Recreation and Youth

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Wen Hong Wei

Abstract (Summary): I have selected the recreation and public space topic because I want to further research on the importance of recreational facilities and services to youth in the KGO. The goal of our group research project as well as the other groups is to research on the major problems KGO is facing and most importantly research on methods that can help solve those problems. In my research report I will first discuss the groundwork research we found on KGO as well as literature review. I think this preliminary research is very important for our group because it help us find where recreational services and youth play come in, and in turn the direction we want to take for our empirical research. Although, the literature review we found are not study of the KGO, but it provided us with concepts and ideas that can also apply to the KGO neighbourhood. Secondly, I will converse on our research methods over the course of the project. Following, I will discuss out research findings as well as my role in the researching process. Lastly, I will analyze and discuss our research findings.

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Individual Research Report

Introduction

In this past summer session I took CITC02-learning in community service and I have to say I have gained some valuable experience working with youth. In my CITC02 placement area which is also a part of the KGO, and during my placement I learned the importance of recreation activities for the youth in community. One of my tasks was organizing a soccer league for youth between the age of 8 to 15, and each week all the children are eagerly waiting for the start of the games. In one of the week my placement provider couldn’t attend league, and more importantly he had all the equipments. Accordingly, I had to cancel the games, and all the children were disappointed. Thus, I have selected the recreation and public space topic because I want to further research on the importance of recreational facilities and services to youth in the KGO. The goal of our group research project as well as the other groups is to research on the major problems KGO is facing and most importantly research on methods that can help solve those problems. In my research report I will first discuss the groundwork research we found on KGO as well as literature review. I think this preliminary research is very important for our group because it help us find where recreational services and youth play come in, and in turn the direction we want to take for our empirical research. Although, the literature review we found are not study of the KGO, but it provided us with concepts and ideas that can also apply to the KGO neighborhood. Secondly, I will converse on our research methods over the course of the project. Following, I will discuss our research findings as well as my role in the researching process. Lastly, I will analyze and discuss our research findings.
Preliminary Research of KGO Neighborhood

The KGO priority neighbourhood has an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent and a low income rate of 38.9 percent (Statistics Canada 2006). Lower level of education is a large part of the high unemployment rate and low income rate. Comparing to the rest of Toronto the KGO neighbourhood have a higher percentage of the population without certificate, diploma, and degree. Since the majority of the population in the area is immigrant many of their Post-secondary education were outside of Canada. KGO have a large percentage of visible minority around 60% of the population and 13.6% of the population is between the age of 15-24 (see appendix for graph).

High Crime Rate

The KGO area is portrayed as a high crime rate neighborhood; often associate with gang violence, break in, and shooting. In fact, the crime rate in KGO is relatively the same compare to other priority neighborhood. However, in 2005 “The Summer of The Gun” the gang violence between the Malvern Crew and Galloway Boys, along with the media heavy broadcasting the events in turn KGO neighborhood had portrayed as high crime rate area. After 2005 the government had implemented many programs and investment into KGO, to help discourage youth gang activities, and more importantly transform KGO into a safer neighborhood. In 2006 the Mayor investing $13 million dollars in each of the 13 priority neighbourhoods over next the four years for new social infrastructures namely playgrounds, basketball courts, community space for youth, etc. In 2007 and 2008, the City of Toronto invested approximately 20 million dollars in upgrading facilities, new youth spaces, library, recreation centres, and multi-purpose community space. The City also created program like Partnerships to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE) to help youth
finding employment opportunity. Lastly, in 2008 the City of Toronto invested 4.9 million dollar for next three years to help discourage gang activity in Toronto (Matthew, 2008). Anyhow, one of the focuses of our research project is to look into the progress of some these programs and investments the City of Toronto implemented over the past three to five years.

Research methods

Over the course of our research our group had used few different research methods to collect the data we needed. Initially, our group conducted many internet research, and find information in our course like lecture notes, and readings that are related to our topic. The above Preliminary Research of KGO Neighborhood is part of our finding. The initial preliminary research data were very helpful, and our group used the information to help formulate our research question. Our research question is, "how do recreation facilities and services for the youth help to build a better and safer community in the KGO neighbourhood?" To answer our research question we created four sub-questions to guide our research. The four sub-questions are the availability of recreation facilities, and its spatial distribution. We also want to evaluate the effectiveness of these recreation facilities and service, and also the limitations faced by the providers of the youth recreation facilities and what are the possible solutions. Further, we distributed the work for the sub-questions. I decided to work on the spatial distribution of the recreation facilities and service sub-question.

Our second research method is literature review. We found many helpful articles relating to our topic. One of the article titled, "Recreation and the Glenview neighborhood: Implications for youth and community development" by Autry, and Anderson, I found it closely related our group project even though the research was
conducted on Glenview Neighbourhood, and not KGO. Firstly, the neighbourhood of Glenview is similar to the KGO in many ways namely, the low average income, high unemployment rate, and most importantly youth gang activities. Secondly, the authors’ main idea that recreation programs can help create a safer community because it promote social capital. Social capital is, “refers to connections among individuals in which social networks and norms of reciprocity and trust are derived that facilitate cooperation for a common benefit” (Autry & Anderson, p271). That idea is very similar to a main theme of our class discussion how a safer community is when every one knows each other, in other words, a strong connection or social network in the community. For the KGO, one of their biggest problems is youth gang activities, and our hypothesis is recreational facilities and services can build a safer community because recreation services promote social capital. In the same time, recreation facilities provide youth with a safe environment to learn and make friends in their community.

For our last research method, we move on to empirical researching. Initially, we want to survey or even interview KGO youth on their view on current recreation facilities and services. We thought this would be helpful to our research because the youth are ones these programs are designed for, and hence their view of the program is very important information. By interviewing youth we can also find out if the recreation facilities and service have helped them in any way. However, the UTSC ethic policy clearly stated youth is a high-risk group, and thus we decided to concentrate on interviewing service providers, counselor of the community development and recreation committee which helped to design and implement the youth anti-gang strategy for our empirical research. Furthermore, our group had all taken CITC02-community service learning, plus Jason and Alton’s placement
providers are closely connected to recreation service in KGO. Thus, we contacted them first and they were more than happy to help us with our research.

For our empirical research we interviewed three service providers in the KGO. Our first interviewee is Shane Beharry—Youth Resources Specialist in East Scarborough Storefront. Our second interviewee is Nneka Perry—Youth outreach worker for the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough. Our third interviewee is Andrea Raymond of Cedar Ridge Creative Centre

Research Finding and Discussion

In our empirical findings we found many benefits of the current recreation facilities and services in the KGO community, and in the same time they also faces many difficulties. To begin with, I want to discuss the benefits. First of all, Recreation centres provide a safe environment for youth to have fun and in the same time they can also learn many useful skills. In the Storefront centre they provide programs like computer courses, cooking class, dance class, and many sport programs. For Cedar Ridge Creative Art Centre they provide many free-of-charge art programs specially designed for youth. A major goal of the art centre is to give youth and adult the opportunity to engage with their artistic side. Since KGO is a low-income community doing art recreationally is quite hard because art like painting, sculpture require many expensive equipments. In addition, the art centre want youth to learn that art can be a rewarding career, or just a recreation activity. For the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, they provide many fun recreation activities for youth to learn and make friends in the community. For the older youth in their teen years the Boys and Girl Club provide assistant in finding employment opportunities. Given the low income
rate in the KGO community many youth need to start working at an early age to support their family. The centre also tries to help youth with criminal record. With criminal record it is almost impossible for them to find a decent job in Toronto. In turn, they are forced to go back to their old way by committing crime in order to survive. The centre helps them look for employment, as well as teaching them interview skills, and help them with their resume. If the youth want to go back to school, the centre will also try to help look for school. Secondly, I think by just attending recreation centre activities regularly will have a positive effect on youth because the social workers, and service providers are excellent role models for them. Furthermore, attending recreation centre give them the opportunity to meet and make friends with other youth in the neighborhood. In turn, create social capital, youth engagement, sense of belonging, and community bonding.

The recreation centres also faces many difficulties namely accessibility, language barrier, and funding. For accessibility, it is quite difficult for youth who live far away from the recreation centre. Overall, the accessibility is good in the KGO neighborhood because the recreation centres are within 1 km walking distance (see appendix B for graph). However, there are many other youth who live farther away from the youth service. Plus, not all the youth can afford TTC fare to attend recreation activities regularly. With the shortage of funding service providers can’t provide TTC fare for the youth. Again, going to the shortage of funding recreation centre cannot afford translator for youth who doesn’t speak English. Combining with KGO’s large population of immigrants it might discourage the youth to attend recreation activities because of the language barrier. However, I do see a positive side to this given that there is no translator; the youth who attend the event regularly will learn and speaking English faster. All the centres we interviewed have to face the shortage of funding,
without funding they cannot provide service for the youth in community. After I analyzed our findings I can see the importance of recreation services for youth in the KGO. It promotes social capital, youth engagement, sense of belonging, and community bonding. As a result, create a better and safer KGO community. I think our finding show the importance of recreation service and its potential benefits, and optimistically I hope our research findings can help recreation centres acquire more funding.

**Division of Labour/Conclusion**

Overall, I gained many valuable experiences from this research project as well as the course. I enjoyed working with all my group members. We would try to have weekly group meeting, and divide the work load evenly. For instance, our four sub-questions which are availability, accessibility, effective, and limitation; we each were assigned to collect data for that sub-question. I decided to work on the spatial distribution of the recreation facilities and service sub-question. For literature review, and internet research we also separated the workload. I was responsible for reading the recreation and Glenview article. Jason, Wing, and Alton look into other research articles. For our empirical finding we had to travel a bit and luckily I have a vehicle, thus, I was in all our interviews. I didn’t conduct the interviews; I was responsible in taking notes. Wing conducted the interview with Shane in the Storefront centre, Alton interviewed Nneka of Boys & Girl club, and Jason interviewed Andrea of the Cedar Ridge Art Centre. Andrea also happened to be Jason’s CITC02 placement provider. Moreover, I want to mention we faced difficulties in the research namely the lack of resource, and time constraint. Also we had a hard time contacting a few recreation service providers, counselor of the community development and recreation committee
which helped to design and implement the youth anti-gang strategy. They are either unavailable for interview, or no reply at all. Anyhow, I did learned many new skills in this project and the overall course in researching, collecting data with different methods, and doing presentation.

References:


Appendix A

Population Age Groups

- 11.8% Children 0-4
- 13.6% School Age 5-14
- 15.1% Youth 15-24
- 10.1% Working Age 25-54
- 6.9% Pre-Retirement 55-64
- 42.6% Seniors 65+

Figure 1. Age groups percentage of KGO, and 13.6% of the population is between the age of 15-24.
Appendix B

Youth Population Within 1 Km Walking Distance of a Youth Service by Neighbourhood

Figure 2. The youth services are in KGO is within 1km walking distance.