and social assistance programs. This movement parallels dramatic shifts in Canadian welfare policies that have involved government withdrawal from universal social assistance programs and increasing privatization of social services or downloading to provincial or municipal jurisdictions.

Documenting the processes of these collaborations would be important to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences when organizations' different (and at times conflicting) mandates are challenged and negotiated. In this article I have focused particularly on the perspectives of the youth involved in the initial stages of the construction-training program, complemented by insights from construction-training staff, administrators, other staff, and counselors.

Homeless youth have multiple and intersecting needs (e.g., housing, employment, life skills, medical issues) that cross regulatory boundaries. Projects, such as Eva's Phoenix, require cooperation on the part of many different agencies and funding bodies. Such cooperation can involve complex and ongoing discussions about how best to

serve youth within existing and newly configured administrative and bureaucratic frameworks. Education of all those involved (e.g., about issues that homeless youth face) may be required in order to ensure that youth can participate as fully as possible in the programs being designed with their needs in mind.

This ethnography raises a key dilemma in the translation of scholarly emphases on agency into social programs and initiatives for homeless youth. Staff at Eva's Phoenix are caught trying to mediate between their organizational aims of recognizing and cultivating the sense of agency of young people, on the one hand, and the more starkly hierarchical occupational cultures of their partners in industry, on the other hand. How can we encourage the exercise of agency by marginalized youth while at the same time train them to accept serious limitations on that agency in their future employment? This is one of the intriguing paradoxes of Eva's Phoenix, one that not surprisingly results in some tensions in the project and one that challenges the more theoretical emphases that anthropologists and cultural theorists have placed on recognition of the cultural agency of youth.

Notes

1. Boychuk's (1998) description of social assistance regimes in Canada characterizes them as "patchworks of purpose." For general discussion of the demise of Canadian welfarism, "one piece at a time," Tester's (1996) overview of changing contexts and policy responses in Canada over the last 30 years documents shifts from universal programs to targeted ones. Increasingly, social security and social services are being privatized. Other useful explorations of the changes are offered in Armstrong 1997, Mishra 1990, Myles and Pierson 1997, and Smardon 1995. For an excellent overview of the emergence of youth homelessness in Great Britain, see Suzanne Fitzpatrick's (2000) book, *Young Homeless People*. In addition to highlighting the importance of early intervention and support for fragile families, training and employment opportunities for youth, and housing supports for youth at risk

of homelessness, Fitzpatrick critiques Britain's lack of adequate social security benefits for unemployed young people in distress.

2. Anne Meisenzahle (1988) has written about women's training and work experiences in the construction field. She states that "in addition to fighting against the temptation to fail, [women] must also fight against society's belief that women are not fit to do construction work" (1988:47).

3. It is with some caution that I use the term *trainee* to indicate one of the youth employed in the construction-training program. The term may defy how the youth name themselves. One of the youth, Isaac, declared during one life-skills training session: "I ain't no street kid. I ain't no trainee. I'm a worker."

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