Diversity in the Fitness Industry:

A Cross-Case Comparison

D. E. Hawes, B.A., B. Kin.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

© August, 2000
Abstract

This cross-case study explored the extent to which two fitness facilities were accommodating diversity with respect to age, ethnicity, gender, social class, sex-role socialization, and persons with a disability among both members and staff. The sites were purposely chosen in a large city and a smaller city in order to provide as representative an example as possible of health clubs within a small sample population. The interview participants were selected by a combination of stratified, typical case, and snowball sampling strategies.

The intent of the exploration was a two-fold examination of diversity issues within both the membership and the staff of the organization. Data were collected and analysis was done using a triangulation method involving personal interviews, observations, and facility documentation. The results of the study showed that the members and staff at each facility were rather homogeneous in ethnicity, age, social class, physical ability, and physical appearance. From a membership standpoint, the environment of the sites presented the impression of being affordable only to the middle- and upper-middle classes, unwelcoming to the older, less fit, or overweight participant, economically exclusive for youth, and nonaccommodating for people with a disability. With respect to staff, the findings indicated that the fitness facilities purported to be team-oriented in theory, but were hierarchical in practice, with the major decision making being made by the male executives. The paper concludes with the recommendation that students must be given a practical toolkit for dealing with these issues in their postsecondary courses.
Acknowledgements

This thesis might never have been written without the unconditional support of Patricia Cranton, my friend and mentor. She believed in me, believed in my writing and believed I could “do it.” There seems to be at least one powerful influence in the life of each research student. Personally and professionally, Patricia was that key player. For months she worked with me by e-mail, answering my endless questions and encouraging me to continue. Diligent about prompt and sensitive feedback despite her own busy schedule, Patricia spent countless hours of her own time working with me. She allowed me to grow in my writing and she respected my need to say things my way, albeit within APA parameters.

I am grateful to Maureen Connolly for intuiting a theme to my random list of topics and for getting me started. To Janice Hutton, Sue Inglis, and numerous others, I owe a debt of gratitude for encouraging me not to abandon the project at the halfway point. I am grateful for Rosemary Young’s support in helping me bring this project to fruition and for the valuable guidance of my committee members, Sybil Wilson and John Novak, who assisted me in producing a finished product. In her gentle manner, Sybil made clear for me the thesis process.

I believe in synchronicity. During one of my inspiration-seeking forays into the university library, I noticed a slim volume lying casually on a study table. For reasons unknown, I was drawn to the volume entitled Writing up Qualitative Research by Harry F. Wolcott. The book became crucial to the process of my thesis writing. Wolcott writes with wit and wisdom about writing up research, and gives practical advice on getting
started, staying focussed, and maintaining momentum. The book deals with vital information missing from other research manuals.

To the authors of other theses, I am grateful for the guidance they indirectly provided through their own writings. I examined the structure of various chapters and the content of their acknowledgements. As a researcher myself, I marvelled at the quality of the work I was reading and lamented the fact that, once the defense is over, the writing probably goes unnoticed.

To my daughters and others who frequently commented "I thought you were supposed to be finished by now", I can finally say "I am done." To my Dad and Stepmother who cheered me on, I can say that I never gave up even when completing the project seemed impossible. To my brother and sister who never doubted for one moment my ability to conquer this challenge, I can say that I mastered the task, so to speak.

Writing up research was not easy for me. I agonized over every phrase, even though I was cautioned not to do so. Although I imagined an endless succession of revisions in my future, I managed to settle for "enough."

And finally, I have to thank Dale for always being there, for having unfailing faith in my writing ability, and for being patient even when he did not understand what was taking so long to finish.
# Table of Contents

Abstract                                    ii  
Acknowledgments                             iii  
List of Tables                              ix  

**CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM**  
  Introduction                                1  
  Circumstances Precipitating the Investigation 1  
  A Need to Find Out: The Problem Situation   2  
  Why do a Study at all?                     3  
  What Needs Investigating?                 5  
  Definition of Terms                        7  
  Rationale                                  8  
  Who Might Benefit from this Study?        9  
  Scope and Delimitations of the Study      10  
  Upcoming Chapters                         11  

**CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**  
  Introduction                                13  
  Diversity and the Physical Activity of Canadians 15  
  Diversity Issues in the Fields of Leisure, Recreation, and Sport 16  
    Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Factors     17  
    Gender                                  18  
    Age                                     20  
  Diversity in Organizations                21  
  Diversity in the Fitness Industry         23  
    Congruence and Incongruence             23  
    Stereotypes                             24  
    Socioeconomic Issues                    25  
    Age                                     26  
      The age wave                          26  
      Youth                                 27  
      The family unit                       28  
      Inclusive programming                 29  
    People with a Disability                30  
    Gender, Sex Role Socialization          31  

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**  
  Epistemological Stance                     33  
  Research Design                            35  
    Case Study Approach                     35  
    Site Selection                           37
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Toronto</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Participants</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s Role</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview Questions</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork Strategies</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Observation Sessions</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview Sessions</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recording and Transcription of the Interviews</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Participants</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person at The Cardinal Club: Ahmed</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person at Club Toronto: Talia</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigitta, Assistant Club Manager at Club Toronto</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon, Aerobics Coordinator at Club Toronto</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmond, Tennis Director at The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina, Director of Sales at The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne, Personal Trainer and Member at Club Toronto</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellye, Receptionist at Club Toronto</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinna, Front Desk Supervisor at The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindy, Sales Representative at The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne, Member at Club Toronto, 15 years</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald, Member at Club Toronto, 10 years</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne, Member at Club Toronto, 4 years</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Interview of Members at The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippa, member, 17 years</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanche, member, 13 years</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan, member, 10 years</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy, member, 8 years</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwynnnyth, Member at The Cardinal Club, 17 years</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlene, Member at The Cardinal Club, 6 years</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla, Member at The Cardinal Club, 2-3 years</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of the Data</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER FOUR: INVESTIGATING THE ISSUES OF DIVERSITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Themes</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tour of The Cardinal Club</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tour of Club Toronto</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underrepresentation</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underrepresentation Within the Membership at Both Sites</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments From the Interviews</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of the Membership</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1  Summary of the characteristics of the interview participants at The Cardinal Club (TCC) and Club Toronto (CT): contact person, middle management, front-line staff 56

Table 2  Summary of the characteristics of the interview participants at The Cardinal Club (TCC) and Club Toronto (CT): members 65
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This cross-case study examined two fitness facilities to determine how they were dealing with the issues of diversity. Diversity, in this instance, revolved around the policies and practices impacting both the memberships and staff of each facility. With the addition of the issue of age, the project focus was the concept of diversity contained in Boyce (1996), who stated that “diversity appreciation refers to ‘an understanding and acceptance of a wide range of individual differences’ (Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995, p. 75) encompassing the areas of ethnicity, gender, social class, sex-role socialization patterns, cognitive abilities, and physical abilities” (p. 46).

Circumstances Precipitating the Investigation

In 1994, I was abruptly dismissed from a full-time position as Fitness Director and was replaced by an inexperienced young, male university graduate. That termination of employment caused me to take a close look at the policies and practices of other fitness facilities and triggered a desire to further investigate conditions for likely inequities in the fitness industry in general.

In 1992, the purported focus of the fitness facility with which I was affiliated was children’s programming and the senior market. The executive management felt that attracting a market of “serious weight lifters” would be in direct conflict with their focus on the family, and the nurturing environment they wanted to project for aging “baby boomers.” At the time, the fitness department staff somewhat reflected the demographics of the target markets for the facility. By 1994, the fitness department in the same facility
was staffed primarily by males in their early 20s and the weight training area was equipped with plate-loaded strength training machines and boxing bags. The focus of executive management and the composition of the fitness department seemed to have drastically changed in 2 years. At an annual aerobics conference, also held in 1994, I noticed that, although the audience for many of the workshops was primarily female, the most popular presenters were predominantly male. Dr. Maureen Connolly, a Brock University professor, once quipped that the fitness industry was largely supported by females but run by males (personal communication, 1996). For the first time, I began to wonder what other kinds of inequities might be occurring in the fitness industry? I began to take a critical look at the industry with which I had been blindly affiliated for so many years.

A Need to Find Out: The Problem Situation

The management style of my own facility was very hierarchical. In addition, the front-line staff were primarily female, while the major decision makers were predominantly male. Was this type of management an isolated phenomenon with my facility or was this situation also prevalent elsewhere? I began to take note of the infrastructure of other facilities. Male usage eclipsed female usage of the weight training rooms, while female participants dominated the aerobics classes. Excluding tennis options, which seemed to cater to all age groups, what kinds of programming were available for people on either end of the age spectrum, young or aging? My casual observations showed that, in general, the membership appeared to be homogeneous, belonging to similar socioeconomic class and ethnic background. It seemed as if certain groups of society were missing from the
phenomenon I was observing. These missing groups were embraced in Boyce's (1996) idea of diversity appreciation which included ethnicity, gender, social class, sex-role socialization patterns, cognitive abilities, and physical abilities, and the additional issue of age.

A study of the fitness industry as a whole was not feasible because of the magnitude of such a project. Therefore, a cross-case analysis of two different fitness facilities seemed to be an introductory method of investigating aspects of diversity in a limited sample within the fitness industry. An analysis of the policies and practices at the two fitness facilities revealed similarities and differences between the two sites, and provided insight into recommendations for managing diversity at the two sites.

Why do a Study at all?

The purpose of the study was both practical and theoretical. The practical purpose dealt with the fitness facilities themselves. Each of the fitness facilities was promised an executive summary of the thesis for participating in the study. The secondary intent of the summary was to raise awareness about management policies and practices within the participating health clubs. In addition, I wanted the facilities to examine their public image, physical plant, and agenda from a fresh perspective to ascertain how their marketing strategies, environment, and programming accommodated a diverse population.

The theoretical purpose of this study was to focus on fitness as an area that merits academic study and research as part of the discipline of education. A literature search revealed studies on diversity in leisure, recreation, sport, and physical education, but not
research on diversity with reference specifically to fitness. The fitness industry has evolved from the "racquet clubs" and "spa chains" image (Levy, 1998) of the past into facilities attempting to offer more holistic options that incorporate the mind, the body, and the spirit into fitness programming options. However, postsecondary academic institutions have not consistently accommodated student learning needs towards this expanded understanding of fitness, so as to prepare students for careers in the fitness industry.

Many universities have recognized the need to align with the health field. University of Waterloo, University of Western Ontario, and University of Calgary, for instance, have undergraduate kinesiology degrees within the faculty of Health Sciences (University of Calgary, 2000; University of Waterloo, 2000; University of Western Ontario, 2000). Departments of Physical Education at University of Western Ontario and McMaster University have undergone an identity change to Departments of Kinesiology and, as a result, a shift in emphasis of their programmes. Queen's University has chosen to maintain the department of Physical Education as an entity separate from Health Sciences (Queen's University, 2000).

Students graduating from these Kinesiology programmes now have a more scientific base to enter into the fitness field, but the programmes are still generally more theoretical than practical. Brock University has a Sport Management undergraduate programme, but the professional opportunities listed for the programme graduates did not specifically mention careers in the fitness industry or fitness management (Brock University, 2000). University of Calgary appeared to recognize the need for courses in
both kinesiology and management by offering a combined degree in B.Comm. and B.Kin. (University of Calgary, 2000).

What Needs Investigating?

A study examining how the fitness industry was accommodating diversity was a huge undertaking because there were so many facets to the term diversity. Individual components of diversity have driven research in the disciplines of leisure, physical education, sport, and recreation. However, this study took a comprehensive approach, investigating a broad range of diversity issues as they pertained to both staff and facility members at two chosen sites.

When investigating staff, my objectives were to examine: (1) the organizational mission and policies, and their execution; (2) empowerment issues and lines of communication; (3) composition of upper management, middle management, and frontline staff; (4) hiring processes and opportunities for employee advancement; and (5) the public image of promotional material and intended target markets. To repeat the focus, each of these objectives was investigated using ethnicity, gender, social class, sex-role socialization, age, cultural background, and disability as the focus.

When studying the membership, I investigated: (1) the public image of the facilities; (2) members’ input into decisions directly affecting them; (3) the composition of the membership with respect to ethnicity, cultural background, socioeconomic class, age, and physical ability; (4) an alignment between programming offerings and programmes desired by members at the facilities; (5) the physical plant and accessibility issues for older clients and patrons with disabilities; and (6) interactive behaviours: member to member,
and staff to member. Issues of diversity were also the focus for these questions.

According to Esty, Griffin, and Hirsch (1995), “the principle of social similarity in social psychology states that, given a free choice, people tend to pick people just like themselves to work and associate with” (p. 8). If this principle were true, the following questions needed to be explored in the study.

- In its hiring practices and its membership drives has the fitness industry, as represented by two facilities, encouraged only homogeneous representation or were there chances for diverse populations a) to be major contributors in the fitness industry or b) to have fair opportunities at the social and health benefits associated with being members at fitness clubs?

- Did the membership populations themselves and the promotional material for the facilities inadvertently exclude anyone through verbal or nonverbal behaviour?

- Were there opportunities for all staff to be included in making major decisions for the facilities or was their input generally ignored? Were there methods in place to get input from the membership populations on policies and programming that directly affected them?

- Although staff were expected to “buy into” the mission statements of excellence in serving the consumers at the fitness facilities, were they also an integral part of those statements?

- How did the physical plants accommodate older clients, youth, and clients with disabilities? What kinds of programming were available for each of these populations?
Why is the turnover rate for employees in the fitness industry typically so high?

Was this tendency of early leave-taking related to inequities in hiring and promotional policies?

Are there discrepancies between stated policies and programmes that pertain to diversity issues, and the actual carrying out of these policies and programmes?

Definition of Terms

This section is intended to provide the reader with a clear understanding of various terms as they are used in the context of the study.

For this research, the term diversity took on the context of “diversity appreciation” as outlined in Boyce (1996). With the addition of the issue of age, diversity appreciation encompassed individual differences in ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sex-role socialization patterns, and physical and mental disabilities. Diversity could have included other issues such as sexual orientation, religion, or obesity, as described in Esty et al. (1995). These issues were not overlooked, simply not included in this particular study. In the interest of maintaining a workable focus and of making a link with education, the more limited definition of diversity by Boyce (1996) from the Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance was chosen.

Fitness, as defined in the dictionary (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998; Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1997; Nelson Canadian Dictionary, 1997) refers to the physical health of the body. However, the fitness industry today views fitness as being an integral part of wellness. This vital linking of the two terms expands the traditional
meaning of fitness to include maximal health in both the body and the mind. Although it could be argued that aspects of fitness and wellness occur in each of the following disciplines, there is not one area that captures the true essence of the mind, body, and spirit connection that is vital to a current understanding of the concept within the fitness industry setting.

The dictionary explanation of leisure makes reference to personal time not occupied by work, duties, or responsibilities (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998; Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1997; Nelson Canadian Dictionary, 1997).

The discipline of Physical Education deals with athletics, hygiene, and physical activities as taught in an academic setting (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998; Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1997; Nelson Canadian Dictionary, 1997).

Recreation is a term used in conjunction with play. An individual engages in recreational activity to refresh the mind or body (Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1997; Nelson Canadian Dictionary, 1997).

Sport is perceived as an activity involving physical exertion and skills. Generally the games have a competitive nature (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998; Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1997; Nelson Canadian Dictionary, 1997).

Rationale

In the decades between 1973 and 1993, the “ethno-cultural composition of Canada” sustained major changes (Taylor, 1995, p. 12). For example, Asian immigration in Canada increased by 40% in those two decades, while European immigration increased
by 23% (Taylor, 1995, p. 13). By 1993, Toronto’s Chinese community was home for approximately 350,000 people.

The Department of Canadian Heritage predicts that by the year 2006, ethno-cultural minorities in Canada will number 5.6 million people out of a projected total population of 30.6 million (Taylor, 1995). Added to the ethno-cultural melting pot are diversity issues of age, gender, socioeconomic class, and people with disabilities. How is the fitness industry, as represented by two fitness facilities, currently accommodating this heterogeneous mix? Is it social conscience or good business strategy to deal with issues of diversity? Can it be both? What is the future direction of the fitness industry?

Who Might Benefit from this Study?

As a result of this study, health club operators might discover that inequitable practices exist within their facilities, whether with staff or members. Bringing diversity issues to light might spark investigation into current club policies and practices. The study might also prompt fitness facilities owners to investigate the essence of their mission statements and the administration of those mission statements. Public organizations involved with fitness and wellness in Ontario such as the YWCA and municipal recreation departments, might also be interested in the results of this study to explore the same kinds of issues.

Based on the findings in this study, postsecondary institutions may look at their curricula and review their course offerings. Physical education courses of study gear the student towards working in a structured, academic setting, generally with a homogenous
age group. A fitness environment requires staff to deal with a diverse group of people in an unstructured and usually voluntary setting. Undergraduate kinesiology degree programmes provide students with a scientific and technical understanding of the human body. However, staff in the fitness industry need more than just technical expertise for designing appropriate programmes for clients. Graduates from postsecondary institutions need to be equipped with hands-on practical programming courses that incorporate the larger holistic picture of wellness, beyond the mechanical workings of the body. Programmes of study need to include psychology, not just sport psychology; client-centred programme planning and collaborative goal setting; preventive health measures as they apply in a fitness setting; management courses with application to a fitness setting; and so on.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This exploratory study examined diversity issues of ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, socialization patterns, and mental and physical abilities as they pertained to two selected, for-profit sites. The intent of a comprehensive approach was to present areas for possible future research, but not to deal in detail with any one issue. Although findings from a cross-case analysis might hint at how the fitness industry as a whole might be dealing with the issues of diversity, no broad generalizations can be made from so small or specialized a sample. Any conclusions suggested are limited to the sites under investigation.

The sites were located in urban centres, which differed greatly in their populations.
Therefore, the results from this study were not necessarily transferrable to smaller centres or to rural, public recreation, or non-profit settings.

The data collection, conducted in 1996, occurred over a 4-month period, too narrow a slice in time to draw any sweeping conclusions. By the time this research is published, the situation in the fitness industry regarding issues of diversity may have drastically changed. A paradigm shift towards more inclusive policies and programming is foreshadowed in current publications (Forecasts, 1997; Highlights, 1995).

The staff interviewees at each site were selected to represent different functions in the organization, but the small sample may not capture the perspectives of all staff at the facilities. The members at one site were self-selected and, therefore, could represent a biased group. The member sample size was smaller at one site than at the other.

The ethnic issue for me, as researcher, was a very sensitive issue. My strong principles about personal privacy precluded my directly asking the participants about their ethnicity. Hence, the results on the individual ethnicity of the participants were derived from third-party information and personal observation. This data on staff and member ethnicity would have been more effective if straightforwardly but sensitively asked.

Upcoming Chapters

The purpose in chapter 2 is to put the study into a context which is temporally and theoretically based. The issues of diversity, which were of concern in 1996 and which relate to the study, are introduced and described using refereed journals, management texts, and professional publications from the fitness field as reference material. There is a
discussion about the difficulties in locating research information in a fitness milieu and an explanation for using research in the disciplines of recreation, leisure and sport to support the rationale for the study.

Chapter 3 is divided into two parts. The first section establishes the epistemological stance of the study and explains the reasons behind the methodological approach used for this qualitative research. The second section describes the research design used to collect data at the two sites, the sampling and fieldwork strategies, the data collection and analysis processes.

In chapter 4, the themes derived from the data analysis are presented from both a staff and member perspective. Diversity issues of underrepresentation; discrepancy in policy and practice; exclusivity and exclusion; and inequity are discussed and supported with information from interviews, from research observations, and from facility documentation.

The final chapter deals with an interpretation of the findings, the implications of the study, and recommendations for future research. There is a final discussion of the value of this research to the facilities involved, to the fitness industry in general, and to academic institutions which deal with professional development courses.
Let's assume that you're a white man who's interested in joining a health club, so you tour a number of facilities. At each, you find that the entire staff is African-American and so, too, is the membership. You may very well be welcome at these clubs, but you might well leave with the feeling that, somehow, you just don't belong. Well, that's precisely the impression that many members of minority groups have gotten at clubs over the years. (Pepper Von, co-owner of Step 1 Dance and Fitness Academy and television personality, cited in Keeny, 1993, p. 31)

Introduction

The fitness industry is a billion-dollar business (Burns, 1997; Chelladurai, 1987; Glassner, 1989). Canadian adults spend almost $700.00 per year to be personally active and parents spend around $800.00 for a child to be physically active. Membership fees are the largest part of that expenditure for adults over 65 years of age, and the second largest expense for Canadians aged 45-64 years (Burns, 1997, p. 18). Yet, a lack of financial resources continues to be perceived as a barrier to physical activity (Burns, 1997) and leisure (Dattilo, Dattilo, Samdahl, & Kleiber, 1994; Kraus, 1995). Since fitness facilities are a source of physical activity for a number of Canadian adults and children (Burns, 1997; Ferebee, 1994; Stephens & Craig, 1990), and a source of employment for a number of Canadian adults, what segments of society can take advantage of these facilities?

Diversity is an important concept in the business world of the 1990s. The meaning of the term diversity, however, seems open to interpretation. With the addition of age, diversity appreciation in this study encompasses individual differences of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, gender socialization roles, and physical and mental disabilities. Others include people significantly overweight in their broad definition of diversity (Esty, Griffin, & Hirsch, 1995; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Robbins & Stuart-Kotze 1994).
Esty et al. (1995) remind us that, although diversity deals with differences that have “common dynamics” (p. 4), the individual issues of diversity are not mono-dimensional (also Keeny, 1993). To illustrate this point, the authors remind us that being of Irish or Italian descent has different implications than being physically or mentally disabled.

Valuing diversity goes beyond the “self-centred” attitude of the Golden Rule to the “receiver-centred” attitude of the “platinum rule,” which advocates that we treat others as they wish to be treated rather than as we would like to be treated (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 24). The connotation of diversity, then, can be conceptualized as a continuum that values differences at one end and advocates multicultural integration of people at the other (Carnevale & Stone, 1994).

In spite of the increasing importance placed on fitness and wellness in this decade, there is a conspicuous lack of Canadian scholarly writing and research in the fitness field (Duda & Allison, 1990; Sports and Fitness Branch, 1989). In 1996, prominent members of the fitness industry were attempting to broaden the scope of the term physical fitness to include mental, emotional and spiritual health, and wellness (Weinberg, 1994). Glassner (1989) concurred, stating that “fitness refers to the general state of a person’s psychophysical well-being -- mind as well as body” (p. 181).

Although there are refereed journals in the disciplines of leisure, recreation, and sport like Journal of Parks and Recreation, Journal of Sport Management, Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, Sociology of Sport Journal, and Journal of Leisure Research, there are no comparable refereed journals for fitness. Much of the information on diversity issues for this research had to be extrapolated from the above publications and
complemented by information from contemporary publications like Canadian Fitness, Idea Today (later Idea Source), Fitness Management, Athletic Business, or CBI (Club Business International).

The literature review is divided into four parts: diversity as it applies to the physical activity of Canadians; research studies that deal with diversity issues in the fields of leisure, recreation, and sport; diversity as it applies to organizations in general; and the individual issues of diversity as they pertain to the fitness industry in particular.

Diversity and the Physical Activity of Canadians

Studies that relate directly to fitness and physical activity deal with: the well-being of Canadians (Stephens & Craig, 1990); fitness services (Chelladurai, Scott, & Haywood-Farmer, 1987; Kim & Kim, 1995); fitness facility selection and usage (Bogle, Havitz & Dimanche, 1992; Hata & Umezawa, 1995); and a philosophical approach to fitness (Glassner, 1989). However, only the first study places factors of diversity in an historical context and discusses the issues as they affect people's physical activity level.

The 1988 Campbell's survey is a "longitudinal follow-up of the 1981 Canada Fitness Survey" (Stephens & Craig, 1990, opening page), investigating the well-being of Canadians. The database contained more than 23,000 people aged 7 years and older. Physical activity is examined using age, gender, occupation, education, and social support as variables. Psychosocial factors, such as emotional health, social support, barriers, and perceived control, are also examined to determine their influence on participation in physical activities. Except for the cohort in their early 20s, Canadians generally increased
their physical activity level in the years between the surveys in 1981 and 1988. The most popular choices of activity that would have an impact on fitness programming, were, in order of preference: walking, swimming, bicycling, dancing, skating, and jogging. These activity choices are being simulated in indoor fitness programme options available at fitness facilities in 1996: instructor-led stationary cycling via group classes called Spinning* classes, aerobics “dance” classes, and skate/ski-simulated exercise using equipment called the Slide®. Similarly, evidence from the United States accumulated between 1987 and 1997, indicates that the treadmill is the most popular piece of cardiorespiratory equipment used indoors (Hartley, 1998, p. 49). The treadmill’s popularity increased over 800% in that decade, and established walking as the continuing number one choice of physical activity, indoors and outdoors. Free weights as an exercise option nearly doubled in popularity in the same time frame, according to the American statistics. The Canadian market is invariably influenced by American trends.

The 1988 Campbell's Survey illustrated that fitness facilities or recreation complexes as sites for physical activity were the preferred choices for only 25% of the population base. The likelihood of choosing either of these options is generally greater with an increase in socioeconomic status, according to the survey. In addition, over half the participants in the Campbell’s survey cite time as a major constraining factor to being more physically active.

Diversity Issues in the Fields of Leisure, Recreation, and Sport

Research that refers specifically to issues of diversity is common in the fields of
recreation, leisure, and sport. However, the studies tend to investigate and analyse individual aspects of diversity. The challenge of researching the leisure experience results from its dynamic and multidimensional nature (Lee, Dattilo, & Howard, 1994).

Henderson (1994a) expressed a similar perspective about leisure, when she describes it as a "highly complex construct, especially when the historical, cultural and political issues of power and social control are analyzed" (p. 3). Murphy and Dahl (1991) suggested that the "melting pot" (p. 107) or homogeneity model that dominates the approach of the leisure services, limits the consideration of diverse programming options. The same kinds of issues affect the fitness industry.

**Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Factors**

Ethnicity, social class, and gender were examined in two Canadian research studies in recreation and leisure. Brayley and Searle (1991) found that the variables of age, gender and income influence people's choice of a recreation site (in Bogle, Havitz, & Dimanche, 1992). However, the researchers also suggest that managers cannot control these biases and must focus on meeting the needs of specific markets irrespective of age, socioeconomic level, or gender.

A second study uses the responses from a large cohort of self-identified ethnocultural groups to examine leisure from the perspective of participation patterns, perceived barriers, and personal importance (Sports and Fitness Branch, 1989). The study recommends that recreational and leisure services in Ontario be investigated and improved for groups of people who have common socio-demographic attributes, who have recently immigrated, who are marginalized, or who are "linguistically distinct" (Sport and Fitness
Branch, 1989, p. 23). Fox (1992) noted that there is a pattern to those who are repeatedly neglected in a leisure setting. This pattern includes discrimination frequently based on gender, race, class, educational attainment, physical ability, age, and other attributes (in Henderson, 1994b). However, it appears that the Chinese, Portugese, South Asian, and West Indian groups prefer to engage in leisure activities that are ethnoculturally relevant (Sport and Fitness, 1989) and, hence, may eliminate themselves from traditional Western recreation options.

Research in recreation and leisure using Blacks, Anglos, and Hispanics as subjects, suggests that lower socioeconomic class, lesser education, and limited acculturation into Anglo society, has an effect on feelings of perceived discrimination (Floyd & Gramann, 1995), or on leisure experiences and recreation choices (Carr & Williams, 1993; Floyd, McGuire, Noe, & Shinew, 1994). Based on a limited sample of Hispanic participants, the feelings of ethnic discrimination appear to be more prevalent among socioeconomic classes who are considered poor and bound to their native language and culture, than among groups who are more educated and assimilated into Anglo society (Floyd & Gramann, 1995). In their study on African and Anglo Americans, Floyd et al. (1994) proposed that (a) marginality and ethnicity are reciprocally, not exclusively, related to leisure choices and (b) race, among self-identified, lower socioeconomic classes, is more relevant to leisure choices than is social class, especially for females.

**Gender**

Many of the studies in the fields of recreation, sport, and leisure use gender as a focus. Shaw (1994) analysed leisure activities from a gendered perspective by
investigating the effects of variables such as class, race, time, and economics on participation in leisure opportunities. It seems that, for both men and women, lack of readily available facilities or programmes are barriers to leisure participation (Shaw, 1994).

In the same study, Shaw (1994) looked at the sex-role socialization of women and girls, and suggested that "aesthetics, physical attractiveness, and body shape" (p.13) act as potential barriers to favourable leisure experiences for females (also Dattilo et al., 1994). Finally, the researcher presented the possibility that leisure choices are a gendered form of resistance against traditional female socialization patterns.

Karla Henderson is a well-known author in leisure research on gender issues. More than once the author admonishes that we live in a "totally gendered society" (1994a, p. 2). Henderson (1994b) maintains that research on gender issues lends insight into the behaviours of society as a whole; potentially provides an "analytic framework" (1994b, p.132) for both sexes in the examination of race, class, physical ability, and aging; and is inseparable from cultural influences. In keeping with a broader interpretation of gender issues, she also states that "researching the gendered meanings of leisure is of no consequence unless that research can be translated into practice and used to improve the quality of life for all disenfranchised groups" (Henderson, 1994b, p. 6).

Dattilo et al. (1994) investigated the leisure preferences, barriers to leisure experiences, and self-esteem of a disenfranchised group of overweight, predominantly African American women in a low socioeconomic group. This cohort reported that family and household responsibilities, lack of time (although they were not employed outside the home), insufficient financial resources, and physical image/problems are constraints to
being more active.

In her review on the sporting lives and physical activity of women, McDermott (1996) looked at the public inclination to label certain sports or physical activities as being male- or female-specific, based on sex-role socialization and the physical intensity of the activity (also Whitson, 1994). In an effort to increase awareness about patriarchal ideologies in the advertising world, Duncan (1993) discussed the effects of media images and media text on public perceptions of sexism and gender stereotypes.

Age

Writings about physical activity and an aging population emerge from the University of British Columbia. Like results in the 1988 Campbell’s Survey, O’Brien and Conger (1991) found that older adults are more encouraged to be physically active if facilities are convenient. Also of importance to aging adults is a local support system and appropriate leadership. However, O’Brien and Vertinsky (1991) also discovered in their research that there are connections, unrelated to age, between the variables of sex-role socialization, economic status, social class, and educational level, and the outcome of participation in physical activity.

In three surveys spanning 7 years, Jeffres and Dobos (1993) studied the effect of environmental influences (looked upon as a lack of available choices), in conjunction with gender, race, age, and socioeconomic factors, on personal perceptions of leisure values and leisure opportunities (see also Brooks, 1995). The researchers detected a weak, inconclusive link between the variables, and participants’ perceptions of leisure values. They recommended further research in this area.
Diversity in Organizations

In contrast to research studies in the fields of leisure, recreation, and sport which study only one or two aspects of diversity, many business texts and articles take a multidimensional approach to organizational diversity. This approach more parallels the perspective taken in this study.

A large part of the fitness industry is still labouring under management theories developed in the first half of this century. Frederick Taylor’s (1911) scientific principles of management and the ideal bureaucracy of Max Weber (1947) embody the major management tenets of many large businesses today: “rationality, predictability, impersonality, technical competence, and authoritarianism” (Robbins & Stuart-Kotze, 1994, p. 46; also Kirton, 1991). There is a division of labour between management and front line, between the decision makers and the doers (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Gulbronson, 1992; Helgeson, 1995; Robbins & Stuart-Kotze, 1994; Senge, 1994)

In a fitness context, Sattler and Doniek (1994) contended that management philosophy based solely on production and statistics is outdated. Weinberg (1994) agreed that dealing with a target market from the top-down is ineffectual in a business as dynamic as the fitness industry, since the front line workers are those in constant contact with the public.

Chelladurai (1992) differentiated between the types of services that can be offered by fitness facilities operating under bureaucratic or mechanistic (hierarchical, structured, centralized decision making) organizational systems, and organic (collaborative, flexible, decentralized decision making) organizational systems. The author contested that a
mechanistic organizational structure is feasible only if consumers are self-motivated and require strictly procedural assistance, such as guidance on how to operate certain pieces of equipment in a fitness facility. However, to encourage staff and consumer diversity, and to offer “human services” (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 48), an organization needs to operate democratically and to empower its employees (see also Helgeson, 1995, for organizations in general).

Implementing diversity requires creative and dynamic thinking. Wheatley (1994) alluded to this thought process when she compared organizations with science and discussed a movement toward holism, understanding systems, and appreciating the facets of diversity. The current management trend toward flattening -- or currently in vogue, “re-engineering”-- organizations (Morgan, 1991; Weinberg, 1994) affects creative thinking and thereby workplace diversity in many ways, such as the following. The sphere of responsibility for managers today will be increasingly enlarged and more complex (Morgan, 1991), leaving them little time to update their managerial skills to deal with diversity (Nanus, 1990), especially if the company does not support the concept of a learning organization (Woolner, 1992). As middle-management posts are eliminated, opportunities for advancement will be increasingly reduced, meaning that the competition for the remaining managerial positions will be fierce (Light, 1988). The dominant white male power structure will be increasingly threatened by public and governmental pressure, and coerced by the enlightened practices of other organizations to institute more equitable hiring practices (Mercurio & Guilfoyle, 1996).

Charles Handy (1991) proposed that “the organization which treats people like
assets requiring maintenance, love, and investment can behave quite differently from the organization which looks upon them as costs, to be reduced wherever and whenever possible (in J. Henry, 1991, p. 280).” The productivity of organizations falters when it cannot take advantage of diversity in its staff (Senge, 1994). Successful implementation of diversity in organizations begins with executive managers who can appreciate diversity and utilize that diversity to the benefit of the organization (Galagan, 1993; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Helgeson, 1995; Hurst, Rush, & White, 1991; Wheatley, 1994).

Diversity in the Fitness Industry

The quote at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates the feeling of discrimination by reversing the traditional roles of the White consumer with a Black consumer. Ethnic minorities have typically been underrepresented in the fitness industry because of a lack of marketing and exposure, of people to facilities and of facilities to people (Keeny, 1993). Both Lofshult (1997) and Keeny (1993) agree that, in the past, minorities have been neglected by the industry because of their poor economic status as consumers.

Congruence and Incongruence

The essence of the term mono-culturalism (p. 249), first encountered in Gardenswartz and Rowe (1993), is used repeatedly in literature about diversity (see also Carr & Williams, 1993; Esty et al., 1994; Green, 1998; Keeny, 1993; Miller, 1995; Robbins & Stuart-Kotze, 1994). The articles admonish the reader not to consider all people in a particular group (e.g., ethnic, age, gender, physical disability) as having the
same characteristics or behaving in a similar manner. Von (in Keeny, 1993) agrees with this thinking, although his ultimate aim is to integrate everyone into the facility (see also Forecasts, 1997, p. 35).

According to Bandura, people need to have successful experiences, appropriate role models, social support, staff encouragement, and realistic goal-setting, before they are able to make major lifestyle changes (in McCarthy, 1993; see also Brooks, 1995; Cohen, 1995; Jeffres & Dobos, 1993). The same tactics will also diminish feelings of discrimination. People often give up their memberships because these elements are missing in their fitness facility experience (Moffatt, 1996). Brooks (1995) talked about consumer "congruence" and "incongruence" (p. 26), situations in which a participant assesses the alignment between self-image and personal needs, and the facility and the programming it offers. When making a decision on congruence, a potential facility member considers issues of exercise intensity and enjoyment, anxieties over body shape and unfamiliar practices, and concerns about not "acting their age" or wearing inappropriate attire (Brooks, 1995).

Stereotypes

Brooks (1995) also discussed the ideal stereotypes endorsed in the marketing strategies of the fitness industry (also McCarthy, 1994; and Duncan, 1993, on sports images) and proposed the need for visible role models within the memberships of fitness facilities. Members look for staff who exhibit qualities of empathy, consistency and age-appropriateness (Durrett, 1995). Westcott (1995) claimed that people are intimidated by the fitness devotees within facility memberships. New members soon "get the impression
that they are too unfit to be seen in a fitness facility” (Westcott, 1995, p. 48; also Lofshult, 1997). People who are intimidated by the physical and human atmosphere in a fitness facility, also wonder if fitness facilities, in general, appeal to people of all shapes and sizes (McCarthy, 1994, 1996; Rippe, 1996). An opinion is difficult to change, according to Gulbranson (1992/3), because it takes 15 positive experiences to obliterates one negative occurrence.

Besides the public impression of the “ideal member,” there are also stereotypes of fitness facilities and fitness facility activities. A 1994 IHRSA (International Health, Racquet & Sportclub Association) study indicated that the public viewed fitness facilities as “‘meat markets’ with an excessive number of mirrors in which fit members ‘check themselves out’” (Moffatt, 1996, p.13; see also Brooks, 1995; Cohen, 1995). Brooks (1995) proposed the concept of psychological congruity as influencing consumer’s decisions to become more physically active and to join a health club. Psychological congruity refers to the “fit” between people’s needs and self-image, and their perception of the programming of fitness facilities. Her 1996 research includes “functional congruity” which takes into account facility location, layout, equipment, services and “affordability” (in McCarthy, 1996, p. 6).

Socioeconomic Issues

One facility highlighted in Athletic Business (1994), offered a variety of membership types and fee structures in order to accommodate the financial resources and the service needs of a wide demographic market. The most economically reasonable membership has limits on available days, while the most expensive membership includes
amenities like private showers, lockers, and laundry service (Popke, 1994, p. 52). However, according to Popke (1994) and Gulbronson (1992/3), socioeconomic status should disappear in the sports arena or in the fitness centre.

In contrast, Kraus (1995) examined recreation "apartheid" or leisure "haves" and "have-nots" (p. 39). It appears that the middle and upper classes have an abundant selection of recreation opportunities compared to the poorer socioeconomic classes whose leisure selections are limited.

Age

Many authors suggested that the "baby boomers" (the generation born between 1946 and 1964) are driving the current trends in the fitness industry. Foot (1996) claimed that the generation known as the "baby boom" represents one-third of the Canadian population (Lee in Forecasts, 1997). Ferebee (1994) predicted a steady decline in the 18 to 34 year-old fitness market because the "50-plus" market will increase 74% in the next 30 years compared to a growth of only 1% in the under-50 population (Ferebee, 1994; Hildreth, 1993).

The age wave. Like their Generation "X" children (those born between 1965 and 1976; Turco, 1996), the consumer group known as the "baby boomers" will be more diverse, more segregated, more unconventional, and richer as seniors than their predecessors (Boyd in Forecasts, 1997; Cohen, 1995; Lofshult, 1997). According to the World Health Report for 1998, the average life expectancy is predicted to be 73 years in 2025 compared to 48 years in 1955. However, "people have been granted 30 extra years of life but not 30 extra years of youth" (Dr. Peter Wood, cited in Hildreth, 1993, p. 24).
As a result, “baby boom” consumers are concerned as much with quality of life as with fitness level, and they expect facilities to have diverse programming and services (Foot, 1996, in Lee, 1997). This age cohort seeks personal satisfaction from their fitness and leisure experiences. However, Jack Raglin of the University of Indiana, suggests that mind-body programmes, which enhance the quality of life for older patrons, still “seem inordinately focussed on younger populations” (Forecasts, 1997, p. 49). Yet Gandolfo (1997) claims that, more than ever before, fitness facilities are appealing to a wider variety of people, particularly children and seniors, and are scheduling more diverse programme options for these groups.

**Youth.** Since few Canadian schools are providing quality, daily physical education, children must get much of their physical activity at home or at public facilities (Alexander, 1996; Belfry, 1996). Obesity has become a health issue for 40 to 50 % of Canadian youth ages 6 to 17 (Alexander, 1996, p. 17). Of these youngsters, 40 to 90 % will go on to become obese adults. According to Fishburne & Harper-Tarr (1992), “40% of Canadian children already have at least one risk factor for heart disease -- reduced fitness due to an inactive lifestyle” (cited in Belfry, 1996).

Since children are not “miniature adults,” they need to have programming options that are not solely motivated by health (Malina, 1991) and physiological fitness. Children of all ages flourish psychologically and physically when unstructured time for play and games is included among their activities. As an alternative for structured play, playgrounds and indoor play areas provide “safe havens to improve the education and cultural and social experience of children” (Brett, Moore, & Provenzo, 1993, p. 1). Brett
et al. (1993) also question whether recreation areas accommodate children both with and without disabilities.

To capture the youth market, Pillarella, fitness industry spokesperson and specialist in programming for youth, suggests that there are macro and micro environmental factors that must be considered in developing children's programming (in Forecasts, 1997, p. 52). The macro factors involve family values, media support, and role models. The micro influences are controlled by fitness professionals and deal with convenience, fair pricing, play value, and diversity appreciation (e.g. of special needs, both genders, ethnicity).

The family unit. Family programming is an option for fitness facilities. However, it may first be necessary to redefine the concept of family in order to plan innovative programming. According to research conducted by the Vanier Institute of the Family in Ottawa, the notion of a traditional, nuclear Canadian family is outdated (Vanier Institute, 1996). This study indicated that, in 1986, a large proportion of family units contained two employed-for-pay parents. Also on the rise are single-parent families (Turco, 1996), run predominantly by women (Vanier Institute, 1996). Since over 70% of the women in the world live in absolute poverty (Rodriguez-Trias, 1996, p. 306), and are consistently paid 25% less than their male equivalents (Esty et al., 1995), leisure experiences for both parent and child could be drastically limited or nonexistent in a single-parent family. It is also possible that children belong to alternative or extended families (Schools, 1995) whose value systems differ from the value systems upheld by recreation providers and fitness facilities.

To accommodate family time, health clubs need to look at providing childcare...
centres, “playscapes” for children, noncompetitive play options, programming for youth, and family recreation areas (Kass, 1992, p. 18; see also Kim & Kim, 1995). Providing such services ameliorates one of the most common complaints cited for inactivity and non-participation in fitness facilities: time. “Time poverty” (Lofshult, 1997, p. 38) is mentioned as problematic in a number of studies and articles on physical activity and health club membership (Dattilo et al., 1994; Vanderburg & Westcott in Forecasts, 1997; Kass, 1992; Harrington & Dawson (1995) in Russell, 1996; Sports and Fitness Branch, 1989; Stevens & Craig, 1990).

Inclusive programming. In reference to activities for all populations, there is a need to offer “developmentally appropriate” programmes (Francis, 1997, p. 52; see also Cohen, 1995; Gandolfo, 1997; Lee, 1997), taking into account the needs and abilities of individual fitness facility members. Schmid (1994) and Gandolfo (1997) talked about designing or renovating a facility with these needs in mind. According to the Schmid (1994) article, half of their facility patrons use the pool areas, which contain a warm water pool, a lap pool and a play pool area for people of all ages. Dinan (Forecasts, 1997, p. 44) questioned whether the fitness industry is capable of adapting to an aging population and suggested some programming options. She proposed more moderate, functional (concerned with daily activities) programmes, liaisons with recreation and health care professionals, accessible transportation, and fitness equipment that accommodates all peoples including the growing aging population (see also Cohen, 1995). Westcott (1997) recommended more inclusive programming that accommodates seniors, newcomers to strength training, overweight adults, patients with cardiac problems, and individuals with
disabilities.

People with a Disability.

As the "baby boomers" age, there will be an increase in people with disabilities (Lockette, 1997; Rimmer, 1997). According to Rimmer (1997), disability refers to "limitations in physical or mental function, caused by one or more health conditions, in carrying out socially defined tasks and roles that individuals are generally expected to do" (p. 28). In the same vein, the WHO (World Health Organization) predicts that there will be 7.5 million blind people by the year 2020 (Lockette, 1997). Mindful of people with disabilities, Kroll (n.d.) specifically addresses the architectural structure in a fitness centre and urges a minimum of 75-80 cm. of floor space between exercise machines. To accommodate wheelchairs, Kroll also recommends double doors, ramps, elevators, and flat thresholds.

In her book Fitness Programming and Physical Disability, Miller (1995) opens with the statement "The legal and ethical ideal is that all exercise programs and facilities should be equally accessible to all people" (p. 4; see also Schofield & Atkinson, 1995). She suggests three different kinds of barriers to participation in fitness programming: physical, attitudinal, and resource-related (p. 4). Physical issues refer to conditions that constrain movement or participation (also Rimmer, 1997). Attitudinal barriers revolve around public perception of persons with disabilities as well personal self-image. Resource-related constraints include lack of money, transportation, inappropriate programming and equipment, and inadequate moral support. In addition to programming issues, Miller (1995) also includes issues of administrative polices and procedures which exclude certain
segments of the population. Other than space issues, however, these barriers apply to any minority population.

Gender, Sex-Role Socialization

In an article on the effects of the fitness industry on women, Russell (1996) attests that the increase in interest of fitness in the past two decades has provided women with an opportunity to become mentally and physically stronger. Still, she concludes with “the real lives of women, however, have traditionally been constrained by gender inequality, role responsibilities, time fragmentation, perception of home as a woman’s place, and the lack of a sense of entitlement” (p. 40; see also Dattilo, Dattilo, Samdahl, & Kleiber, 1994). These constraints apply to both female participants and staff members in a fitness facility.

The Melpomene Institute (founded to “close the research gap between physically active men and women;” Lutter & Jaffe, 1995, p. 65) conducted a study on larger women. The research finds that larger women often eliminate themselves from physical activity because of the contempt and humiliation they feel based on their appearance. Larger women have difficulty in finding fitness facilities with an atmosphere supportive enough to provide suitable programming for them. The myth of females being the weaker sex is perpetuated in programmes that focus on weight management, body shape, and sex appeal (Theberge & Birrell, 1994, in Russell, 1996).

In other research about young girls and self-esteem, the Melpomene Institute lists significant barriers to this cohort being more physically active. The study shows inequitable treatment by the boy players, presuppositions that the girls lack the skill to play, underestimations of the girls’ level of competence, inadequate opportunities, and
conflicts with other activities.

The literature search provided a definition of diversity, talked about the 1988 Campbell's Survey on the physical activity of Canadians, and went on to investigate diversity issues in research from the fields of recreation, leisure, and sport. The chapter continued with the management aspects of diversity and ended with a discussion of diversity issues occurring in the fitness industry.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how two fitness facilities were handling issues of diversity: namely ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, sex-role socialization, and physical and mental disabilities. Of prime importance were the policies and programming that had an impact on the memberships, and the policies that had an effect on staff. The following chapter discusses the methodology chosen for the research and the methods used for data collection.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This chapter sets out for the reader both the methodological approach used in this research project and a detailed account of how data were collected and analysed. The first segment explains the reasoning and advantages of using naturalistic inquiry for examining the topic. This section contains information on: 1) the choice of methodology, 2) the selection of the sites, 3) the researcher’s role, and 4) sampling strategies.

The second section is separated into two parts: a descriptive account of the data collected and a summary of the analysis process. The first segment presents a rich narrative of the sites chosen and profile information about the interview participants. In addition, it discusses how the ethical issues were handled in this research project and outlines the methods and difficulties encountered in the collection of the data. This section concludes with an explanation of the analysis process and the development of the themes.

With issues of diversity, as outlined in Boyce (1996), guiding the inquiry, I launched my exploration of management structures and current praxes of two selected fitness facilities.

Epistemological Stance

Given the holistic and sensitive nature of the issues of diversity, qualitative research was a natural choice for the collection of my data. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) suggested that “Qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with selected persons in their settings (field research) and by obtaining relevant documents” (p. 372). This was my intention in conducting interviews, making personal observations, and collecting various types of documentation at the chosen sites. Although there were
occasions in my observational data when I quantified what I saw, the interpretations on the data collected were subjectively and inductively analysed.

The motive behind the study was a profound desire on my part, as the researcher, to identify the policies and practices of the fitness industry, and to determine whether, in its philosophies, behaviours, and daily operations, the industry was embracing different ethnic groups, genders, ages, social classes, economic echelons, and physical and mental abilities. If a theoretical orientation had to be applied to the study, ethnography would most closely fit. The research investigated the cultures of both the membership and the staff of two different fitness facilities. Patton (1990) has also suggested that “a focus on culture has become central in organizational studies” and programme evaluation (p. 68). However, implicit in ethnography is the element of an extended period of immersion in the culture (Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). This study does not meet that particular aspect of ethnography.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993) mentioned that critical ethnography is “an adoption of ethnographic methodology to incorporate a ‘critical’ perspective to raise policy questions about the role of education in specific social and cultural contexts that promote the ‘reproduction of social classes, gender roles, and racial and ethnic prejudice’ (Anderson, 1989, as cited in Schumacher & McMillan, p. 550).” In discussing the use of case study as a method of qualitative research, Schumacher and McMillan (1993) also commented that analyzing policy often requires more than one research method to achieve.

Driven by the initial feeling of personal injustice, I decided to investigate whether
the inadequately explained dismissal that I experienced was an isolated incident or a common occurrence in the fitness industry. This motivating factor led me to question the policies and practices of the fitness industry with respect to age, sex-role socialization, and gender, within both the staff and the membership of a health club. As the concept took hold, these issues spawned the need to examine other issues of diversity appreciation such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and physical and mental disability within the consumer and employee cultures of a fitness organization. Thus, the research was guided by, but not limited to, the focus of critical ethnography.

Research Design

In a limited time span, investigation of a representative sample of the Canadian fitness industry on the issues of diversity is impossible. Therefore, the case study approach is an exploratory means of answering the “how” and “why” of the research question (Merriam, 1988, p. 9), namely the extent to which diversity was incorporated into the programming and management structures of two selected fitness facilities.

Case Study Approach

The individual components of diversity could have been investigated purely by quantitative methods, as was done in other studies in the fields of recreation, sport, and leisure, by statistically analyzing the number of examples of diversity in each of the health clubs. However, the holistic perspective of fitness and wellness, that is a strength of qualitative research, and the interdependence of the elements of diversity among the membership and staff at the facilities would have been lost.
Analyzing a single site provides valuable insight into issues raised in a research question. However, the results might apply only to that facility. Therefore, by choosing two sites in two different locations, I maximize variation in a small sample, lending significance to the data when common characteristics emerge (Patton, 1990). If similarities exist in both the facilities, then generalizations can be made about these two facilities, and tentative opinions may be posed about the fitness industry in general. Future research can uphold or discredit any generalizations tentatively proposed about the fitness industry as a whole.

For data analysis, the main source of information about the facilities was derived from responses to the interview questions. Observational data supported or rejected this information and permitted me to “understand the program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews” (Patton, 1990, p. 25). Facility documentation was a supporting source of information for interpreting data. Thus methodological triangulation reinforced the study and cross-validated the data by providing a variety of strategies with the same focus (Patton, 1990).

The informality of the fitness facility setting permitted me a relatively unobtrusive immersion into the environment as an interviewer and an observer. I mixed interactive (interviews and observations) with non-interactive (use of documents) strategies (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 374) to collect different kinds of information at each of the facilities. The foreshadowed questions arising from the problem statement, as outlined in chapter 1, were translated into themes for constructing the interview questions and the observation sheets.
In the interest of confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms are used for both the sites and the participants. The exception was the city of Toronto. This city promoted anonymity by virtue of its very size. I call the Toronto site, Club Toronto and the facility in the smaller centre, The Cardinal Club.

**Site Selection**

The sites were chosen for two reasons. First, I had a contact person or an “in” at each of the fitness facilities. At The Cardinal Club, I received direct permission from the general manager to conduct my research there. At the metropolitan fitness facility, I had a “known sponsor“ (Patton, 1990, p. 254) to intervene on my behalf with the Fitness Director, to gain me access to the club, and to provide me with a certain degree of credibility for the research project. Both facilities operated on the standards set by IHRSA (International Health, Racquets and Sportsclub Association), a not-for-profit trade association.

Secondly, and most importantly, I selected the sites for both their homogeneous and their heterogeneous characteristics. By using a cross-case study, I wanted to represent as many different characteristics of other facilities as possible. Both health clubs were for-profit, commercial enterprises. Each location had a membership base of about 3,300 people and offered among their programming options, aerobics, weight training, and racquet sports. The fitness facilities were comparable in physical plant size (fitness facility wing only), commercial vision, and organizational mission. Both the facilities had opened their doors to the public within 1 year of each other, 1978 and 1979. The shared features of the clubs account for their homogeneity.
In keeping with Patton’s (1990) suggestion of maximizing variation in a small sample, the chosen sites also have several key differences. The Toronto facility, Club Toronto, belonged to a chain of nine fitness facilities, with an offsite executive management; The Cardinal Club was a single, family-owned and -operated business. Club Toronto was strictly a fitness facility while The Cardinal Club was part of a hotel complex that included a pool, a dining room, and a sports shop. Club Toronto had a potential market base of greater than 2 million people; The Cardinal Club drew from a surrounding area of about 200,000 residents. While The Cardinal Club sat on a parcel of land in between two small cities, and was inaccessible by public transportation, the metropolitan site was located in the downtown core. Conceivably, the central location of the metropolitan club restricted the availability of economically feasible floor space, while The Cardinal Club had room for potential expansion upwards and outwards.

The Cardinal Club. I had an association with The Cardinal Club facility and an intense desire to explore its policies and practices with respect to diversity appreciation.

The health club was located between two Ontario towns, with populations of 70,000 and 130,000 people. The facility was owned and operated by a prominent family in one of the nearby cities. Over the years, the various children of the original owner had conjointly managed the complex under their father’s supervision. The structure was visible from and had easy access to a nearby four-lane highway. It was located in a rural setting. Because of its location, expansion was a possibility. There was no public transportation that stopped close to this facility.

In 1979, the fitness facility was added to the original hotel complex and started as a
racquets-only club: squash, racquetball, and tennis. The evolution of a fitness focus spanned several years, starting with a few pieces of strength training equipment, and aerobics classes that improbably shared the weight room with strength training participants. At the time of the research, both a staff member and a facility member mentioned that there were sometimes shortcomings with the facility as a result of this change in focus. They proposed that the problems resulted from the fact that the owners were still trying to work with and adapt the original structure into a health and wellness club.

The membership base for the facility at the time of the research in 1996 was approximately 3,300 members. The facility contained eight indoor and four outdoor tennis courts, six squash courts, and two racquetball courts. Previous racquetball courts had been divided horizontally in half to create upstairs and downstairs rooms. The products of this division were an aerobics studio, and four strength training and cardiovascular training areas.

The Cardinal Club was open to the public daily at 6 a.m. From Monday to Thursday, the closing time was 11 p.m.; on Friday, closing was 8 p.m.; and on Saturdays and Sundays, closing times were 8 p.m. and 5 p.m. respectively.

Club Toronto. The fitness facility was located on a main street near a busy intersection in northern Toronto. In 1996, Toronto had a population of more than two million people. The health club vied for curb space with office buildings and retail stores, and was located on the upper levels of an office building. At first sight of the facility, it occurred to me that real estate space could be a potential expansion problem for this
The health club was one of a chain of nine fitness centres scattered throughout the urban and downtown areas of the city. City transportation and cars sped by in view of fitness facility exercisers on the second floor. Across the street from the facility was a small public parking lot available to fitness facility members. Club Toronto helped finance the parking in this lot by validating the parking “tickets” of members using the fitness facility. The maximum cost for 3 hours of subsidized parking was $2.00, a real value in metropolitan Toronto. On my first visit, unaware of the parking assistance, I circled the block several times before finding a place to park on a side street.

The chain of clubs to which Club Toronto belonged started as a single facility with a single focus -- racquet sports. It contained eight indoor and six outdoor tennis courts. The original facility was 700 square feet and contained two multistation exercise units (weight training machines that had several stations to exercise individual body parts). The gymnasium “also doubled as the daycare. There was an outdoor pool, a restaurant and two locker rooms” (quote from an article by the owner, 1998). (To preserve anonymity, I am omitting both the publication and the page reference for this quote.) Club Toronto opened to the public in 1979, primarily as a squash club. In the 1980s and 1990s, the health club grew and evolved into a facility offering group exercise classes, and strength training as well as squash. The major renovations undertaken in 1995/96 added space that provided a window to the outside and rearranged the second floor layout to accommodate the changing needs of the facility. Previous to this time, the club owned only internal space in the building where it was located. New interior decorating gave the facility an
upscale look.

In 1996, the membership base for the facility was over 3,200 members. On the premises there were seven squash courts, a main gym, various other weight training areas, two aerobics studios, one of which doubled as a Spinning® studio, and a miscellaneous room for seminars and workshops. Club Toronto’s hours of operation were 5:45 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays. Closing time on Fridays was 9 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, the club opened at 8 a.m. both days and closed at 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. respectively.

Study Participants

I used a combination of purposeful sampling strategies for this study. In choosing participants to interview, I used a combination of stratified, typical case, and snowball or chain sampling strategies. Interviewing a cross-section of employees, from management to front-line staff, generated data that depicted different perspectives of the diverse practices in each club.

Through a letter of introduction and explanation of the thesis project (see Appendix B), I personally invited the owner and club manager of The Cardinal Club, and the Fitness Director of Club Toronto to take part in the research. They agreed. I decided on four participants per site for the staff interviews: two representatives from front-line staff, one from middle management, and one other volunteer willing to be part of the study.

At The Cardinal Club, based on the criteria for stratified purposeful sampling, I personally invited staff to take part in the study and made the arrangements for the interviews. The resulting group of staff interviewees consisted of one sales representative,
the supervisor of the front desk staff, the Tennis Director and the Director of Sales. At Club Toronto where I was not acquainted with the staff, I used both stratified purposeful sampling and snowball sampling strategies. For two of the participants, I chose a particularly knowledgeable front desk employee, who had a long-term association with Club Toronto, and the male Aerobics Coordinator, with whom I had a professional connection. My contact person at Club Toronto selected the other two staff interviewees and arranged the interview schedule. She chose one middle management staff and one fitness staff.

Getting volunteers from the membership using a purposeful sampling strategy was more difficult. I found it necessary to use a combination of typical case sampling and snowball sampling to gain recruits. At The Cardinal Club, I assembled my group by spreading the word about the research project. My intention was to assemble a cohort representing each gender and including a variety of ages, different ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic classes. However, the self-selected respondents who finally agreed to be interviewed formed a like-gender group. All of them were white females, although they differed in age, length of membership time with the facility, educational background, and socioeconomic status. Even with the intervention of his fiancee, attempts to recruit a male club member in a wheelchair failed. He would have made an invaluable contribution to the study.

At Club Toronto, the front desk interviewee recommended a list of members whom she felt would provide me with information-rich data. Of that list, I was able to recruit only one male and one female of differing ages, educational levels, and
socioeconomic backgrounds. They agreed to telephone interviews.

Typical case sampling was also used to choose the programmes and activities for observation. Had the study not been conducted over a short span of time, I would have randomly observed several different activities and collected data on each of them. Methodological triangulation was used to confirm whether the cases were truly typical or favourably biased.

Researcher’s Role

For my research role, I adopted Patton’s (1990) interpretation of participant observer, where “the extent of participation is a continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as full participant to complete separation from the setting as spectator” (p. 206). I remained flexible to my surroundings and often found that my role was context sensitive. At one end of the spectrum I was an interactive participant in the interviews, on the other end I acted solely as an onlooker in the weight rooms and in the lobby.

There were problems involved in arranging observation times and interview schedules. Limited personal time frames and work commitments often conflicted with availability of others at the facilities. The research data collection had to be completed between mid-October, 1996 and the 3rd week in December, 1996. The distance to the Toronto facility was an obstacle. Ultimately, I concluded the final two telephone interviews with Club Toronto members late in December, 1996. In total, I managed to complete six observation sessions in various areas of the facilities, and 18 personal interviews.
The Interview Questions

As a novice researcher, I chose an open-ended, standardized interview format to gain insight into the thoughts and perspectives of the interviewees. The interview questions were focussed, carefully worded, and thought-provoking, in order to directly and indirectly elicit opinions on issues of diversity. As much as possible, I avoided interjecting unless to ask for clarification. However, after reading some of the copied interviews, I often wished I had probed further on some significant issues.

Tape recordings and written notations of each of the interviews ensured accuracy in the transcriptions. Prior to the interviews, both the participant and I signed and dated a Permission to Tape Record form (see Appendix A). The form assured the interviewee of confidentiality and accuracy in the transmission of responses. Included on the permission form was an offer to provide, within a few days of the interview, a copy of the transcribed interview for the participant’s comments and revisions.

Because the perspective of each cohort (contact person, staff, and members) was different, I prepared three different sets of questionnaires (see Appendix B). Each of the interviews was limited to 10 questions, although some of the questions had multiple parts. The opening question for each of the questionnaires was informal, easy to answer, and sought minor background information, in an effort to ease the participant into the interview, and to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere (Patton, 1990). However, I sometimes found it necessary to bypass the introductory questions in the interest of time.

The questions for the contact people sought opinions on company vision, target markets, “cutting edge” trends, recent renovations to the facilities, and recruiting staff for
management. The staff questionnaires elicited perspectives on personal interpretation of
the mission statement, understanding of the concept of diversity, decision making and
communication within the organization, and public impression of the facility. The
questions for the members probed for viewpoints on the facility; the setting of policy for
the facility, the front-line workers and management staff, and programming for facility
members. Common to each of the questionnaires were questions about a "typical"
member, the reaction of a new member to the weight room atmosphere, and
accommodation of the facility and programming for older people or people in a
wheelchair.

Data Collection

The bulk of the data collection was completed between October and December, 1996. Personal and facility schedules dictated the time period. In the interviews and in my
observations, I noted both verbal and visual indicators of diversity with respect to
ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, and mental and physical disabilities. I paid
very close attention to the image projected by the sites and to the accessibility of the
surroundings.

Fieldwork Strategies

Originally, I had intended to videotape some of the events and activities. However,
there were concerns expressed about the ethics of such invasive measures. Hence, I
abandoned the idea.

I encountered some problems in gaining access to historical and current records
about programming, staff, and membership base. For Club Toronto, the personnel staff
were not on site. At The Cardinal Club, historical and personnel records were sketchy or unavailable.

The Observation Sessions

Three observation periods at each facility provided vital information for analysis of the data. For these sessions, I recorded my observations using two charts that I had devised (see Appendix C). One of the charts documented issues of diversity about the membership, such as estimated ages, ethnicity, gender participation, body shape, and estimated fitness level. The second chart dealt with behaviours and the outward indicators of behaviours such as interactions between members, and between staff and members, or the type of apparel worn in the various areas.

The observation sessions covered time periods from early morning to early evening and on both weekdays and weekends. The sessions provided me with a brief sampling of such issues as traffic patterns, behaviour, and general population distribution. Both facilities had so many different areas, that I walked around the entire facility once or twice during an observation session, making notations as I went. At Club Toronto, because of its size, I managed to unobtrusively make observations in the main gym for some time.

At The Cardinal Club, I sat on a sofa across from the main reception desk and simply observed. Often people waited here for rides or for others in the club. My presence went unnoticed. I spent a total of 1.5 hours over two sessions observing from this vantage point. My first observation period began at 9:15 a.m. on Wednesday, October 9, 1996 and lasted 30 minutes; the second 1-hour session took place on Wednesday, October 25, 1996 and lasted until 6:45 p.m.
Observations in the other areas of the fitness facility took place in the morning and evening of October 9, 1996 and on the morning of Friday, October 11, 1996. This latter date proved to be a Professional Activity day for the schools. There were more youth activities and more children in the building than was normal for a Friday. At 9:25 a.m. on October 9, 1996, I observed the upper circuit room and miscellaneous room through the glass wall on the mezzanine on the upper level of the facility. Clipboard in hand, I recorded the statistics on prepared observation sheets (see Appendix A). Fifteen minutes later, I observed what was happening in the free weight room from the lower hall through the glass partition. From this position, I was also able to record statistics on observation sheet (1) (see Appendix D) about classes in both the aerobics and the Spinning® studios. Twenty minutes later I recorded what was happening in the “cardio” room seated on a mat in the corner. I remained there for about 20 minutes. I went through the same procedure later that day from 5:25 p.m. to 6:25 p.m. On Friday, October 11, 1996, I began my observation period at 9:20 a.m. and concluded this investigation at 11:25 a.m. On this day, I added the tennis courts, the pool, and the squash and racquetball courts to my list of observation duties for the day. I made two sweeps of the facility and followed a procedure similar to that of October 9th.

When I was observing at Club Toronto, I was slightly more noticeable sitting in one of the leather chairs than I was at The Cardinal Club, where the lobby area was larger. However, members were usually too intent on their own agendas to pay much attention to me. The first session occurred on Tuesday, November 19, 1996, and lasted 30 minutes until 3:15 p.m. A second 1-hour observation period took place on Sunday, December 15,
1996 at 10:30 a.m.

The main gym at Club Toronto was much larger and more open than at The Cardinal Club, where the training area was divided into small, crowded rooms. On November 19, 1996, my observation session lasted from 3:30 p.m. to 6:10 p.m. For 45 minutes, I was able to observe and record while seated on a platform in the corner of the fitness centre. I then wandered through the facility noting and recording as I went. At 4:15 p.m. I looked in on the free weight area and the “cardio” room; at 4:30 p.m. I went to the “stretching room.” At 4:45 p.m. I looked through the window at the aerobics class. I repeated this procedure before concluding the observation session at 6:10 p.m.. The session on Sunday, December 1, 1996 followed a similar format. I started my observation period in the fitness centres at Club Toronto at 10:30 a.m. and concluded at 12:35 p.m. During this time, I also observed a Spinning® class and an aerobics class.

The Interview Sessions

Each interview session was scheduled to last 1 hour. The interviews with the contact people took place in their offices. The staff interviews were more informal and took place wherever space was available for a private conversation. The member interviews took place on the mezzanine for The Cardinal Club and by telephone for Club Toronto.

Because of the distance necessary to travel to Toronto, I arranged to conduct all the interviews in one day. The contact person at Club Toronto drew up a schedule of interviews to take place on December 11, 1996, between 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Each interviewee was on a very tight schedule. Interview sessions lasted between 45 minutes
and 1 hour. The final interview with the receptionist, I personally arranged. This latter one took place on December 15, 1996 under less than ideal conditions. The receptionist was so sick that she was actually going to book off work. However, she agreed to stay because of the distance I had travelled. I abbreviated the questionnaire to include only those questions that I considered most important to the topic of diversity. Fortunately, notes from earlier conversations with this employee served to fill in any missing data.

The staff interviews for The Cardinal Club took place during a 1-week period between October 17 and October 25, 1996, each in the early afternoon. The sessions lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour 45 minutes.

The telephone interviews for the Club Toronto members took place during the morning hours between December 20 and 23, 1996. The members’ interviews for The Cardinal Club occurred between October 25 and 31, 1996 during the morning and early afternoon hours.

Tape Recording and Transcription of the Interviews

Budgetary limitations discouraged the purchase of a tape recorder specifically for the interviews. Although I had access to a large recorder, I felt that such a device would be too intrusive. Hence, I borrowed a mini-recorder, a Philips 285 mini with a built-in microphone. The tapes were only 15 minutes in length on each side, and difficult to change unobtrusively in a 1-hour period. As a result, the majority of the interviews were recorded only when the questions required an opinion on diversity issues. The first two sets of questions sought background information. The responses for the background
inquiries were recorded manually. I was not as concerned about verbatim transcription with this information as I was with answers to crucial questions on mission statements or organizational policy. Throughout the interview sessions, however, I made brief notations to accompany the tape transcriptions. Ultimately, a combination of personal notes and tape recordings were used to make a copy of the interviews. I was relentless in seeking accuracy.

The tape recorder presented another problem with the transcription of the tapes. The voices were often quite low and the recorder had limited capabilities to increase the volume on playback mode. The group and dual interview sessions at The Cardinal Club were particularly difficult to transcribe because of the participants talking over each other. However, to guarantee absolute accuracy, I listened repeatedly to the tapes to distinguish the authors of each of the comments. As a result, I also spent hours continually re-winding certain sections before being satisfied with the results. The consequence of this effort was that the interviewees at Club Toronto never received a copy of their interview sessions for review. In one instance, I had to rely on my notes to transcribe the interview of the Club Toronto participant who acted as both a staff and a member source of information. She spoke so softly and her voice was so muffled that her words were indistinguishable to me.

Whenever absolute accuracy was not possible, a series of question marks appeared in the transcription to alert me to the fact that I could not understand what the participant said. Usually, this omission did not create a problem with understanding, only with the exactness of the quote.
As promised, the finished transcriptions of the staff interviews were delivered to the The Cardinal Club participants with a deadline return date of October 25, 1996. The members’ transcriptions were proofread and returned to me by mid-November, 1996. Minimal changes were made by any of the participants, except to clarify what was actually said.

Shortly after the last interview for Club Toronto, I moved out of the country. As a result, there was no participant corroboration with the Club Toronto set of interviews.

The Participants

The names for these participants are fictitious. (See Table 1, p. 56 and Table 2, p. 65, for a summary of the characteristics of the interviewees.)

Contact Person at The Cardinal Club: Ahmed

On August 12, 1996, I sent Ahmed a letter explaining to him my thesis project and my wish to involve The Cardinal Club as a site for the study (see Appendix B). In that letter, I requested permission to interview him, and selected staff and members. I mentioned that I wanted to conduct observations sessions as well. He asked for more details. I provided him with the information he requested and I assured him that I would not in any way interfere with the daily operations of the facility. I suggested a start date of September 25, 1996 for preliminary observations to occur and thanked him for his time. I sent carbon copies to the Fitness Director at The Cardinal Club, the co-owner, Ahmed’s brother, and my thesis advisor. On October 30, 1996, I sent a reminder request for an interview time. He granted me only 30 minutes to conduct the interview on November 12, 1996, at 1:30 p.m. Since the interview time allotted was less than my questionnaire had
allowed for, I eliminated the opening questions. Because we ran out of time, I also had to forego asking the final questions on the physical plant layout and programming with respect to the older client and to the member in a wheelchair.

I am not certain of the ethnic origin of Ahmed. It was my impression that his cultural background was Middle Eastern. From the interview responses and from personal knowledge, I concluded that his family was wealthy. These facts are relevant in light of the focus of this study, namely investigating the issues of diversity.

Ahmed was in his mid-30s, slim and well-muscled, with a permanent tan. He projected an image of casual elegance. He had a ready smile and spoke well on his business, the fitness industry, and the members of The Cardinal Club. By his own admission, he was Vice President of marketing as well as Club Manager of the fitness facility. He was also involved in the hotel complex and other family businesses. He admitted to spending 30 hours per week on his fitness facility responsibilities. His personal vision for facility expansions included the addition of a third floor, thereby eliminating segregated rooms in favour of a larger fitness centre; a “first class” spa; and wellness services to include sports medicine, chiropractic care, physiotherapy clinic, or a combination of all of these.

Contact Person at Club Toronto: Talia

On September 16, 1996, I telephoned Talia informing her of my thesis project and my wish to involve the Toronto facility in the study. My thesis advisor had introduced me to Talia during a seminar presentation. Talia wanted details of the study and the outcome of the results. As a university graduate in physical education, she took an academic
perspective to the research. She agreed on behalf of her fitness facility to participate in the study. However, Talia suggested that September was a particularly busy month, since people were reestablishing routines after the summer season. I promised to send her a formal letter of request (see Appendix A) and to subsequently telephone her in the 2nd week of October to set up an interview and observation schedule for her and her staff. The interviews with Talia and the other staff representatives at Club Toronto took place on Tuesday, November 11, 1996 (Schedule in Appendix A).

At the time of the interview, Talia was the Fitness Director at Club Toronto, and Spinning® Coordinator and Fitness Manager for the chain of nine fitness centres in Toronto. Ninety percent of her working time was spent as Fitness Director at Club Toronto. Besides overseeing and hiring staff, she was also involved in the training and development of staff. When asked why she joined the company owning Club Toronto, she replied, "All the managers are female." Because of her line of work, Talia was dressed in a Club warm-up suit on the day of the interview.

Being sensitive to inquiring about ethnicity, I did not ask Talia her cultural background. I believe that she referred to herself (or included herself) as African-American. This fact was important because I was looking at diversity among staff and management. According to one of the interviewees, Talia was 29 at the time of the interview. She was a single, muscular, slim female with a quick sense of humour and a no-nonsense attitude.

Brigitta, Assistant Club Manager at Club Toronto

As a child, Brigitta came from Sweden and lived in Eastern Canada before coming
to the Toronto area. She had a combined undergraduate degree in physical education and arts from Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario and had been involved in the fitness industry since 1988, starting as a part-time aerobics instructor. Brigitta joined the staff at Club Toronto in 1992. Her intentions on graduation had been to travel extensively or to become certified as athletic therapist. She did neither. Instead, she went into the fitness field. When she was recruited by the Toronto company owning Club Toronto, she accepted employment as Assistant Manager in August, 1995. In February, 1996, Brigitta was promoted to General Manager because of a reorganization of the company infrastructure. By July 1, 1996, the company was again reorganized and Brigitta was demoted to Assistant Manager when one of the Vice Presidents returned to the facility to take up her former title and her former duties.

Like Talia, Brigitta joined the company owning Club Toronto because she was intrigued by its professional management and organization. As a multi-club company, she felt that her chances of professional advancement were greater than with her former club. A mostly female middle management structure, however, did not play a role in her decision, because there were also female middle managers at her previous club. On the day of the interview, Brigitta wore a “uniform” of white shirt and dark pants.

Brigitta was a single, slim, blonde, white female with a warm smile. At the time of the interview, she was 28 years old.

Brandon, Aerobics Coordinator at Club Toronto

Brandon came to Toronto from Trinidad and Calgary. His original career was in banking. On a whim, he began a career in the fitness industry. Five months after this
start, he was managing two fitness clubs and running the aerobics department. He came to work for Club Toronto as an aerobics instructor in 1986/87, considering this organization to be the “premier place to work” at the time. Nine years later, he was Aerobics Coordinator for a chain of nine clubs and a sought-after presenter at national and international conferences. When he started as an aerobics instructor with Club Toronto in 1986, he was an uncertified instructor making $40.00 per hour. Since Brandon taught 13 classes a week at a variety of facilities for the Toronto organization, his traditional garb was aerobic wear under a warm-up suit.

At the time of the interview, Brandon was separated from his wife and devoted to his children. He scheduled no conferences, workshops, or shifts during his weekends with them. By self-admission he worked approximately 70 hours per week, but he traditionally left work by 3 p.m. on Wednesdays to be with his children. Brandon was a very slim, athletic looking, light-skinned male with a very bass, mellifluous voice. I estimated him to be in his mid-30s.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Degree in Physical Education and Psychology</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>0.40</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>TCC</th>
<th>Director of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Degree in Physical Education and Psychology</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TCC</td>
<td>Director of Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, Shira, B.J.</td>
<td>Degree in Physical Education and Psychology</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TCC</td>
<td>Director of Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married, Shira, M.</td>
<td>Degree in Physical Education and Psychology</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TCC</td>
<td>Director of Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table above is a summary of the characteristics of the interview participants at the Cardinal Club (TCC) and Club Toronto (CL). Contact Person.*

**Table 1**

Middle Management and Staff
Desmond, Tennis Director at The Cardinal Club

Desmond had a longer association with a single facility than any of the interviewees from either site. On the intervention of a former professor, he came to The Cardinal Club in 1980 as Director of Tennis. Desmond had been a junior programmer and coach of tennis at a club in Toronto before coming to The Cardinal Club. He earned a degree in Physical Education with a Psychology minor while attending Brock University and University of Toronto simultaneously. As Director of Tennis, he worked 48 to 60 hours per week, mid-morning to mid-evening. His shifts included Monday to Friday and two Sundays a month. Because of his line of work, Desmond’s daily garb was a Club warm-up suit or shorts and a Club jacket.

Desmond was a single, dark-skinned male, tall, very slim, attractive, and athletic-looking.

Angelina, Director of Sales at The Cardinal Club

Angelina started as a waitress with The Cardinal Club in 1984. In 1988, she took on additional duties with the company as a typist in the evenings after her daughter went to bed. At that time, she had been a single mother. In 1990, she joined the Sales and Catering Department at The Cardinal Club. She joined the facility because she was looking for stability in her employment. By May, 1996, she had worked her way into a newly amalgamated Director of Sales position which included both the fitness facility and the hotel. She admitted to working 60 hours per week, Tuesday through Saturday.

In her position of Director of Sales, she was always very professionally dressed. She was outspoken and ambitious. At the time of the interview she confided that she had
purposely lost a great deal of body fat through a combination of sensible eating and exercise. She was very pleased with the change, and claimed that people were very encouraging in their praise of her accomplishment. At the time of the interview, she was attempting to work out regularly in the fitness centre of The Cardinal Club. This workout pattern afforded her the opportunity make comments on issues both from a member’s perspective, as well as from a management perspective.

Angelina, who admitted to an Italian heritage, was a tall, large-framed, dark-haired, white female, recently remarried. She was 28 years old.

**Daphne, Personal Trainer and Member at Club Toronto**

Daphne had an incomplete undergraduate degree in Environmental Health and Sciences. She was self-employed as a caterer and had been a personal trainer for Club Toronto for 2 years, after being a member of the facility for 15 years.

Daphne was a petite, slim, athletic-looking female. Because of her lengthy association with Club Toronto, I estimated her age to be mid- to late-30s.

**Shellye, Receptionist at Club Toronto**

Shellye had an undergraduate degree, was working on a second undergraduate degree, and, at the time of the interview, was contemplating switching to a graduate degree in business. She was working part-time at Club Toronto in order to continue her schooling. She admitted to being employed at Club Toronto longer than any other staff member at the facility. As a result, she was a tremendous source of information for me, filling me in on historical as well as current data on staff, members, and organizational changes. Shellye had been with Club Toronto for 3 years but with the organization longer
null
than that.

Shellye was a single, petite, slim, white female. She was 29 years old.

**Corinna, Front Desk Supervisor at The Cardinal Club**

At the time of the interview, Corinna had been with The Cardinal Club for 10 years, starting as a receptionist. By 1994, she had worked her way up to Assistant Club Manager. By October 1996, she had been demoted twice to her current position of Front Desk Supervisor. The Assistant Club Manager position had been eliminated. Like the amalgamation of the Director of Sales position, the Front Desk Manager’s position underwent a change to include both the hotel and the fitness facility. The appointee was a young male candidate who had already been overseeing the front desk personnel in the hotel. Corinna was always professionally dressed in a white Club shirt and dark blue pants.

Corinna was an attractive white female with a ready smile and a sympathetic ear. Generally she struggled with her body shape, ranging from slightly plump, to athletically slim. Medical problems limited the type of activity in which she could engage, but she was faithfully active in whatever she could handle. She was formerly a swimming instructor and an avid cyclist during vacation time. Corinna was 36 years old, married, and childless by choice.

**Lindy, Sales Representative at The Cardinal Club**

In 1995, Lindy was hired “on the spot” as a waitress for The Cardinal Club, by the dining room manager, who was no longer an employee at the facility. In the next year, she held positions as part-time receptionist, Squash and Racquetball League and Tournament
Coordinator, and sales representative. Finally, she was hired as a full-time sales representative and given the title of Member Services Executive Representative. She had an undergraduate degree in English. Lindy was a very perceptive young woman, very vocal about unfair practices and social inequities.

Lindy was a single, petite, slim, white female, who was 23 years of age.

Daphne, Member at Club Toronto, 15 years

As described above under staff.

Donald, Member at Club Toronto, 10 years

Donald worked for the Toronto Transit Commission as a Planning District Scheduler, who dealt with “anything on driver or crew assignments.” He graduated from college with a transport planning certificate and, at the time of the interview, was augmenting his knowledge about computers. Donald had been participating in the aerobics classes since 1991, 5 days a week, and was active in weight training. Before getting into aerobics, Donald had been involved in racquetball. He scheduled his weekday workouts for late afternoon in order to avoid waiting to use the exercise machines. He usually concluded his resistance training workouts with an aerobics class, including Sundays.

Donald was a white, slim, attractive male, aged 42. He had remarried 3 years ago to a woman he had met at Club Toronto.

Joanne, Member at Club Toronto, 4 years

Joanne was a driver for the transport department in the film industry. She worked sporadically and for long periods at a time, sometimes 18-20 hours per day. She was
responsible for driving the motor homes of people on the set, or the trucks containing the cameras and equipment. She had also been a nursery school teacher for a time. She claimed that she was “often at the club, because she was often unemployed.” Previously, Joanne had belonged to an exclusive women’s fitness facility, and very willingly expressed her opinion about Club Toronto, especially in relation to her former facility. She participated in a variety of aerobics classes, and used both the “cardio” and weight training machines. Generally she used the club during the morning five times a week, when she was not working.

Joanne was a white female, separated, about 50 to 60 years of age.

Group Interview of Members at The Cardinal Club

The following four members were interviewed as a group. Each of them played in the tennis league and participated in activities together. Generally they came to the club weekdays from morning until early afternoon and spent a minimum of 2-3 hours each time at The Cardinal Club. At least 2 days each week were devoted to playing indoor tennis. They travelled about the region playing competitive tennis with The Cardinal Club’s competitive tennis league. All four spent social time together at the fitness facility and often ate lunch in the restaurant. The group seemed to enjoy each other’s company, laughing and talking together.

Philippa, member, 17 years. Philippa was a homemaker with a part-time job in the pro shop at The Cardinal Club, where she worked 15 hours a week. She retained an accent from her native England where she graduated from teacher’s college. She had previously taught in the primary grades both here and in England. Philippa originally
joined The Cardinal Club for racquetball, until she found that participating in this sport bothered her back. At that time, she started playing tennis and met the current group. She was a self-professed “couch potato” before taking out the original summer membership at The Cardinal Club in 1979.

Philippa was 56 years old, and a married, white female with an average body shape.

Blanche, member, 13 years. Blanche was a “domestic engineer” and a high school graduate. In addition to the other activities listed for the group above, she spent five hours at The Cardinal Club on Thursdays, participating in weight training and aerobics on that day. Like Philippa, she originally joined The Cardinal Club to play racquetball. Over the years, Blanche claimed, she had seen many changes in the policies and programming at The Cardinal Club.

Blanche was a married, white woman, in average shape. She had strong but fair opinions on how things should be and had a sense of humour that kept the group laughing.

Susan, member, 10 years. Susan was office manager for her husband’s dentistry practice. She was a high school graduate. Originally Susan joined The Cardinal Club for the tennis facilities and the leagues. After an orthopaedic assessment on her knee and physiotherapy treatments, she was set up on a strength training programme at The Cardinal Club by the kinesiologist, who no longer worked there.

Susan was a married, white female, with a petite, slim shape. She was 48 years old.

Wendy, member, 8 years. Wendy was a homemaker who worked part-time with
an interior decorator. She had an undergraduate degree. She originally joined The Cardinal Club for the indoor tennis.

Wendy was a married, white female, in average shape and 50 years old.

The next two members were also interviewed in tandem and provided an interesting contrast of personalities.

Gwynnyth, Member at The Cardinal Club, 17 Years

In her British accent, Gwynnyth explained that she had flexible work hours doing clerical or secretarial work. She spent about 3-4 days a week at The Cardinal Club, organizing her workouts around her work schedule. She frequented The Cardinal Club in the mornings or afternoons. Of the 4 hours that she spent at the facility, half of that time was engaged in socializing. Originally, Gwynnyth had devoted her time to the aerobics classes. At the time of the interview, her exercise time was divided mostly between the circuit room (an area where people alternated cardiovascular training and resistance exercises on various machines) and the “cardio” room. She occasionally took part in the aerobics classes.

Gwynnyth was a married, white female, very slim, and fit-looking. She was 51 years old.

Charlene, Member at The Cardinal Club, 6 Years

Charlene was probably the most timid of the interviewees. She was reluctantly “eased into” strength training and became a devotee, training five times a week, after gaining confidence in her training programme and seeing positive gains from it. Charlene spent 30 minutes to 2 hours at the club per session. She preferred the free weight room
The text on the page is not visible in the image provided. Please provide a readable image of the document for analysis.
for training and had recently added the Spinning® classes to her workouts.

Charlene was a married, white female in the process of developing an athletic build. She was 30 years old.

**Marla, Member at The Cardinal Club, 2-3 Years**

Marla joined The Cardinal Club because her husband had been a member. Although she had always been an active adult, she had never been a member of a health club. A convenient location was important to Marla. Hence she chose The Cardinal Club. She was looking for balance in her life. She used her undergraduate degree in Horticulture to co-manage, with her husband, their busy greenhouse in the vicinity of The Cardinal Club. On most weekday mornings, Marla spent 1 hour and 45 minutes at her workouts. Her passion was advanced aerobics, but she occasionally frequented the circuit and “cardio” rooms. Socializing at The Cardinal Club was not important to Marla. Her sons were active in programmes at The Cardinal Club and both she and her husband would spend time watching their sons at their various activities and lessons. On occasion, the family would come to The Cardinal Club to swim in the pool or to dine in the restaurant.

Marla was a tall white, married female, with a very slim, muscular build. She was 35 years old.
| Gender | Age (in years) | Education | Occupation | Self-processed occupation | Physical appearance | Physical height (cm) | Presenting Association | No. of yrs Full-time | Depression | Anxiety | Education | Occupation | Self-processed occupation | Physical appearance | Physical height (cm) | Presenting Association | No. of yrs Full-time | Depression | Anxiety |
|--------|----------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------|---------|------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Female | 42             | College    | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Male   | 48             | High school | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Female | 6              | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Male   | 30             | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Female | 15             | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Male   | 01             | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Female | 20             | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
| Male   | 01             | Some college course | Office worker | Manager                  | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             | 156                 | CT                  | 13                  | 4                     | 10               | 32         | 19       | White      | Administrator         | Office worker             |
Analysis of the Data

Patton (1990) consistently reminds us that the foreshadowed problems are the focus of the thesis. Hence, during the analysis for the thesis, I kept a visible reminder of the issues of diversity, namely ethnicity, gender, age, social class, sex-role socialization and mental and physical abilities, in a prominent place near my workstation. A book by Wolcott (1990) proved to be an invaluable source of inspiration when I felt overwhelmed by information. Wolcott (1990) admonishes the reader “not to get buried by avalanches of our own making” (p. 35) and suggests that “the critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to ‘can’ (i.e., get rid of) most of the data you accumulate” (p. 35).

Summarizing the interview transcriptions was a painstakingly long process. Themes eluded me until I grasped the concept of inductive reasoning. Even after insights emerged, naming the themes was difficult.

To facilitate the content analysis of the case studies, I made three sets of summaries in graph form. The summaries were comprised of six graphs, one set each for the contact person, the staff, and the members at each site. The first graphs were simply synopses of the participant responses to the questions and my ongoing comments. A second set of graphs were a weak attempt at searching for patterns among the indigenous concepts and making connections with the sensitizing concepts (Patton, 1990, p. 391) that were the components of diversity. The final set of graphs used the insights from the previous graphs to produce researcher-generated themes (Patton, 1990, p. 398). The final set of themes was revised, reworked, and refined, and are presented in chapter 4 as a
cross-case analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: INVESTIGATING THE ISSUES OF DIVERSITY

The intent of this cross-case study was to investigate how two fitness facilities were accommodating diversity. Boyce (1996) described “diversity appreciation as ‘an understanding and acceptance of a wide range of individual difference’ (Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995), encompassing the areas of ethnicity, gender, social class, sex-role socialization patterns, cognitive abilities and physical abilities” (p. 75). With the addition of the variable of age, the statement encompassed the very essence of this exploratory research, which, in turn, viewed the components of diversity from two different perspectives: a) as they pertained to facility members and b) as they impacted facility employees.

The data for chapter 4 were gathered from three sources at each of the sites: 1) interviews of members and staff from different areas within the organization, 2) personal observations, and 3) pamphlets, newsletters, brochures, a videotape, and other available documentation. This chapter examines the policies and programming of the two fitness facilities selected for this study. According to Wolcott (1990), blending description and interpretation is a difficult task. He gives the following advice: “at the least suspicion that your analytical asides are interrupting rather than enhancing the narrative, I recommend that you separate the two” (p. 29). This chapter was composed with that advice in mind. Interpretations, when unnecessary for clarification, are presented in chapter 5.

Introduction

Diversity is a variety of things, representative of the market you are trying to attract. (Corinna, front desk supervisor, The Cardinal Club, 1996)
In *Workplace Diversity* (Esty et al., 1995), the authors talk about the feelings and behaviours of people who are different or in the minority. They call them "Os" or outsiders. The authors list two dozen different emotions and half as many behaviours associated with feeling left out. Adjectives such as "low self-esteem, lonely, out of place, uncared for, disrespected, uncomfortable, and invisible" describe the negative emotions experienced by outsiders (Esty et al., 1995, p. 6).

Those kinds of negative feelings are just as relevant to the member of a fitness facility as they are to the health club staff member. Behavioural results of feeling like an "O" (outsider) such as "pulled back, stopped trying, left the situation, performed less well, and was silent" (Esty et al., 1995, p. 6) apply to marginal populations in general, whether in a workplace setting or in human relationships, such as an affiliation with a fitness facility. The interview responses express these kinds of feelings through descriptors like "intimidated" (a common litany with respect to a weight room setting), isolated, frustrated, unfulfilled (in reference to employment), and withdrawal (referring to members terminating their memberships and staff turnover).

**The Themes**

Analysis of the interviews with members and staff generated the following themes: underrepresentation, discrepancy in policy and programming, exclusivity and exclusion, and inequity. In other studies in the fields of recreation, sport, and leisure (Chelladurai, Scott, & Haywood-Farmer, 1987; Floyd, McGuire, Noe, & Shinew, 1994; Glassner, 1989; Henderson, 1994a, 1994b; Mercurio & Guilfoyle, 1996; Shaw, 1994), the dimensions of
diversity were often divided into issues of race, class, and gender. In this study, the facets of diversity were so intertwined in the comments, that division into separate elements was improbable. Therefore, the following section explores, develops, and presents each of the themes as they relate to the components of diversity appreciation adopted for this study: namely ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic class, age, gender, sex-role socialization, and mental or physical disability. Each theme is subdivided into categories and discussed in depth with supporting evidence taken from the interview comments, from observations, or from documentation available at the sites. A discussion of the findings expressed in this chapter occurs in chapter 5.

A Tour of The Cardinal Club

The best method for describing The Cardinal Club was to take a “tour” of the fitness facility and adjacent areas. The parking lot was relatively small for the size of the health club. There was a single space directly in front of the entrance to the facility marked by a blue “handicapped parking” sign. Other parking spaces extended to the right and left of the entrance and around the north side of the building. There was a standard-sized emergency door at ground level on the north side of the building. The door had to be opened from the inside and tripped the alarm system if unlocked without notifying the front desk.

Parking was also available across the street, but the area was unpaved, full of potholes, and apparently not the property of the owners. Additional parking was available in front of the hotel and to its south side. Often members parked illegally on the rural road
in front of the facility. Immediately beside the front door to the health club were spaces reserved for the owner’s sons. The owner himself always parked in the tow-away zone close to the hotel entrance.

The main entrance into the fitness facility was up a flight of stone steps that ended on a stone landing at the front door. Two sets of double doors separated by a small foyer led into a very wide fitness centre lobby. Usually only one side of the doors was operable. The entire lobby area was opulently decorated and richly carpeted. To the left of the lobby was a gleaming wooden and glass information desk neatly housing numerous pamphlets on club events, schedules and membership information. On the left side of the lobby were an entrance to washrooms and a separate glassed-in sales office. To the right of the lobby were the door to a set of unseen offices and a large reception. The lighting was soft and contemporary music played unobtrusively from speakers hidden in the ceiling. Straight ahead was a glass wall overlooking tennis courts on the lower level. The viewing area contained comfortable roll-about tub chairs that were arranged in cozy groupings around movable tables. Near this area was a wide, spiral staircase with open, carpeted steps. The brass spindles, handrail, and glass partitions surrounding the steps shone. The glass wall was crystal clear. Stairs led to the lower level, and the courts, the locker-rooms, the aerobics and Spinning® studios, and the main entrance to the weight training areas. Spinning® was a specialized group exercise class using stationary cycles, led by a certified leader.

While I was at the facility, front desk reception staff worked in pairs. Connected to the club desk on the left was a very small glassed-in office for the front desk supervisor.
All official business, payments, and bookings seemed to occur at this desk. A great deal of human traffic did not even stop at the front desk but continued into the club. A number of these “unknowns” were young people with large bags containing what looked like tennis gear. A number of others could have been destined for the restaurant or bar area to the right of the lobby.

The female personnel behind the desk wore official white shirts and navy blue pants. They spoke courteously to members arriving and leaving, answered the phone, and managed to maintain a controlled, pleasant demeanour throughout all this activity. The front desk staff were late 20s in age, slim, attractive, white-skinned, and well-groomed.

The upper hallway located at the end of the lobby provided viewing areas overlooking the squash courts on the left and the tennis courts on the right. Further down the hallway was another glass wall looking into the upstairs portion of the weight training area: the circuit training room and the heavy bag/miscellaneous training room. There was a narrow emergency exit into the upstairs promenade from the circuit room. The equipment in the circuit room around the perimeter of the room faced the outside mirrored walls. There appeared to be 1.5 to 2 feet of space between each piece. The narrow space between the equipment on both sides of the room contained stationary cycles and an exercise bench. The exercise rooms looked directly onto a large sunken fireplace area. There was no washroom for public use in the vicinity of these upper rooms.

The open circular staircase leading to the spacious lower lobby was flanked by locker rooms. The formerly wide hall in the lower level had been narrowed to accommodate tennis offices, a Spinning® room, and an aerobics studio. The hallway
leading off to the right ended at a glass wall with a locked glass door. It was possible to exit from this door into the hotel complex, but a key was required to return back through the door. Beyond the door were the child care area, the hotel, the pool, and the elevator for both the hotel and the fitness centre. The elevator was located in the hotel and was accessed by a ramp in the hotel lobby. This was the only assistive device for the fitness facility. Access to the upper level weight training areas required passing through the restaurant area.

The pool was shallow and of a fairly uniform depth from end to end. Ladders at either end of the pool provided admittance into the water. There was a standard-sized glass door opening into the aquatics area. Opposite the pool was a very small, colourful daycare room. The room was neatly crowded with toys and furniture. Adjacent to the daycare area was a “kid-sized” washroom.

To the left of the lower lobby were two glassed-in offices for the fitness and squash departments. Part of the wide hall in front of one of the glass-in squash courts had been partitioned to make room for the Spinning® studio, which housed 12 gleaming stationary cycles. Adjoining the Spinning® studio was a narrow aerobics studio, the bottom half of a converted racquetball court. There was a short incline at the entrance into the aerobics studio. A single glass or sliding glass door provided access to each of these areas. When classes were in session, loud music emitted from the rooms. If two classes were conducted simultaneously, the music combinations collided in the ears of passers-by.

The narrow passageway into the weight training rooms passed by the glass wall of the aerobics studio, where classes in session could be viewed. The narrow hall then split
turning left into the “cardio” and free weights rooms, and leading straight ahead to more squash and racquetball courts. The door at the end of the hall was propped open and led to the “cardio” room, an area that contained treadmills, stairclimbers, a Step Mill ® (an exercise machine that resembled a small, three-step escalator with handrails), stationary cycles, and a Gravitron ® (a mechanical device to assist the participant in performing chin-ups). In the centre of the “cardio” area was a bank of television sets, suspended from the ceiling. Each of the pieces of “cardio” equipment faced this entertainment centre.

The doorway to the left led into an area with free weights (dumbbells and barbells) and resistance training equipment that required the addition and removal of weight plates. In this room, the floor space between the pieces of equipment was inconsistent. At most, there was 4 feet creating a walkway between the pieces of equipment on either side of the room; at the least, benches jutted into the space down the centre of the room. The floor area between each piece of equipment was minimal. Where Olympic bars overhung the standards that held them, the space between any two pieces of equipment was reduced. Potentially, the head or other body parts could be struck on the projecting equipment. Since all four rooms had been created from two former racquetball courts, the rooms were narrow and the ceilings were very low. The majority of the walls in the weight training and “cardio” areas were mirrored. The mirrors tended to make the narrow rooms appear larger.

The four weight training rooms were on two different floors connected by a narrow staircase at the back of the “cardio” room. The upstairs rooms were visible from the second level. There were no washrooms nearby either the upper or lower training areas.
There was no elevator or mechanical device in the vicinity of the exercise areas, studios, or racquets courts to transport a member from one floor to the other.

A Tour of Club Toronto

Across a busy street from the parking lot, was the entrance to the fitness facility. A small landing led to a single door and a narrow staircase into the facility. There were 19 steps to another set of standard-sized doors at the top: an entrance door and an exit door. Arrows on the wall pointed the way up to the fitness centre. There was no ramp and no elevator for the facility itself. The only elevator to the upper floors was located inside the main foyer of the office building. This elevator provided general transportation for people to the next two levels of the building, but not specifically to the fitness facility. The elevator stopped in a lobby on the second and third floors, and provided access to locked doors into the fitness facility. If members wished to gain access to the facility in this manner, staff had to be alerted in advance to open the doors.

Just inside the entrance door of Club Toronto was a narrow area bounded by a brass railing, herding members past a green marble and redwood reception desk. The interior decorating was classy and European, done in muted greens and marble, with a shiny ceramic floor and contemporary pictures on the wall. A short distance beyond the front desk was a section of the facility still under construction. A small lounge area on the other side of the railing had modern, comfortable leather furniture grouped around a European-styled marble table; lighting was muted and contemporary music floated from somewhere. Receptionists, dressed uniformly in white club shirts and dark pants, greeted
members and dealt with telephone inquiries, bookings, and members’ issues. Comment
cards and new aerobic schedules were visible in a holder on the front desk.

To the left of the reception desk was a narrow hallway, still under construction, and
a compact, open café containing a few small round tables and high stools. The café served
lunches and beverages, and was managed by two friendly, white South African males.
Opposite the café and across the hall leading to the squash viewing gallery were glassed-in
areas containing a large daycare room and the club sales offices. The new daycare room
was large, colourful, and well-equipped.

A newly-renovated, wide passageway led from the front desk past glass-front
offices on the right, to double doors leading into the new central fitness centre for the
facility. It had high ceilings and bright lighting. This room contained “cardio” training
equipment, selectorized machines (resistance training machines that each target a specific
muscle group), and a few free weights. Windows on the far side of the room overlooked
the street below. The “cardio” machines took up about one-half of the floor space and
were primarily arranged around the periphery of the room. While some of the treadmills
faced the windows, the rest of the “cardio” equipment looked into the interior of the room.
The strength training equipment was grouped slightly to the right of the middle of the
room. The centre of the room and the area to the left of the main entrance had free floor
space for stretching or abdominal exercises. A small free weights area (dumbbells and
barbells) was located in a mirrored area on the right-hand side of the room. Adjacent to
this free weights area was a short hallway to washrooms. Next to this passageway to the
washrooms was an information desk containing the workout cards of the members. Most
of the walls in the fitness centre were mirrored. Suspended from the walls at strategic points around the room were television sets, often tuned to different stations. It was possible to listen individually to one of the television sets by tuning into a certain frequency on a Walkman®. Generally, a contemporary radio station played at a moderate listening level.

From the main reception area, the squash gallery was behind the café and down five steps. On the right-hand side of the squash viewing area was a long narrow passageway leading to the squash director’s office. The hallway on the left ended at a narrow staircase that led to the upper level. A sharp turn was required at the end of the hallway before heading up the stairs to the upper floor. On this floor were the older weight training rooms, four rooms linked internally to each other and externally to the hallway. Three of these rooms contained free weights and various plate-loaded machines (equipment that use removable weight plates for resistance). The room at the far end was small, out-of-the way and contained “cardio” equipment and exercise mats. An elevator connected to this level from the main part of the building. The narrow staircase that led to this level, went up one more level to the aerobics studios, the locker rooms, and the offices. I did not see a ramp to this level from the elevator. The glassed-in aerobics studio across from the men’s locker room was large, airy and square with a wooden floor. Polished Spinning® bikes were neatly arranged in the back corner of the room. Further down the narrow hallway on the right was the women’s change room; on the left were office and storage rooms. This hallway ended at another large aerobics studio with windows overlooking the busy street below. There were standard-sized “in” and “out” doors to this room and a
cattle-railing arrangement near the entrance to the room. In the middle of the working area of this aerobics studio were two support columns. Even when the aerobics classes were in session, it was possible to talk easily over the music in the hallway.

Apparently there was another level to the facility, to which I was never taken. However, one of the interviewees alluded to a running track, on this level, a track named after a very active senior member of Club Toronto.

Underrepresentation

Fields encourage us to think of a universe that more closely resembles an ocean, filled with interpenetrating influences and invisible structures that connect. This is a much richer portrait of the universe; in the field world, there are potentials for action everywhere, anywhere two fields meet.

(Wheatley, 1994, p. 51)

According to the Collins Concise Dictionary (Hanks, 1989), the word “representation” is defined as characterizing a class or kind and containing or including examples of all interests, types, etc. as in a group. By linking the term with the prefix “under,” the dimension of insufficiency, dearth, or shortage is added to the root word. This theme was developed from the idea that examples of diversity -- ethnicity, social class, age, gender, and physical ability, for instance -- were sparse in the data collected.

Underrepresentation Within the Membership at Both Sites

I like to describe our general membership as fit, for the most part. If they’re not fit, they at least look fit....General member? Upper middle class, aesthetically pleasing to look at and that doesn’t have to mean that they are beautiful, but they are typically not overweight, at least not to any large degree, or great degree....I think more and more we are getting blue collar (workers). And I think that has a lot to do with .... the factories in the area....But I think (The Cardinal Club) is perceived very much the white collar, snobby, elitist.

(Lindy, sales representative, The Cardinal Club, interview, 1996)
Comments From the Interviews

I did not always approach the topic of diversity directly. For instance, in lieu of asking a direct question about issues of diversity within the memberships, I asked each of the interview groups to describe a “typical member” (see questionnaires, Appendix A). The essence of the responses was almost unanimous. This hypothetical member was young, relatively affluent, middle class to upper middle class, White, and physically fit.

Donald, a regular male member at Club Toronto, used descriptors like “20-40 (years of age), many singles, a fair amount of disposable income” to refer to his idea of a typical member. From a staff perspective, Talia, also claimed that “a typical member at Club Toronto is between 25 and 35 and you’ve got about a 40,000 dollars-a-year job. Probably have one child, at least.”

Joanne, a member from Club Toronto, felt that a typical member in her time slot was “female, married with a Nana” and either a “working Mom or a Jewish mother.” Shellye, the front desk receptionist at Club Toronto, concurred with both cultural background and income level by stating: “I would say that all of our members have about the same income level. About I would say, probably 60%, at least 50% of our members are Jewish.” Brigitta, the assistant manager, and Talia, the Fitness Director, both at Club Toronto, also agreed with Shellye’s conclusions on ethnocultural and socioeconomic observations. Each of them used the term “WASP” and “WASPY” in reference to target markets and the typical member. Talia also expressed concerns about other ethnic issues.

...It (ethnic representation) is very, very minimal. And I approached the company about that (lack of diverse ethnic representation). Last year, we tried to target the Chinese market at (one of the other clubs), and I brought
up the issue of African Americans and Orientals, Asians. Talia, the Fitness Director at Club Toronto, was herself African-American. She also added, “I think one of our ads had an Asian person in it and that was it!”

Similar kinds of statements were made at The Cardinal Club. Marla, a member, commented about the economic image of a typical member as follows: “...but, I think in general, a large percentage are a lot of people who are well-off, females who are not working or work part-time. That’s the crowd I see daytime.”

Brigitta, the assistant manager at Club Toronto, alluded to underrepresentation with respect to age and physical appearance when she mentioned that the average member at Club Toronto was generally young and fit. Ahmed, the club manager at The Cardinal Club, echoed the same kinds of sentiments about his club’s typical member when he said, “...I think the typical person (member) is not extremely overweight. I don’t think we have, we don’t get, you don’t see obese people come in here off the street.”

Although members at The Cardinal Club--Blanche, Philippa, Wendy, and Susan--felt that the facility members were generally “middle and upper, upper-middle” class, they seemed to agree that the tennis court was a “leveller” as far as minimizing socioeconomic class distinction. According to Philippa, “You can’t tell who’s who on the tennis court....If you are all doing the same activity, it doesn’t matter where you are on the class scale, if there is such a thing.” Both Blanche and Wendy chimed in simultaneously that there was still such a thing as class distinction.

Observations of the Membership

“In order to fulfill our mission we pledge that we open our membership to persons
of all races, creeds and places of national origin.”

(Quote from Code of Conduct on The Cardinal Club’s brochure)

Personal observations at random times and days in the various areas of the fitness centres supported what had been said in the interviews regarding the diversity of the memberships.

Members using the weight training rooms at both facilities ranged in age from mid-teens to mid-60s. However, 63% of the males \( \{n=155\} \) and 72% of the females \( \{n=87\} \) fell into the estimated age category of 20 to 35 years. These statistics supported the interview responses that the memberships at each facility were generally young.

Males seemed to frequent the weight training rooms more than females, who accounted for only 39% \( \{n=67\} \) female members) of the total number of members \( \{n=174\} \) using the weight training rooms during my five observation periods at both facilities.

Females predominated in attendance at the aerobics and Spinning ® classes, although the latter classes appealed to males more than conventional aerobics classes. Spinning ® classes were specialized group exercise sessions on stationary bikes in an atmosphere created specifically for this class. Often the room was dimly lit with a spotlight on the instructor. The participants were usually positioned in semicircular rows around the instructor. Of the two kinds of classes that I observed, Spinning ® and traditional aerobics classes, 1.6% of the population \( \{n=61\} \) attending a traditional aerobics class was male \( \{n=1\} \). In contrast, 39% of the participants \( \{n=31\} \) attending the Spinning ® classes was male \( \{n=12\} \).

Of the total number of participants in both kinds of classes \( \{n=96\} \), over 80%
(n=77) looked as if they belonged to the age category, 21-37 years.

The Cardinal Club had a tennis programming option not available at Club Toronto. Tennis seemed to attract a more diverse population with respect to age and gender than other activities at the facility. Of the total number of members (n=33) playing tennis on the morning of my observations, 45% were male. Estimations and personal knowledge were used to decide upon the age range of the participants. The tennis players ranged in age from 10 to 84 years. Participants in the estimated category of 61 to 71+ years of age (n=18) made up 55% of the group. The age representation of this morning tennis group was atypical to the age of participants in other programmes.

The ethnic composition of the tennis participants included two Oriental individuals, 0.6% of the total number playing tennis that morning. The remainder of the tennis participants were Caucasian.

Observational data of other areas of The Cardinal Club indicated that the members were predominantly Caucasian (n=96). At Club Toronto, out of the members that I saw (n=144), there were only 3 Blacks (2%), 3 Orientals (2%), and 1 East Indian (0.6%). Given the cosmopolitan nature of the population of Toronto, these statistics seemed particularly underrepresentative of a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The final results of my observations dealt with physical characteristics. As Ahmed had declared, the stereotype of a fit member was apparent throughout the facility. Of the number of participants present in the training rooms and in the classes (n=251) during my observation periods, less than 3% (n=7) would have been considered “inactive looking or over-fat.” This number excluded The Cardinal Club tennis group, who seemed to
constitute a more diverse population with respect to body type and fitness level, gender and age, than the rest of the facility.

Only once during my observation periods at The Cardinal Club did I see a man with mental disabilities working out in the weight training room. At Club Toronto, I encountered no member with physical or mental disabilities during my visits.

Underrepresentation Within the Management Infrastructure

And I've had people come in here and say, "Wow, you don't have a lot of this type of staff working here. You don't have a lot of this culture."

(Talia, Fitness Director, Club Toronto, interview, December, 1996)

Interview Responses at Both Facilities

Lindy admitted that the staff of The Cardinal Club was not representative of the demographics of the membership, with respect to age, gender, and physical appearance. Corinna concurred, but she also maintained the belief that front desk personnel had to "look the part" for the public.

When probed for clarification to a statement he made that there was diversity within the fitness facility staff, Ahmed had to admit, "How representative is our staff? You mean the average age of our staff with that of our members? .... Valid point. No, I think that it is, we probably have a younger median age than what our membership would be."

Brigitta and Shellye, at Club Toronto, acknowledged that there was more ethnic diversity among staff than among the members. They also stated that the age of the staff probably reflected the population of the geographical area of Club Toronto, and the executive target market for advertising in that area.
Observations and Documentation of Staff at Club Toronto

The front-line staff at Club Toronto, from reception to sales, revealed that the employees were all female and early- to mid-20s in age. Reception staff were employees who managed the daily business operations at the front desk and who were the link between the members and other staff. Front desk staff were the member’s first and last contact with the facility. Sales staff were the facility link with potential members and with renewing members. From information supplied by Shellye, sales staff at Club Toronto ranged in age from 23 years to early 30s, with a median age of 27 years. The reception staff were mostly early- to mid-20s.

During personal observations made on two occasions at Club Toronto, I saw two non-Caucasian representatives among the front desk staff: possibly East Indian and Oriental. The other front-line staff members that I viewed working in the sales department, the fitness department, and at the front desk were typically white- or light-skinned, under 30 years of age, attractive, and fit-looking. In my random visits at this site, I did not see one service representative who might be considered overweight, unattractive, or physically challenged.

I caught only glimpses of the maintenance staff at Club Toronto. This group was responsible for cleaning and servicing the physical plant. The composition of the maintenance staff was 56 % male and, according to Shellye, were all Filipino. The surnames from the staff list of the maintenance department seemed to support Shellye’s disclosure.

Of the staff at Club Toronto, the fitness staff and personal trainers seemed to be the
most diverse in gender and age. Of the personal trainers listed for this site, 7 out of 15 were male, a fairly even representation of both genders. Talia and Brigitta both alluded to the fact that some of the personal trainers were, in general, older than the rest of the staff at Club Toronto. Brigitta confided, “Some of our personal trainers are older than most of our (other) team members.” Talia talked about a very popular personal trainer who had to leave the facility because her husband, who was in the military, was posted to Saudi Arabia. When the trainer left Club Toronto in 1995, she was 53 years of age. I estimated the age of the personal trainer, Daphne, whom I interviewed, to be mid- to late-30s because she had been a member at Club Toronto for 15 years. Also, the CEO of the group of facilities was a personal trainer. In an article in Canadian Fitness, he talked about starting his first facility in 1974. Hence, I estimated his age to be between 45 and 55 years.

The Director of Aerobics for the whole group of facilities including Club Toronto, was a male in his late 30s; his assistant was female and 43 years of age. These statistics were provided by Shellye. Of the 28 instructors listed to teach aerobics classes in the month of December, 1996, 14 % (n=4) of the leaders were male. Of the instructors scheduled to lead classes on the Spinning ® schedule, 3 of the 8 staff were male, a higher percentage than for traditional aerobics classes. The aerobics instructors that I saw were generally young, attractive, White, and slim to athletic-looking.

**Observations and Documentation of Staff at The Cardinal Club**

At The Cardinal Club, sales and reception staff regularly visible to the public were generally young, attractive, and slim to athletic-looking. They appeared to be predominantly Caucasian, with English as their preferred spoken language. One of the
sales staff was blond, slim, attractive, with a very muscular body. Only the director of the sales staff did not resemble this general staff physical image. Angelina told me that she was of “sturdy” Italian stock. She admitted to recently experiencing significant positive results from her diet and exercise plan.

The reception and sales employees at The Cardinal Club ranged in age from 23 to 39 years of age, with a median age of about 27 years. These age statistics were similar to the front-line statistics at Club Toronto. This information came from personal knowledge of the staff and an incomplete report supplied by the payroll department.

During my observations at The Cardinal Club, the maintenance and housekeeping staff were relatively invisible, except in emergencies. The maintenance and housekeeping employees seemed to be older than staff of other departments, perhaps ranging in age from 20 years to 50 years. In the housekeeping department, all staff were female, and several were significantly overweight. For a number of housekeeping employees, English was not their native language. The department head was a very overweight female in her 40s.

The maintenance department was exclusively male, all Caucasian and generally older than the rest of the employees at The Cardinal Club. The maintenance staff were neither significantly overweight nor fit-looking. The department head of maintenance was 50 to 60 years of age.

The full-time staff in the tennis department were more diverse than other departments at The Cardinal Club, with respect to age and gender and seemed to reflect the older age span of the members using the tennis courts. The full-time tennis department consisted of three males and two females. According to Desmond, this employee group
ranged in age from 22 to 40 years. The median age was 36 years.

The part-time tennis department staff at The Cardinal Club, on the other hand, ranged in age from 16 to 24 years with the exception of one male employee who was 41 years of age. While the tennis director was dark-skinned, all other staff were Caucasian. Each employee in the department was athletic-looking and still played tennis regularly.

Unlike Club Toronto, the fitness department at The Cardinal Club included a female youth and children’s programming staff coordinator. Of the 8 members in the Fitness department, 38% (n=3) were male. The fitness director was female and 35 years of age. The personal trainers were both male and female, ranging in age from 21 to 35 years of age. The median age was about 26 years. In the aerobics section of the fitness department, 22% of the staff was male. In comparison, 50% of the Spinning® staff instructors were male, including the owner and club manager. The estimated age range of the males in the latter two groups was 23 to 42 years; the estimated age range of the females in these two groups was 22 to 35 years. All fitness department staff, excluding the club owner, were Caucasian.

It is notable that the executive management of the sites played an active secondary role in their respective facilities. At The Cardinal Club, the owner and club manager was one of the regular Spinning® instructors and at Club Toronto, the President of the association was a part-time personal trainer.

General Observations of Both Facilities

When compared to front-line demographic statistics, the composition of middle management differed significantly in age and gender at each of the sites.
At the middle management level at The Cardinal Club, there were 8 directors or director-like positions. Of the 8 staff, there were 4 males and 4 females. There were male directors of the tennis department, the squash department, the maintenance department and the front desk. Females were in charge of the fitness department, public relations, housekeeping, and sales. Other than one director who was dark-skinned, the staff were White. The age range of the directors was approximately late 20s to 40, approximately paralleling the age span of middle management at the Club Toronto, where the age range for management staff was late 20s to mid-30s. Personal knowledge of staff ages, and the personal admission of staff, placed the median age of the middle management group at approximately 35 years.

At Club Toronto, there appeared to be 4 director-like positions and one general manager. The managers or supervisors were predominantly female, with the exception of the male Aerobics Director. When Talia was asked why she joined the staff at Club Toronto, she cited the fact that all the middle managers were female. From information supplied by Shellye, the median age of middle management at Club Toronto was early 30s. Of the 5 staff employed at this middle management level, I was uncertain about the ethnic background of one of the directors, Brandon, who said he was born in Trinidad. Of the others, 1 was African-American and the rest were Caucasian. Unlike The Cardinal Club where middle management representation of male to female was approximately equal, males were underrepresented at the middle management level at Club Toronto.

Despite the fact that there was female representation among middle managers at each of the facilities, the major decision makers for the sites were male. Both Talia and
Brandon agreed that the two top executives made all the final decisions. Staff interviewees at The Cardinal Club agreed that the family, who were also the owners and the executive management, made all the major decisions for the facility.

Discrepancy in Policy and Programming

In addition to an underrepresentation of certain facets of diversity among staff and membership, I found that there were discrepancies between policy and practice; between what was said and what was perceived by different people. Written policies for the facilities espoused the idea of a fairer representation of opinion throughout the organization through the concept of “team units” as opposed to hierarchical departments, through an interactive association of staff and member, through programming that responded to members’ needs and requests, through committees in which employees from every part of the facility were encouraged to provide input into decision made, and through the utilization of an open door policy at executive management level. However, in reality, the policies were either not being executed as stated or were not clearly understood by employees, usually front-line staff, or by the members for whom the policies were created. This section begins with a look at discrepancies in some of the policies that directly affected the members and the programming for the members. The second part of this section presents paradoxical policy as it impacted the staff.

Issues Affecting Members

We had to listen to our membership continually ask if we were getting it (the Spinning® programme)....You know, if the membership is really serious about it (a fitness trend), then we will proceed. The programming is
really about them. (Talia, Fitness Director, Club Toronto, interview, 1996)

When asked who set the programming policy for the facility, Joanne stated, “Nobody that I know of. For example the Spinning® bikes. Everyone has to pay to take the classes. I don’t like that.” When asked who decided to put in the Spinning® classes, her reply was “I don’t know. That decision came from upstairs, I imagine.”

Donald also believed that the owners exclusively set the policy at Club Toronto and made the executive decisions regarding members’ issues. He mentioned that Club Toronto formerly had a members’ board to discuss members’ concerns and to air suggestions. However, Donald said, the board was disbanded when the originator of the idea left the facility. No one else had taken on the responsibility for continuing this policy.

In response to a question about the policy for implementing current fitness trends affecting members, Talia, the Fitness Director at Club Toronto, chuckled and said “I’d honestly say by trial and error.” When asked the same question, Shellye admitted to being unfamiliar with any particular policy for including the membership in decisions for implementing “cutting edge” fitness trends.

I’m not involved in that, so I don’t know....If it’s a trend, they (the Fitness Director and the Aerobics Director) follow it without considering whether it would suit the members....Like boxaerobics was like a big trend....Well, it was never something our members wanted because that class was never full. There was never anyone in the class!

Brandon seemed to contradict Shellye when he stated that he tried to “stay... current with the trends. But again, with what fits into our membership....implementing them (the fitness trends) where they can fit.” Brandon also stated that Club Toronto
determined interest or need by “assessing members, trying out different things.” Brigitta commented that “our members run our club.” She continued with “the more we hear, we kind of tell our senior people, our VPs and (the president) and then it kind of goes from there.”

Rather than programming issues being generated from the membership as Brandon and Brigitta indicated, Talia felt that there were times when trends had to be introduced to the membership before a decision could be made by them. However, other than the trend dying through lack of member interest and support, Talia did not mention a process for members to abort or modify a trend once it was inaugurated. She simply stated that “there are situations where we bring things to the members and they’re a flop....So we must be careful with how we go about things.”

In the interview comments of dedicated members at The Cardinal Club, there seemed to be confusion as to whether members had input into policy created for them. When asked who made the decisions and set policy for members, Gwynnyth, a member at The Cardinal Club for 17 years, replied, “Members, I guess.” Charlene stated that the executive management was “pretty open to people’s opinions.” Gwynnyth went on to say that “since...the younger ones (sons of the family) took over running the club, they seem to be really tuned in to what people want.” When asked the same question, Marla declared, “In my opinion? I don’t know.” Blanche and Wendy stated without hesitation, “(the father) for #1”; “Oh, we don’t know how much influence the boys (the sons) have”; “I’m sure it’s a family matter.” Most of the time, it seemed, there was no structured forum for involving members and staff in major decisions for the facility, and no members’ board to
provide input into decision making about programming or trends for the centre.

At The Cardinal Club, members had mixed reactions about having input into programming decisions made on their behalf. Gwynny felt that "...they (the young owners, the sons) really listen now (as opposed to previous years under their father's management)...and they seem to be really tuned in to what people want." When asked about members' input into programming and renovations, Marla commented, "Oh, I think management staff always welcomes opinions of members here. They are always looking for the critical aspects and also ways to improve. I think they really address, they handle that very well." Blanche did not fully agree with Marla. On behalf of her interview group Blanche declared, "We do (have input into programming) in fitness, don't we? In aerobics anyway to a degree, but not in anything else."

When asked how policy was communicated to the members, one staff person at Club Toronto admitted that a major change was made to a policy that impacted the members. However, the change was not made public. Unless members directly inquired about this particular policy, it was possible for them to remain totally ignorant of a policy change that directly affected a segment of the membership.

Invisibility Versus "Walking Around"

Being visible, initiating conversation, and anticipating the customer's desire was the essence of the "Ten-Foot Attitude" approach developed by Sam Walton, founder of the Wal-Mart store chain. Talia took Mr. Walton's approach one step further when she talked about getting feedback from the members.

The cards, verbal, just things that you hear in the locker room. The locker
room is a great place to hear things. You just go in, pretend you’re going to the washroom or you’re going to go take a shower. Listen to what the members are talking about. You can actually achieve a good guideline by that.

Reception staff had more contact with members than any other employees because customers interacted with them when entering and leaving the facility. Yet this vital group of employees seemed to be left out of major decisions affecting members and the facility as a whole. Shellye at Club Toronto remarked,

I guess what I am getting at is, if they (management, executive management) want to know how we are going to benefit the members, we (front-line staff) know better than anyone else. We contact, like we’re in contact with them on a daily basis.

According to Talia, the Fitness Department staff, like front desk staff, was quite visible and readily available to help the members, especially at peak times during the business day. In response to a question about the new member and the effect of the first visit to the weight room on that member, Talia commented on the atmosphere.

We bring you to the main gym to work out, and during your workout time, while you are cycling, we chit chat....Usually late afternoon, early evening...that is our peak time and (the) staff is out there.

When asked about the treatment of new members, Shellye stated that “We try also to be -- a lot of contact with them. We do have people, our gym motivators, our fitness staff. There’s always somebody on Gym Motivation.” However, both these assertions were in conflict with what I observed during the peak times of my observation hours. During those time periods, I witnessed no staff supervising the main weight training rooms, making themselves available to members, or interacting with members in any way. Other than trainers working with clients or vacuuming the carpet, I saw no personnel available to
answer training questions or to comment on safety and technique.

During three different observation times at The Cardinal Club, I also saw no staff patrolling the weight training rooms or helping out patrons. At one point during my visit, I observed a staff member doing a fitness assessment on a client in a small office. I noticed that the blinds were open and I wondered about the comfort level of the client in such a conspicuous setting.

Miscellaneous Conflicts

When asked to describe a “typical tennis member,” Desmond of The Cardinal Club made the following assessment: “equality of gender, age group --30s-50s-- higher than average percentage of affluent people. The sport, the family, each attracts its own clientele.” Yet, later in his response to the same question, he contradicted himself by saying,

There is a great cross-section in the club, a cross-section of socioeconomic groups. More successful, a conscious target market, not exclusive. There is the impression out there still that we are unreachable. There are all (kinds of) groups that we can accommodate. Our rates are comparable to what is out there. But there is still this reputation.

In talking about the social policy of the Club Toronto, one of the directors stated that “our parties, we will have one tomorrow night, are generally very good....There is a big social aspect, a lot of people meet here and go out from here....So, we’re known for that, too.” However, from a member’s perspective, Donald claimed that the outings “didn’t go over well.”

When talking about the composition of the membership, Donald reasoned why there were very few older members. He felt that the demographics of the geographical
area surrounding Club Toronto tended to be “younger, transient, with apartments that attract singles. The membership reflects that distribution.” Daphne corroborated Donald’s impression about Club Toronto. She called it a “singles’ meat market.” However, Brigitta seemed to have a different viewpoint. She talked about the surrounding area as being a “very big residential area” with young families, like a little “baby boom.”

**Discrepancy in Policy Concerning Staff**

Thus the very complexity of the high-reliability organizations gives rise to a kind of mutual interdependence between taskers and operators. The leaders must feel comfortable learning from and trusting their subordinates, since those subordinates often possess vital knowledge beyond the scope of their superiors.

(Helgeson, 1995, p. 42)

**Team-Oriented Philosophy**

Club Toronto’s management style was supposed to be team-oriented, rather than hierarchical. A team-oriented concept usually embraced the issues of diversity through its environment of mutual respect for all levels and viewpoints throughout the organization. At Club Toronto, the term “department head” was replaced by Team Captain and the title of team player supplanted the term “staff.” When asked about the management style at Club Toronto, Brigitta stated, “It is very team-oriented.... That’s what I really like about this company.” Brandon claimed that, when restructuring occurred in 1994, a committee was struck and “everyone was there including the janitorial staff.” Brigitta claimed that “with a new trend, a lot of us will take a look at it. We listen to everybody.” However, Shellye had a different perspective on this democratic company policy. “We are asked to follow, not to create. Team captain involvement does not occur.... I don’t know anybody who is
involved. ” She was quite emphatic in her response.

The opening pages of the Employee Handbook at The Cardinal Club contained this quote: “We are also dedicated to a co-operative and team spirited philosophy with all employees for the good of the company.” However Ahmed’s comment about staff involvement in the decision making process indicated a management style that was more hierarchical than team-oriented. Ahmed told me, “We’ve learned over the years to... keep them (the staff) informed, keep them up-to-date on what changes will be taking place.” According to that statement, decisions appeared to be dictated, not arrived at in a democratic fashion.

The executive manager of The Cardinal Club did, however, support and practise an “open door” policy for his employees. The facility was informal enough to allow this kind of interaction with staff. Ahmed declared “If you can’t have your front-line staff come to you, you know, feel comfortable coming to you, then you should change the way you do things.” Desmond corroborated this claim, “Management’s door is open-- never said it is not open yet.” Other members and some staff seemed to concur.

However, when asked about communication within the organization, Lindy felt she met with her supervisor’s disapproval whenever she went directly to the club manager. She commented that,

This (the method of communicating) actually frustrates me to a certain degree, because with the change of the infrastructure in the past year, it has changed so drastically.... I am very direct. I don’t like beating around the bush and I don’t like to manipulate situations.....And I would continue going to (the owner/manager) and then (he) would go back to (my supervisor) and say, “Oh, I talked to Lindy about this little ‘blah’ and it created friction....And so going through the channels, you know, there’s lots
of memos and there’s lots of meetings, and there’s... Baaaaaaahhhhh. You know... I find that very frustrating.... I know that ultimately (the owner/manager) is going to make the decision. I don’t want to waste my time because there are so many other things that I want to do, so just let me talk to the (owner/manager), you know.

These difficulties exemplified an hierarchical system, a one-way communication system, not a team-oriented system.

When asked about the reluctance of staff coming directly to him, Ahmed said,

I mean there is always going to be some sort of hesitation because I think people fear that if I say anything that is taken any way as critical...they are going to think that all I do is nag and carry on. “So maybe they won’t want me working here. So I had just better keep my mouth shut and let somebody else say something. I wouldn’t dare call the boss.”

Desmond also questioned the efficacy of staff personally approaching the club manager.

There is an intimidation with going direct to management, that some of the folks would have, I’d say. Maybe 80% of it would go right to myself and then is passed on from there.... Unfortunate, from my perspective, that the management, who are family and who are owners of the organization, have always been very tentative to what is suggested and have never said yes or no to one particular thing.

Further evidence of hierarchical management came from Angelina who commented that communication was one-way, from front-line to management and was unproductive, done indirectly through voicemail and memo.

**Discrepancy in Promotional Policy**

As with other issues of policy in this section, there seemed to be a discrepancy between what was voiced and what was actually done with respect to promotional policy.

In the case of Club Toronto, Brigitta stated that hiring for a management position was done
from within, yet she was hired from an outside organization and was placed in a managerial position within months of being hired.

On diversity and promotion, Ahmed, of The Cardinal Club, made these comments:

But we have diversity here (at The Cardinal Club) and there is opportunity for a lot of movement (within the organization). You know, we’ve had people who have started off as dishwashers and housekeepers, that have moved up through front desk positions and managerial positions.

When I reviewed the history of the management staff in 1996, I came up with the following information. Late in 1993, an employee was brought in from Toronto in a marketing capacity, installed a computer system which turned out to be unsuitable for the facility, and disappeared shortly after its installation. Numerous unanswered questions arose from staff as a result. The sales manager had indeed worked her way up through the “ranks,” but at least three managers/supervisors had been hired directly into managerial roles from outside the agency or had made a meteoric rise to management in a short space of time: for instance, the fitness director (three changes of staff between 1994 and 1996), the tennis director, and the marketing director. Some of the dismissals or demotions had been so sudden, that members were unaware that the person was no longer on the management staff at The Cardinal Club. Charlene, a member, commented on this phenomenon: “I used to talk to Carla (one of the internally promoted but short-lived Fitness Directors in 1994). It was helpful to me. I thought she was away on holidays!”

My historical investigations also revealed that, in 1993 or 1994, there had been an attempt at a cross-department initiative as an appreciation for the diversity and expertise required in each department. Executive management proposed that each department head
spend a day or part of a day with each of the other department heads. However, blocking off work time to take part in this endeavour was an issue for the middle managers. Support measures from executive management did not materialize. Therefore, this attempt at fostering diversity appreciation although espoused in theory, failed in practice.

Exclusion and Exclusivity

Issues of exclusivity and exclusion encompass actions of rejection, segregation or discrimination. Marginal groups who already feel like outsiders (Esty et al., 1995), may be particularly sensitive to disregard or rejection by a group of members or staff. In this instance, non-verbal or verbal ostracism may be based on gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and physical and mental abilities or result from sex-role socialization patterns. Exclusive action might be a conscious attempt to prevent someone from becoming part of a group, or to reject someone from a group. On the other hand, exclusion could constitute a more subtle attempt at isolation from inside the group. In both instances, there is an implied intent to maintain a status quo, to foster homogeneity within the group or organization.

Exclusive Behaviour

As we stop pushing these lean bodies and we start using a lifestyle approach, their fear, their intimidation, is going to go down. We need to take the fear and narcissism out of fitness. (Burke, cited in Cohen, 1995, p. 38)

The Impression that You Don’t Belong Here

From a number of the interview responses came the word clique, meaning “a small
exclusive group of friends or associates” (Hanks, 1989, p. 241). If underrepresentation of certain groups of society was already prevalent at the fitness facilities, then exclusive behaviour on the part of the members would be doubly devastating to a new participant. Generally any new member to a group or organization feels isolated because of unfamiliarity with both policy and procedure. Trying to become a part of an established environment is somewhat akin to trying to get a spot in a revolving door that constantly rotates and never slows down long enough to get in. Eventually, one gets discouraged and stops trying.

Shellye stated that at the Toronto facility,

...But the place is “cliquey” as well. The squash group with their leagues, ladders and tournaments are a very close-knit group. Also the aerobics corps...Spinning® has its groups -- who follow the instructor. In the weight room, the members will not line up, they are not very patient. They will go to another piece of equipment.

At the same facility, Donald expressed similar sentiments. He described the membership as “divided into various factions: squash, racquetball, aerobics, and weight room.” When queried about an “average” member, Brandon, the aerobics director, indirectly said the same thing. “(It depends) on the time of day-- 5:30 to 9:00 p.m., young, attractive, in good shape; 9:30 a.m. to noon, housewife, mothers, people who care about fitness; 7 a.m., high-stressed professionals who don’t care about looks.”

Nor was this phenomenon unique to Club Toronto. Gwynnyth talked about The Cardinal Club as having segregated groups, 'cause I’ve gone to them all. I started with just the squash crowd and then I did 2 years of nothing but tennis and moved with the tennis crowd, and then there’s your workout people who don’t do the
racquet sports. They’re different...It’s up to you to sort of mix and mingle.

Of course, implicit in this final statement is that a member would have to have a certain degree of self-confidence in order to contemplate joining one of these established groups.

Angelina stated that, “The members have their own niche and cliques. They don’t intermix.” In this instance, Angelina was commenting as a new member, since she recently implemented morning workouts at The Cardinal Club into her daily routine. In fact, she went on to say,

I do a morning workout and I am on the treadmill next to this guy for three days. Same guy every morning. Never says “hi” to me. There seems to be a breakfast group of regulars there. One day, I just said to this guy, ‘Hi, I have been next to you for three days and we have never spoken.”

I met the “breakfast group of regulars.” The group spanned two generations (30 years to 65+ years [retired]), and contained both genders. They were all Caucasians and belonged to the middle-class category.

Blanche, Philippa, Susan, and Wendy concurred with a sense of segregated groups. Wendy and Philippa stated that their older children felt that “everyone (in the facility) is a snob.” Philippa added, “They feel like they don’t belong because everybody is in little groups.” Wendy expanded on this impression with,

It is very “cliquey” here. I think it is. You know the tennis people probably don’t like the-- I shouldn’t say don’t like-- they don’t mix with anybody....The aerobics people probably get annoyed with the tennis people when they congregate in huge clumps!

With no hesitation at all, Lindy answered the question about the effect of the weight room atmosphere on a new member,

Intimidating. Everybody in there knows what they are doing, or they look
like they know. As long as you look the part, it doesn’t matter...I think, to a certain degree, the new member is viewed as an inconvenience and an intrusion by an old member because the person doesn’t know how to use the equipment. “They’re taking up too much time. Get out of my way, I’m here to use it! You don’t know what you are doing.” I think there’s that mental feeling and I think attractive people get treated very well.

Gwynnyth echoed the same sentiments about how a new member might feel entering the weight room for the first time. “When you go into the gym and see people working out, you are intimidated because they know what they are doing-- or they think they do-- so that intimidates you....Oh, here comes the new one!” Charlene concurred.

“Yeah, plus you feel like all eyes are on you.” Charlene also added,

When I first went in the weight room, I was very intimidated, watching other people and thinking, “Oh, am I doing it the right way? What are other people going to think of me? Do I look like an idiot?” You know, like, my problem was mostly the men in there.

However, Gwynnyth also stated that she herself never felt intimidated. She was a very secure individual, very self-confident and a long-standing member at The Cardinal Club.

She gave a colourful and comical description of behaviour in the weight room.

If anything, they should feel intimidated by me especially like a few of the guys pumping these heavy weights and all the grunting and groaning. I mean I get more of a laugh out of them. It’s like, “give me a break,” you know? And I read an article recently in a women’s magazine actually about guys who grunt in the gym. It’s all done to impress the women in there, or 90% of it, you know. All the weight belts are on and they reckon that’s to make them look bigger in the upper body, with these tiny waists. I go in there and laugh at them. They are not really doing a serious workout, you know. I mean a lot of them are obviously well built and muscular and you can tell they’ve done some work. But at the same time, it’s like, “Oh quit with the grunting and groaning!”

Although Angelina is a very self-assured young woman who broached issues with the executive management with confidence, she discussed the weight training room this
The text on this page is not legible due to the quality of the image. It appears to be a page from a document, but the content cannot be accurately transcribed.
way. "As for the weight room, I don’t use it. I am too afraid to ask. People are too self-absorbed to care. In here the mission statement is carried out only 50% of the time by staff."

At Club Toronto, Shellye told me that the new central weight training room was intimidating. “Before,” she said, “the weight rooms were more intimate. People liked it better. Now there is one big room. Some are averse to the new renovations.”

In answer to a question on the renovations, Talia made this comment. “Yeah, where the daycare is? If you extended that (room) into just this room here, this is what our cardio room consisted of. It was like being in a cattle barn, ‘cause all of the cardio equipment was in one room. It was kinda nice, but at the same time, it was the most intimidating place. These new members would walk in and everyone was staring at them!”

Further to the comment on staring behaviours, Talia had this to say.

The members have turned some of the stairmasters around. But all the treadmills face out (towards the windows). We haven’t turned them around. Some of the members are into “people watching.”

This kind of behaviour and this setting would have been intimidating for any member entering the area, but especially for someone already in an unfamiliar environment. The atmosphere might also have felt hostile, if, as some interviewees mentioned, new members encountered regular members who also viewed them as an inconvenience.

Blanche agreed, “I’d feel like I am out place. Like what am I doing here? You know? Yeah, you see, I’ve never had anybody show me anything, in any of the rooms except for Paul (a former aerobics instructor at The Cardinal Club) and Susan (one of the interviewees).
Philippa mentioned that there was a specialty class scheduled in one of the weight training rooms. The class had been designed to appeal to most levels of fitness, especially to members who were intimidated by both the aerobics classes and the weight training rooms. Philippa described the problems about actual implementation of this class.

Yeah, we saw what happened on Sunday when we tried to hold a class in there. They (members who were not part of the class) were complaining about it. We should be allowed to go in there any time....They are only taking up half so we should be allowed to take up the other half.

**Exclusive Physical Appearance**

“I have heard out there, ‘well, before I join your club, I have to get in shape’.”


When discussing the dress code on the tennis court, Blanche said, “I definitely agree with a dress code on the tennis courts. Definitely agree with that.” Philippa added the thought, “It doesn’t matter how much money you’ve got or haven’t got. On the tennis court, it doesn’t count. You know, everybody’s playing tennis.”

Blanche also felt that, in the aerobics classes, T-shirts and shorts were more acceptable modes of clothing than body-revealing apparel like bra tops, thongs, and other “skimpy” garb. She claimed that casual, but not “sloppy” apparel like T-shirts created an inviting atmosphere in the aerobics room and weight training rooms for the average exerciser and for herself. She stated, “I think you should stick to the T-shirt idea, though, because I definitely need some, not just myself but a lot of other people, need to cover this area!” Wendy added, “That and a few other areas” and the whole group erupted in laughter. However, they had made their point. Both Wendy and Philippa alluded to the
improbability of instituting a dress code. “A lot of people might not like that very much....I’d find it a bit much, to be honest with you.” However, each of them agreed that some form of dress code would de-emphasize differences in size, shape, and socioeconomic background.

Lindy had a very strong opinion on this very same topic.

Here’s something that we’ll never do: institute a different dress code. Get these people out of Spandex. That’s a big deal here. It’s a huge deal. I mean and a lot of it is female because we have these incredibly disgusting standards that are on TVs and commercials and stuff, and women are walking around in tights and thongs and crop tops. I am guilty, just like the next person....Yeah, but it makes the woman who is 70 pounds overweight, you know, wearing baggy track pants and a big baggy sweatshirt-- and will barely take off her sweatshirt to reveal her T-shirt-- and never be caught dead in shorts. And wear tights. Are you kidding?

Gwynnyth concurred with Lindy about the dress code and offered a man’s perspective of the situation.

I’ve heard the men say the same of the women in the aerobics classes, that they are there in the fancy outfits, skimpy outfits, or whatever. And they’re there to just, you know, to do their version of flaunting, too, you know, for the sake of the guys that are walking by to the weight room....I hear feedback from the guys. They can tell the women who are serious about working out because of just the way they dress, and their manner and their attitude. The same can be said for the men.

However, it seemed that a visible minority of shapely or muscular bodies were creating this image. For instance, one morning at Club Toronto, I noted that 28 out of 42 participants, or 67 % of the members present in the weight room on the day of my observations, were sporting T-shirts and shorts or sweat bottoms. Two members were in full sweatsuit gear, 5 were in tights and leotards, and 7-- 3 males and 4 females-- were wearing tank tops.
The policy for weight room attire at The Cardinal Club precluded sleeveless clothing. Only once, during a morning observation period in the “cardio” room at The Cardinal Club, did I see one female member wearing a bra top and shorts. However, in that same room were two larger women on the treadmills, one wearing a full sweatsuit outfit and one wearing a sweatshirt and sweatshorts. In general at The Cardinal Club, the men wore T-shirts and shorts, “tear away pants” or sweatpants.

Exclusive Attitude

“Excuse me for being cynical, but if you are in a wheelchair, exactly what are you doing here? I mean there is not much ....”

(Wendy, member, The Cardinal Club, interview, 1996)

At The Cardinal Club, Blanche commented on people with physical disabilities in the following manner. “Don’t you think that 75% of people who are in wheelchairs have their own physiotherapy places to go?...They must have quite a few places where they are getting (fit). I don’t know where— maybe the ‘Y’.” Wendy added a rather strong viewpoint on the same issue. “Excuse me for being cynical, but if you are in a wheelchair, exactly what are you doing here? I mean there is not much ....” At this point she was interrupted by someone else in the group talking about another issue.

On the topic of socioeconomic status, one staff member commented on the patriarch of the familial owners of The Cardinal Club.

There is a great deal of negativity regarding the family philosophy. Some staff did not like that philosophy, which is the family. They have their own way of thinking. The present owner, for example— brash, dictatorship, seemingly rude to both staff and members. The owner came from a successful construction business. He does not have to care what other people think. He is considered a “have” and therefore may be the subject of jealousy. Some staff felt they were not treated like a “somebody.”
In the same vein, Joanne at Club Toronto commented that Shellye “seems to think that (Club Toronto) is something special. Personally I think it is just another club. That’s what you pay for. The members feel like snobs, yet there are TTC drivers here, too. There is a middle-class clientele.”

With regard to age and attitude toward children, Charlene seemed to feel the same way about the owner. “I remember when my parents were first members here. I came to swim. And I remember (the owner, the father) coming in and saying to me, ‘Where’s your membership tag?’ I’m still, to this day, intimidated by him.” Charlene is now 30 years old.

Gwynnyth also commented on her early years at The Cardinal Club and stated that “there was a feeling that children really weren’t encouraged here.” However, Gwynnyth also went on to describe the positive changes that had occurred at The Cardinal Club since that time.

But now that’s (attitude toward children) done a big turnaround in the last few years and they cater to kids like unbelievably. I mean, I wish my kids had all the things that they’ve got going now. When they were members, when they were younger, there was nothing for the little ones at all. They did not encourage little ones at all, even teenagers. Now the place is full of teenagers, you know.

Gwynnyth’s comment indicated that children were present in the facility and that, perhaps Ahmed’s desire to bring children and families into the facility was being realized.

Self-Perception of Exclusivity

Barrier #1 pertains to people’s perceptions of their own bodies—their own physiques—compared to their perception of the bodies of people who are club members. In short, they believe that their own bodies are either too old, or too heavy, or too unshapely for the hard-body havens called “health clubs”.... Barrier #3 pertains to the average person’s fitness interests and
goals. These people do not define themselves as fitness fanatics.... But, from their perspective, the lives of the people who join health clubs are consumed by fitness and this does not square comfortably with their image of themselves or their image of who they want to be.

(McCarthy, 1994, p. 6)

Brigitta mentioned that, for new members, there was a small gym upstairs at Club Toronto. I saw the gym about which she was talking, and it was very isolated from the rest of the facility. She commented,

the last place I would want them to go into would be the big, free weight room. And even down to the big gym here, somebody who has never been in the club before and is very intimidated or very deconditioned...I would bring them up to our small gym, more the private room.

However, Brigitta had expressed concern over the general lack of staff supervision at Club Toronto. This type of segregation might serve only to make the member feel isolated from the activity and social interaction occurring in the rest of the facility.

Charlene’s parents were in their 60s and both members of The Cardinal Club. Her father, who was 69, actually had a physical problem with one of his legs. However, he had not let this limitation prevent his participating faithfully in racquet sports. Charlene’s mother (who was 67 years of age) had a different perspective. When encouraged by her daughter to take part in the club activities, the following was an example of their verbal exchange.

Well, my mother’s first question, when I tell her about going into a spin (Spinning®) class is-- she always asks me-- well, are there other ladies in there about my age?...Well, what do they wear? She’s always worrying about what they are wearing....I looked in there the other day. They’re all wearing the cycling shorts. My mother will not go in; she will not put on a cycling short.... Well, I mean, she used to play tennis all the time, but because she hasn’t done anything in a while, you know, she thinks she’s really fat, which I don’t think she is.
Forty-nine-year-old Gwynnyth added similar sentiments about her parents-in-law.

I mean, I have tried to encourage my in-laws out here. She, my mother-in-law, played tennis as a young person, but they haven’t done anything for years—either of them....Every morning I go out here; everybody on the tennis court’s got to be 10 years older than me!...I said, they’re all out there, doing their thing!...You don’t have to keep up with 20-year-olds....That’s why I don’t play squash any more. I can’t keep that pace up. But I still work out, you know.

Lindy had strong opinions about the image of being attractive and fit-looking at The Cardinal Club. Earlier, she had vented on the “disgusting” dress code at The Cardinal Club. This time, she discussed the psychological repercussions on a woman, “70 pounds overweight,” exercising in an atmosphere that could be perceived as being exclusive.

They don’t want to feel isolated. They want to feel like there’s somebody else out there that’s like them. Nobody wants to feel completely unique in their problems. They want to have somebody they can connect with, even if it’s just visually. And if there is somebody overweight and there is somebody old and there’s -- whatever-- and somebody skinny, who wants to put on weight, and stuff like that. They want to be able to connect.

Lindy also alluded to the perception of gender exclusivity in the weight room while she was conducting tours with a potential member.

And if I walk into the weight room and there’s no women and I’m touring a woman through here-- I hate that! Because I like free weights and I think women really do. But if there is nobody in there, I always get the (comment), “Oh, is this just a men’s room?”

Exclusive Atmosphere

A 1994 IHRSA (International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association) study on “How Consumers View Health and Sports Club” indicates that the perceptions that non-members have of health clubs is as “meat markets” with an excessive number of mirrors in which fit members “check themselves out.”

(Moffatt, 1996, p.13)
When Corinna was queried about the impression of the weight room on new joiners to The Cardinal Club, she replied, “Intimidating, cold room, not welcoming.” It seemed universally agreed among the interviewees, that the average participant, and even a club regular, like Blanche, and staff, like Desmond, were hesitant to enter and use the weight room.

Donald, at Club Toronto, claimed that there seemed to be a “force field” at the door preventing members from entering. Brigitta agreed with Donald. About the weight training rooms she said, “If I walked up there and had never touched it before, I would be very intimidated.... The last place I would want them to go into would be the big free weight room.”

When asked how this area of the facility could be made less intimidating, the owner of The Cardinal Club showed a sympathetic understanding of the new member’s plight.

This past Sunday, I was at the Reebok Club in New York. And here I was as a club owner and a club manager-- someone who is an active exerciser. Yet, when I walked into the Reebok Club, I still felt, “Gee, if I was a member here, would I really feel comfortable? So, I don’t know if it may be a universal thing, that no matter where you go...you still feel awkward and unusual because it’s such a personal thing and it’s your body, you know.... Yeah, I think it’s intimidating. And hopefully, what we are trying to do now is to have staff people, more fitness staff people, around to make that person (the new member) feel welcome....You are right, that is the #1 reason why people get turned off working out, just because they don’t feel comfortable.

Exclusive Public Image

I hope the fitness center is one of the places where the mail sorter is as welcome as the CEO. Statistically, they both count as one member.

(Gulbronson, 1992-93, p. 29)

With respect to the public image of The Cardinal Club and economic considerations
in joining, Gwynnyth commented on her first impressions of the facility.

Well, obviously pretty fancy surroundings. You know, pretty ritzy looking compared to the Y. It was like, “Can we really afford this?”... And there are still people out there that still have that impression: that it is a high society type club for the rich, well-off people and that’s baloney, really, absolute baloney....I find it’s my second home.

When he talked about the future expansion of The Cardinal Club, Ahmed described a facility, that, based on appearance alone, might have prevented the average consumer from considering a membership. He described the facility as a “first class spa,” talked about “plans to go up another level on our building; have a rooftop of all glass.” At Club Toronto, Brigitta also repeatedly described the facility and the café as “upscale,” a term that also could have implications of appearing exclusive.

Exclusion

First, for the most part, industry advertising continues to reinforce these existing barriers, signaling the consumer that nothing has changed. To the eyes of the person whose image of our industry is mediated through advertising, clubs are still enclaves for the young, the lean, the muscular, and the shapely. No others need apply.

(McCarthy, 1994, p. 6)

Exclusion in Marketing

Talia commented about the lack of ethnic representation at Club Toronto, and then, when asked if excluding certain ethnic groups was intentional or inadvertent, went on to say,

You know, I don’t really know. I question it sometimes. We sometimes talk about prejudice and I try to voice my opinion, but I just think that, in their minds they want monthly fees to be at a certain level, like $100 or more, and they think that this is the type of clientele that they are gearing it towards. And this is reflected in their marketing. And I think that this IS their market.
Lindy at The Cardinal Club commented on the internal conflict that the owners had regarding the market to be cultivated.

I know that the (family owners) are torn between wanting to maintain that (image), wanting to maintain it for the people to whom it applies, because they want that white collar, upper-middle class person to feel this is their club, you know. But they also want to open it to people who are blue-collar, who are middle to lower-middle class, where it's a nice place for them to work out. They feel special but don't feel overwhelmed by it. I think that there is this dual identity that they're fighting with.

Evidence of an ambiguous target market appeared in a glossy Cardinal Club brochure that portrayed both the image of a facility that was out of the financial reach of the average lower to lower-middle class group, and the image of a facility that endorsed the idea of a traditional family. In the pamphlet, there was a picture of the arrival of guests portraying a family. The brochure also showed the “family” in the pool area with the children in the water, father on deck, mother in a deck chair. However, the description of the fitness facility in the leaflet stated that The Cardinal Club “has created what seems to be magic. Blending glamour and luxury with world class recreation.” Visually and verbally the brochure seemed aimed at a socioeconomic class who could afford the elaborate surroundings.

However, to its credit, the pamphlet did attempt to encompass diversity in its visual displays. The leaflet included Harold, the doorman who looked of retirement age, but who was wearing a formal uniform that included white gloves. Among the photographs was a simulated Spinning® class that included the owner, the fitness director, an aerobics instructor, and four fitness facility members, one of whom was 50 years old and one who was a young male; however, all the “participants” were White. The picture of the
restaurant displayed a table set with a gourmet meal and a bottle of wine. The workout
centre layout displayed a young female personal trainer (she was actually a very attractive
salesperson) “overseeing” the workout of a young man, who was actually a personal trainer
and an aspiring professional football player. In the mirror of the same picture was a
member whom I guessed to be in his 50s and a set of “young” hands engaged in a weight
training activity. Finally, there was another picture of the Tennis Director, who was dark-
skinned, with a group of youths, among whom was one female, two of Middle Eastern or
West Indian ethnic background and one child who was less slim than the rest. Although
this picture was a good attempt at diversity, it did not match the demographics of the
membership.

Among the documentation for Club Toronto was an upbeat and informative video
produced for and given to potential members who were unsure about signing up. The
video portrayed a new member preparing for and undertaking his first visit. Featured in the
film was a bespectacled, balding man who was White and middle-aged. The video
discussed questions that new members might have had about the chain of fitness clubs
associated with Club Toronto. It recommended what to pack for a workout, and talked
about parking, information dissemination, and fitness assessments. The video also
explained various aspects of the club from weight training areas to daycare, from free
weights and “cardio” equipment to parties, trips, in-house bars, and gourmet eating at
some of the other facilities. The focus of the video was the thought process of the middle-
aged patron on his first visit to a facility. Also visible in the film were a variety of
“members” and staff. There was a male aerobics instructor, a Black bespectacled member,
and a female member (she was not wearing the uniform of a personal trainer, so I assumed that she must represent a member) assisting the Black bespectacled male in a strength training exercise. Except for the male aerobics instructor, the group exercise class featured all female participants, who were, in general, fit-looking and white-skinned. One participant was dressed in a crop top, others in various types of form-fitting aerobic gear. One woman might have been considered slightly overfat. (Most of the film was shot using the reflection in the mirror.) The staff cameos showed young people, one of whom was Black. The manager was a young female. The video suggested that programming was available for most interests; from swimming to racquet sports, from self-defense to volleyball, from nutrition to body walking. The video closed with a pitch for energy conservation and a reminder that all information was available in the new member’s kit.

**Physical Plant Exclusion**

“A physical barrier is a condition of the physical environment that restricts or complicates access, movement, or participation” (Miller, 1995, p. 4).

With respect to accessibility for members having to rely on a wheelchair for mobility, Shellye commented on accessibility issues at Club Toronto.

It is possible, but on weekends it would be difficult because accommodations would have to be made with staff to help member access the areas and to meet the member coming off the elevator. There is also a problem with women with strollers. The upper level is accessible to wheelchair members but the change rooms are not.... If there were not staff available to do this, the member would not be able to use the club.

Brigitta mentioned another difficulty for anyone who has trouble with mobility. “It would be great if we had change rooms closer to the big gym. Some complain about going
way upstairs, just to turn around and come back down. We have a good layout, but not ideal.” She also stated,

So we definitely have handicapped people.... Like, I mean, these people have gone upstairs when they have prostheses and stuff like that. So it just takes them a little longer. But otherwise it is a beautiful layout. I mean, we do have a lot of stairs; we are a very large club. So it is probably not the most conducive to a senior with arthritis and stuff like that. I mean, we don’t have a lot of those people in the club either. So there are some limits definitely in our club.

Corinna talked about The Cardinal Club as being “user unfriendly” and referred to the absence of ramps in the actual facility itself. Both Charlene and Gwynnyth commented on the same issue and added that anyone having difficulty climbing stairs would also have a problem getting around the facility. Gwynnyth said

Yeah, the only means they’ve got is the elevator through the hotel. But that’s a long trek by the time they go all the way through the building. I thought of that just recently, actually, that they do need to cater more to the handicapped or whatever. Even people who have difficulty climbing a set of stairs. Like even to go down to the locker room and things. Because they would have to go by the elevator (in the hotel) to come up and by the elevator to go down again.

Charlene added,

Everything is so close together (in the weight training areas) and crammed in that sometimes I find it-- I nearly flipped over backwards today. I was walking out and I was talking to (some members) and I was backing up like this. I back right into the bench and I went right over it.

According to information from a training course on facility design, “machines require a minimum of 2 feet and optimally 3 feet between machines. Note: 30 inches is necessary in areas to be accessible for the handicapped... or 42 square feet is predictable average floor space to allot for a selectorized machine” (Kroll n.d., pp.318, 320). Visual
inspection indicated that this space did not exist at The Cardinal Club. In her interview, Charlene mentioned personally falling over the equipment. Since a new weight training room was part of the 1996 renovations, Club Toronto had more room than The Cardinal Club to navigate around the equipment.

Marla concurred with Charlene about floor space at The Cardinal Club.

Can they even get in the front door? No. You couldn’t fit a wheelchair between the weights in that room. You wouldn’t be able to access a lot of them. You wouldn’t be able to get down. You wouldn’t even be able to enter. I’m just stopping to think. Where is it (the elevator)? Because legally you have to have one. Oh, in the hotel. Legally, that is required, is it not? Maybe it’s not enforced, but I know, even with our business, we had to have wheelchair accessibility. I would think they would feel very intimidated here.

Marla’s husband had a brother who was “mentally and physically handicapped,” so Marla was aware of the issues affecting the life of someone with a disability.

I mean he can still function independently. I mean, he still lives on his own, but he has to have someone come in and keep an eye on him, every day. He used to be in a home where he was totally taken care of. They did not allow him to do anything, which is bad. And mentally he was much worse at that point. Now that they have integrated him, he has his own little apartment. He takes the bus. He does piecework at some factory and he is very independent that way. He is a much happier person, much more independent. It was interesting to watch. I think a lot of them are capable of more than what they are allowed. They are never given the opportunity. And labelled in such a way and tucked away in a quiet corner somewhere

Philippa and Blanche demonstrated an ignorance about wheelchair accessibility at The Cardinal Club with comments like: “Well, you could get into the club alright, but you couldn’t get upstairs to there, could you?” “I don’t know how you are going to do it.” “Well, there are some weights downstairs though. There’s the free weights are downstairs.”
Originally I tried unsuccessfully to interview a new member in a wheelchair named Tom. When I originally met him, I asked Tom some informal questions about manoeuvrability around the weight training machines. He laughed and said that, in Florida, where he had previously trained, space in the exercise room was even more limited than at The Cardinal Club. However, I never saw Tom in the facility again. Repeated attempts to contact Tom through the help of his fiancée failed to gain me an interview time with him. His fiancée claimed that he often lost heart because of his disability and, she felt, this seemed to be happening again. In my interview with her, Angelina, who had encouraged Tom to become a member of The Cardinal Club, took a realistic look at the situation.

But you also need to realize what you can and cannot do. You must realize what you can go after. Like Tom, maybe this is not the place for him. We can only do so much with what we have....Tom was given his own key to the security door (between the fitness facility and the hotel entrance: the only place with an elevator and a ramp). Perhaps we are not set up to accommodate a membership like that. We have to realize what our limitations are.

Exclusion in Programming Issues

...For example, what are the characteristics of individuals attracted to your weight room, aerobics programs or personal training services? Are you capturing the interest of your entire customer base, or are you simply churning the same group?

(Frittenburg, 1998, p. 26)

When Lindy referred back to an earlier time in The Cardinal Club’s history, she felt that only token programming had been available for both children and aging adults. However, she mentioned that programming trends had changed for both ends of the age spectrum.

We now have children’s programming. Basically we’ve given seniors
aquatics classes. Big whoopee deal (about having only aquatics for seniors)....Now I’m really excited about the new classes up here, with the yoga, the stretch and tone, and the back and abs. I think those are great for any level. But I think they are realistic for seniors, you know?...But then I had another woman come in and she had a gentleman in a wheelchair and he was an older gentleman, and wanted to know if we had social activities.

“Did we have bridge? Do we have movie days? Do we do anything for seniors?” I have to tell her no. We have a pool and it’s a shallow end pool.

“Is there wheelchair access? Is there some sort of device to lift him in and out of the chair?” I said, “No, I’m sorry there’s not.” We don’t have that.

As an onlooker, I observed one of the stretch and tone classes. The class was quite intense and the moves too advanced for the population to which it was marketed, such as the inactive, injured, or senior population. It appeared that Lindy was unaware of the discrepancy between the product being marketed and the execution of the product.

In answer to a question on using the facility as a member in a wheelchair, Desmond made a keen observation.

We are limited in what we can offer such a person. Actually, we do not deal with it. There would have to be an actual programme for it. There is such a thing as wheelchair tennis, but there would have to be a market for it to be economically feasible here at the club. One of our staff members referees for the wheelchair basketball association and wheelchair tennis is a growing sport. The facility is user friendly for such a programme. We could accommodate it, but there would have to be the numbers in order to programme something formally. The amount of energy to run such a programme compared to the economics and revenues that would be generated would have to be determined.

When further queried on social responsibility of accommodating people with physical disabilities as opposed to a singular focus on business profit, Desmond replied,

Social responsibility? I guess that would be on a “wish list” to be able to do that. Everyone would like to fulfill the “wish list,” but this is a business. We run charity events if we are “fat,” i.e., we can give back when we are successful financially. There are avenues for that.
At the front desk of The Cardinal Club, there was a plethora of information on all aspects of the fitness facility, including schedules and comment cards. The pamphlets were colour-coded to target interest. For instance, youth programming leaflets were on pink paper, wellness on orange paper, and fitness on blue paper. Despite the apparent wealth of advertising, members seemed surprisingly unaware of programme options other than physical activity at The Cardinal Club, unless they were reminded about the options. Marla, Gwynnyth, and Charlene mentioned children's programmes, tennis, and swimming lessons for all ages. When prompted about other types of programming, Gwynnyth commented, “The nutrition classes, I've never managed to fit one into my schedule yet. But I think they're great, that's a great idea to have stuff like that.” However, Marla was not really certain about the options. She indicated this fact when she said, “Oh, yes, that's right. The nutrition programmes they have, the seminars, but that's just something recent. They haven't done that all along, have they?”

At the front desk of Club Toronto, there was less information obviously available except for schedules and comment cards. Both facilities had newsletters for members containing events, schedules, and miscellaneous club information.

The same kind of vague awareness of wellness programming was apparent with the members at Club Toronto. Daphne and Donald mentioned lifestyle specialty seminars, nutrition talks, wellness movement options like Pilates, and social outings. Joanne suggested that “Once in a while, (Club Toronto) will do an intro to weights or a Pilates class.” However, Joanne also admitted that she was a member primarily to “burn energy, as down time.”
Staff-to-Member Exclusion

When asked about the presence of the fitness trainers/ floor monitors at Club Toronto, Joanne retorted,

They are invisible as far as I am concerned. I see the Department Head carrying towels. She walks right by you. She sees others doing something wrong, but seems to do nothing about it. That is the one downfall that they (the fitness staff) have. It should be part of their job. Any of the trainers should be helpful....I find that the manager is rather invisible as well.

However, Donald disagreed and claimed that fitness staff were visible and always willing to help. He contended that “a lot of people don’t want to be approached.”

Brigitta admitted that she wished Club Toronto could employ staff to supervise every room at all times.

I wish we could have somebody that just walked around our. Sometimes even in Gym Motivation, one of our fitness staff is on Gym Motivation through the club, they are supposed to be kind of walking around and talking to members and helping anybody out who needs it. Sometimes they might get stuck with a member for 15, 20 minutes and then their hour of gym supervision or motivation— they might not be doing technically the job that I wish they could do. So I know that ideally I would like to have a lot more. Unfortunately it is not always the financial side that lets us do that.

Shellye commented on the presence of management among the members: “If you talk to members, they know the names of all the receptionists. But they couldn’t tell you the names of all the sales people.... And some people will say, ‘Well, who’s that woman?’ Well, that’s ...the club manager. And they don’t know that.”

According to Brigitta, the President of the association of fitness facilities seemed to be more visible than the general/club manager or fitness staff at Club Toronto. She told me that the executive manager was actually a certified personal trainer, and also used the
services of the personal trainers at Club Toronto.

With respect to creating a obvious presence with the members, the owner/club manager of The Cardinal Club followed the same approach as the executive management at Club Toronto. The executive manager actually worked out in the weight rooms with the members and was one of the Spinning * instructors. According to Gwynnyth,

....I think because you see them (the executive management) in here, too. I mean they’re involved in here...they’re around, they’re very obvious, that, say they work out and get in there. So obviously they get a lot of feedback.

Initially when she talked about supervision in the weight room, Corinna said that “there was never anyone visible. No one to talk to you or to greet you or to help you out.” Later she changed the wording to read “often not.” Gwynnyth agreed, stating

...with one or two things about the weight room and the fitness area that have bothered me....But it bugs me that I see people using the machines incorrectly. And now we have fitness staff actually in the little office there or at least there is always staff around. I feel that it is part of their job to go to that person and say “you’re going to kill your back doing it like that.” Like they should be correcting people. They should be observing how people use the equipment and correcting them and making sure they are doing it properly because you can see injuries coming....I think they (staff) are ignoring them....But I really feel that it is part of the fitness staff’s job....to interact more with people, because the aerobics instructors do.

Often hesitation on the part of a new member in the weight training room resulted from unfamiliarity with weight room etiquette, programming, or usage of the equipment. For example, when Charlene was asked how she increased her comfort level in the weight room, she admitted that it helped to have more guidance by fitness staff and to be shown the right way to use the equipment. Her confidence level and self-esteem improved with an increased knowledge about correct technique, the weight training programme, and proper
usage of the equipment.

Now I have my programme, I know what I have to do when I go in there....Really, whatever is going on around me, I have no idea. I’m not paying attention to it. But you don’t realize until you get that far into it, that people are really, they might look at you, but they are not really paying any attention.

Gwynnyth heartily agreed and stated that instruction on proper usage of the equipment should be mandatory before new members were allowed to use the weight training rooms. In order to accomplish this result, supervision needed to be addressed at both Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club. However, my observations and members’ comments revealed that, for a great deal of the time, fitness staff were unavailable for questions, encouragement, or corrections. Fitness appointments were included and encouraged with the membership package at both facilities. Repeatedly, however, the fact of inadequate supervision in the weight training areas cropped up.

Desmond admitted to feeling intimidated in the weight room: “there is such a technical component to it. People do not know what is going on. I don’t know how much guidance is actually given in there. I think it is improving. To have someone in there all the time, it is a matter of economics. I don’t really think it is economically feasible to have it supervised all the time. Like Ahmed, he admitted that the need for supervision in the weight room surpassed the actual number of hours that the weight room is monitored.

Charlene countered with, “I have actually gone up to people when I see them doing something and say, ‘it’ll benefit you more if you do it this way’.” This is not the kind of situation that the fitness industry would want to promote: random advice from uncertified sources.
Lindy expanded on this idea of staff involvement by commenting on follow-up procedures with new members. "They were getting drowned in the 'cracks' before. It was terrible. And it is rather unfortunate... And there's where I think the staff needs to come in and that's where I think we have this huge gap."

Gwynnyth also talked about the value of interaction with new members.

... a lady just started recently on the treadmill, the last couple of times I've been in.... This was her very first time on the treadmill, so the girl (one of the fitness staff) just put her on at like 1.2 speed level, you know and she's just like -- step, step, step. And, of course, I'm marching along at 4.5 (miles per hour) and she looked across at me and said, "Oh, you must have been doing this for a while. "And I said, "Well, yeah, you know I have." But then I started to, like, encourage her because you can tell, she was an older lady and you could tell she was feeling a little bit intimidated by, like, you say, all these people around her goin' hell for leather!! You know, I like to kind of encourage people like that when you can tell that they are sort of intimidated a bit or whatever, or they feel you know that they are too old to do this.

It was puzzling that the staff person had not been as sensitive to this lady's plight as Gwynnyth. Perhaps feelings of exclusion and frustration were commonplace among new members, because of an insufficient length of time to bond with staff and members. The demonstrated indifference of the staff member could have been doubly devastating for the new member on the treadmill: a) because of the sex-role socialization pattern under which she was already operating which dictated to her that exercising in this manner was inappropriate behaviour for her age, and b) because of the dearth of visible role models in the facility with whom she might visually and physically connect.

At one point during my observation periods, one staff member was conducting a fitness assessment or appraisal on a client. I remembered being concerned about the
comfort level of the client because the curtains were open. However, a staff member later admitted that the "clear view" was policy to encourage members to make appointments for a fitness appraisal or programme. The tactic was a revenue-generating strategy, it seemed, at the expense of more reticent clients.

Front-Line Staff Exclusion

It's hard to get good service from a frustrated employee. An employee without job control will soon be frustrated. Listen to your staff, encourage and reinforce a two-way communicative process. Is it not ironic that the lowest paid employee (front desk) has the greatest customer contact and those employees who receive the greatest customer input have the least control over the policies and procedures they are asked to enforce? A genuinely concerned staff member speaks for 25 members. You can eliminate major crises by listening to your employees. You don't tell your mechanic how to fix your car. Why not allow your exercise specialists and front desk some input on how to better service the customers? ...Treat your staff like you expect the staff to treat a customer.

(Gulbronson, 1992/93, p. 30)

Whenever staff in either facility were questioned about mission statements, the unanimous focus seemed to be on the "member, guest, and client." This concept was predictable for businesses in the service industry. However, a good mission statement should encompass both clients and employees in its intent, according to Nora, an instructor from a local community college who was working with the owners of The Cardinal Club on empowering employees.

Both Angelina and Brigitta agreed that the mission statements for the facilities were aimed primarily at providing excellence of service to the consumer, an excellence that would keep members happy enough to provide continuous referrals. Nevertheless, Angelina mentioned in passing, "The staff is my customer." However, of all staff
interviewed at either club, only Brigitta acknowledged that another dimension needed to be added to the mission statement: the mental welfare of the employee.

One thing that is not kind of written in the mission statement ... is also to keep our team members - I don't like to say employees or staff, because I think you know we do try to work as a team-- by trying to keep our team members happy ... that's going to help us achieve our whole mission statement by servicing our members with excellence. 'Cause if our team members are happy and enjoying what they are doing, that's going to help us achieve our whole mission statement by servicing our members with excellence. "Cause if our team members are happy and enjoying what they are doing, that's going to come out with the members as well."

Brigitta went on to say that, "if I wasn't enjoying myself, I wouldn't stick around here.... I come in early and teach or work out. If I didn't enjoy it, I wouldn't do that."

Although Lindy alluded to the importance of staff for the survival of the business-- "without staff there is no business," she still did not specifically associate the staff with the intent of the mission statement.

When asked how the mission statement included staff, Desmond admitted that the mission statement was not written with the staff in mind, nor did he think it necessary to include them in the essence of the mission statement. "From a staff standpoint, they have to accept the fact that we do serve people; we are the servers of people....I don't think our mission statement, per se, is for the staff. It is sort of an objective that the staff is to maintain and to uphold."

When asked about hiring new employees, Angelina had the following to say.

I set my criteria ahead of time. Like with Donna, I needed someone who was married and who would not be looking for a man or be influenced by Ahmed....Ahmed wants someone who is fit and looks the part. The criteria for the front desk is youth, energetic, athletic, male or female. Someone who looks the part and is a motivator.
In her response to a question on staff role in decision making, Talia contradicted herself. Earlier she had proclaimed that staff, and middle management in particular, were very much empowered and included in decision making for a specific area or department. Yet in this particular reply she admitted,

It was kind of -- “Here’s the renovations. This is what’s happening.” I got a phone call 3 months before renovations started, to say this is the space you are going to have, what equipment do you want to include in it? And what do you want to get rid of? That was it. Plans went ahead, the offices were designed. I wasn’t conferred on that, but I was asked to choose which office I wanted.... I really needed three fitness offices but I got thrown out the door. And then, when it came time to dictate where outlets would be put, then I got pulled in. Then I got pushed out and then I demanded to get pulled in because it was my office and the last time we did offices, they totally screwed up the outlets.... But, for the most part, when it comes to the final analysis, it is (the two male CEOs).... They don’t really like to have too many people coming in and making decisions because renovations cost a lot.... The “big guys” make the decisions and then we have to knuckle down the rest of the way, too.

Empowerment

Empowerment involves pushing problem solving and decision making to the lowest appropriate level. The process gives the employees a greater sense of ownership.

(Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 37)

“Ahmed and Cyrus (his brother) need to learn how to empower employees,” commented Angelina. “We are working with Nora (from a local community college) right now. The ‘boys’ have had their eyes opened on the issue of empowerment. The Department Heads are not empowered. They run to Ahmed and Cyrus with every little thing.” In addition, The Cardinal Club Manual (p 4) talked about empowerment in these terms:
We have given you the empowerment to do the extras that the customer would not expect. Going beyond your normal duty requirements to meet and satisfy the need of a member or guest. The little extras that will create a warm smile and pleasant thank you. Therefore, good customer service on all fronts is very critical.

However, the essence of the term service means to aid or assist, a meaning which greatly differs from the decision making properties of empowerment. The manual seemed to equate service with empowerment.

The idea behind the concept of the team unit is a more equitable distribution of power, the recognition that everyone in the organization has an important part to play in its daily operations. However, when Shellye was asked about the role of front-line staff in decision making and communication, her instantaneous response was “We have no role.... No, nothing. It’s (the communication) top down.”

Economic Exclusion

The Cardinal Club caters to the more affluent. You can just see that by the cars in the parking lot. So, you’re catering to that upper class of people. I hate to say it. They are the only ones who can afford this lifestyle....

(Marla, member, The Cardinal Club, interview, 1996)

Marla went on to say,

I know some friends of mine that actually were greenhouse employees of mine...and they come here. They work out regularly. Her husband had a heart attack. He was not even 40 years old. On the job. And the doctor strictly suggested a real lifestyle change here and they’re exercising and working out. They may not be able to afford the time or the money but they’re doing it.

Lindy seemed to concur with Marla.

Well, definitely, on the socioeconomic, you have to be well off....It is a sacrifice just like anything else. Like for me to go...to university. It was a sacrifice, you know....It’s just like anything else that’s for your well-being,
be it social, spiritual, emotional...But, at the same time, there is a definite line. Some people absolutely cannot afford it-- and I am talking specifically about our club. You can't afford it. Period.

Initiation fees of $175.00 to $375.00 were common for individual memberships at The Cardinal Club and the multiple facilities in the Club Toronto organization (brochure information, 1996). Monthly facility fees ranged from approximately $50.00 to $100.00, excluding court fees or additional costs for specialty sessions. Joanne at Club Toronto commented about the fees:

I tried to talk my ex-husband into joining because there is a reduced fee for couples. Sixty dollars a month is the lowest fee as a single with an aerobics membership. I have been single for about 4 years. I have had no problems with it, but I would love to have someone to share the fees with.

In addition to aerobics classes and weight room options, there were other programmes available for adults at Club Toronto, like Spinning®, Pilates (a “fitness regime that was developed in the 1920s by Joseph Pilates, a German gymnast turned nurse. He developed the program initially to help rehabilitate hospital patients” [Moffatt, 1998, p. 33]), Yoga, Kick Boxing (“a form of self-defense that combines both effective boxing and kicking techniques” [Club Toronto’s fitness program guide, January, 1997]), Karate, Tai Chi, Latin Dancing, and personal training. However, the specialty programmes at Club Toronto were often instructor initiated and cost an average of $65.00 per 8-week session. There were fewer specialty programmes available at The Cardinal Club than at Club Toronto. Spinning® costs were comparable in each of Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club, and ranged from $5.00 per class at each facility to $90.00 for a 6-month package at The Cardinal Club. Marla at The Cardinal Club, like Jean at Club
Toronto, commented on the extra fees for the Spinning® classes. Personal training session costs at The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto ranged from $35.00 to $60.00 for an individual one-on-one session. Individual wellness sessions at both facilities, like massage or reflexology, cost $30.00 to $55.00 per 1-hour session. Presumably only those with extra disposable income might be able to afford these specialty classes in addition to membership fees.

In contrast to the income-generating programmes, there was a marked attempt by Club Toronto to be responsive to the limited financial resources of a growing student population. Their Youth/Young Adult category for membership was extended to 28 years of age. However, the change in policy was not well publicized.

Ahmed talked about the junior squash and tennis programmes for children and youths expanding and doing quite well at The Cardinal Club. However, fees for the junior tennis programme, for example, ranged from $160.00 to $350.00 for 19 to 24 hours of instruction. In addition, if the youngster were interested in competition, the annual tennis academy fees were as high as $1,600.00. There was an immediate question of the socioeconomic group for whom these opportunities were possible. Both Charlene and Gwynnyth talked about children’s programming. Charlene stated, “I don’t have kids but I think that is a great idea. I guess my only concern-- yeah like now, I just don’t think of the cost because I don’t have kids, but if I did, that would be one of my concerns.” Gwynnyth agreed.

Unlike adult memberships, there appeared to be very little programming included with a youth membership. At The Cardinal Club, teens could use the weight training
[The content of the page is not legible or discernible.]

rooms if they had a personalized programme done for $25.00 and wore a tag proclaiming this training. There were attempts at free programming for youths through a Saturday aerobics class and “sports” Sundays.

Other children’s programmes were not based on a child’s membership, but on a parent being a member of the fitness facility. Many programmes occurred on Saturdays and carried fees of $45.00 for 10 weeks. Other programmes like Kardio Kids and Sports Sundays were free when the parents were members. Swimming lessons for children were run by an independent agency using the facility. The fees were $75.00 for 7 weeks. At Club Toronto, there was a Junior Squash programme but I was unable to get any details on the fees.

Exclusion in Decision making

There is a lot of talk about the horizontal organization replacing the traditional pyramid, but even in those so-called horizontal organizations, there are three categories of employees— the “tops,” the “middles,” and the “bottoms.”

(Esty et al., 1995, p. 104)

When asked about the part that members play in the decision making for the facility, Joanne flatly stated that, “There is no input by members.” She went on to say that, “(her previous) club operated differently. They always seemed to ‘tap’ the members for their opinions on things.”

Both Brandon and Talia used exclusive language, perhaps without even realizing it. Talia said, “The big guys make the decisions and then we have to knuckle down the rest of the way” when talking about the renovations at Club Toronto. Brandon, too, referred to the executive decision makers as “the top guys.” Hence, despite the fact that Club Toronto
seemed to have an equitable system evidenced by a predominance of female middle managers and advocated a team approach, these comments indicated that the ultimate decision still rested in the hands of the male executive management.

Lindy had a unique way of looking at the decision makers in the organization. In her opinion, the family made the major decisions for The Cardinal Club. By the family, she meant Ahmed, Cyrus, and the father, although she stipulated that the father operated on a very different level of influence at that time. She did not state what that “realm” was. However, she called Angelina and another female manager, who was on contract to The Cardinal Club, the “decision planters.” “They will put-- they know how to say, what they need to say in order to put an idea that they want executed into action,” she claimed. What did she have to say about her own influence on the major decisions? She had none.

When asked about the input that members have on formulating policy and programming, Philippa and Wendy felt that they had limited influence on the schedule for aerobics classes but “not in anything else.”

At Club Toronto, Shellye had some strong opinions on the team management process and on the role of the staff in decision making for the organization.

We are asked to follow, not to create. Team captain involvement does not occur....When they (the executive management) created the strategic plan, the idea was that they would have committees? And each committee would be organized for a certain purpose. And those committees would have higher level management, middle level management and people like maintenance staff and receptionists and everyone involved. I don’t know anybody who is involved. And I have, I would say probably more, contact with all the like lower, like all the maintenance staff and all the receptionists. None of us were involved. And the people I know that were involved, were like club managers or assistant managers or sales people. No one who was at a lower level....They (the executive management) always say they do
(consult the front-line staff), they always say they do, but they don’t!

Inequity

When we ask groups of employees, “What does it take to get ahead in this organization?” we used to be surprised by the kinds of answers we got. We expected to hear about competence, commitment, technical skills, and people skills. And these were frequently mentioned. But, in addition, we almost always hear, “It depends on who you know, on being in the old-boy network.” (Esty et al., 1995, p. 110)

Favouritism

Angelina had this to say about employee promotions at The Cardinal Club.

People have gotten hired or promoted around here for personal reasons, not business reasons. I have set out to prove that I deserve the position I am seeking. I do not get ahead by “playing the game.” I refuse. If I found out that management was treating me unfairly, I would be out of here. They use me, but I also use them. When it no longer suits me or when I can learn no longer, I will be gone.

This statement echoed Shellye’s comments about promotion to management positions at Club Toronto.

But there is a lot of favouritism. And it’s more like if you’re, if a lot of people into reception and they think that it’s a foot in the door. Because it’s easy to get a job in reception and they think they’ll move on to sales.... There have been quite a few people who’ve done that....But you are basically kissing butt to get into that. So, if you get on the wrong, if your management doesn’t like you, then they’re not going to do anything for you. They play a favourite game. And there was one woman who came into the club last year. She was NOT more qualified than anyone else who was vying for a (director’s) position. In fact, there were people who were more qualified than she was and one of the managers who used to work at the club just LIKED her. She just hit it off with her and she thought she was great and she wanted to keep her at this club ‘cause there was some changes going and keep her and hire her as an assistant manager. And
everyone was completely floored by it because she had been at the club for, like, a month. She didn’t have any practical experience at all. She had a degree in Phys. Ed., but she had never worked in Phys. Ed., had never done any programmes, never did any personal training. Her only involvement was like with team sports at university. She had ABSOLUTELY NO EXPERIENCE. And there were other people who had been working for the club for years who had all kinds of qualifications, had the same degree, had been working at this club and other clubs for, like, 8 years and she got the job over him because of favouritism. And also, it’s interesting. It was a male.

Promotion Potential and the High Rate of Staff Turnover

Only by reintegrating doing and decision making, design and execution, can we restore context and autonomy to the labour that frames most people’s days, and thus motivate them to deliver the best, and most imaginative, effort.

(Helgeson, 1995, p. 50)

At Club Toronto, Talia talked about recruitment for management staff. Most of the time, she stated, the company tried to promote from within. She stated, “Very rarely do we go outside of our company. We’ve hired two managers that I know of from outside the company and they were just the biggest failures that I’ve ever seen....She (Brigitta) came from outside but she started in sales.”

When asked how employees get promoted to management, Desmond, at The Cardinal Club stated that he knew of no “structured plan for advancement,” but that there were a number of staff who had “started at entrance level and gone to department head.” However, an historical search revealed that at least two of the current managers, out of a complement of seven, were external hires. The criteria for managerial promotion, according to Desmond, required that applicants be “competent in what they did, have a desire to go higher, have the personality to succeed, have the qualifications to move
Corinna admitted that there were "limited opportunities" for employees to get promoted in The Cardinal Club. Up until 1994, Corinna was the assistant club manager. In 1996, Corinna had been with the company for 16 years, when she was rather suddenly replaced by Gregor as Front Desk Manager. Gregor had been with the company for 2 years as the Front Desk Manager at the Inn before his title was expanded to include responsibilities at both the hotel and the fitness facility. At the time of the interview, Corinna’s staff picture was still on the employee wall as Front Desk Manager. She pulled a wry face when I imparted this fact to her.

When asked her current official title, Corinna said,

At the moment my title is unclear. I am a supervisor of sorts. Actually my job has always remained the same although the title keeps changing....I really thought that I would be let go. In fact, I thought I was gone at one point during the summer. But I am still here. I do not have the title any more, but, in a way, that is better. I no longer have the responsibilities, either. I forget when someone comes to complain....Gregor was given both the Inn and the Club front desk manager’s duties. I don’t think it was well thought out, because it (the new arrangement) is not working. He was the wrong person for the job. I don’t know what is going to happen right now. I am still doing the same things.

Angelina speculated on the sudden shifts in personnel at The Cardinal Club, by saying, “Decisions are made without enough thought. Like Gregor, he was put in too quickly and this move has turned out to be disastrous.”

Gwynyth commented, “I have been around here so long. Maybe some of the staff have, too, but not many. The staff does change over frequently.” Donald made a similar comment about Club Toronto, when he responded to a question on decision making and
the setting of policy. He was talking about a members’ board, its disbandment, and the participating staff members left from that board. Talia was the only staff member from that original members’ board still working at Club Toronto. Donald commented on “major turnover, ones that go to other clubs.” He added that about half the staff that “disappeared” were front-line staff and one manager in particular who was promoted to Vice President, then returned to Club Toronto to resume her former position as area manager.

At Club Toronto, Donald’s statement pointed to a lack of foresight in strategic planning with respect to staffing. Brandon provided insight into the history of this promotion/demotion. He talked about a restructuring of the Toronto organization in 1994. At the time, two of the female club managers were promoted and each given the title of Vice President. By the time of the interviews in 1996, however, these titles and positions had disappeared. One of the Vice Presidents returned to Club Toronto as General Manager. In turn, the Brigitta, the Club Manager was demoted to Assistant Manager.

At The Cardinal Club, Corinna was asked about her long-term plans with the company. She had been with the facility for over 15 years and talked about the consideration of holidays and benefits in the idea of leaving the job. She admitted to being uncertain about her future career moves.

I could go. I am not attached to anything here. Not my house, my family is all over the place anyway. (My husband) is not sure what is going to happen with his job. If he wanted to go, I would not hesitate to leave here.

When asked about her professional plans with The Cardinal Club, Lindy asked me
to turn off the recorder because she was still working at the facility and had not revealed her intentions to anyone. Shortly after the interview, however, she accepted a job with another agency. Therefore, reasoning that the factors for maintaining confidentiality no longer existed, I have included here what she told me that was relevant to this topic.

Lindy revealed that the job at The Cardinal Club was a “dead end.” She explained that “only certain personality types would ever get into management at The Cardinal Club and she did not feel she had these qualities (see also Favouritism above).

Earlier, Angelina concurred with this assessment about having the necessary “attributes” to be considered as management material.

Lindy talked about her plans for the future.

I want to continue to serving [sic] people. I want to, I have to, be in an area or direction where I am focusing on relationships. I’d like to get into a management type position where I’m doing, helping, coordinate group incentives. I’d like to actually work for a big corporation, maybe doing some PR or doing some creative stuff. Like I’d like to balance creative and relational.

When talking about her job description, Angelina had this to say.

It is important to keep up staff morale. I am a big believer in equity. Sometimes this company is blinded to these issues. That is why I would never give up the social director’s job....Management makes employees feel as if they should serve, not be served. Things are better than they used to be.

As Donald stated for Club Toronto, the turnover rate of employees at The Cardinal Club was also very high. Front desk staff were a constantly changing mosaic. Between 1994 and 1996, there had been five different Fitness Directors. Historical information through the interview responses indicated that there had been several
“constructive dismissals,” as described by the Labour Board, or demotions in the years leading up to 1996: namely, two fitness directors, the front desk supervisor, the head of the sales department, and the head of marketing. Charlene commented that she thought that the fitness director who was on staff preceding the interviews in 1996, was “on holidays.” Actually she no longer worked for the company. Details surrounding these dismissals were not public knowledge.

Chapter Review

The data in this chapter were derived from interviews, researcher observations, and facility documentation. A great deal of the information was presented as direct quotes from the interviewees and was supported by personal observation and documentation. Gathering complete personnel or membership documentation proved to be impossible given the time frames for the study and the problems of access.

Recurrent themes revolving around issues of diversity emerged from the analysis of the data. Underrepresentation of diverse ethnic backgrounds was a visibly obvious element missing from the memberships of both facilities. The majority of patrons and front-line employees dealing with the public were classified as fit-looking. The membership seemed to belong to an homogeneous socioeconomic grouping: middle- to upper-middle class with a degree of disposable income. While the memberships demonstrated a variety of ages, the composition of the front-line staff and middle management did not reflect this age range. Staff representation from entry level to executive management showed differences in gender composition as the influence of decision making increased. At both sites there was a predominance of female front-line
staff, with the exception of the maintenance departments. At The Cardinal Club and at Club Toronto, there was a mixed to dominant representation of females at the middle management level and male executives at the major decision making level.

Although there were policies in place to facilitate diverse perspectives and representation from both staff and members, there were discrepancies in the way these policies were executed. According to middle management, fitness staff were on duty and available to members for consultation, guidance, and encouragement. However, random observations, coupled with staff and member comments, indicated that the presence of fitness department staff was lacking in the weight training areas. There were also questions raised about the target market of company advertising and initiatives, the success of social activities, and hiring and promotional policies. The infrastructure of the organization was organized to operate in teams. The premise of a team concept was to promote input from all levels of the organization. Instead, investigation revealed that both facilities actually operated in an hierarchical fashion, with the major decision making in the hands of executive management. While management staff commented that members were the prime focus of fitness trends and renovations, there appeared to be no formal vehicle for members to provide input into policy and programming. Widespread involvement in policy making is an indication that diversity appreciation is alive in an organization.

Besides the obvious visible underrepresentation of certain minority groups, there were also subtle signs of exclusivity and exclusion. Evidence of exclusivity occurred in the cliques of the members, in the behaviours and attitudes of members and staff, the atmosphere of the facilities themselves, the public impression of fitness facilities in general,
and marketing strategies. More tangible evidence of exclusion occurred in the physical layouts of the fitness facilities, the programme offerings, and the membership fee structure.

Finally, there appeared to be inequities in hiring practices and promotional policies, and a high rate of staff turnover within the organizational infrastructure.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Differences can divide people, but the diversity created by differences can also enrich life. . . . The response either professionally or personally to difference can be to deny the extent and essential nature of differences, to celebrate differences, and/or to challenge the centrality and organizing premises of sex or race or whatever the sources of difference are (Rhode, 1990). . . . As leisure scholars we are repeatedly discovering that some groups of people have been overlooked or misunderstood because of gender, race, class, education, physical ability, age and other characteristics. (Fox, 1992, cited in Henderson, 1994b, pp. 132, 134)

This exploratory research of two fitness facilities investigated the extent to which two chosen sites were handling diversity with respect to ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, sex-role socialization, and mental and physical disabilities. Since there was no previous research in fitness on this topic, much of the support for the study came from the fields of leisure, recreation, and sport. Additional information was obtained from management texts and from contemporary publications on fitness. The study analysed the data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation to gain insight into the policies and practices of the chosen fitness facilities. A variety of staff and members expressed their opinions on diversity appreciation within the facilities by responding to a structured set of questions. Personal observation data and documentation collected at the sites were used to corroborate or reject the findings from the interviews.

Discussion of the Findings

When viewing two fitness facilities through the lens of diversity, many issues come to light. Some are obvious, like the layout of the physical settings; some are more subtle, like the behaviours of regular members towards new members. Some are noticeable, like the homogeneous ethnicity of both members and staff; some are less conspicuous, like the
fact that although the front-line staff are all female, the executive is all male. Some are observable, like the exclusive, posh look of the facilities; some are intangible, like the lip service paid to the team philosophy within the organizational infrastructure.

**Ethnocentricity in the Fitness Centres**

From observations at both sites, the majority of the staff and members were White. Since I chose not to intrude on individual privacy by asking directly the ethnicity of the participants, I relied on personal observation to provide that information. Although personal inspection did not reveal the exact race or culture of the individual, I used skin colour and native dress as an indicator of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the composition of staff and members at the two sites. The idea was a general, overall sense of the ethnic composition of the fitness centres. At both the sites, representation from minority groups was not apparent. The assumption might be that the fitness industry itself is ethnocentrically White. This speculation would be supported by research demonstrating that minorities were frequently excluded from (Fox, 1992; Henderson, 1994b; Sport and Fitness, 1989) or provided limited opportunities in leisure, recreation, and physical activity (Carr & Williams, 1993; Floyd et al., 1994). The observations at the two sites in this study corroborated that ethnocentric supposition.

However, there is another aspect to this assumption. What if minorities did not "buy into" the idea of Western-style fitness, no matter how much the industry was trying to stress an holistic approach that incorporated other philosophies on physical, spiritual, and mental wellness? What if, as was pointed out in the Sport and Fitness study (1989), minorities eliminated themselves from traditional fitness options in favour of activities
pertaining to their respective cultural groups? This perspective might have some bearing on the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities at the two fitness sites.

Socioeconomic Issues: One for all or all for Some?

Both Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club strive to follow the philosophy of IHRSA (International Health, Racquet, & Sportsclub Association). When discussing programming and staffing, Talia, the fitness director at Club Toronto stated that “We live by the IHRSA standards. There is no question about it. They are pretty well the binding authority in policies and procedures, hiring, and so on.” In an advertising brochure for The Cardinal Club, there is included a Code of Conduct which states,

As a member of IHRSA, we at (The Cardinal Club) consider it our mission to enhance the quality of life through physical fitness and sports.... In order to fulfill our mission, we pledge that we open our membership to persons of all races, creeds, and places of national origin; ... that we design our facilities and programs with members' safety in mind; ... that we provide public service programs to expand the awareness of the benefits of regular exercise and sports; ... that we deliver what we promise.

(advertising brochure, 1996)

Fitness Facility Fees

Initial impressions of each of the facilities are that the clientele base is at least middle class or upper middle class. Brigitta repeatedly referred to the post-renovated facility at Club Toronto as upscale. The literal translation of upscale is "up the ladder." If we understand the "ladder" to be social class, then the intent of the decor of the fitness facility is to appeal to the upper economic classes. Similarly, at The Cardinal Club, the interior is all brass, glass, and rich carpeting, meticulously cleaned and polished. On a first visit, a consumer might conclude that being a fitness facility member requires a substantial
outlay of money. At The Cardinal Club, an interviewee suggested that the expensive cars in the parking lot were indicative of the socioeconomic status of the health club members.

Was it the intention of the organizations to give this impression of exclusiveness? Glossy documentation from The Cardinal Club certainly displays a lifestyle beyond the financial means of the average citizen. Lindy hinted at a duality of purpose within the family owners, who were torn between wishing to maintain their white-collar membership and throwing open the membership to others including blue-collar workers. At Club Toronto, Talia alluded to the fact that the initiation fees were intentionally set to attract a certain clientele. Generally, club fees were affordable only with a certain level of income, or by a dual-income family, certainly not by the average family struggling with the necessities of life.

Is a higher income level a more desirable client base to have? Keeny (1993) stated that "For years, many businesses ignored minority groups believing that they were low-income groups" (p. 32). Was this the mentality of the executive management of these facilities? If visual impression tells the tale, then there is the feeling of socioeconomic class exclusivity projected by both fitness facilities.

It seems socially unfair that well-equipped health clubs are available only to select socioeconomic classes. However, with executive management support in the implementation, there is a potential compromise to this situation. Membership packages from a basic "no frills" membership to a deluxe membership which includes laundry service, permanent locker, and private change facilities, could be created to accommodate a wider range of income groups within the same facility (Renner, 1997). In theory, this
seems to be a solution. However, I foresee a potential segregation of socioeconomic classes because of this differentiation in membership packages. Yet, according to the Sporting Club of California officials, it is possible for the “economic factor to disappear after leaving the locker room” (Popke, 1994, p. 52). A graduated fee structure might then be a method for widening the range of socioeconomic classes for whom membership in a fitness facility is a possibility.

Non-Membership-Related Fees

In keeping with their IHRSA philosophies and according to their activity schedules, both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto are offering programmes beyond the traditional physical fitness classes. Such interesting physical activity options as Pilates, Yoga, Aikido, Tai Chi, Latin Dancing, and self-defense for women appear on the activity schedules. However, all these programmes are on a fee-for-use basis. The Club Toronto adventure programmes such as Mountain Biking in Chile or Weekend Ski Trip to Vermont are aimed at a more affluent member (Lee, 1997), but Club Toronto also offers more affordable programmes like Outdoor Rock Climbing in Beaver Valley on weekends and a single-day mountain biking outing. Members on a moderate income might be able to take part in group activities as a result of group discounts, which might not be possible for them as individuals.

I recognize that the fitness facilities in this study are for-profit businesses. They must charge for some programmes in order to remain financially sound. However, the benefits to the fitness facilities of incorporating graduated fees for membership packages would have a domino effect. The lower fees would attract a broader socioeconomic base,
which, in turn would increase the membership base, which, in turn, would increase revenue for the facility. The positive social offshoot to this graduated fee structure would be a more diverse membership base, at least with respect to socioeconomic status.

**Physical Accessibility and Social Conscience**

Besides the exclusive impression given off by the decor of the fitness facilities, there are exclusive issues with the physical layouts, as well. Anyone incapable of climbing a flight of steps is instantly excluded from directly entering either of the clubs.

**The Situation**

At each facility, there is an elevator, but the lifting device provides a general service for the buildings and is not part of the fitness facility. For example, at The Cardinal Club, a fitness member in a wheelchair must pass through the hotel lobby and a locked door (which has no special opening device) to arrive at the lower level of the health club. In order to move from the “cardio” room in the fitness facility to the circuit training room directly above it, the member in a wheelchair must return back through the locked door to the hotel, take the elevator to the upper floor and travel through the restaurant to get back to the fitness area. This is only one of the physical hurdles for the member with a disability.

At Club Toronto, usage of the elevators by a member in a wheelchair requires advance planning with staff to escort the member from the building lobby into the fitness centre. The centre spans three floors in the office building in which it is housed. Each of the levels is accessible internally only by long flights of stairs. Even at the squash gallery level and the locker room level, there are small sets of stairs. According to employees and
members at Club Toronto, the locker rooms are not accessible by elevator.

Charlene, a member from The Cardinal Club, alluded to a lack of floor space in the weight training rooms when she mentioned falling backwards over a bench. Presumably, what is “tight” for an ambulatory member is even more impassible for a person in a wheelchair. The floor plan in the newly renovated workout room at Club Toronto allows ample space to manoeuvre a wheelchair. However, older sections of Club Toronto would be as “user-unfriendly” to the person with a disability as The Cardinal Club workout areas.

There is little or no representation of people with disabilities either in the membership or among staff at the fitness facilities in this study. It also appears that the facilities are “user-unfriendly.” Is accessibility at the fitness facilities in the study an issue because there are few people with disabilities and therefore no reason to make changes? Or are there few people with disabilities represented at the facilities because the facilities are user-unfriendly? Angelina originally encouraged Tom, the member in a wheelchair, to join The Cardinal Club, yet she also realistically confided to me that there were limitations on the accommodations that could be made to an existing structure. Would it have been fairer to Tom for her to apprise him of the entire situation before encouraging him to take out a membership?

The exclusive language of some of the interviewees regarding people in wheelchairs (Blanche and Wendy, interview, 1996) may be indicative of a general lack of public awareness about the obstacles encountered by a person with mental or physical disabilities. If the sites excluded people in a wheelchair, then the sites were also user-unfriendly to people with arthritis, lower limb prostheses, Cerebral Palsy, chronic
mobility problems, or other physical disabilities that might hinder them from climbing stairs or manoeuvring in tight places.

One of the most difficult challenges facing fitness professionals is helping members maintain their enthusiasm for being physically active. In each of these sites, the new member with physical disabilities or with physical limitations is doubly excluded: by physical differences and by the exceptional conditions they face in order to be part of the health club culture.

Marla, one of the interviewees (1996), Pepper Von (Keeny, 1993) and Dr. James Rimmer (1997) all spoke of the value of integrating members with and without physical disabilities in the same spaces and in the same programmes. Marla talks about the feelings of independence and a growth in self-esteem of her brother-in-law, who has physical and mental disabilities, when he is able to do things for himself and to be part of everyday society. She stated that “I think a lot of them are capable of more than what they are allowed.” Von (Keeny, 1993) researched thoroughly at hospitals, trauma centres and physiotherapy clinics in order to effect a smooth integration of people with physical disabilities and limitations into the “mainstream” (p. 51) of programming at his facility. Dr. Rimmer (1997) believes that individuals with disabilities benefit from interacting with people in a nonmedical setting (p. 35).

What can be Done?

What is the feasibility of implementing more user-friendly facilities? Each of the health clubs was opened in the late 1970s. Over the last decade and a half, changes were made to the interior designs to adapt to trends in the fitness industry.
At The Cardinal Club, the current fitness facility layout borrowed from originally spacious hallways and racquetball courts to create a series of workout and aerobics class areas. The parking lot is at ground level. It appears viable to create a ground level entrance for members who have physical difficulty with stairs. Still, the collection of strength training areas at The Cardinal Club exists on two different levels, connected only by a narrow staircase. Installing another elevator, if possible in the existing structure, would be a major expense. Ahmed, however, plans to add a third floor to the fitness centre and create one large workout area. This renovation would provide an excellent opportunity to include an elevator and adequate floor space into the new construction plans.

While The Cardinal Club has the potential to expand both upwards and outwards, Club Toronto is limited by available interior office space. The facility could acquire additional space on the fourth floor, but the problem of accessibility still exists. How much adaptation to persons with physical disabilities is feasible depends on the focus of executive management, the target markets, and the financial return on investment. Accommodating members with physical disabilities might be considered more a response to social conscience than a move motivated by financial gain. However, such action can also be profitable (Keeny, 1993).

The Culture of the Organization

In most organizations, valuing and managing diversity requires nothing less than cultural transformation. This is a prodigious task, for it requires people -- especially those of the dominant culture -- to let go of their assumptions about the universal rightness of their own values and customary ways of doing things and to become receptive to other
cultures.... Defined as a "shared design for living," culture is based on the values and practices of a society...(and ) carries over to the ways people perceive themselves and the world. (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 24)

The Membership

There are subtle and obvious imbalances in the elements of diversity at both Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club. The membership composition of each facility shows a relatively even gender distribution among the more than 3,000 members.

A paradigm shift in the focus of group exercise classes. On closer inspection at each of the fitness facilities, pockets of gender discrepancies come to light. While female acculturation into the world of strength training is on the rise, the weight training room is traditionally considered a male domain. In contrast, the aerobics classes continue to be dominated by female participants.

In recent years, there have been deliberate shifts in the types of group exercise class offered on the fitness facility schedules to accommodate a wider public. Traditional "dance" class choices have been competing for participants with other, more diverse group exercise options. Boxing-based programmes, indoor cycling, martial-arts-based aerobics, seniors-specific classes, strength workouts, flexibility training, Pilates, yoga, lifestyle/wellness, and stability ball classes are all on the rise while hip-hop influences and traditional high impact aerobics are on the wane (Davis, in Ryan, 1999, p. 54).

I propose that there are two reasons for these programme offerings. First, it is common to hear that there is a need to attract more men to aerobics classes. Second, the new classes are revenue-generating initiatives, unlike traditional aerobics classes which are
included with a general membership. I will deal first with the issue of attracting men to aerobics classes.

As the analysis shows, very few men attend aerobics classes and very few males teach traditional aerobics classes. The new group class formats, like Spinning®, modified boxing, or sport moves appeal to a greater male membership population because they appease male sex-role socialization notions by being more socially acceptable forms of exercise for men than “dancing.” From my observations at the two sites in the study, 1.6% of the attendance at traditional aerobics classes was male compared to nearly 40% male attendance in the Spinning® classes. In the same manner, the number of male Spinning® instructors climbs to 50% of the staff list at The Cardinal Club. If my theory about attracting a greater male population is correct, the shift in focus is working.

Who is driving this trend toward attracting more males to the classes? Is this paradigm shift an executive strategy to be more accommodating toward a diverse participant base or is it simply a calculated tactic to attract more revenue for the fitness facilities?

Paradigm shift in the atmosphere of the weight training rooms? Returning to the idea that pockets of gender discrepancy occur in fitness facilities, a broader question arises. If concessions are being made to increase male participation in aerobics classes, what corresponding steps are being taken to create a weight room atmosphere that is inviting and accommodating not only to females, but also to people with physical disabilities, the beginning exerciser, the older participant, people of various ethnic backgrounds, or people carrying more than a healthy distribution of body fat?
According to the interviewees and the literature, the weight room retains the stigma of being too technically complicated, too full of narcissistic exercisers “checking themselves out in the mirrors” (Moffatt, 1996, p. 13), too intimidating for all but the most fit-looking, youthful participants. The media and fitness industry advertising perpetuates the image that fitness is equated with youth and slimness (McCarthy, 1996), a conception that is false. To counteract this public image, fitness professionals must diligently educate the public to the contrary. Since both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto endeavour to follow IHRSA standards on diversity, they need to initiate steps to convince people that a diverse population is welcome not only in the weight training rooms, but also in the facilities in general. Underrepresentation of certain marginal populations does not promote an image of diversity appreciation.

The effects of socialization. Socialized male and female behaviour occurred in the fitness facilities. Fitness professionals frequently hear females expressing the belief that strength training is not feminine, that it produces “bulging muscles.” As a result, the aerobic classes become an acceptable form of exercise by default, because they are considered a form of “dancing.” Men, on the other hand, are socialized into thinking that strength training is “macho,” that aerobics classes are for females and not a serious mode of exercise. Hypertrophy (the enlargement of muscles) is preferable to cardiovascular training. This socialization is manifested in the poor representation of females in the strength training areas and the underrepresentation of males in the traditional aerobics classes. Lindy commented that, during tours, she was often asked if the free weight room was a men’s only area (interview, 1996), because predominantly male bodies were visible
in that particular area. The gender imbalance in use of the different areas in the fitness centres might result in self-exclusion because of visual underrepresentation.

The media perpetuates an image of the perfect body, generally slim and unattainable by the majority of the population. The public impression of health clubs is highlighted in Ahmed's comment that people feel that they need to get into shape before joining a fitness centre to get into shape (also Brooks, 1995; McCarthy, 1994,1996; Rippe, 1996). A sad parody on the obsession of females with their bodies appears in a Special K television commercial where men comment on their physiques in a typically female manner. Since men customarily do not have the same kinds of body image problems as women, the content of the monologues seems humourously uncharacteristic for the speakers. However, the commercial is a sardonic reminder of how disparagingly many women speak of themselves.

Socialization can result in self-exclusion for a number of different segments of society. In this study, there are few visual support systems for people who are obese or aging or "not attractive" by Lindy's definition; there are few options for people who are physically or mentally disabled, or who lack the skills (even if this is perceived) to participate in activities at the fitness centres; there are few role models for people who believe that participating in activities at a fitness centre is inappropriate behaviour for their gender or age; there is underrepresentation of people from different racial backgrounds, who speak a language other than English or who wear clothing other than traditional Western garb. There is little evidence to indicate that marginal populations are welcome at the fitness centres, although the code of conduct based on IHRSA standards claims to
accept all races, creeds, and nationalities.

**Issues of families and youths.** At The Cardinal Club, Ahmed states that two of his current target markets are youth and families. While there is some programming for youth, each of the programmes has a price tag attached to it. According to Desmond, the junior squash and tennis commissions account for 70% of the income of some of the staff in the tennis department. Lessons and court fees are not generally included in facility memberships.

In lieu of traditional competitive programme offerings like tennis and squash, the Glover and Shepherd (1989) handbook suggests cooperative ways to inculcate a fitness ethic in young people. The authors state that “the goal is simple: to make kids feel special while learning to have fun playing a game and exercising” (p. 315). For many years, schools have acknowledged a paradigm shift away from a traditional sports-only agenda, by including leisure activities in their curriculum. Yet the emphasis at both Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club seem to be competitive type activities. Imagination and commitment are the only limits to designing successful activity options for young people that are not based on either sports or competitive options.

There is an alarming rise of obesity in children. It is likely that these youths will become the future’s obese adults, with all the ensuing health risks associated with a body carrying excess fat and physical inactivity (Alexander, 1996; Belfry, 1996). The time to instill good lifestyle habits and physical activity levels is early in life. However, other than Kardio Kids and Sports Sundays offerings which are non-competitive kinds of events and “free” to members, there are no other youth-specific programmes included with a junior
membership at The Cardinal Club. At Club Toronto, the only programme for children is the Junior Squash programme. Would extra fees exclude certain socioecononmic groups from enrolling their youngsters in fee-for-participation programmes? Are children with disabilities a consideration in the programming planning for youth? Are different cultural groups represented among the children? Are obese children considered into the programme options at The Cardinal Club or Club Toronto?

Currently, for many busy families, the opportunity to spend quality time together is precious and rare (Focus on Family Fitness, 1999). The fitness industry has an opportunity to alleviate this situation and benefit financially by creating programmes that allow families to participate either together, or at least simultaneously, in the same facility. Some facilities have responded to the need for family activities by offering creative theme-based events and family personal training. To accommodate simultaneous family activities, a fitness facility in the United Kingdom offers a club within a club for children 12 years of age and older who are allowed to use the adult workout areas at non-peak times (Focus on Family Fitness, 1999). In my observations and from brochure documentation at Club Toronto, the programming is aimed at adult participation.

“Upcoming events” in the fall newsletter for The Cardinal Club lists registrations for the Academy of Tennis, the Junior Provincial Tennis Tournament, the junior squash programme, babysitting courses, Professional Development day activities, and the Children’s Christmas Party. In this document, there are no apparent activities for either family participation or for concurrent family involvement in activities at the facility. Like the suggestion for youth programming, the possibilities for creating family events requires
imagination and a belief in the value of family time. Still, Andy Jackson, international director for FitClub in the United Kingdom, warns about controlling the number of junior memberships and the family access times in order to keep the fitness facility financially sound (cited in Focus on Family Fitness, 1999).

First, however, programmers need to recognize that the notion of a traditional, nuclear Canadian family is outdated (Vanier Institute, 1996) and that suitable programming needs to be flexible. Many families contain two employed-for-pay parents (Esty et al., 1995; Vanier Institute, 1996) or may be single-parent families headed by women on a limited income (Turco, 1996). The programme offerings need to consider time availability of the family unit and an affordable fee structure.

Perhaps for Club Toronto, the children and youth market is not part of their marketing strategy, since they offer children’s programming only in squash. Their “youth” membership category was expanded in 1996 to age 28 years, to accommodate students who are remaining in school longer. This action might indicate that the primary market focus is adults.

Ahmed’s strategy for The Cardinal Club in 1996 is to have a more aggressive marketing campaign for youth, families, and seniors. In the winter of 1996, there is a programme called Parents and Tots that includes games and activities both on land and in the water. These activities take place on weekday mornings, potentially excluding families where both parents work. This programme, in addition to gymnastics and children’s self-defense, is aimed at children up to 12 years of age. Generally, there is a fee for participation in these activities. “Teens Step Up” is geared for youths aged 10 to 14 years.
In the youth calendar of programmes for the following year (fall and winter 1996/1997), some of the previous activities (Water Tots, Parents & Tots Combo, Teens Step Up! and Children’s Self Defense) are no longer offered, perhaps indicating that the programmes were not well attended. Although there is a full-time youth coordinator on staff at The Cardinal Club in 1996, it seems that youth programming is not successfully capturing the young market and that family activities have yet to be incorporated into the activity schedule.

The influence of the aging market. Baby boomers are discriminating and demanding consumers. They are more concerned about overall health and wellness, about quality of life, than about a limited interpretation of physical fitness. They are a group who are becoming “empty-nesters,” who have the time and the disposable income to indulge in leisure time activities (Teague & MacNeil, 1992). I believe that the new fitness trends of Pilates, Power Yoga, Tai Chi, Latin Dancing, and Adventure Programs (sic) offered at Club Toronto, and the Wellness Services and the Wellness Seminar Series available at The Cardinal Club are being driven by the expectations of the “baby boomers.” For years, this age cohort has been involved in traditional aerobics classes and weight training programmes. Now they are seeking more from health clubs and will shop around until they find congruency (Brooks, 1995) with a fitness facility. The Fitness Group in Vancouver, for instance is responding to this widening range of interests by offering such nontraditional fitness programming as wine tasting, candle making, and how to “green” your household (Winning, 1999, p. 17). These kinds of unconventional programming options do not appear on the schedules at The Cardinal Club or Club Toronto. However,
The Cardinal Club has an entire section on Wellness in its Fall/Winter 1996/97 Members' Guide, offering nutrition counselling by an on-site dietician, healthy eating programmes, and wellness seminars for a modest fee as well as Wellness Services such as reflexology, Reiki, and Ear Candling. Both Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club have in-house registered massage therapists. It seems that The Cardinal Club has more extensive programming in Wellness than does Club Toronto and appears to be responding to a need in their membership.

Pandering to the young, healthy, and fit individual, as the industry has historically been inclined to do, is shortsighted and is most likely a contributing factor to the demise of numerous fitness business ventures to date (Brooks, 1994). Yet both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto project this stereotypical youthful image through underrepresentation of a diverse population in their memberships and their front-line sales and reception staff.

The age of an average member at Club Toronto is 25-35 years, according to the interviewees, and the median age of the front-line staff at both facilities is mid- to late-20s. What kind of message does this relay to the potential client? Much of the consumer public already ascribes to the stereotypical perception that the average fitness facility member is young and in shape (Rippe, 1996). With each of the facilities, is there also a visual translation to this youthful image that "to be young is to be truly alive" (Teague & MacNeil, 1992, p. 58)?

Role models of an active, healthy aging person are relatively nonexistent, in both the fitness facilities and the media, whose advertising seldom promotes the message of a vibrant older person. Apparently there are older women in the daytime tennis league at
The Cardinal Club, according to Gwynyth. She comments that, at 51 years of age, she is younger by about a decade than other players in her league. Shellye and Brigitta at Club Toronto applaud a 74-year-old woman who attends four aerobics classes per week and an older male runner for whom the running track at Club Toronto is named. Still, at neither of the participating sites are there many positive, aging role models, rendering an impression that exercising at a health club is age-inappropriate behaviour.

I contend that a great deal of a defeatist attitude about remaining active as we age is the reaction to a socialization process that conditions people to “act their age.” Sentences ending with “pretty good for your/my age” demonstrate a preconceived mentality about aging. Why qualify the statement? According to Dr. Peter Wood, a Stanford University researcher, if we change “our notion of age from calendar-based to fitness-based,... a fit 70-year-old who can run a mile in seven (sic) minutes would be considered ‘younger’ than an overweight 30-year-old who cannot run a mile in 10 minutes” (Hildreth, 1993, p. 27). Yet there are persistent stereotypical images of older people as being confused and frail (Hildreth, 1993). Underrepresentation of older members at both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto would tend to support this public perception.

Teague and MacNeil (1992) tell us that the over-55 market is “large, affluent, diverse, and generally untapped and underrecognized” (p. 369). In addition, this age cohort is predicted to increase as much as 74% by the year 2023 (Hildreth, 1993). Strategic business plans for the fitness centres may want to investigate this age group, programming options, and the amount of money set aside for targeting this market. If the
underrepresentation of the 55-and-over population in this study is an indication of fitness industry focus, the industry is missing an opportunity for both membership and financial growth by neglecting this age group in their marketing strategies. Dezzutti of the America Leisure Corporation suggests that this segment is going to be the market to target in the next 15 to 20 years (Cohen, 1995). Besides having the wealth, the motivation, and the time to be involved in fitness, this age group is very loyal if there is congruence between the individual’s idea of service and need fulfilment, and the services offered by a fitness facility (Cohen, 1995). It appears that both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto are currently ignoring this age group in their marketing and programming plans.

Naming programme options is an important consideration when attempting to appeal to a mature market. The aging consumer can be sensitive about age-labelled programmes or about euphemisms such as “golden years” (Hildreth, 1993). Ahmed notes that people seldom view themselves as aging, nor do they want to be reminded of the aging process (Cohen, 1995). Therefore, one programme can be designed and marketed to appeal to a diverse group such as people recovering from an injury, operating with a physical disability, seeking to continue the quality of their lives, engaging in exercise for the first time since school years, or undertaking a lifestyle change by adding activity. As a result, the programme name can target the needs of the participants rather than their ages.

**Weight room behaviours.** The findings show that interaction, acceptance, accommodation, and inclusion are often missing from staff and member behaviours in the fitness facility culture. Members at the fitness centres discourage social contact with other members by tuning out on headsets connected to personal listening devices or by tuning
into visual entertainment on television monitors suspended from fitness centre walls or ceilings. Staff interaction with members is minimal in The Cardinal Club weight rooms of both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto. Ahmed, Brigitta, Angelina, and Gwynnyth specifically commented on the fact that staff invisibility in the weight training rooms is a problem.

Staff at The Cardinal Club place new members in potentially embarrassing situations when they conduct fitness appraisals in an office with open window blinds. Fitness appraisals typically include body measurements and “fat pinching” as part of the consultation. The office is in full view of members working out on “cardio” equipment. This staff policy is an invasion of the privacy of the new member. When I asked the fitness director about the practice, I was told that the policy existed to encourage other members to make fitness assessment appointments. The purported intention of the one-on-one consultations is to provide members with quantifiable fitness goals. However, the appraisals are also revenue-generating strategies for the fitness facilities.

Health Club surveys (Moffatt, 1997) and presentations at the Canadian Fitness Professionals’ conference in Toronto (Sandy Coffman, seminar leader, August, 1999) support the idea that one of the prime reasons why members leave a health club is that they do not feel part of the fitness facility culture. How can relationships be developed if members ignore each other? How can bewildered new members feel part of a culture which treats them as an imposition in the weight training rooms, as Gwynnyth and Philippa suggest? How will new members feel welcome and gain trust in staff if their first experience in the fitness facility demonstrates a disregard for their basic rights to privacy?
The phenomenon of cliques within the membership is repeatedly mentioned by both staff and members in this study. Inherent in discussions of dress codes, cliques, and weight room conduct is an "either/or" proposition. Either the member is part of the "in" crowd or is excluded. According to Carron and Chelladurai (1981), "the factors that most saliently separate the group from the random gathering of individuals is the degree of attraction, commitment, and involvement of the individual members, related to the collective totality" (cited in LeUnes & Nation, 1996, p. 214). Members of cliques are comfortable with one another, and comfortable in their understanding of what is expected of them as part of the group. They use language peppered with phrases exclusive to the group. While grouping people with common interests and common workout times could be a relationship-building strategy, the connotation of the term clique, a word commonly used in the interviews, is one of exclusion rather than affiliation. Staff need to create positive experiences for new members joining the fitness facilities. A system which "buddies up" new members with existing members might be a solution to making the new member feel part of the fitness facility culture.

Human services, social connectedness, and the fitness consumer. Supervision, service and a genuine caring attitude towards new members is a way to counteract the feelings of intimidation and isolation that interviewees and writers mention when discussing the weight training rooms (Prouty, 1998; Rippe, 1996, for example). Ahmed, who is a very confident club owner, talks about his own discomfort during a visit to the exclusive Reebok Club in New York. He suggests that feelings of intimidation in any strange setting might be a universal experience. Feelings of isolation are amplified when a
situation is faced on one’s own.

Sometimes the discomfort is caused as much by ignorance of weight room procedures and by a lack of companionship in the weight room as by an initial need to fully understand the programmes. Charlene’s self-assurance in the weight training rooms increased when she gained a certain amount of confidence in knowing what to do and how to do it. Much of her composure in the weight room and her positivism about her resistance training programme was gained in consultation with two fitness facility members who befriended her. In order to encourage new members to take full advantage of their memberships, there needs to be a mentor system and provisions for adequate staff supervision.

The findings show that staff supervision in the weight training rooms is inadequate to nonexistent. Brigitta talks about full-time supervision as possible only in “an ideal world.” Both Desmond, Brigitta, and Ahmed commented on the economic difficulties of continuous staff supervision in the weight room during operating hours. All the staff interviewed at both sites remarked on staff invisibility in the weight room and the need for increased supervision.

A way to offset the cost of full-time supervision by staff is to make use of member volunteers. By creating members’ boards at the facilities, members and staff conjointly could effect a smooth integration of new members into the fitness facility culture. During initial sessions with their mentors, new members would (a) become familiar with weight room etiquette and exerciser’s rights, (b) learn the correct use of the equipment, and (c) meet other new and regular participants in their chosen time slots. The comfort level and
confidence level of the individual new member will increase with solicitous attention. Charlene is a prime example of the power of knowledge. After becoming skilled with her programme and informed about training techniques, Charlene lost her feeling of intimidation and her sense of being critically analysed in the weight training room.

New members will more readily acclimatize to the fitness facility culture with immediate nurturing. Renner (1997) talks about “buyer’s remorse” (p. 29) when referring to people who decide shortly after joining a fitness facility that there is an incongruence between their personal image, their fitness goals, and their fitness centre expectations. With solicitous attention after joining, new members will have a better chance at making life transformations with respect to wellness and quality of life, than they would if they were left to “fend for themselves” in the fitness facility.

In large facilities, such as those in this study, the service that is most often rendered a new client is technical. It is usually policy at fitness facilities for new members to undergo a fitness appraisal before any physical activity is undertaken, and to have an exercise programme designed for them before using the weight training rooms. Often this information is overwhelming for many new members and completely foreign to them. Yet, after a 1-hour programme explanation, they are subsequently left on their own by staff with a “let-me-know-if-you-have-a-problem” attitude. The need for social connection is overlooked and, in many instances, the new member’s withdrawal from the fitness facility goes unnoticed. Fitness professionals label this missing member phenomenon as “falling through the cracks” (Renner, 1997).

McCarthy (1994) suggests that the fitness industry needs to rethink how much
social support is actually needed to allow the new member to feel confident and welcome in a fitness facility. The primary reasons that people cite for joining fitness facilities involves their physical health (Appearance, 1997, p. 30). Yet, Wildman, president of Toronto’s Fitness Institute, claims that people really join a health club for the social connections that they make (in McCarthy, 1993). If health benefits be the central reason for joining a fitness facility, why do 22% of the members who leave a facility claim that they did not make the social connections necessary to encourage them to remain, or that they never even used the facility (Moffatt, 1996)? Volunteer member mentors would be a creative compromise between concern for the integration of the new member, and concern for the “bottom line” of the organization because of staffing expenses.

The Staff

If the human services offered by a fitness facility “require that employees are well educated, highly trained in their speciality, and able to process information flow and make optimal decisions” (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 48), then staff need to have functional power over decision making. Chelladurai (1992) goes on to state that organizations may give lip service to the concept of empowerment, when the decision making actually rests in the hands of those with positional power.

A question of power and empowerment. Angelina alludes to a discrepancy between policy and practice when she claims that the family owners believe that employees at The Cardinal Club are empowered, when, in reality, they are not. Shellye strongly states that staff at Club Toronto are asked “to follow, not create.” Overlooking worker empowerment can result in costly attrition and turnover rates for the employee and client
(Chelladurai, 1992; Gangemi & Waters, 1996). Both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto have high turnover rates according to Philippa, Shellye, Donald, and available historical records.

If executive management retains all the information necessary to make key decisions, the organization effectively perpetuates the division of labour between management and front-line staff, between the decision makers and the doers (Helgeson, 1995). To effect a shift of power and inculcate a sensitivity about diversity within the organization, executive management must be committed to the vision of changing the way a company views diversity (for example, Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Morrison in Galagan, 1993). The executive management at Club Toronto and The Cardinal Club need to review hiring practices, promotional policies, issues of empowerment, and marketing strategies before any change in cultural thinking with respect to diversity at the fitness facilities can take place.

Is the fitness facility “applicant-friendly”? The owner/club manager of The Cardinal Club claimed that no older applicants sought employment at, nor submitted resumes to the fitness facility. Was the organization “applicant-friendly” (Flynn, 1995; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993, p. 316)? Pessin (1997) suggests that individuals who enter the fitness field as a later-in-life career choice are likely to remain in the industry and should be considered real treasures (p. 33). Since turnover is costly and prevalent in the fitness facilities, hiring older employees would be a fiscal benefit. Instead, the findings show that the fitness facilities in this study are neither hiring nor attracting older candidates.
If marginal populations were more visible and more equally represented throughout the organization, there would be two repercussions. A more diverse population would apply for jobs in the organization and, as a result, would more capably and skilfully market to a diverse membership (Flynn, 1995; McNerney, 1994).

**Hiring and promotional practices.** “Women and minorities continue to enter the workforce in huge numbers. If your company isn’t handling diversity, they’ll go to your competition” (Flynn, 1995, p. 74; Hampton, 1997). The study shows that turnover among front-line staff at the facilities is frequent. All front-line staff in this study are female. On the whole, they are young and single, or married in a dual income family. Generally the low paying entry level jobs at fitness facilities (Hampton, 1997) attract single young females living at home or in inexpensive accommodations, women in a dual income family, or women seeking part-time work to give them a break from family responsibilities. Typically, women are paid less than men for the same jobs (Danzig & Wells, 1993). It is my contention that hiring practices take advantage of the fact that females often have clearly defined ideas of the kinds of jobs and wages to which they aspire (Eisler, 1995) or have familial responsibilities that they juggle in order to work for pay outside the home. This is a significant fact that can have implications on career mobility (Esty et al., 1995) at the fitness facilities. In my opinion, front-line staff are expendable because they are plentiful. In both fitness facilities, the surroundings are beautiful and give the impression of being ideal places to work. It appeared that middle management were not concerned about staff turnover because the supply of applicants at the fitness facilities generally exceeds the demand. Nevertheless, the cost of training a new employee needs to be
considered as a budgetary expense.

Because of the “flatness” of the organizational infrastructures at the two participating fitness facilities, the chances for advancement are slim. It appears that there is an inversely proportional relationship between the number of female entry level staff, and the number of female executive level staff. At both The Cardinal Club and Club Toronto, the entry level staff are female and the executive staff are male. Helgeson (1995) commented on the fact that women in management positions are often either childless or have husbands working at home. At the fitness facilities, the staff interviewees were mostly single or childless, except for Angelina, who was an exceptionally ambitious woman raising a child on her own for several years.

Shellye and Angelina alluded to favouritism in hiring and promotional practices at each of the facilities. This allegation raises a question of bias, whether conscious or unconscious, on the part of management in their hiring and promotional practices. Shellye commented specifically on favouritism in the selection of a fitness director in 1995 at a facility associated with Club Toronto. She claimed that the successful candidate had less than 1 year’s employment with the organization, and lacked practical experience in programming, personal training, and administration at the middle management level. Shellye disclosed that one of the managers “just liked her and she thought she was great.” The unsuccessful contender for the directorship was a male with the same educational qualifications and 8 years of employment with the organization. In Shellye’s opinion, if staff do not curry the favour of management, they will not be considered for advancement.
Ann Morrison (1992) deals with the hurdles that ambitious employees, who are not male and Caucasian, face in potential career advancement. She suggests that a diverse panel of employees deciding on organizational promotions is a strategy for countering the omnipotent hiring-and-firing power wielded by a bureaucratic executive. At Club Toronto, Brandon puts this philosophy into practice. In his instructor auditions, he includes supervisors, aerobics instructors, fitness staff, and fitness facility members in the process of choosing an aerobics instructor. How many coordinators value the opinion of such a diverse group when hiring a new employee?

At Club Toronto, two club managers were each promoted to vice president and demoted to club manager in the same calendar year. The club managers were both female. Another female staff member at Club Toronto shared in the repercussion of this change in policy by being promoted and demoted at the same time as her club manager. Would executive management have treated male managers in the same manner as these female managers with respect to promotion and sudden demotion? Would male managers have remained with the company as did these female managers, if the male managers had been subjected to the same kind of mercurial change in positional power?

At The Cardinal Club, there were several incidences of seemingly inequitable practices. There was an unexpected demotion of the female front desk manager who learned of her demotion indirectly in a memo. In her place, according to Angelina, the company promoted a totally unsuitable male supervisor. In addition, in a 2-year period between 1994 and 1996, there were dismissals or unexplained departures at The Cardinal Club of a sales director, a marketing director, a computer planner, and three fitness
directors. Each of these incidences involved females. One female director was replaced by a young male university graduate with no administrative experience. As a condition of his acceptance of the new job, the male assistant negotiated for an immediate salary increase of 25% over his predecessor's wages.

The practices at each of these facilities beg the question: Is this kind of treatment more commonly experienced by women than by men in the fitness industry? It is the feeling of Danzig and Wells (1993) that the "old boys' network" and a "sexist cultural climate" (p. 40) continue to work against women trying to advance in their careers. Females in management are traditionally more accommodating than males (for example Eisler, 1995; Helgeson, 1995), an attribute which can be misunderstood as being weak or indecisive (Esty et al., 1995, p. 19). Studies have shown that well-educated women leave companies at twice the rate of their male counterparts (McNerney, 1994). The major reasons for this exodus are inflexibility of working hours and a sense that they can rise only so far in the organization. Coupled with alleged favouritism, these reasons could explain the departures or inconsistent treatment of so many female employees at the fitness facilities.

The principle of social similarity in social psychology states that people tend to choose candidates like themselves (Esty et al., 1995; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993). Is the practice of social similarity in hiring and promotion actually occurring at the fitness facilities? Is this the reason for the impression of favouritism? Does the homogeneity of front-line staff with respect to gender, age, race, and physical ability reflect personal inclination on the part of the employer? Helgeson (1990) contends that organizations
would be run more democratically and more inclusively if women were in charge (in Eisler, 1995). If women had input at the executive level, perhaps there would be a greater appreciation for diversity and different ways of dealing with issues of diversity within the organization.

An inclusive mission statement. How will a diverse base be created in an organization like a fitness facility, if a dominant male status quo persists at the executive level and a hierarchical management philosophy endures? According to management texts and articles on management, it is unlikely that diversity in organizations will be implemented without the complete buy-in of executive management (see, for example, Eisler, 1995; Morrison, 1993). If males in positions of power, such as at the fitness facilities, choose to disregard the benefits of input from all levels of the organization, and from the membership, then organizational diversity will neither be valued nor managed.

The best way to encourage diversity appreciation and boost organizational morale is to have an inclusive mission statement that applies both to member and to staff. Invariably when staff interviewees quote the mission statements of the fitness facilities, the reference is to providing excellence in service to members, and to exceeding consumer expectations. Even when prompted to elaborate, staff interviewees did not factor employees into the quintessential meaning of the mission statements. Only Brigitta mentioned that satisfied staff have a direct effect on the superiority of service captured in the mission statements. Employees who have the greatest interaction with members have the least control over policies and procedures that they are expected to discharge (Gulbronson, 1992/93). A well-informed staff member actually speaks for 25 fitness
facility members (Gulbronson, 1992/93). This kind of support cannot be bought. Helgeson (1995) comments on this very attitude when she states that "no organization today can hope to thrive with this demoralizing vision of the options available to the majority of its people -- a vision that wastes talent and resources, breeds frustration and cynicism, and fosters an atmosphere of us-against-them" (p. 13). If there is no buy-in by staff, no empowering of staff by executive management, no true fostering of a team spirit, no treatment of staff as if they, too, were a "somebody," then staff have no incentive to take pride in and take ownership of their organizational actions. Their role becomes solely one of continued employment.

Why would an employer be so shortsighted as to deprive the organization of potential strength? An equitable, democratic philosophy and diversity appreciation are a "win-win" situation for both the employee and the company. The fitness facilities in this study have expressed the desire to remain competitive in the fitness marketplace, to be on the "cutting edge" of industry trends. By implementing diversity in the cultures of both the memberships and the staff, these fitness facilities will be fulfilling that aspiration.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because of the complexity of researching with numerous variables, future studies on diversity in fitness might take their lead from recreation, leisure, and sport. Researching one or two of the variables of diversity, would provide richer and more in-depth data than is possible by including all the variables in one study. Another way of simplifying the research would be to study either participants or staff, but not both
simultaneously. In future, other researchers, not as immersed in the industry as I am, might prefer to choose a more detached phenomenological approach to study the same topic.

Interesting follow-up research could be conducted on the fitness facilities in this study to create a more longitudinal perspective on the data from the sites. What changes have occurred in the last 3 years? Have some of the recommendations in this study already been implemented? Have the marketing focus or programming options been altered? Have the demographics of the memberships changed? Which employees have remained or left? What has happened at management level? What facility renovations have taken place?

Since the city of Toronto has ethnic communities the size of small towns or cities (Taylor, 1996), research conducted in different geographic locations in Toronto might render a clearer picture of how the Canadian fitness industry is handling diversity in a single urban centre. The study might look quantitatively at ethnicity among the membership compositions of city health clubs for instance, and compare these numbers to the demographics of the areas surrounding the health clubs. The same study might add socioeconomic status and education to the study to broaden the data base. To further increase the scope of the research, fitness facilities in a comparably-sized city in the United States would provide a cross-country comparison to the Toronto study.

A study might also be launched to investigate fitness facilities across Canada: a) to examine how a variety of sites are handling diversity and b) to evaluate whether there is variation from province to province in managing diversity.
As a preliminary to future research on the fitness industry, there could be a study conducted to determine how many fitness centres are in Canada, where they tend to be located, their membership base, and their membership and staff compositions.

For an in-depth study, longitudinal research could be undertaken with a small sample of fitness facility members. The study participants could be chosen for their diversity, that is, an older member, a young member, a member from a different race and different cultural background, or a member with a disability. They could be shadowed, keep journals, and be interviewed to get an insightful perspective on being a fitness facility member. The same kind of critical or action research could be conducted on a small sample of staff to gain insight into the infrastructure of the organization from the "inside."

An analysis of staff and management policies at fitness facilities and selected non-fitness-related businesses might indicate how the fitness industry compares to other businesses in hiring and promotional practices. The study might investigate career opportunities from the aspect of sex-role socialization, gender influences, and the potential "glass ceiling" effect. Hiring and firing practices could be analysed for potentially inequitable procedures.

An interesting study might be made comparing for-profit and nonprofit fitness organizations. The hypothesis might be that nonprofit organizations will be more diverse in both membership and staffing than commercial, for-profit businesses.

This study has suggested that fitness facilities engage in marketing and advertising strategies catering to the young. The study has also noted that the public perception of health clubs is that they cater to a young population. How pervasive these prejudices and
preconceptions are might be the topic of future research.

Since fitness is a relatively untapped field for research, there is a wealth of opportunities to investigate policies and practices in the fitness industry.

Recommendations for Educational Practices

In the early 1980s, the fitness industry recognized a need for standardization to control unsafe practices. No credentials were required to lead aerobics classes and no formal education was required to design exercise and strength programmes for consumers (Government of Canada, 1989). According to the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (CAHPER, 1986), educational opportunities for becoming a fitness leader in the 1980s were inconsistent in the depth of knowledge expected and the amount of time spent on learning (Government of Canada, 1989). The National Fitness Leader Advisory Council (NFLAC) was assembled to create national standards. However, utilizing the standards for fitness leader course content and examinations remains voluntary. As a result, the onus for hiring standards falls back upon the individual fitness centres. They may choose to follow NFLAC standards or ignore them.

Since NFLAC is already an assembled body of professionals, I would recommend that NFLAC take a more proactive stance in the standardization process. It could take responsibility for reviewing and approving training courses that follow specific guidelines that it already sets out for fitness leaders. NFLAC would need to redesign the performance standards to be more specific than they currently are, outlining course
content, method of instruction, qualifications and training of course conductors, hours of study, practicum requirements, and resulting certification options. Organizations who provide, or wish to provide, instructor training courses would apply to be become a nationally recognized training organization. In the application form, the training associations would outline their courses of study and the qualifications of their course conductors. If the training organization meets the course and instruction criteria set out by NFLAC, the advisory council would designate the training organization an accredited fitness training centre. In turn, when fitness facilities hire staff who are certified by these sanctioned training organizations, they would also receive an official facility document labelling them as accredited fitness facilities. This certificate would be posted in a prominent place, letting fitness facility members and guests know that the fitness facility hires only nationally recognized, certified fitness professionals. Annual fees collected from “NFLAC-sanctioned” training organizations and fitness facilities would be used to offset the operational costs of NFLAC. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) operates in a fashion similar to what I recommend here for NFLAC, except that the focus of CSEP is exercise physiology and fitness appraisals (You Asked for it, 1998). In time, accredited fitness centres would become recognized by the public for having qualified fitness staff. Well-informed consumers are already asking about staff qualifications in telephone inquiries and facility tours.

More than ever before, fitness professionals need to have a working knowledge about exercise science and an ability to utilize resources for setting goals and designing client-centred programmes for facility members. Aerobics classes no longer consist solely
of choreographed “dance” moves. Many of the classes include strength training components as a regular part of the class format. With a captive audience of participants, fitness leaders need to know safe and effective techniques for both class choreography and exercise design. Continuing education is expected. However, in Ontario there are training courses leading to certification as a group exercise leader that are as short as 22 hours in length. There is minimal training and no teaching qualifications required for the course conductors. Anatomy, muscle physiology, biomechanics, and adult learning principles are taught at the same time as group exercise leadership skills, class design, and choreography. What depth of knowledge in these areas can be acquired in such a short time span? How much adult learning can occur in 22 consecutive hours of instruction?

Personal training certification courses are being offered in the same time format. This accreditation process is ludicrous compared to standards in Alberta which require a fitness leader to complete 2 years of postsecondary education in order to qualify as a certified personal trainer (conversation with Alberta NFLAC representative, Ottawa, 1999). Personal trainers are responsible for the ongoing exercise habits of clients in a one-on-one situation. They are viewed as experts in the field of fitness. How much knowledge can be gained in 22 hours of theory instruction, and some practical training under a mentor with unknown, perhaps professionally unrecognized qualifications?

The same kinds of concerns are now being expressed with regard to the short period of training that results in certification for the new group exercise cycling classes (Speak Out, 1997). An electronic search was made about certification procedures to become a group cycling instructor. The search revealed that courses between 6 and 8
hours long "qualify" a student to teach indoor group cycling classes (Sprint Canada: Keiser, 1999). There were no prerequisites listed on the application form for the programme. As an adjunct to the learning of an already seasoned aerobics instructor, the hours of training might be adequate. Presumably, according to the Keiser website, an individual, who is inexperienced in the fitness field, is able to lead group exercise classes after only 6-8 hours of training. This fact is disturbing to fitness professionals who are concerned about the standards of the fitness industry.

The demand for more education in the fitness industry has already begun. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) recently changed the standards for the baseline appraisers' course, the Certified Fitness Consultant (CFC), and recommended that candidates "have recognized training in principles of exercise physiology, human anatomy and physiology, health promotion, fitness and wellness, and human behaviour and communication normally delivered in university or community college programs" (Wheeler, 1998, p. 6). In the United States, there has been a tendency to look for fitness centre staff with Master's degrees in exercise science. However, graduates complain that, although they lend credibility to the facility where they work, they receive the same wages as someone who is hired just because they are attractive in workout clothes (Pessin, 1997).

I am not necessarily advocating that an undergraduate degree is essential for becoming a certified personal trainer. However, I am suggesting that an entrance exam would standardize the knowledge base of candidates who apply to take a certified personal trainer's course. I would like to see Ontario follow Alberta's lead by requiring 2 years of
postsecondary training in the fitness field. Candidates should graduate with scholarship in three areas. First, they need in-depth technical knowledge of anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, programme design, and research strategies. Second, students must study the human side of personal training with courses in psychology, lifestyle transformation, goal setting, client counselling, and interpersonal skills. Finally, they should receive information about the business side of personal training: marketing, legal liability, entrepreneurial time management, and basic accounting. Armed with this kind of learning, the certified personal trainer will be worthy of client confidence.

Several interlibrary searches revealed that Canadian universities do not subscribe to publications like Canadian Fitness, Fitness Management, Club Direct, and CBI (Club Business International). These sources of information are the lifeblood of the Canadian fitness industry. Is the fact that these serials are omitted from the library shelves indicative that the curricula of institutions of higher learning are still primarily concerned with the theoretical (Sariscsany, 1994) and physiological aspects of physical activity?

Postsecondary education needs to address issues of managing in the fitness industry. Furthermore, institutions of higher learning need to equip their graduates with the practical tools necessary to counter unfair practices in the fitness industry, and to incorporate diversity at all levels of employment and programming.

The educational field is recognizing the need for movement specialists by changing the designation of undergraduate degrees in physical education into degrees in kinesiology. Both McMaster University and University of Western Ontario have made the name and focus change from Physical Education to Kinesiology. With partnerships occurring
between the health care and fitness fields, there will be growing demand for exercise specialists to enhance the health and quality of life of an aging population in particular, and the public in general. In addition, the fitness industry is big business (Burns, 1997; Chelladurai, 1987; Glassner, 1989) and will need administrators that understand management specific to a fitness setting. University of Calgary recognizes this need and has a joint undergraduate degree in Kinesiology and Commerce. However, an electronic search revealed that the university programmes and course offerings continue to be primarily technical and science-oriented (Sprint Canada: Kinesiology, 1999). The practical application of information learned in postsecondary educational institutions is questionable (Pessin, 1997). Drucker (1992) discusses both the theoretical and practical aspects of management struggling with business trends and changes and also concludes that higher education is playing an inadequate role in the “post-business,” advanced societies of the Western world (p. 5). If graduates are going to be working in a service industry, they require practical as well as theoretical courses. Students need courses that deal as much with people and society as with science and laboratories (Ryan, 1997).

The issue of diversity appreciation is larger than the focus of this study. Valuing diversity is a societal issue. Changing people’s perspective on diversity requires a change in culture. A transformation of culture can only be effected by a change in thinking and attitude. To bring about this transformation requires education.

In this study, I use fiscal efficacy as an incentive for implementing diversity in the fitness industry. This approach seemed necessary to me because of the for-profit nature of the business. However, besides being a business concerned with profit, the fitness industry
is also part of a democratic society and, as such, has a responsibility to question the attitude of that society towards minority groups. Fitness industry members, particularly at the management level, need to be equipped to facilitate a cultural transformation. That cultural transformation would embrace a more inclusive perspective than presently seems to be the case, one that values diversity in its marketing approach, target markets, programming, staff training, policies and procedures. To effect this change, graduates entering the fitness industry must be schooled in subjects other than the basics of exercise science. Education at the University and College levels need to address the issues of diversity from both a business and a societal viewpoint in their course offerings. The following are examples for course topics: Fitness and Social Responsibility; Diversity Appreciation in Canadian Society; the Influences of Gender and Sexual Orientation on Fitness Opportunities; the Effect of the “Baby Boom” Generation on Canadian Businesses involved in Fitness, Leisure, and Recreation; A Moral Dilemma: Social or Fiscal Response to the Canadian Consumer?; Inclusive Hiring Practices; Marketing Strategies for Diverse Consumer Groups; Cultural Sensitivity Training; Transforming into a Multicultural Organization. In my opinion, there are numerous approaches that can be taken with a fitness and business focus and diversity. A minimum number of courses relating to this topic should be mandatory. This information would provide the graduates entering the fitness industry with the tools to make positive changes toward a more diverse culture at the staff and consumer levels.
Final Comments

The fitness facilities in this study seem to be managing changing fitness trends and dynamic consumer interests by offering diversity in commodities. However, the issues of diversity in the human element of the organization appear to have been neglected. Is this a reflection of how the fitness industry in general is handling diversity?

By introducing nontraditional kinds of activities and services into its programming options, the fitness industry is attempting to broaden its scope from a physical fitness emphasis to a more holistic wellness focus. Programming in health clubs has expanded to include wellness offerings and services alongside new hybrid indoor sporting workouts and traditional fitness activities. The intent of the expanded focus is to reach a broader market. Yet, the fitness facilities in this study appear to be appealing to a homogeneous consumer base with respect to age, socioeconomic group, ethnicity, and physical ability. Is this how the fitness industry in general is approaching the public? Based on the comments in numerous fitness publications about public impressions of fitness facilities catering to the young, fit, and shapely, I suspect that diversity in marketing and advertising is lacking, and that the demographics of the regular users of fitness facilities reflect a lack of diversity among active members.

Of course, fitness facilities are entitled to decide on the most financially advantageous markets to sustain profitability for their businesses. Business strategies typically choose a niche in the market and earmark advertising dollars for that niche. Except that the philosophies of both facilities in this study are based on the International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association standards and purport to welcome all races,
creeds, and nationalities. Either the promise should be modified or the diversity issue should be addressed. IHRSA is a well-recognized, well-respected representative of the fitness industry in North America. How many other facilities are purporting to uphold the philosophy of IHRSA while actually ignoring the essence of diversity?

The front-line staff in this study are neither multicultural nor diverse in age, gender, and physical appearance. Although the research findings show that middle management is more diverse with respect to ethnicity, and gender, and are slightly older on average than front-line staff, executive management is male. In the fitness industry in general, how prevalent is this organizational infrastructure? How many fitness facilities hire staff who belong to a different culture or race; who speak a different language; who are larger than the public image of a perfect body; who have physical disabilities; who are in the 50-plus age bracket? How equitable is the execution of hiring and promotional policies? If gender- and ethnic-dominant references to executive management from sport, recreation and leisure, and from the business world in general are any indication, the fitness industry may also need to examine and deal with diversity issues.

Why should the fitness industry manage diversity? The pragmatic answer is organizational profitability. However, it is difficult to make a clear cause-and-effect link between managing diversity in an organization and seeing fiscal benefits (Taylor, 1995). The highly competitive fitness market is so dynamic that valuable resources may be drawn away from vital diversity issues in order to stay “on the cutting edge” of fitness trends.

The societal answer to managing diversity involves social equity. Encouraging diversity in the fitness industry creates a climate which is supportive both for staff and
members to maximize their potential, irrespective of race, nationality, age, gender, body image, or physical ability.

However, implementing diversity is not easy. There are many obstacles blocking its smooth inception. It is human nature to resist change and to be generally ethnocentric (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993). Without a buy-in from all levels, including the consumer, diversity will never be effected in the fitness industry. Without educational direction from institutions producing the future managers, societal changes toward a more diverse culture will never be realized in the fitness industry.

However, like the ripples created by dropping a single stone into still water, encouraging diversity starts at the centre. If educational institutions create an awareness of diversity in their course offerings, then individuals graduating from these courses will be equipped to begin transforming the cultures of fitness organizations. If individual health clubs in the fitness industry undertake a cultural transformation internally, then public perception will be affected. If public perception changes, then the congruency of fitness facilities will align more with consumer expectations. The end result will be a more diverse environment at both the staff and membership levels than is currently the situation. However, this paradigm shift will take patience and time.

Appreciating diversity requires operating “outside the box.” Managing diversity takes wholehearted support and sustained effort from both an educated executive management and a trained staff. Potential consumers can better identify with a diverse staff than a homogeneous staff; a diverse staff can better manage and empathize with a diverse membership base. Diversity weaves an acceptance of who you are into the fabric
of the fitness industry. Diversity provides a synergistic richness not possible in a homogeneous setting. Managing diversity is not easy, but infinitely rewarding.
References


null


Brock, Windsor, University of Western Ontario, Queen’s, York, University of Calgary,

Sprint Canada search: Keiser, power pacing, Schwinn, Spinning ®. (Oct, 1999).


Press/ Oxford University Press.


Bibliography


Appendix A

Initial and subsequent correspondence with the contact persons
August 12, 1996

xxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxx
xxxxxxx, ON
xxxxxxx

Dear xxxxxx,

I am currently completing my Masters’ degree in Education and would like to involve xxxxxx in my research. The thesis is a comparative study of how two fitness facilities are coping with diversity. The choice for my second site is the xxxxxxx in Toronto.

I would like permission to conduct interviews with you and your staff, and to spend some time observing behaviour and activity in various areas of the club. Personal interviews should provide me with a depth of information not possible through questionnaires alone. However, if you prefer, I can collect data by written surveys. Throughout the study, I will try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

xxxxxxx stands to benefit from this project in at least two ways. It is my experience that xxxxxx prides itself with being on the cutting edge of industry trends. This study would point out those trends and xxxxxx’s response to them. Secondly, xxxxxx will also see how it compares on all levels with one of the xxxxxx, foremost leaders in the Canadian fitness industry.

I will contact you on ____________________________ about your answer to my request. I look forward to a positive reply and working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Dawnelle Hawes
Fitness Consultant

cc: xx

Dr. Maureen Connolly
August 12, 1996

XXXXXXXXX
xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxx, ON
xxxxxxxxxx

Dear xxxx,

I am currently completing my Masters’ degree in Education (in the Health Studies area) and would like to involve xxxx in my research. The thesis is a comparative study of two fitness facilities and their methods for coping with the present business issue of diversity. The choice for my second site is the xxxx in Toronto.

I would like permission to conduct interviews with you, some of your staff in different departments, and a random sample of participants. I will enclose a sample of the types of questions I might ask. I hope this clarifies my purpose here. I will make formal appointments with the staff members during their non-busy times.

Ideally, I would like to spend some time observing behaviour and activity in various areas of the club. I first need to find out the busiest times at the front desk, weight room or lobby, for example, in order to maximize the time I spend observing. I will then take an unobtrusive position like the couch or office in the cardio room and observe for two or three hours. I will repeat this scenario as many times as is necessary to collect sufficient data. I may perform a trial run in the early part of the data collection.

Personal interviews should provide me with a depth of information not possible through questionnaires alone. However, if you prefer, I can collect data by written surveys. Throughout the study, I will try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

xxxxx stands to benefit from this project in at least two ways. It is my experience that xxxx prides itself with being on the cutting edge of industry trends. This study would point out these trends and xxxx’s response to them. Secondly, xxxx will also see how it compares on all levels with one of the xxxx of Canada, foremost leaders in the Canadian fitness industry.

I would like to begin some preliminary observations on Wednesday, September 25, if this meets with your approval. Thank you so much for your cooperation and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Dawnelle Hawes
Grad student, Brock University

cc:  xxxx
xxxxx
Dr. Maureen Connolly
Sample Interview Questions

How long have you been working in the fitness industry?
   a) Where were you employed before coming to ____________ (name of club)?
   b) What duties did your job include?
What circumstances brought you to work for ____________ (name of club)?
   a) How has your educational background helped you in your current profession?
What is the mission statement of ____________ (name of club)?
   a) In what ways does your department carry out this mission?

All other staff are busy. You have been asked to take me on a tour of the club as a prospective new member. What features of ____________ (name of club) would you highlight?

******************************

Sample observational concepts

How does the staff greet the customers: entering/leaving the club?
How is equipment shared in the weight room?
What verbal interactions occur i) between staff and members, ii) between members?
******************************
August 12, 1996

xxxxxxx, Fitness Director
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Toronto, ON
xxxxxxxxxxx

Dear xxxxxxxx,

I am currently completing my Masters’ degree in Education (under the Health studies umbrella) and would like to involve the xxxxxxxx in my research. The thesis is a comparative study of two fitness facilities and their methods of coping with the current business issue of diversity. The choice for my second site is xxxxxxxx in xxxxxxx.

I would like permission to conduct interviews with you, the staff in different departments in the facility and a random sample of participants. Ideally, I would like to spend some time observing behaviour and activity in various areas of the club. Although, personal interviews should provide me with a depth of information not possible through questionnaires alone, I can collect data by written surveys, if you prefer. Throughout the study, I will try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The xxxxxxxx stands to benefit from this project. It is my impression that the xxxxxxxx prides itself with being on the cutting edge of industry trends. This study would point out those trends and the xxxxxxxx’s response to them. In addition, the xxxxxxxx would also see how it compares on all levels to another club in the Canadian fitness industry.

As requested in our conversation of September 16, 1996, I will contact you during the second week of October to set up a convenient time to conduct my observations and my interviews. With your permission, I will attend some aerobics classes before that time, to “get a feel” for the club. Thank you for your cooperation and your participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Dawnelle Hawes
Grad student, Brock University
October 28, 1996

xxxxxxx, Fitness Director
xxxxxxxxxxxx
Toronto, ON
xxxxxxx

Dear xxxxxxx,

As you requested in our conversation today, I am sending to you a little more detail about the project. Your supervisor will, then, have more information to make a decision on participating in this study. I apologize for not being more specific, but I had the impression that Maureen Connolly, because of her connection with you, had already cleared the way for me at the xxxxxx.

My thesis has a two-fold purpose regarding the issue of diversity. Perhaps you would be clearer about the study if I quote to you from my proposal. "The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain the ways in which two commercial health clubs are handling the current trends of more diverse staffing and programming. In the context of this study, diversity refers to characteristics of age, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, socioeconomic class, marital status, and educational background", and quality of life and wellness issues.

My focus will be club policy on a) hiring, promoting and supporting staff, and b) creating, promoting and implementing a variety of programme offerings. I have chosen orientational, qualitative inquiry as my approach to this research. To cross-validate my data and my analyses, I am combining observations, interviews and support documentation like pamphlets, advertising, and club records. All activity will proceed only with your approval and full awareness. I am looking to collect information on, not to judge, the policies of the two chosen sites. The results will not be generalized to embrace other fitness clubs: the two clubs are merely unique case studies of how two similar-sized fitness facilities handle diversity. Maureen Connolly proposed using your club because she feels that it is a good representation of diversified staffing. I will be analyzing the data both intra-club as well as inter-club.

Enclosed are the questions that I intend to ask at your facility and the questions that I have already put to the participants and staff of xxxxx. I have thoroughly enjoyed my interview time at xxxxx. This fact surprised me because I was almost paralysed trying to get started. Because of this reticence, I chose a standardized interview strategy, that is, I composed the questions in advance so that the time spent with each interviewee would be as productive and focussed as possible. I generally tape-record the interview in order to assure accuracy, but, on request, I have conducted the interview without the recorder. I guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of all information. I would like to speak to a cross-section of employees, from front-line staff to management, and a cross-section of participants. I will need approval and help with collecting
historical data and membership information.

xxxxx views the xxxxx, as one of the xxxxx of Canada, as being on the cutting edge of industry trends. Besides researching my own facility, xxxxx, I want to study the policy of one of Toronto’s premier facilities.

I hope that this letter addresses the questions and concerns that you might have about the project.

I will contact you on Friday morning, November 1st, about proceeding. I apologize for the rush, but I have recently discovered that I am moving to the United States in December, 1996. My husband and I suspected that we might have to move, but we did not realize that it would be so far, nor so soon. Hence, I am working under a real time constraint and I am aware that this is coinciding with a particularly busy time at your facility. Any help and cooperation you can give me would be greatly appreciated. With your permission, I can do some preliminary work with your club before I formally start. In general, I will just become “part of the decor” before actually undertaking observations and interviews. I look forward to working with and learning from you.

Sincerely,

Dawnelle Hawes
Grad student, Brock University
Appendix B

Sample of the advised consent form for the interviews
Advised consent form

Site of interview: ________________________________

Interview with: ________________________________

On: ____________________________ (date)

At: ____________________________ (time)

I’d like to tape record what you have to say so that I don’t miss any of it. I don’t want to take the chance of relying on my notes and thereby miss something that you say or inadvertently change your words somehow. So, if you don’t mind, I’d like very much to use the recorder. If at any time during the interview you would like to turn the tape recorder off, all you have to do is press this button on the microphone, and the recorder will stop.

Anything that transpires here is strictly confidential. Your name will never appear in my publication nor will I intentionally write in such a manner that the source of my information be obvious. At any time during the interview, you may tell me that “this information is off the record”. I will not record that part of the conversation. Otherwise, I will try to capture your words as accurately as possible. If you prefer not to be tape recorded, I will comply by taking only notes on what you say. However, for accuracy and future analysis, taping the dialogue allows me to review what is said and quote your words (while not referring to you directly) verbatim.

If possible, I will submit a copy of my notes for your perusal within a few days of our interview. If there is any part of the transmission that you feel is inaccurately portrayed, you may make changes on the copy. If there is any question on which you would like to further elaborate, please feel free to do so on an additional page. If there are any statements you would like to make with regard to the topic, make your comments on the blank pages provided.

Thank you so much for your invaluable cooperation.

Dawnelle Hawes, graduate student, Brock University.

Signed by: ________________________________ (interviewee) Date: __________

Signed by: ________________________________ (interviewer) Date: __________
Appendix C

Standardized interview questions for the contact person, the staff, and the members
**Interview questions for the contact person**

1. I would like to get some background information on you.  
   What is your current position within this company?  
   How many hours per week are you on the job?

2. What prompted you to make a living in the fitness industry?

3. What is the mission statement for_______?  
   What is your interpretation of the mission statement?  
   At whom is the mission statement directed?  
   How do you, as the Fitness Director, carry out the mission statement?

4. What are the current target markets of_______?  
   What radius does your target market cover?  
   What market share do you aim to capture?  
   How successful do you feel the company is in reaching those markets?  
   In your opinion, how representative is your membership of those target markets?

5. In your opinion, what are the “cutting edge” trends of the fitness industry today?  
   Which trends are you choosing to incorporate into your programming?  
   Why have these trends been singled out for implementation at_______?  
   How do these trends fit into your vision for_______?

6. How do you recruit staff for the_______?  
   What qualities do you look for when hiring an employee?  
   In your opinion, what qualities would qualify someone to be considered for the management team at_______?
   If front-line staff members possess these qualities, what are their chances for advancement in this organization?

7. Many business texts have been written on workplace diversity. What is your understanding of this concept?  
   What is_______’s position on workplace diversity?

8. What prompted the recent renovations for the club?  
   What do you hope will be the outcome of these renovations?  
   What circumstances determine whether changes are made to the club?

9. Who are the decision makers at_______?  
   What is your role in the decision making process?  
   How is your staff involved in this decision making process?  
   How is policy set?  
   How is policy communicated to your members?  
   How is policy communicated to your staff?

10. All other staff are busy. You have been asked to take me on a tour of the club as a prospective new member. What features of_______(name of club) would you highlight?

11. In your opinion, what impression does the physical layout of_______(name of club) have on incoming guests, members and potential clients?

12. I am a typical member at_______(name of club). Describe me.
a) Imagine you are a new member entering the weight training area. You have never participated in strength training before. Describe the atmosphere of the weight room, what you see, and your reaction to it.

b) If I were an older client, what advice would you give me about becoming a member of your club?

c) I use a wheelchair to get around. How would you handle a membership for me?
Interview Questions for: ____________ (staff)

1. I would like to get some background information on you.
   Where do you now reside?
   Where did you go to school/ were you raised?
   What was the last school that you attended?
2. How long have you been working in the fitness industry?
   a) Where were you employed before coming to ____________ (name of club)?
   b) What duties did your job include?
3. What circumstances brought you to work for ____________ (name of club)?
   How many hours per week do you work at ____________ (name of club)?
   Generally what shifts and days do you work?
   a) what is your official title?
   b) what is your job description?
   c) How long have you been working at this job?
   d) What past experiences equipped you for this job?
   e) How has your educational background helped you in your current profession?
   f) If you had to explain your role/purpose in this organization, what would you say?
4. What is the mission statement of ____________ (name of club)?
   a) In what ways does your department carry out this mission?
   b) What is your personal interpretation or understanding of this mission statement?
   c) If you were given the authority to revise the mission statement, what changes would you make?
   d) How does the policy or mission statement of ____________ get carried out with respect to:
      i) the hiring of programme staff
      ii) your promotional materials
      iii) professional development
   e) What is the company policy on following fitness industry trends?
      i) on instituting societal trends? (i.e. pay equity, employment equity, accommodating a diverse membership.)
5. Diversity is a big issue with businesses right now. What is your understanding of the term “diversity”?
   a) What does ____________ (name of club) do to accommodate your interpretation of “diversity”?
6. Who are the decision makers in this organization?
   a) What is your role in the decision making process?
   b) Explain to me how information gets passed around to all levels of the organization.
   c) What are your professional plans with this company?
   d) In your opinion, what opportunities do employees have for getting promoted to
management positions in this company?

7. All other staff are busy. You have been asked to take me on a tour of the club as a prospective new member. What features of _________ (name of club) would you highlight?

8. In your opinion, what impression does the physical layout of _________ (name of club) have on incoming guests, members and potential clients?
   a) Describe for me the social atmosphere at _________ (name of club).

9. I am a typical member at _________ (name of club). Describe me.
   a) Imagine you are a new member entering the weight training area. You have never participated in strength training before. Describe the atmosphere of the weight room, what you see, and your reaction to it.
   b) If I were an older client, what advice would you give me about becoming a member of your club?
   c) I use a wheelchair to get around. How would you handle a membership for me?
Questions for fitness facility participant:

1. How long have you been a member at _______?  
   How many times per week do you use the club?  
   What time of the day are you usually in the club?  
   On the average, how much time do you generally spend in _______ each time you come?

2. I am trying to determine how members spend their time at _______.  
   What areas of the club do you use most often?  
   In which activities do you regularly participate?  
   What percentage of your time at _______ is spent on your chosen activities?

3. For what reasons did you choose _______ as your fitness club?  
   When you first toured _______, what was your first impression of the club?  
   What caused you to have that opinion?

4. What is your occupation?  
   What qualifications do you require for this job?  
   What was the name of the last school you attended?

5. In your opinion, who makes the decisions and sets the policies for _______?  

6. You are asked to create an ideal fitness facility for yourself.  
   What are the most important qualities that you would include in this ideal club of yours?  
   Why did you choose these qualities?  
   With respect to these qualities, how does _______ compare to this ideal club of yours?

7. If you had to pick an adjective that would describe the front-line staff at _______, what adjective would you choose?  
   If you had to pick an adjective to describe the management staff at _______, what adjective would you choose?  
   Define for me your interpretation of the term “management staff”.

8. I am a typical member of _______. Describe me.

9. What kinds of programmes are offered at _______?  
   What kind(s) of programming are you looking for?  
   What kind of input do _______ members have on decisions made about the club and its programming?

10. You are a new member at the club… (Or you are a racquets player) and you are interested in exploring the possibilities of strength training. Describe the atmosphere of the weight room here at _______ and your reaction to it.  
   a) A 65-year-old relative has expressed an interest in joining _______ to improve fitness. What would you say?  
   b) I use a wheelchair to get around and would like to weight train. How could _______ accommodate me?

11. I now invite you to comment on anything about _______ that I might have missed.
Appendix D

Observation sheets
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sharing of space? Wilting of non-wilting behaviour? Maintenance claim on equipment or vacates for another?  

Incarceration? Administration of wearing a walkman®® & conflict avoidance of conflict?  

Appearance/attire, e.g. smell, grits, short, T-shirt, revealing undergarbs?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member-to-member behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Number observed:  
- Area of observation:  
- Date of observation:  

- Hallities observed:  
- Hours of observation:  

Sign on duty:  

Observation sheet (2)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff-to-Member Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is the acknowledgement sincere?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence of conflict?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approaches members?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>acknowledging</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>eye contact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>interaction with whom?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>inclusive or selective interaction?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>interaction conversation?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>appearance/attire?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>are the staff visible?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>invisible?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number observed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitates observed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of Observation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of observation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of observation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shift on duty:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation Sheet (3)
The preceding charts were created as a short-hand method for recording what I surveyed. Ethnicity, age, gender, sex-role socialization, and physical and mental disability were some of the issues under investigation and hence, a source for the observation suggestions. The observations and conclusions that I made from this chart were subjective, other than obvious quantitative data such as gender or number of members. The purpose of the observations was to provide insight into the broad issues outlined above and to verify whether the data collected from the interviews was supported by what was viewed at the sites.