

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)

2002

Employment experiences of people with developmental challenges: A participatory approach

Roslyn J. Shields
Wilfrid Laurier University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd>



Part of the [Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shields, Roslyn J., "Employment experiences of people with developmental challenges: A participatory approach" (2002). *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. 723.
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/723>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

NOTE TO USERS

The videocassette is not included in this original manuscript. It is available for consultation at the author's graduate school library.

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**385 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**385, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file / Votre référence

Our file / Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-72637-1

Canada

**EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH
DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES:
A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH**

BY

Roslyn J. Shields

B.A. (Hons.), University of Guelph, 1999

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
2002

© Roslyn J. Shields 2002

For my parents, Stephen and Maude Shields

Acknowledgments

It seems like a lifetime ago that I began my thesis journey - oblivious to the long and winding road that lay ahead. It has been two years that have been filled with numerous ups and downs and there are many people who have made it easier to navigate this unpredictable terrain. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Ed Bennett, for his guidance, encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Joanna Ochocka and Dr. Juarne Clarke, for their insight and helpful contributions to my thesis project - it was very much appreciated.

My thesis would never have been successful without the enthusiasm and commitment of my participants. I am grateful to them all for their honesty, insight and support. I heard stories that were inspiring, stories that were humorous, and stories that were poignant - and I am honoured that participants trusted me with these experiences and agreed to share them with others on the video. I also appreciate the assistance of agencies and employers who recommended participants and allowed us to videotape their work settings.

On a more personal note, there are some very special people in my life who have stuck by me throughout the years and have never left my side. I would like to thank Rena Al-Samadi, Kimberly Bell and Sarah Wylie for being my constant comfort and inspiration. I would also like to thank Purnima Sundar for her friendship and support - I really could not have done this without you!

I have also been fortunate enough to have some wonderful people come in and out of my life throughout my thesis journey. They have all, in some way, contributed to this experience. So, to old friends at WLU and new friends at CAMH, I thank-you.

And finally, I would like to thank my parents. Not only for their 'tangible aid', but for

their constant encouragement and emotional support. It is your never wavering belief in me that has given me the strength to follow my dreams. I am eternally grateful.

So, this part of the journey is over and I look back with fondness and forward with anticipation!!

Table of Contents

Section	Page Number
CHAPTER ONE - Introduction	1
CHAPTER TWO - A Review of the Current Literature	4
Empowerment Theory	4
The Meaning and Benefits of Work	8
Work and People with Developmental Challenges	15
Social Support	26
CHAPTER THREE - Methodology	28
The Research Context	28
Assumptions	29
Stakeholder Involvement	31
Ethical Issues	33
Participants and Sampling	36
Methods	39
Analysis and Verification of the Data	44
CHAPTER FOUR - Research Results	46
Employment Experiences	47
<i>Empowerment Dimensions of Work</i>	47
<i>Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops</i>	47
<i>Community Settings</i>	52
<i>Dreams for the Future</i>	58
<i>Social Dimensions of Work</i>	59
<i>Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops</i>	60
<i>Community Settings</i>	66
<i>Environmental Dimensions of Work</i>	75
<i>Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops</i>	76
<i>Community Settings</i>	79
An Illustration of Empowerment Excellence	86
Reflections on the Research Process	89
<i>Telling their stories</i>	89
<i>Making the video</i>	93
<i>Watching the video</i>	96
<i>Presenting the video</i>	101
<i>Steering Committee Meetings</i>	104

CHAPTER FIVE - Discussion	108
Job Experiences	108
<i>Positive Job Experiences</i>	109
<i>Social Dimensions</i>	109
<i>Environmental Dimensions</i>	112
<i>Summary</i>	115
<i>Empowered Job Experiences</i>	116
<i>Social Dimensions</i>	117
<i>Environmental Dimensions</i>	127
<i>Process of Empowerment</i>	129
An Ecological Model of Employment	131
<i>Macrosystem</i>	132
<i>Exosystem</i>	137
<i>Microsystem</i>	140
<i>Individual</i>	144
Participatory Action Research Learning	147
Limitations and Recommendations	152
A Final Reflection	155
References	156
Tables	164
Figures	168
Appendices	171

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the summer of 1998 I was hired as a summer student at my local Association for Community Living. Having never worked with people with developmental challenges before, I was unsure of what to expect in the adult developmental services/ co-operative sheltered workshop where I was employed as a staff member. I was grateful for the warm welcome and the continuous trust and support I received from clients (the term the association uses to describe program participants with developmental challenges) and staff alike. I was amazed at the wealth of knowledge, experience, skill, humour, honesty, and compassion of the people with developmental challenges with whom I worked. This was not a side of 'the developmentally challenged' that I had often been exposed to, or had the opportunity to experience, as a member of the larger community. It was truly an eye-opening experience, and one that provided me with much of my motivation to pursue studies in Community Psychology. Therefore, when it came to choosing a topic for my thesis, it only seemed natural to 'go back to my roots' and pursue a topic in which I could hopefully give back to the community of people who made such an enormous impact on who and where I am today.

My interest in the area of work experiences of people with developmental challenges has arisen in the past two years where, as an employee and interested community member, I have had many opportunities to observe, listen to, and talk with people about their work experiences. I have observed situations, both in sheltered workshops and in the community, that appear to facilitate growth and those that appear to hinder opportunities. I have heard stories of pride, anger, frustration and acceptance. I have heard stories that make me proud, angry, and frustrated. I feel that I am in a position, however, where I can urge people not to accept situations where they are unhappy and

disempowered. While employment opportunities for people with developmental challenges are better now than in the past, many barriers still exist. Therefore, I decided to use my thesis project as an opportunity to hear the employment stories - the good, the bad, the happy, the sad - of people with developmental challenges. I also felt it was important to raise awareness of these experiences, as well as give people with developmental challenges an opportunity to recommend strategies and changes which they feel will maximally benefit themselves and others.

Another motivation for me to pursue this area of research relates specifically to the barriers to employment faced by people with developmental challenges as well as the need for consciousness raising. When I was in the preliminary stages of developing a thesis topic, I was engaged in an informal conversation with several friends about people with developmental challenges in the workforce. I found it interesting and concerning that they expressed both negative and limiting opinions regarding the employment (and particularly the supported employment) of people with developmental challenges. Reflecting on this conversation afterwards, it dawned on me that these opinions are likely to represent those of the public in general. Therefore, I felt more assured that my thesis needed to address this issue by raising awareness of the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. The overall purpose of my thesis project, then, was to gain a greater understanding of the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. I also wanted to add to, and expand on, the existing literature on the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. In addition, I hoped to gain knowledge and understanding by using empowerment theory and practice to guide my research process.

Participants with developmental challenges were given the opportunity to tell their stories about their work experiences - their likes, dislikes, opportunities, barriers, and other issues that they

feel are most relevant to them. By defining the employment issues that they saw as important, I hoped that the findings of this research would be more authentic than many previous studies where the perspectives of people with developmental challenges were often overlooked. After their initial stories were told, participants were provided with the opportunity to reflect on these stories as a group. I also wanted to use the results of my thesis to raise awareness of people with developmental challenges and their experiences of employment (provided the individuals I interviewed agreed to share their stories for this purpose) and together we made a short video which was shown to various audiences.

I hoped that participating in my thesis project would be empowering for the people involved by giving them the opportunity to tell their stories, reflect on their experiences, and create possible strategies for change. All of the participants were also asked if they wished to sit on a Steering Committee to guide the research project. This was predicted to be an empowering aspect of my thesis process as it gave participants the opportunity to provide meaningful input into the research project as well as providing them with the chance to gain new skills and experience. In the final stage of my thesis project, participants were asked to take part in an informal interview to reflect on the research processes used throughout my thesis. I hoped that my thesis would also make a contribution to the existing literature on the use of empowering research practices with people with developmental challenges.

CHAPTER TWO

A Review of Current Literature

Empowerment Theory

As mentioned in the introduction, I used empowerment theory to guide my overall research process. This theory also provided me with an overall context in which to pursue the study of the employment experiences for people with developmental challenges. The construct of empowerment has long been at the heart of Community Psychology values, research and action (Rappaport, 1987). It is only recently, however, that a theory of empowerment has been developed and defined to help synthesize the observations and data obtained from within a community psychology perspective (Zimmerman, 2000). As empowerment theory is still in its infancy, and the literature surrounding the theory is rich and complex, I will only attempt to address the major tenets and assumptions which are applicable to the current study.

Empowerment has been defined as, "...an internal ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over these resources (Cornell University Empowerment Group, as cited in Rappaport, 1995). Simply stated, empowerment is a mechanism whereby people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their own affairs (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Keiffer, 1984).

First, according to empowerment theory, empowerment can be manifest at three levels: psychological, organizational, and community/societal (Zimmerman, 2000; Kroeker, 1995). Psychological empowerment is seen as the expression of empowerment at the individual level - it is described as a process by which people gain a sense of mastery and control over their own lives,

develop a critical understanding of their environment, and demonstrate assertive participation in their community (Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Kieffer, 1984; Berger & Neuhaus, 1977). Psychological empowerment focuses on the interaction between a person and his/her environment and is, therefore, consistent with community psychology values (Zimmerman, 1995).

At the organizational level, empowerment is demonstrated through changes to the power structure of society as it is expressed in a particular group or community. At this level, empowerment may involve the creation of new settings or empowering organizations - places where new structures, values, and modes of interaction can be established (Zimmerman, 2000; Kroeker, 1995). At the community/societal level, empowerment is exhibited through changes to the larger social structures and institutions which have been inherently oppressive to various groups of people (Zimmerman, 2000). It has been suggested that empowerment at one level has an impact on empowerment at the other two levels (Kroeker, 1995; Rappaport, 1987). This assertion is consistent with another major assumption of empowerment theory.

Empowerment theory has been described as adhering to an ecological perspective (Gibson, 1993; Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Rappaport, 1987), which is an important component of any theory in community psychology. Rappaport (1987) offers two other assumptions which support the ecological perspective of empowerment theory. First, empowerment is influenced by the historical context and current cultural context of the setting in which a person, program or policy operates. The second assumption is that empowerment is not a scarce resource that runs out, but a phenomena that once experienced, expands the resources available to people, organizations, and societies.

Building on this assumption - that empowerment theory is ecological- and the belief that many factors contribute to how empowerment is experienced by different people, organizations, and societies, another assumption of empowerment theory emerges. Empowerment is also viewed as a dynamic experience that takes different forms for different people, takes different forms in different contexts and life domains, and fluctuates over time (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Chibnall, Legler & Yapcahi, 1998; Zimmerman, 1995). Moreover, it is assumed that every person has the potential to experience both empowering and disempowering processes (Zimmerman, 1995). Keiffer (1984) also provides support for a dynamic view of empowerment. He found that empowerment can be manifest in different intensities that can change over time, and that empowerment is not an absolute threshold that one can achieve and thus be labeled empowered. The implication of this assumption for research is described by Zimmerman (1995). He argues that measuring psychological empowerment in a specific setting for a particular group of people is possible, but it must be connected to their experiences, how they state the concept of empowerment, and how it is contextually grounded in their life experiences.

A final, and important, assumption of empowerment theory is the assertion that empowered outcomes are achieved mainly through empowering processes (Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995; Kieffer, 1984). Empowering processes are thought to build people's capacities (Matthew & Fawcett, 1984), by creating, or giving them the opportunity to gain mastery over their lives (Zimmerman, 1995). Similar to empowered outcomes, empowering processes are unique to time, individual and circumstance, but include any actions, activities, or structures which result in some level of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowering processes also occur at the individual, organizational and community/societal levels. According to Zimmerman (2000;

1995), empowering processes at the individual level would include participating in one's environment, learning and applying decision-making or problem solving skills, managing resources and working with others to target common goals and to expand one's social network. Empowering processes at the organizational level would include various activities and experiences, such as having the opportunity to participate in decision making, sharing responsibilities and sharing leadership. Additionally, empowering processes at the community/societal level would include opportunities such as providing equal access to necessary resources, implementing a participatory governmental structure, and enforcing a widespread tolerance for diversity (Zimmerman, 2000).

Empowering processes at the individual, organizational and community/societal level can also be employed through social interventions. Some examples of empowering interventions include: citizen participation and community development (Perkins, 1995; Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988); competence building prevention programs (Perkins, 1995; Rappaport, 1987); consciousness raising efforts (Kroecker, 1995; Perkins, 1995); as well as environmental empowerment practices, community crime prevention programs, and self-help/mutual aid groups (Perkins, 1995). Similarly, empowering processes can also be employed through social research. Participatory Action Research is thought to epitomize empowering processes with its emphasis on working with community members to develop, implement, and evaluate interventions which affect them (Rappaport, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, Israel, Shulz & Checkoway, 1992); its requirement that researchers become part of the community to some degree and work with community members as co-researchers (Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987); and with its goals of improving the competencies of people and communities

so that they do not become dependent on researchers (Rappaport 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). In a similar vein, Rappaport (1995) has also suggested that using narratives or story telling in research is consistent with the goals of empowerment, and that, "...listening to stories and helping people create places that value and support both personal stories and collective narratives is an empowering activity," (p.805).

In this research project, the processes that I used adhered to the tenets of empowerment theory. Specifically, I used Participatory Action Research throughout and gathered my data using techniques that were consistent with a narrative framework. I hoped that by implementing these empowering processes, participants in my study would feel or demonstrate empowered outcomes.

The Meaning and Benefits of Work

In addition to the examples outlined in the previous section, empowering organizational processes (and disempowering processes) may also be present in various workplaces or may be components of certain occupations. In fact, it is arguable that employment itself is an empowering process. With the context of empowerment in mind, I will provide a review of the literature on the meaning and benefits of work for individuals in Western society. I will also specifically address the previous research and literature on work for people with developmental challenges.

Western society has always placed a strong emphasis on the significance of work in defining the quality of a person's life, as well as acknowledging him/her as a respected member of the community (Meissner, 1997; Freud as cited in Levine, 1997). People tend to be judged according to their employment status and those who are not 'earning their living' are often treated as second class citizens (Meissner, 1997). Even those whose financial situations do not require

them to work often maintain employment, thus demonstrating the strong work ethic that permeates our society (Brook, 1991). Furthermore, it is my perception that the social value of employment remains significant in North America today and that work (or lack of work) is a central part of life for the majority of people.

The cultural view of work as an integral part of people's lives has obviously influenced research in the area. In this respect, research has tended to focus on the personal benefits of participation (and drawbacks of non-participation) in the paid labour force. Jahoda (as cited in Ezzy, 1993) developed a functional model to account for the positive aspects of employment and negative outcomes of unemployment. She argued that, in addition to the manifest function of employment (i.e. earning money), there are five latent functions of employment: the imposition of a time structure on the working day; the opportunity to have regular contact with people outside of the family; the opportunity for people to become involved with goals and purposes that are larger than their own; the ability to define aspects of personal identity and status; and the enforcement of activity. Jahoda asserted that these five latent functions account for people's motivation to work, and explain why, "...employment is psychologically supportive even when conditions are bad," (as cited in Ezzy, 1993, p.44). Within this model, unemployment is seen as psychologically destructive due to the absence of latent functions in a person's life.

Ezzy (1993) critiqued Jahoda's notion that all employment is beneficial and all unemployment is detrimental, as "romanticizing employment" (p.45). The author cited several empirical studies which have demonstrated that many people experience enhanced psychological well-being when they leave stressful and dissatisfying jobs. He asserted that many people find their jobs oppressive, and that Jahoda's failure to look at work content as an influence on

psychological well-being is a major flaw of her theory. While the latent functions of work undoubtedly benefit many individuals, for others, unemployment may be more favourable than alienating employment conditions. Ezzy (1993) asserted that the relationship between work and well-being is much more complex than described by Jahoda. In accordance with Ezzy's assertion, many researchers have focused on particular aspects and/or dynamics of employment situations which are thought to be most beneficial to employees.

Work-adjustment theory is one strategy which looks beyond the 'work is inherently beneficial' assertion, towards the dynamics of the work situation. Work-adjustment theory looks at the correspondence between a person and his/her environment and predicts worker adjustment based on the fit between a person's needs and a job's requirements (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). When this fit is good, the employee will be satisfied with their work experience, and the employer will be satisfied with the worker's contributions. Levi (1994) also asserted that a good fit between a person and his/her work environment leads to improved well-being and quality of life. A misfit of personal needs and workplace demands can lead to deterioration in mental health for the employee. Therefore, according to work-adjustment theory, only when there is a good fit between an employee's needs and the demands of his/her workplace, is work considered to be a positive and beneficial experience. Other theories have also looked at how the work environment can satisfy the needs of its employees.

Hanna (1985) contended that each person has a Personal Construct System (PCS) which is an integration of unique images, values, beliefs, and expectations, that create and define a particular person. A PCS creates life meaning for an individual through the establishment of needs, purposes and goals. Hanna believed that work can impact a person's PCS by meeting, or

not meeting his/her needs and by providing, or not providing, opportunities to achieve goals.

Work environments that provide employees with work they enjoy, compatible co-workers, policies which enhance personal development, and norms and expectations which are similar to those of their employees, are more likely to satisfy the needs and goals of individuals and confirm their life meaning. If personal needs and goals are not met by the work environment, a person is likely to become dissatisfied, frustrated, angry, alienated and depressed. Therefore, similar to work-adjustment theory, Hanna believed that a certain 'fit' between employee's needs and goals, and the employment environment is necessary to produce beneficial outcomes for people.

Similar to the two theories just described, Lippitt (1982) also discussed how work can satisfy people's needs. His ideas are based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and he describes how employment can potentially satisfy people's needs at each ascending level of the hierarchy. There are several examples that Lippitt used to demonstrate how work can satisfy these personal needs: safety and security needs can be met by providing good working conditions; social needs can be met through work social functions and participatory leadership; ego needs can be met through office sizes and parking spaces; and self-actualization needs can be met by providing opportunities for employees to use creative thinking at work. Lippitt asserted that an organization which is attempting to satisfy employee needs at each level is encouraging people to meet their goals and reach their full potentials - a working experience which is obviously beneficial to employees.

Two other theories also rely on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to demonstrate how work can satisfy employees needs and provide them with the motivation to work. Herzberg (as cited in Lippitt, 1982) described the first three levels of Maslow's Hierarchy as 'hygiene' factors. He argued that people expect that these factors will be met at work, and if not, employees will be

dissatisfied. Hygiene factors include things like the need for a salary, appropriate work conditions, security, and equitable company policies. Herzberg also asserted that the other levels of need in Maslow's hierarchy function as motivators, such as the need for stimulating job content, career advancement, responsibility, and recognition. He believed that work situations which meet the higher level needs of employees (while still maintaining the lower hygiene factors) increase employee satisfaction and their desire, or motivation, to work. Herzberg's assumptions are very similar to those of Douglas McGregor (1989). He proposed that managers who only provide physiological and safety needs for their employees are using the control theory of management, or Theory X. McGregor noted that once these lower needs are met, people are motivated only by higher needs. If the opportunity to meet these needs is not provided, then employees become passive and in need of direction. However, managers that create conditions for employees to meet these higher needs (or Theory Y) are likely to see increases in worker satisfaction, personal fulfilment, and self respect. According to these theories then, work environments that are able to meet employee's needs, or provide opportunities for employees to meet their own needs - and particularly higher level needs - tend to increase the satisfaction and well-being of employees.

Other research has also been conducted to determine the specific aspects of the work environment that tend to increase satisfaction among employees. Locke (1983) noted that salary plays a complex role in employee satisfaction, as some employees value their wages more than others. In addition, Gruneberg (1979) reported that people place importance on their salaries for different reasons. Some people value the material benefit, while others regard it as a sign of accomplishment and recognition. While the benefits of salary on employee satisfaction are not clear, research on the specific job characteristics that tend to enhance employee satisfaction has

produced more conclusive results. Moseley (1988) cited several studies that indicate that work that involves more complex tasks, more challenges to employee's abilities, and increased control over the work process, increases employee satisfaction. Finally, increased teamwork with coworkers and greater social support at work have been shown to positively influence worker satisfaction (Locke, 1983; Gruneberg, 1979).

An interesting study on the benefits of social support was conducted by James (1997) who looked at social support at work and the health benefits to employees. He found that European Americans who reported high levels of social support at work had lower levels of behaviours that were reflective of health problems - the same findings did not hold true for African American employees. James also found that European American employees reported higher levels of work social support than African American employees. Therefore, social support at work seemed to provide physical health benefits for employees who were not members of a visible minority. In addition, the availability of work social support also appeared to depend on whether one belongs to white or non-white groups. Social support, then, seems to be a complex factor in determining positive outcomes for employees. Thus, according to these studies just reviewed, worker satisfaction seems to be related to many employment conditions and factors similar to those asserted in the theories I described previously. Satisfaction at work has also been shown to be positively related to a person's overall mental health (Levi 1994), therefore demonstrating the benefits of a good work environment.

Other studies have looked more specifically at certain aspects of the work environment and its impact on employee mental health, particularly on how work influences people's self esteem and self perception. For example, researchers have found that workers in more complex

jobs are likely to have higher self-esteem than workers whose tasks are more mundane (Brook, 1991; Staples, Schwalbe & Gecas, 1984; Kohn & Schooler, 1973). A twist on these findings was discovered by Schwarzberg & Dytell (1996) who found that men in more challenging jobs had higher levels of depression. The same finding did not hold true for women in their study. These researchers did find, however, that both males and females who felt their work was insignificant had lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression than those who did not view their work as insignificant.

Another work dimension which has been found to impact workers' self esteem is the amount of independence they are afforded in their jobs. Mortimer, Lorence and Kumka (as cited in Gecas & Seff, 1990) found that workers who were given more autonomy at work had higher levels of self-competence. In addition, Staples, Schwalbe & Gecas (1984) found that increased supervision at work related negatively to workers' self esteem. Other work dimensions which have been shown to relate positively to worker's self-esteem are recognition of accomplishments (Levine 1997) and occupational prestige (Gecas & Seff, 1989). Gecas and Seff (1990) also conducted an interesting study which demonstrated that when people view work as a central context in their lives, their self esteem will be more influenced by aspects of this environment. Those who do not see work as a central context in their lives will be less influenced by this environment and their self esteem will likely be linked to their success in other contexts (i.e. home/family). The authors note, however, that most people will tend to see their work as a central context in their lives if this work is challenging and autonomous. Thus, these studies demonstrate that many aspects of the work environment are beneficial to people and positively impact their self-esteem. For others, however, self-esteem is not influenced by certain work

dimensions.

In summary then, it appears that when people are given the opportunity to work in a supportive and challenging environment they experience benefits to their well-being. The research also suggests that the majority of people would rather work than be unemployed. Work (and especially 'good' work) appears to be a very important aspect of life for most adults in Western Society, and I believe that this includes many people who have developmental challenges

Work and People with Developmental Challenges

The work and work-related experiences of people with developmental challenges typically adheres to one of three main models: adult day programs, sheltered workshops, or supported employment programs (Johnson & Rusch, 1994). Adult day programs focus mainly on the teaching of daily living skills. These programs may also include rehabilitation components and services and some work related activities. Sheltered workshops focus more specifically on work-related skills and productivity. These workshops usually subcontract from other companies, and typically involve piecework activities. For some people with developmental challenges, the sheltered workshop is a transitional program where they can continue to build their skills before moving into the competitive job market. For other people, the sheltered workshop is their long-term employer.

Supported employment programs attempt to integrate people with developmental challenges into competitive job settings by providing on-going support services to help people learn and maintain the skills related to their jobs. (Melchiori & Church, 1997; Kregel, Wehman & Banks, 1989; Moseley, 1988). Supported employment programs usually provide one of four placement alternatives: the individual placement alternative, where one person is employed at a

specific site or department; the enclave placement alternative, where a group of up to eight people with developmental challenges are employed to work in the same department; the work crew alternative, where a group of people with developmental challenges are contracted to perform various jobs in the community; and the entrepreneurial, or small business, alternative which is similar to the enclave placement alternative except that the work tasks are more specific (e.g. packaging products) (Johnson & Rusch, 1994; Kregel, Wheman & Banks, 1989).

Historically, the number of supported employment settings was limited and the majority of people with developmental challenges were employed in sheltered workshops (Griffin, Rosenberg, Cheyney & Greenberg, 1996). Research in these settings, however, demonstrated that several problems and barriers existed. Bellamy, Rhodes, Bourbeau & Mank (1986) provided a review of this literature and determined that the segregation of people with developmental challenges from their non-challenged coworkers, low rates of movement into competitive employment, wages which were well below the poverty threshold, minimal number of hours worked, and the reported dissatisfaction of employees, were major problems within sheltered workshop settings. Similarly, Maxwell (1986) provided a case study of a sheltered workshop in Detroit, Michigan and reported that a major problem was the lack of movement into community-based employment. This lack of movement was attributed to the separation of the workshop from community-life which made it difficult for people to apply learning from the segregated setting into real work environments. Another barrier to movement into competitive employment was the focus on piecework and fine motor skills within the sheltered workshop. Maxwell (1986) noted that people who had skills in other areas were often excluded from movement into community work settings.

In addition to the problems found in sheltered workshops, other research at the time

provided evidence that people with severe developmental challenges were able to learn complex vocational tasks (Mank, Cioffi & Yovanoff, 1998). It appeared that it was these two bodies of research which provided the grounding for the development of supported employment programs. Johnson and Rusch (1994) reported that these programs were developed based on the assumption that the best way to get ready for work was to work in actual employment settings. The authors also noted that there are three other assumptions of supported employment programs: people with developmental challenges have the right and responsibility to work with non-challenged coworkers; people with developmental challenges have the right to be paid a decent wage; and people with developmental challenges are capable of achieving successful competitive employment. In addition to these assumptions, the potential benefits of these programs for both people with developmental challenges and employers are also discussed in the literature (Maxwell, 1986; Snart, Barton & Hillyard, 1983). Thus, by early the 1980s supported employment had emerged as an attractive work alternative for people with developmental challenges.

Research and literature also began to focus on supported employment, and more specifically on the benefits of this employment model for people with developmental challenges. Kregel, Wehman & Banks (1989) studied the employment outcomes of 1550 individuals involved in supported employment programs throughout the United States. The researchers concluded that participation in supported employment dramatically increased the monthly wages of workers (increases ranged from 280% to 574%) and also increased workers' social integration with non-challenged workers and the wider public. This research also demonstrated that more positive outcomes are associated with the individual placement alternative than with the other three types of supported employment. In a similar vein, Shafer, Revell & Isbister (1991) found that people in

supported employment earned six to ten times more per month than people employed in sheltered workshops. These researchers also discovered that employees in the individual alternative of supported employment had the highest hourly wage of employees in all four placement alternatives. In addition, Shafer et al. (1991) reported that the majority of supported employees are employed on a full-time basis (35hours/week). Other positive outcomes which have been attributed to the supported employment model include increased productivity and heightened work stamina of employees (Maxwell, 1986).

Other studies have focused on the actual experiences of people with developmental challenges who are employed in community- based settings. Jiranek and Kirby (1990) found that psychological well-being is better for people who work in competitive employment settings than for those who are unemployed. However, no difference was found between the psychological well-being of supported workers and employees of sheltered workshops. The researchers did find that people in supported employment have higher ratings of job satisfaction and self-esteem than people employed in sheltered workshops. Griffin et al. (1996) provided further support for these findings on job satisfaction in their study of 200 individuals employed in supported settings and sheltered workshops. These authors found that mean ratings of job satisfaction and self-esteem were significantly higher for people working in supported work settings than for people employed in sheltered workshops. In a similar line of research, Seltzer (1984) discovered that employees of sheltered workshops who had previously worked in supported employment settings were very dissatisfied with their current situations as compared to their previous employment settings. They reported that diminished wages and repetitive tasks were the major contributors to their dissatisfaction.

Pedlar, Lord and VanLoon (1989) also studied the area of job satisfaction for people with developmental challenges. They conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with twelve individuals employed in supported work environments. The researchers discovered that a major contributor to job satisfaction for these individuals was employment in the community versus employment in a workshop setting - regardless of the specific job that they held in the community. The participants in this study also noted that learning new tasks, meeting new people, and helping others enhanced their feelings of accomplishment and increased their job satisfaction. In addition, Pedlar et al. (1989) determined that job satisfaction, along with opportunities for advancement, increased self worth and self determination (from working in community settings), receiving payment for their work, and having the opportunity to develop relationships with co-workers all contributed to the participants' quality of life.

Another area of research into supported employment focuses on comparing people with developmental challenges with their non challenged co-workers and peers. Mank, Cioffi, and Yovanoff (1997) looked at the job environments of people with development challenges in supported employment and compared these to the typical job environments of their non challenged coworkers. The researchers found that the more similar the environment of the supported employee was to the environment of his/her coworkers, the better the employment outcomes for the supported employee. More typical employment settings were characterized by better wages and higher degrees of social interaction for the employee with developmental challenges. Mank et al. (1997) also reported that these positive outcomes remain constant even when controlling for different levels of developmental challenges - a finding they used to assert the need to include people with more severe developmental challenges in supported employment

settings.

Another study which focused on the comparison of supported employees with non supported peers was conducted by Moseley (1988). In his doctoral dissertation, Moseley used qualitative research methods to interview employees with severe challenges in supported work settings. He asked them about their satisfaction with their current jobs in comparison to previous employment experiences in sheltered workshops and training programs. Moseley (1988) then compared the findings of his research to the body of literature on the 'meaning of work' for people without developmental challenges. He concluded that people with developmental challenges derive the same meaning and satisfaction from work as their coworkers - by receiving equitable pay, by participating in meaningful and varied tasks, and by being involved in the informal social culture of their work settings. Moseley (1988) suggested that supported employment programs take note of these findings and proposed some changes for these programs.

Melchiori and Church (1997) also compared the vocational needs and satisfaction of supported employees with their co-workers employed in the same job. They found that supported employees tended to express a greater desire for recognition and have higher levels of job satisfaction than their non-supported co-workers. Co-workers, however, expressed a greater desire for self-reinforcement, while no differences were found between groups on the value of comfort in the work setting. A finding that the authors draw particular attention to involved the difficulty that supervisors had in adequately determining the level of job satisfaction for their employees - especially their supported employees. Melchiori and Church (1997) therefore, concluded that the success of supported employees was likely evaluated according to the employee's ability to meet job requirements, as opposed to the job's ability to meet the employee's

needs.

Ochocka, Roth, Lord and MacGillivray (1994) addressed this issue by conducting qualitative interviews with people with disabilities involved in supported employment programs. The researchers interviewed people with developmental, physical and psychiatric disabilities to determine what they felt made their jobs successful. There were 4 main factors of success which emerged from these interviews: personal factors (such as having the opportunity to demonstrate abilities, feeling like their work was important, and finding a balance of variety and routine tasks); management style (employers who communicated well and consistency among different levels of management); internal workplace environment (good relationships with coworkers and supervisors, opportunities for advancement, acceptance of diversity) and external supports (work place that is close to home, social support from family, support groups, and employment agencies). Ochocka et al.'s (1994) study demonstrated the multitude of factors which can contribute to successful supported employment .

Other obstacles and barriers to supported employment have also been identified in the literature. Johnson & Rusch (1994) asserted that the government and funding agencies continually give more resources to segregated settings in an attempt to uphold the status quo. Thus, the majority of people who are participating in community-based services are not receiving the best possible supported employment programs. Similarly, Kregel, Wehman & Banks (1989) cited attitudinal barriers and lack of effective training technologies as the major obstacles needed to be overcome in supported employment - particularly for people with the most severe challenges. Also providing support for this notion, Mank et. al (1998) reported that people with more severe developmental challenges were under-represented in supported employment programs - a problem

which they think requires further investigation.

While it appears that the majority of academic literature focuses on supported employment options, there is some recent research which concentrates on employment in sheltered workshops. Brackhane (1994) and Brackhane and Westphal-Binder (1994) described sheltered workshops in Germany. These workshops provided 'work training programs' to prepare people with developmental challenges for competitive employment, or permanent employment in the 'work area' of the sheltered workshop. The authors described the "Pathways Model" that they created to provide more effective occupational training. Based on developmental psychology theory, the model provides sequences of learning steps for people to follow in order to achieve competence in a desired area of work. Brackhane and Westphal-Binder (1994) completed psychological tests with people who were learning the skills according to the Pathways Model. The researchers found that these individuals had increased their mental age since participating in the program and also had improved their cognitive learning and social competence.

Wilgosh and Covassi (1988) also looked at vocational training programs within sheltered workshop settings. Focusing specifically on people who had left the program for community based employment, the researchers found some mixed outcomes. Of the fifty four people followed, 25.9% were employed at the time of data collection. Half of those employed had been working for over a year - mainly as part-time or seasonal employees - and their wages were low. Seventy-eight percent of the employees in this study were thought to be satisfied in their job settings, while those who were dissatisfied were described as having higher job ambitions.

The final study that I reviewed on work and work- related experiences of people with developmental challenges was completed by Gaylord-Ross (1987). This author looked at

employment integration from a cross-cultural perspective. Using observations, interviews, and documents, the author looked at the major employment opportunities for people with developmental challenges in Denmark, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, and West Germany. The author asserted that the dominant model of employment in each country is a reflection of the historical circumstances and cultural values of a society. While Gaylord-Ross (1987) provided non-evaluative descriptions of the employment models in each country, he did conclude his study with suggestions on how supported employment programs have developed and become strengthened in the United States and other Western European nations. Gaylord-Ross (1987) appeared to be adding to the extensive literature that asserts that supported employment programs are the most promising opportunity for employing people with developmental challenges.

While there is a substantial amount of literature on employment alternatives for people with developmental challenges - particularly supported employment programs - it is my contention that the majority of the findings are based on research which is not empowering to people with developmental challenges. Several researchers conducted their investigations without including any people with developmental challenges. For example, Mank et. al. (1997) and Mank et al. (1998) used the perceptions of job coaches to determine how people with developmental challenges were experiencing their work settings. Similarly, Wilgosh and Covassi (1988) interviewed the parents of people with developmental challenges to determine how satisfied the participants were with the experience and outcomes of a vocational training program. Other studies did incorporate the views of people with developmental challenges (see for example, Melchiori & Church, 1997; Griffin, et. al, 1996). However, these researchers relied exclusively on quantitative research methods which can be disempowering to people who belong to marginalized groups in society (Kirby & McKenna,

1989). The authors in these studies conducted their investigations according to what they perceived to be issues in the employment of people with developmental challenges: they defined the research questions and developed the hypotheses, they chose the instruments to investigate the issue, and they required people to respond according to pre-selected categories. People with developmental challenges were not given the opportunity to identify what they believed to be the most important aspects of their employment situations.

Moseley's (1988) discussion of his dissertation where he conducted qualitative interviews with people employed in supported work settings, appears to be one of the most empowering investigations into the work experiences of people with developmental challenges. However, Moseley (1988) still defined the issue he wanted to investigate (i.e. job satisfaction) and appeared to structure his interviews around this specific topic. In addition, Moseley (1988) also offered a critique of his own method which involved asking people to compare their present employment in supported work settings with their previous employment in sheltered workshops. The author noted that when people with developmental challenges are asked to compare supported employment experiences with sheltered workshop experiences, it was likely that supported work settings would emerge as the better alternative. This method of inquiry, then, overlooks any areas of concern that they may have with the supported employment model itself. Moseley (1988) also identified that the previous treatment and training of people with developmental challenges may lead some of these individuals to respond to questions in order to please others rather than to express their own opinions.

Two studies by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services used Participatory Action Research methods in their investigation of work experiences of people with

developmental challenges. While these two studies epitomize empowering research methods, there are a couple of issues that their studies do not address that I have approached in my study. First, Ochocka, et al (1994) interviewed people with physical, psychological and developmental challenges. As salient as this investigation was, it is my belief that the experiences of people with developmental challenges are fundamentally different than those with physical and psychiatric challenges. I believe that the rights of individuals with psychiatric and, in particular, physical disabilities are emphasized more in our current climate than are those of people with developmental challenges. Therefore, I felt it was important to look at the unique experiences of this group of people. Second, both Ochocka et al (1994) and Pedlar et al (1989) included in their research only people with developmental challenges who were currently working in supported community settings. While this is often seen as an ideal employment situation, it is still not the reality for many people with developmental challenges. Therefore, in order to get a true picture of the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges in our communities, I felt it was necessary to talk to people in both sheltered workshops and community settings.

In order to avoid the problems of previous research studies, I believed that an investigation into the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges should focus primarily on hearing their voices and opinions. I believe it is important that people with developmental challenges define the issues which impact their employment experiences, as this will be the only way to truly understand these experiences. Using methods which adhere to these beliefs, it will be interesting to see if the current model of supported employment - or supported employment more generally - continues to emerge as the ideal employment option for people with developmental challenges.

Social Support

As demonstrated in the previous sections, there are numerous potentially empowering processes which can be present in individuals' work environments. In particular, several different studies pointed to the importance of social support as a positive contributor to job enjoyment and satisfaction. Due to this repeated finding, and the relevance of social support in the current study, I will take a moment to expand on this concept.

Social support has been described as consisting of five major 'types' (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Emotional support involves receiving comfort and security from others during times of crisis and stress. Social integration or network support involves feeling like one is part of a group of people with common interests. Esteem support refers to encouraging a person to help enhance his/her sense of self competence for dealing with stresses and challenges. Tangible aid is concrete assistance provided to others during stressful periods, while informational support is advice or guidance given to someone to assist them in generating possible solutions for a current problem or crises. Dalton, Elias and Wandersman (2001) group emotional support and network support together under the heading 'generalized support', which they describe as ongoing and stable across time and situations. They also group esteem support, tangible aid and informational support together under the heading 'specific support' which is invoked in response to certain problems that arise within specific settings. In addition, it is interesting to note that Cutrona and Russell (1990) also identified a sixth form of social support: the provision of support to others. The authors asserted that feeling needed by others and having the opportunity to provide guidance and assistance to others is also a form of social support.

In addition to the impact of these different types of social support on job satisfaction, the

benefits of social support on a person's overall quality of life has been well documented (House, Landis & Umberson, 1988). Despite the empowering potential of social support, however, other researchers have studied both the positive and negative impacts of social support. The directionality of social support has been the focus of several research studies conducted by Maton (1988; 1987) in his research on self-help groups and community organizations. Maton proposed, and provided support for, the 'Bidirectional Support Hypothesis', asserting that people who have a relatively balanced pattern of providing and receiving social support have better psychological well-being and a greater sense of self-esteem than those individuals who predominantly give or receive support. Individuals who constantly receive support, with little or no opportunity to provide support in return, suffer the negative impacts of unidirectional support.

Other researchers have also demonstrated the negative impact that constantly being the recipient of social support has on a person's sense of self worth and self esteem (Coyne, Ellard & Smith, 1990). Furthermore, Nadler and Fisher (1986) asserted that when recipients of social support begin to feel threats to their self-esteem, they may react by backing away from the support. This 'spurned support' then leads to a decrease in self-esteem for the support provider, as he/she feels unsuccessful in their ability to provide support. As a possible solution to combat the negative effects of unidirectional social support, researchers and theorists have suggested that providers of social support focus less on giving specific types of support to a person in need and spend more time relating to the person as a capable individual and affirming their goals, strengths and dreams (Taylor, Sylvestre & Botschner, 1998; McKnight, 1977).

Social support, therefore, appears to have the potential to act as both an empowering and disempowering process on individuals in the workplace. This is an interesting issue which will be

revisited and discussed more in depth in later sections of my thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The Research Context

Participants in this study are people who have been labeled with developmental challenges. Society's response to this group of individuals has changed over the years and has often reflected the Zeitgeist of the era. People with developmental challenges have been locked in jails, 'treated' in institutions, and 'cared for' in the community. They have been deemed unable to work, able to be trained for simple job tasks, and able to learn complex job tasks. While people with developmental challenges have gradually been afforded the rights and privileges of other citizens, "...by the late 1980s this population continued to occupy a marginal, devalued and disadvantaged role in society," (Renshaw, et al., as cited in Duckett & Fryer, 1998, p.58). In the more than 10 years since this observation, community integration and participation of people with developmental challenges has evolved further and many individuals are being provided with opportunities to take control of their own lives. It is my contention, however, that as a group, people with developmental challenges are still viewed as second-class citizens and continue to be a disempowered group in contemporary society.

The participants in this study were either involved with, or associated with, one of two groups who offer services and opportunities to people with developmental challenges. The first group is a large, traditional Association for Community Living which offers residences, adult day programs, and adult rehabilitation centres (sheltered workshops) to people with developmental challenges. A unique aspect of this particular Association for Community Living is a co-operative

semi-sheltered workshop where workers are regarded as equal partners in the ownership and management of the business. The second group which several participants belonged to was a small program which was recently created to enhance the lives of people with developmental challenges living in the community. This program employs people with and without developmental challenges as equal co-workers and creates consciousness raising and empowerment focused services and programs. In addition, many of the participants who are involved with the two main agencies are also employed in various other community settings. Therefore, these two agencies provided me with the opportunity to talk with individuals who have experienced diverse employment situations and experiences.

Assumptions

There were four main underlying assumptions to the research approach that I used in this project. The first assumption was that all aspects of this thesis - from idea conception, to data gathering and analysis, to the interpretation and presentation of findings - were grounded in the values of Community Psychology. Individual wellness, a sense of community, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, a respect for human diversity, and an emphasis on empirical grounding all influenced the development and implementation of this project (Dalton, et al., 2001)

The second assumption was that people with developmental challenges are the richest resource for defining and outlining the employment issues which affect them. These individuals know better than anybody else what it is like to live with a developmental challenge, and only they truly experience the impact that this label has on their employment situations (Duckett & Fryer, 1998). Based on this assumption, then, my methods of inquiry reflected the need to tap this

expertise. By listening to the stories of people with developmental challenges and having them define the issues that they felt were important, I hoped that my thesis and existing literature would be enriched by an 'insiders' perspective on the experience of work for people with developmental challenges.

The third assumption which guided my research approach followed from the first assumption. While I attested to the need to hear the voices of people with developmental challenges, I also wanted to avoid taking these stories and using them for furthering my own purposes only. Reinharz (1985) discussed the negative impact and ethical considerations involved in situations where researchers move on after a research project leaving their participants in the same social situation that they were in prior to the study (as cited in Oliver, 1992). Therefore, I made every attempt to avoid this scenario by using the empowering processes of Participatory Action Research Learning (PARL). Like the more commonly known Participatory Action Research (PAR), PARL gives participants the opportunity to meaningfully participate in research that affects their lives, as well as use the research results to take action or make changes (Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord, 1998). PARL, however, adds an extra component to the research process that places an emphasis on the learning and empowerment of participants involved in the study (Zupko, 1999). The major focus of this project was on participation and learning for participants (Participatory Research), though action goals (e.g. using a video to raise awareness) were also incorporated into the design (Action Research).

Using PARL as a methodological guide, participants in my thesis were given the opportunity to join a Steering Committee, define the issues which affect them, discuss the analysis of findings, make suggestions on how to change situations they were not happy with, and use their

stories to raise awareness of the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. By telling their stories, the participants in this study not only had the potential to add to scholarly knowledge, but were also provided with the opportunity to embark on a journey that would hopefully be empowering for them.

The fourth assumption that guided my research approach was the acceptance that there is no single correct answer to the employment issues of people with developmental challenges. Rappaport (1981) suggested that social problems are inherently dialectical by nature and are in need of divergent thinking in order to approach the issues effectively. As I demonstrated in my literature review, previous research has tended to favour supported employment as the best employment alternative for people with developmental challenges. It is possible, however, that this may not be the case for some individuals. By listening to the stories of people in various employment circumstances (sheltered workshops and community settings) and offering them an opportunity to reflect on these experiences, participants were given the opportunity to freely discuss facilitators and barriers in all employment settings. Using this method allowed for the possibility that different employment settings could emerge as the preferred option for different individuals, as well as offering a more comprehensive picture of these settings. Therefore, an open-ended story-telling approach and the use of qualitative research methods were used to acknowledge the dialectical nature of the research topic and to promote divergent thinking and problem solving opportunities.

Stakeholder Involvement

The involvement of key stakeholders is a major component of PARL and involves the direct participation of all individuals who have a stake in the research process and findings. Taylor and Botschner (1998) assert that stakeholder involvement is empowering for stakeholders as it

encourages them to contribute to the research process. In addition, having their perspectives and opinions heard and incorporated into the research strengthens stakeholders' commitment to use the research results. In the current project, there were several groups of individuals who held a stake in the project. These stakeholders included, but were not limited to: people with developmental challenges, their families and advocates, and employers of people with developmental challenges.

While it is important to include the viewpoints of all stakeholders, I had to be realistic in the planning and implementing of this thesis project. Therefore, my main focus was on the involvement of my main stakeholder group - people with developmental challenges - and specifically those who participated in the thesis project. All of the participants were asked if they were interested in sitting on a Steering Committee to guide the overall research process. I also made every attempt to include other stakeholders in the research process by informally discussing my thoughts and ideas with them and asking for their input and suggestions. In particular, I maintained close contact with individuals who work closely with people with developmental challenges. Several of these people offered their guidance and support for my research.

My relationship with participants was one of co-participant and they were viewed as the experts in the area of employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. I tried to include various people with developmental challenges in all stages of the project. The Steering Committee members, for example, were asked for their feedback and suggestions regarding the initial interview guide (see Appendix A) and were also asked for their opinions on various other areas of the research project. The participants in the research project were involved in, and in control of, the research process by sharing the stories that were meaningful to them. Participants were also involved in the filming of the interviews, as well as the lighting, sound, and editing.

Several participants also took on a leadership role by facilitating presentations of the video.

Meaningful participation in the research process also included a chance for stakeholders to engage in self-reflection, as well as provide and receive feedback. I incorporated these processes through several means. First, participants were given (and read, if needed or requested) their original transcripts and were asked for any comments that they may have had prior to the data analysis. Second, participants were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss the initial analysis of the findings, reflect on their stories, and make any suggestions for changes that they may have for work environments. Third, participants were involved in choosing which parts of their stories they wanted to include in the final edit of the video, and made suggestions as to where they would like to present their video. Friends, families, employers, and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to preview the video and several of them participated in discussions to convey their reactions and thoughts on the video as well as offer any suggestions that they had. Finally, participants were engaged in a final informal interview to discuss the participatory research processes used in the thesis (see Appendix B). All participants received a copy of the video as feedback (and a written summary if requested) and current employers also received a summary feedback sheet.

Ethical Issues

When conducting participatory research with people in the community, it is important to keep in mind several ethical guidelines. These guidelines include: maintain respect for the dignity of the participants; ensure maximum benefit to participants and stakeholders; maintain equality in relationships (e.g. co-participants); remain sensitive to cultural diversity and issues; maintain sensitivity to the unique aspects of each situation; and do no harm. I made every attempt in this

thesis project to uphold the high ethical standards of community research. As with all research studies, however, there were some foreseeable risks associated with this project which had the potential to jeopardize the overall ethical integrity of the research. However, several safeguards were in place to avoid these possible problems.

The first major ethical consideration was assuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. This posed some problems in this particular study due to the use of the video camera. However, the raw footage was secured and viewed only by myself, the interviewee and editors. In addition, original transcripts were also secured and available only to myself, thesis committee, and participant. Participants were also given a pseudonym in the transcripts. The interview itself was conducted at a time and place where privacy was reasonably guaranteed. Participants were given the opportunity to choose the parts of their interview that they wanted to include on the final video thereby minimizing the possibility of using parts of their story that the participant did not wish to share with others (see Appendix C). I hoped that participants did not find these processes too intruding, and in an attempt to avoid this, participants were reminded from the beginning that part of the project would be the inclusion of their stories in a final video. They were reminded to take this into consideration before agreeing to participate and were given an information letter (see Appendix D) and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix E). Obviously, anyone who changed their mind and disagreed to have part of their interview on the final tape would have had their wishes respected - fortunately this issue did not arise.

A second ethical consideration was protecting the anonymity of employers. These people (or agencies, organizations, etc) were given pseudonyms in transcripts and were not discussed on the video if they did not provide a signed consent form. Some participants provided a guided tour

of their work settings, and their employers were notified, explained the purpose of the thesis project, and were asked to sign a letter of consent (see Appendix F). A day for the tour was decided on in advance at a time that was convenient for everyone involved.

A third ethical issue that was considered was the possibility that participants may realize that they were not happy with their current work situations and want to make changes. If this situation were to have occurred, participants would have been encouraged in their decision (as capacity building and empowerment were key focuses of the project), but would also have been encouraged to discuss their thoughts with family, support staff, and /or employers. In addition, if participants had expressed an interest in finding a new job, they would have been encouraged and assisted to look for community groups which would have been able to assist them in this process (as this would have been beyond the scope of the current project).

A final ethical consideration was the possible feelings of disappointment that participants could have felt at the end of the project, especially if they were expecting major changes in their employment situations. In an attempt to avoid this, I was clear with my participants from the beginning that this thesis focused mainly on hearing their stories and using the information in these stories for awareness raising (through my written thesis and their video). Participants were encouraged to take pride in the fact that their stories are contributing to making changes - even if they were small. In addition, while participants were given the chance to make recommendations for change, and build their capacities to initiate change, they were encouraged to pursue their changes by utilizing resources in the community.

In addition to the risks involved in any research study, there were also benefits. Possible benefits to participants in this study included: empowerment and affirmation by being able to share

their stories and have others listen to them through awareness raising efforts; enhanced capacity by participating in the empowering processes of PARL.; feelings of pride in their contribution to academic literature and to the community of people with developmental challenges; and increased confidence if their stories affirmed their contentment with their current employment situations and life in general. It was my belief that the possible benefits of participation in this study outweighed the risks, and that participants were likely to benefit from their involvement in this project.

Participants and Sampling

My sample consisted of 12 individuals with developmental challenges who were employed in various settings in the community (including sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops). This small sample size was consistent with qualitative research strategies where small and purposeful samples are usually preferred over the large random samples of quantitative research (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling is important because it allows researchers to focus intently on information-rich cases which can provide a great deal of insight into the primary issues in a research study (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling can involve many different methods and it is important to choose the method that is best for a particular study and its objectives (Patton, 1990). The two methods which worked best for my thesis are outlined in Patton (1990) and include: snowball/chain sampling and maximum variation sampling. The combination of these two strategies is described as 'mixed purposeful sampling'.

In snowball/chain sampling, people who have knowledge of the setting (and some knowledge of the research study) recommend to the researcher people whom they believe would make good participants. As more and more people make recommendations, the snowball or chain grows. For my thesis, I found it useful to begin with this sampling strategy. People in the two main

settings approached potential participants who they thought would provide 'information-rich' cases, and who would also be interested in telling their stories. Using a prepared script, individuals at these agencies explained the details of the study to interested people and asked if they could pass on their names to me (see Appendix G). As I knew only a limited number of people in each setting, this strategy provided me with a broader, and more diverse, range of possible participants.

After receiving a number of recommendations (and some basic information on where these individuals were employed), I then used maximum variation sampling to reduce the number of participants. This type of sampling involved selecting participants with different experiences with the purpose of looking at unique variations, as well as allowing for the identification of any common patterns that could emerge among the participants' varied experiences. Using this strategy allowed me to adhere to the objectives of my thesis research by providing people with diverse employment experiences the opportunity to share their unique stories. In addition, any common themes that had the potential to emerge among people in different settings would make awareness raising strategies more focused and proposed recommendations for change stronger.

In order to use this type of sampling strategy I needed to identify the diverse characteristics and criteria that I was looking for when selecting participants. Some preliminary criteria included people who worked in sheltered workshops and people who worked in various community settings. 'Working' in community settings included both paid and unpaid work experiences, as many people with developmental challenges hold volunteer jobs in the community. Participants were also included if they had an interest in sharing their stories, had the ability to share these stories verbally, and had the ability to understand and answer simple questions.

In adherence to the above criteria, twelve participants were interviewed for this study.

During one interview, it became apparent that a participant did not adequately comprehend the questions that were being asked. Several attempts were made to re-word questions, but the participant's responses were not usable for data analysis purposes. While this individual's data was not included in the larger part of this study, this participant still had the opportunity to share parts of his employment experience on the video and participate in Steering Committee meetings.

The final eleven participants ranged in age from 19 - 50 years. There were six males and five females and participants experienced varying degrees of developmental challenges. Participants lived in either one of two mid-sized cities in Southwestern Ontario, or a smaller community in the surrounding area. Of the eleven participants, five lived in independent apartments, 4 lived at home with relatives, and 2 lived in a group home facility. Two of the participants who were living in independent apartments shared their home with a spouse, and one participant had shared her apartment with the same roommate for twenty years. Participants all expressed an interest in employment and valued the importance of work in their lives. Six participants were employed in a semi-sheltered co-op setting - a relaxed and comfortable mid-sized workshop where employees disassemble computers and make and sell crafts. Two participants worked in a larger sheltered workshop - a large factory-like workshop where employees work in various departments including paper and mailing, woodworking, and custodial services. Finally, three participants had jobs with the PWT community group described above. In addition, the eight participants who worked in sheltered/semi-sheltered work settings all held concurrent jobs/volunteer placements in the community, or had previous employment related experiences in community settings. Moreover, the three participants employed by the community group also had various other employment related experiences. As participants were encouraged to discuss all their current jobs/volunteer

placements, as well as select a couple of previous experiences, a wealth of data was collected on many different employment settings. For a summary of participants' past and previous experiences, see Table 1.

Methods

As I have mentioned in previous sections, the overall method that guided my thesis process was PARL. More specifically, I chose a narrative framework to guide the actual data gathering processes. The use of narrative complements empowerment theory and is a powerful means to further empowerment processes (Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993). Narrative has been described by Sarbin (1986) as, "A symbolized account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension. The story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending...The story is held together by recognizable patterns of events called plots. Central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions," (p.3). Narratives are also seen as dynamic (Fullager & Owler, 1998) and intrinsically entertaining and humanizing (Salzer, 2000). Using a narrative framework involves listening to people's stories, understanding and being sensitive to individuals' perspectives, and using a variety of research methods to facilitate people's expression, or demonstration, of their stories (Rappaport, 1993). For individuals who have difficulty articulating their personal stories, combining interviews and observations, as well as using simple questions and prompts to 'draw out' an individual's story, can help give voice to people whose personal narratives may be more challenging to express (Booth & Booth, 1996). A narrative framework also spans levels of analysis and focuses on individuals, organizations, and communities (Rappaport, 1995).

Rappaport (1995; 1993) has identified three main types of narratives: personal stories,

community narratives, and dominant cultural narratives. Personal stories are individuals' personal accounts of their lives and are developed within a social context. Community narratives are persistent themes that emerge through the personal stories of members in a particular setting or community. Community narratives indicate shared experiences and identity among members of a specific group. They also communicate to members and non-members what the community is like, how the community developed, and what behaviours are expected among members (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991). Dominant cultural narratives are over-learned stories about people, places, or things and are communicated by social institutions and mass media. These narratives can be very powerful and often convey stereotypical information about certain groups of people. Dominant cultural narratives are often reflected in people's personal stories.

As mentioned, the use of narrative is consistent with empowerment theory. Having the opportunity to tell one's story is an empowering process that can be demonstrated at two levels. First, many people who are the focus of community psychology research and interventions are often disempowered - their voices are silenced. Rappaport (1995) notes that those who are in control in society determine whose stories are important and should be given social value. The stories of 'outsiders' are often ignored, or told by others in more powerful positions. People with developmental challenges, for example, are often 'excluded voices' in research that affects their lives (Booth & Booth 1996). Therefore, privileging the voices of research participants - giving them the opportunity to tell their stories, listening to these stories, and respecting these stories - is an empowering process that also changes the roles of researcher and participant to one of co-participants (Rappaport, 1995).

In addition to actually telling one's personal story to a researcher, having the opportunity to

share this story and reflect on it with similar others is also an empowering process. Fullager and Owler (1998) and Salzer (1998) discovered that negative dominant culture narratives are often reflected in the personal stories of disempowered people. They also found that positive themes of personal experiences also emerge in these stories and that these themes challenge the dominant cultural narrative. The researchers assert that if people have the opportunity to share their positive stories with each other, a new and more positive community narrative can be developed.

Rappaport (1995) suggests that, "...the goals of empowerment are enhanced when people discover, or create and give voice to, a collective narrative that sustains their own personal life stories in positive ways." (p. 796). He also asserts that community narratives are an important means for enhancing personal and social change. In addition Salzer (1998), predicts that through the use of community advocacy, it may eventually be possible to replace negative dominant cultural narratives with more positive community narratives. This too would be an empowering process.

Empowerment through narrative thus emerges through the opportunity to tell one's story and having access to, and influence over, community narratives (Rappaport, 1995). Data gathering in my thesis attempted to empower participants through both of these means. People with developmental challenges are a silenced population who are affected by a dominant cultural narrative that identifies them as lacking in abilities, and suggests they should be excluded from normal community life (Fullager & Owler, 1998). Also, as mentioned previously, these individuals tend to be excluded from research that concerns them (Booth & Booth, 1996). Therefore, I used a narrative framework to give my participants the opportunity to tell their personal employment stories. They also had the opportunity to discuss, and reflect on, their stories with similar others and had the chance to create a more positive community narrative to be shared with others through

the use of video.

Within a narrative framework, the most useful and congruous means for data collection is the use of open-ended, unstructured or moderately structured interviews (Mischler, 1986). Therefore, I chose to use the “Interview Guide” approach described by Patton (1990). This approach involved developing a list of questions or issues to be explored with each participant to make sure that similar information was obtained from everyone (this also helped to facilitate data analysis) (see Appendix A). With this approach, “...the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style- but with the focus on a particular subject that has been pre-determined,” (Patton, 1990; p.283). The interview guide is also flexible, it can be developed in more or less detail, and it allows the researcher to make the best use of the time available. In my thesis, this method gave participants a chance to tell their stories and define the issues that were important to them. It also provided me with a guide to gather similar types of information from each person and helped to keep participants’ stories relatively focused.

Duckett and Fryer (1998) and Booth and Booth (1996) both found that this method was effective for interviewing participants with developmental challenges. As mentioned, however, Booth and Booth (1996) noted that some participants did have a difficult time expressing their stories in response to open-ended questions. These authors asserted that researchers interviewing people with developmental challenges need to be 'self-developing' in their research methods by refining their methods during the course of an interview. It is suggested that sometimes direct questioning may be needed to gain access to people's stories. Booth & Booth (1996) also discussed the risks and rationales of this method. Therefore, I kept their suggestions in mind when

conducting interviews and made adjustments accordingly.

In adherence to Rappaport's (1993) suggestion that various methods should be used when conducting research within a narrative framework, I also made observations of some participants in their work settings. This provided people with a chance to put their stories in context as well as provide further information. A third method was the use of informal focus group discussion for participants to discuss and reflect on their stories. While the purpose of the focus group was not to reach consensus, it did provide participants with the opportunity to find common themes among their stories and had the potential to develop a community narrative. Assuming the ensuing narrative is positive, the experience of participation in focus groups had possibilities for empowerment. The use of focus groups for discussion during a research project, and for reflecting on outcomes and impacts at the end of a study, is consistent with Patton's (1990) suggestions. An additional semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the project to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of being involved in this project (Appendix B).

The final method that I used in my thesis was the use of video to record participants' interviews. This video was edited and can now be used for participants to share their stories with a wide range of people. Mankowski & Rappaport (1995) suggested that using audio and visual recordings is an effective means for demonstrating how personal stories can contribute to community narratives. Therefore, I was able to observe participants' stories and identify the common themes that emerged. In addition, the amalgamation of participants' stories together on one video was a useful means to demonstrate these common themes, or a community narrative. The use of video to share stories with a wider audience is actually based on research that supports the disempowering effects of visual media. Salzer (1998; 2000) reports that sensational mass media

accounts of public housing residents (and other groups that people do not have daily contact with) negatively impacts the public's opinions of these people, and strengthens and maintains negative dominant culture narratives. Thus, it was my initial contention that a video that demonstrated a more realistic view of people's lives could raise awareness and possibly change people's negative views of people with developmental challenges. It was hoped that using a video of participants' stories for awareness raising purposes (as well as the other narrative methods previously outlined) would be empowering for people in my study.

Analysis and Verification of the Data

In order to properly analyze participants' responses, several steps were taken prior to the actual process. First, interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed verbatim. Second, participants were shown their transcripts and if needed, or requested, I read them their transcripts. Finally, I recorded any insights they had, or any observations I had, in the margins.

I then analyzed the data in accordance with "open coding" procedures. My first step was to reread all participants' transcripts to familiarize myself with their responses and to alert myself to any similarities and/or differences in their answers. I then reread the transcripts a second time and highlighted all of the quotes which I felt were important or interesting. My next step was to create a new document where each main area covered in the interview served as a heading. I then pasted each participant's responses to that question under the appropriate headings and thus amalgamated all of the useful data. I then reread the responses under each interview area and identified some categories and major themes which emerged from the data. Next, I created another new document where the major themes served as headings and I, once again, pasted the participants' responses under the appropriate themes. After this process, I reread the two newly created documents to

ensure that all of the important data was included in the final document. Once I was sure that the final document included all valuable information, and that no new regularities could be found in the data, I reached a point of 'saturation' and the data analysis was complete.

It is particularly important when conducting qualitative research to verify the trustworthiness of the data, as qualitative methods are often accused of being too subjective and/or imprecise. Trustworthiness of the data in this research study was verified according to the three criteria set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These authors assert that the *credibility* (or the 'truth value') of qualitative findings must be demonstrated by representing multiple constructions of reality. I attempted to secure the credibility of the data in this study through two methods. First, I used a triangulation of sources by including several participants so as to gain data from different perspectives. Therefore, major themes which were supported by some, or all, participants helped to secure the credibility of the data. I also used triangulation of methods (interviews, observation, and focus groups) so that similar data obtained from these methods could secure the credibility of the findings. The second method that I used to secure the credibility of the data was giving participants a chance to read their transcripts and to verify their responses. I also held a focus group where I presented to participants the overall themes to be used in this final report. Participants agreed with the use of these themes to describe their experiences, and thus helped to secure the credibility of the data.

The second criteria which I used to help establish the trustworthiness of the data, was *transferability* (or the extent to which findings can be transferred to a different setting). Since qualitative research often focuses on very small sample sizes, it is sometimes difficult to generalize the findings to different situations. This lack of transferability may be seen as damaging to the

trustworthiness of the data. However, if the researcher provides a detailed description of the context within which the original research takes place, then the non-transferability of findings can be related to the differences between contexts, not to the method of qualitative inquiry. Therefore, the trustworthiness of the data will not be jeopardized by the non-transferability of the findings. In this research study, I have provided clear descriptions of the participants, sampling strategy, and methodology to secure the trustworthiness of the data. Therefore, if the findings of this study do not hold for another sample of people with developmental challenges, the context of the two studies can be examined for inconsistencies.

The final criteria for verifying the trustworthiness of the data is *dependability/confirmability*. In order to fulfill this criteria I kept an 'audit trail' of all the steps that I followed when analyzing my data. I followed Lincoln & Guba's (1985) suggestion of keeping a journal to record every step taken in the data analysis. I also kept all of the hard copies of the documents that were developed during the analysis to help verify the dependability/ confirmability of the data. Therefore, by satisfying the three criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability/confirmability, I am able to verify the trustworthiness of the data found in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Results

Results will be presented in two main sections. In the first section, participants' experiences in their various work settings will be outlined along three major dimensions: empowerment dimensions, social dimensions and environmental dimensions. Empowerment dimensions will focus on the empowered and disempowered outcomes that participants have experienced in their work settings. Many of the social dimensions and environmental dimensions that will be outlined in this

section may have the potential to act as empowering and disempowering processes for participants in their work settings - thus impacting participants' empowerment dimensions. Major themes within each of the three dimensions will be supported by quotes and personal stories to illustrate more clearly the lived experiences of participants. A detailed illustration of one work setting will also be used to highlight a workplace where empowering social and environmental dimensions appear to have influenced the empowered outcomes of employees. The second part of the results section will integrate participants' thoughts on their involvement in this project, along with my own personal reflections, to describe the experience of Participatory Action Research Learning.

Employment Experiences

Empowerment Dimensions of Work

Empowerment dimensions of work revolve around participants' thoughts and feelings regarding their work experiences, as well as their behaviours within the job environment. As discussed in the introduction, psychological empowerment is evident when an individual exhibits a sense of personal control, has a critical awareness of his/her environment, and takes action to exert his/her control (Zimmerman, 2000). A person who is not empowered would exhibit none of these features. Participants reported that they experienced both empowered and disempowered outcomes in their work settings.

Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops

Bill is a quiet and serious man in his early forties. He has worked in various jobs in the community over the years, but his main source of employment has been the 17 years he has spent in the woodworking department of large sheltered workshop. Bill took woodworking courses in highschool and feels that this previous experience was beneficial in securing his job at the workshop. When he was offered the job in the woodworking department, Bill felt that the final decision to accept the offer of employment was completely up to him, and he chose to say 'yes'. Bill enjoys woodworking, and particularly values the friendships he has made with his coworkers. He sometimes feels upset and frustrated when his supervisor yells at him and the other workers for

simple mistakes, however, he also feels comfortable questioning some of his supervisor's instructions. Despite his claim that he typically enjoys working at the sheltered workshop, Bill is frustrated that he receives only seventeen cents an hour for his work. This lack of money often makes it difficult for Bill to find the motivation to go to work in the mornings. Bill also relayed a story where a counsellor told him that he did not need to be working in a sheltered workshop and should be employed in the community. Bill, however, feels that it is easier for him to work in a sheltered workshop rather than to look for a full-time job 'out there'.

Empowered Outcomes

An indication that participants' were experiencing empowered outcomes in their workshop settings, was demonstrated by participants taking initiative during different stages of their employment experiences. When asked how she found her job, one participant indicated that she was the one who was primarily responsible for finding her job and making sure she was adequately prepared to work in that setting.

I just went in...and thought I needed some work boots...to...work out there, so [a staff member] thought we should go up to Canadian Tire and get some work boots. (Sandra)

Another participant demonstrated initiative when he relayed a story where he took it upon himself to question his supervisor's instructions when he felt there was a better way to complete a work task.

A second theme that indicated that participants were experiencing empowerment in their sheltered work environments was demonstrated in their ability to recognize their own strengths and appreciate how these contributed to their employment success. Previous experience was a personal strength that participants said made it easier for them to get their jobs. Participants discussed how the skills they had learned from parents, school, and former jobs had facilitated their current employment status.

I guess, maybe just...general experience...my woodworking experience from the school...custodial also from...the school... I guess experience...sort of...gets you around to

whatever you want to do...most jobs require experience...I've got my grade 12 education...you know, but, what I did in my last year of school...working here...compares to what I did there (Bill)

In addition to explaining how personal strengths contributed to the obtainment of employment, one participant in a sheltered workshop setting also indicated that her ability to persevere when confronted with challenges contributed to her employment success.

Sometimes it's frustrating, but I stick with it. Sometimes it's hard. (Kate)

Similar to recognizing one's strengths and positive qualities, another indication that participants were empowered in their work settings, was their ability to recognize their own weaknesses. Laziness was the major weakness identified by several participants who worked in sheltered workshops. Finding the motivation to actually go to work was identified by participants as a personal weakness that contributed to negative work experiences.

I guess it varies...some days are...are better than others...you know...some days you get up and...you don't feel like going to work...and then you think well...if you're not here, you don't get paid...you know...so you come in, you get paid for, for your work...and by time, by the middle of the day you're fine, you know... (Bill)

I think I could be doing better...well...obviously coming in more, I think...I'm lazy, I'll admit it...`let's watch T.V'... (Kevin)

In addition to self reflection, demonstrating the ability to make one's own decisions is also an important indicator of being empowered, or having control over one's life. In this study, the theme of choice emerged quite strongly, particularly when looking at the reasons why participants were in their current jobs. Participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops overwhelmingly indicated that they wanted to work at these jobs and it was they who had made the final choice to work at these particular settings.

It's me [that made the final choice]...like, you just fill out the application and then they decide... I filled out the application, you know...you could say no or yes...but I said yes.

(Bill)

Feeling empowered while actually at work is just as important as feeling empowered when selecting employment. One indication that participants were experiencing empowerment while on the job was the notion that they made important contributions to their work settings. One participant in a semi-sheltered workshop setting discussed his duties with pride.

I'm also the president, that's what I like... [I] help other people out. Do the banking, in charge of time, that stuff. (Scott)

While this particular participant obviously felt the importance of his work, most participants who expressed feelings of importance in their employment settings did so in reference to their jobs in the community.

Disempowered Outcomes

While participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops demonstrated signs of empowerment, they also experienced disempowerment at work. A very common theme that emerged among participants' responses was feeling frustrated about various aspects of their work settings. While it is arguable that being frustrated could be the catalyst for taking action (thus a demonstration of empowerment or control), it is also arguable that the actual feeling of frustration itself, is an indication of disempowerment. Moreover, it was evident when talking to participants in this study that the feelings of frustration they were experiencing were ongoing, and little action was being taken, or perceived as being an option, to combat this frustration. Therefore, the feelings of frustration demonstrated by participants in this study are one indication that they were experiencing disempowered outcomes in their work settings.

For participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered work environments, feelings of frustration emerged in response to interactions with supervisors and support staff. Being treated with a lack of

respect by individuals in supervisory roles, or watching their coworkers being treated in this manner, was a source of frustration for several individuals when they recounted stories of these situations.

I didn't like [the workshop] one bit... I really wanted to get out of there... if you wanted to go to the washroom they wouldn't let you go until your thing was done and that's pretty hard cuz when you have to go, you have to go. (Kate)

I don't know if they've gotten any better since...it seems like they have... a couple of years ago, I remember it seems nobody could do anything, staff seemed to be really...up on their high horse. One time, [a coworker] was coming out...just to say hello to somebody who was coming in, and the person who was in charge was like, 'No, no, no, come back here, sit down', you know, I just thought that was kind of like, let her go ahead outside, no big deal. (Kevin)

In addition to being frustrated by social aspects of their work environment, participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops also expressed frustration in regards to environmental aspects of their work situations. A particularly pertinent source of frustration for these individuals was the minimal salaries they received for their work. Similarly, participants also expressed feelings of frustration when they discussed the lack of work available for them in some of these workshop settings. Participants were bored and irritated with these situations.

The second theme that emerged from participants' responses which indicated they were experiencing disempowerment was an expression of giving up, or demonstrating a resigned acceptance of negative aspects of their work experiences. One participant epitomized this resigned acceptance when he discussed his search for employment beyond a sheltered workshop.

I went for... I don't know what... some kind of test... down by... the hospital there... and the lady that I talked to there said I shouldn't even be in [a sheltered workshop], you know... but I figure it's easy for me to be here than trying to find a job out there. (Bill)

Another participant demonstrated a resigned acceptance when discussing why she left a previous job at a sheltered workshop. Staff at the sheltered workshop made the decision for her to leave this

job after she exhibited some behavioural problems. They did not choose to discuss their decision with her prior to telling her to leave. It was interesting that the participant discussed this situation in a way that demonstrated an acceptance that this was just the way that things happened and she did not have the right to question the procedure.

Community Settings

Tyler is a charismatic and dynamic young man in his early twenties. His main passion is the arts and he loves to perform. Several years ago, one of Tyler's friends saw an advertisement in a local newspaper for a young people's theatre troupe. Tyler auditioned for the troupe, and attributes his position in the troupe to his talent. Tyler enjoyed his time in the group immensely. Despite the nervousness that he often felt prior to performances, Tyler feels that his ability to entertain people lead to his success in the theatre troupe. There were occasions when Tyler was not completely happy with the group dynamics. He shared one story where the troupe was brainstorming and appeared to be incorporating everyone's ideas except his. This experience made Tyler feel sad and frustrated. Overall, however, this was a positive experience for Tyler and he was sad when his contract ended. Since that time, Tyler has been searching for employment in the community. While he has been paid to make presentations for a local group, he has not had much success in finding a permanent job. Tyler is frustrated with the prejudicial attitudes of people in the community and often feels confused when dropping off resumes in buildings that are difficult to navigate.

Empowered Outcomes

Similar to participants who worked in sheltered workshops, several participants in community settings also demonstrated that they were taking initiative in their employment situations. Participants noted that it was primarily their own actions which secured their jobs.

I started out as a volunteer....I was about a volunteer for about 8 months, so then I applied..then there was job... description.... there was an opening...for the community worker...and... I was interviewed for that...he asked me what I think about what the community would be like...and I told him...what it would be like, that every self advocate...should come into the community where there's lots of things for them to do, because at that time...see what we were...all about is to bring those who were in institutions back into the community again, which...which at that time they were closing the institutions...so...from there...[they] just called me and said, 'You're hired!' Then I was one of the community workers. (Grace)

Participants who worked in community settings also demonstrated that they had taken the initiative to quit their jobs. Participants indicated that they had quit their jobs when they had become uninteresting, or when they felt they were being mistreated.

I quit after about a month...people would just...always complaining about this or that or nothing was ever right or... a lot of time we couldn't get the job... finished cuz we didn't have proper... equipment. The dishwasher would break down, you know, we'd have to sit there and scrub by it by hand, and... of course it has to be super clean cuz...they do have a lot of mentally challenged people coming in...hepatitis and what not...and that's, that was another thing that...they failed to mention in my contract...that I signed about... in the event that you do get hepatitis you can't sue us, you can't do anything... once I found that out then... I pretty much quit then. (Kevin)

In addition to taking initiative, participants working in the community also demonstrated empowered outcomes by recognizing how their own strengths and positive qualities were instrumental in securing their employment positions. When asked what made getting a job easy for them, a few participants noted that it was their personal strengths that facilitated the process.

I think it was... I think it's... from my talent...and also...I think my sense of humour that caught them... (Tyler)

I'm reliable, on time, call if I can't make it. (Bill - Bookstore)

Other participants indicated that it was their previous work experiences which had made it easier to get their jobs.

I had the experience of doing a lot of things... answering the phones and... doing computer work, so it really... it made it really easy... for me to get it because I had the experience. (Grace)

Participants also indicated that their positive personal attributes were important while actually working in their community jobs. One participant attributed his employment success to his ability to entertain people, while another participant specifically addressed how her growing ability to recognize her own strengths and weaknesses was contributing to her positive work experiences.

This ability to recognize personal weaknesses was evidenced by several other participants as well.

Participants discussed how negative personal qualities contributed to difficulties when searching for a job and while on the job. Similar to participants who worked in sheltered workshops, laziness appeared to be an important quality which contributed to negative job experiences. For participants searching for jobs in the community, this lack of motivation made it difficult for them to find employment. One participant discussed how his inability to get up early made it particularly difficult to find a job, while another participant noted that it was his general lack of motivation that inhibited his job search.

I'd say...trying to...get up early...it's like I've been told that...that...what's that one phrase... the early bird gets the worm, so...but it's the opposite, the early person gets the job... (Tyler)

I was slacking off, hanging out at [a coffee shop], being lazy. Lots of slacking...I thought at first I did want a job, but it was hard to find at first... I wasn't doing enough. I was being lazy. That's the past. (Scott)

A second weakness that was identified by two participants as making a negative impact on their work experiences was nervousness. One participant discussed how nervousness made it difficult for her during job interviews, while another participant discussed how the nervousness he feels during presentations at work is something about himself that he does not like.

Another indication that participants in community work settings were experiencing empowerment was demonstrated in their ability to make personal choices. Similar to the responses of participants who were working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, the theme of choice emerged particularly strongly for participants when asked who had made the decision for them to work at their jobs. Almost all participants noted that they had made the choice to work at a specific setting.

*I did [made the final choice]...because I was supposed to go with another girl and the other girl backed out... at the last minute and said forget it, so, I said '...let me do it'.
(Jessie)*

I decide myself [to work here]. (Robert)

In addition to choosing to work at a particular setting, a couple of participants working in the community also indicated that they were making their own choices while on the job.

Participants discussed how they decided when to complete certain tasks and what tasks they wanted to do on particular days.

Another indication that participants were experiencing empowerment in community employment was the recognition that they are valuable members of these settings. Feeling like they play a significant role or are making worthwhile contributions to the work environment is undoubtedly an indication that these participants were feeling empowered. Some participants expressed feelings of importance when discussing the actual work tasks they performed. Being responsible for completing meaningful tasks or helping others in need appeared to make participants feel important.

Well, there was this one time when [a child] was crying and...I came over and played with him and made him feel better (Kate)

For my work...make sure everyone doesn't fall on ice...and...sometimes I put salt on...to make all the customers safe. (Robert)

In addition to feeling like one's specific tasks were significant, it was evident that other participants were feeling important when they discussed being in charge of other people or certain areas of the work environment

It's such a great place to work...I've got pretty well run of the whole area up there...except maybe for a few spaces... (Bill - Bookstore)

Disempowered Outcomes

Similar to participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, participants who worked in community settings also experience disempowered outcomes as a result of their work experiences. These participants discussed their frustrations with various individuals at different stages of their employment journeys. There were several participants who described their frustration when looking for jobs. They had found it difficult to secure employment positions in the community, and attributed this to the prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour of people in employment agencies and people in the community.

I applied twice for wet/dry [recycling], but [an employment agency] was doing the hiring...I don't even know if they looked at my resume or not...but, I told them I had four years experience...and I never got called in for an interview or nothing...and the last I heard, the city was supposed to be doing it, so if the city was hiring I may have got in...but they didn't do it, [the employment agency] did...I don't know if I got turned down because I work here at [a sheltered workshop], because maybe they thought I wasn't experienced, or they had to train me more. But they were hiring people with less experience. Or maybe because of [my] highschool... it's seen more as a trade school, and they let in people in wheelchairs. I don't know if any other highschool does. I have my grade 12. (Bill)

Other participants discussed feeling frustrated when job coaches treated them like children when assisting them to find employment.

These participants also discussed situations where they felt frustrated while actually at work in the community. Participants frustrations were evident when they relayed stories where supervisors continuously watched their every move, and where they were repeatedly not informed when their shift was over, resulting in unpaid overtime. Other participants shared situations which made them feel frustrated.

It's frustrating, it wasn't clear about being paid. They think I'm slow and can take advantage of me. I've had a lot of people do that to me in the past. (Kevin)

I worked in [a factory] for one day...and they laid me off...they didn't even give me a

chance...worked at [another company] for three days, they didn't even give me a chance... I only worked for three days... I don't know... I only worked hard enough for one...they were treating me like a kid...they'd ask me the same questions over until I got sick of it (Scott)

It is interesting that, similar to participants who discussed their frustrations when looking for work in the community, participants who were frustrated while actually working in community settings also attributed these frustrations to prejudicial attitudes and behaviours exhibited by other people in the work environment.

In addition to frustrations being attributed to interactions with other individuals involved in the employment process, participants also expressed some frustrations with aspects of the actual work environment. One participant noted that he felt particularly frustrated when he visited work settings that were confusing and inaccessible. Other participants expressed frustration that they continuously had to rely on seasonal and contractual positions.

In addition to feelings of frustration, participants in community settings also demonstrated a resigned acceptance to situations at work. One participant relayed a particularly poignant story where he demonstrated a resigned acceptance to his coworkers not taking his thoughts and ideas seriously.

It was the...people there...because...when I give some, some feedback, right...they do sometimes talk about the feedback what I say right...but other times, they don't, and like...the problem is they...heard the feedback, right, but they also listen to other people's feedback and they...they say things what...other people say about the feedback, and... I'm like what is this... I didn't know....like I was giving them feedback right, but they...they didn't think that it was actually interesting...but, the other people gave their feedback and they thought it was interesting...so, and that's why I wrote that one song called "Alone", during that one time...I was in the...I was in the project. (Tyler)

Finally, there were also several accounts of participants demonstrating a resigned acceptance when they had to leave their jobs.

Well [my boss] gave up the store...he passed it on to...another guy who's not as friendly...and...anyway, when they switched it over they didn't have room for me anymore, so... I was pretty much let go (Kevin)

They laid me off...because they didn't want me anymore. I don't know why, but... (Scott)

Whether they were laid off or forced to quit, these participants and others who left jobs against their will felt they were not wanted where they worked and relayed this information in a way which implied that this was not an unusual occurrence and was behaviour they had grown to accept.

Dreams for the future

Just as an interesting aside to this section on empowerment, the final question of the interview asked participants to describe their employment dreams for the future. I think that a significant indication that many participants in both sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops and community settings were feeling a sense of empowerment was evidenced in their responses to this question. When asked what their idea of a dream job would be, nearly every participant in this study was able to identify and discuss their ideal job situation. Some participants discussed jobs that were more modest than others, such as working for grocery stores, restaurants, and cleaning services. Other participants, on the other hand, felt no limits to their dreams.

I would have to say somewhere in California..I don't know, I'd probably... edit film...seems like a fun job... things to do with movies...I guess it's tied into the same thing, but I'd like to do voice work for cartoons... I always want to hear myself on Saturday morning cartoons, I think that would be really neat. (Kevin)

Law enforcement...police science... probably... make up a new vest... their vests I think are... not top of the line... they call, called killer bullets, they're hollow tip...and... from what I've heard the police are only supposed to use them, but there's... guys out there that have them... and a hollow tip won't...the shield won't stop it... If I could have any job that would be it...police science... there's... they got that thing on there on TV, but it costs a fortune just to enroll or something like that... just law enforcement, I'm... intrigued by law enforcement. (Bill)

Other participants shared their dreams of becoming a teacher, becoming a disc jockey, working at

the Air Canada Centre, and traveling to Australia. Finally, other participants talked more generally about their job aspirations and hopes for the future.

Somewhere where it's friendly...a safe environment...people who work together with me, not against me...people who, who work as team...like that (Michelle)
I'd just like to say... I wish that in the future I could...get a job that I could actually keep... and be happy. (Tyler)

In summary, then, participants in this study demonstrated that they were experiencing empowered outcomes as a result of their work experiences. To varying degrees, participants exhibited a sense of personal control, a critical awareness of the environment, and participation in behaviours to exert their control. On the other hand, many participants also demonstrated feelings and behaviours which did not reflect empowered outcomes. Feeling frustrated and showing a resigned acceptance of negative experiences demonstrated a lack of personal control as well as a lack of action to exert control.

Social Dimensions of Work

A major focus of the social interactions described by participants in this study centred on social support. As outlined in the introduction, Cutrona and Russell (1990) described five different 'types' of social support: emotional support, social integration or network support, esteem support, tangible aid and informational support. Participants in this study indicated that they received these different types of social support from various sources during their search for employment, while on the job, and when leaving their work settings. Support was provided by job coaches and external employment agencies, work supervisors and staff at sheltered workshops, coworkers, and members of the larger community. Some participants even had the opportunity to provide support to others in their work settings - an opportunity that Cutrona and Russell (1990) argued was a sixth form of social support. There were also situations, however, where participants felt they were not receiving

support from others in their work settings. Moreover, there were many situations where participants felt that those responsible for assisting them in their employment journeys were not only being non-supportive, but were treating them in a disrespectful manner.

Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops

Kate is a confident and well-spoken woman in her early thirties. She spent several years working in a large sheltered workshop, but does not like to discuss this experience as it was extremely negative. Kate recalls being picked on by coworkers and not being allowed to use the washroom whenever she needed. When Kate was asked to leave the sheltered workshop due to some behavioural issues, she visited a smaller semi-sheltered workshop where she immediately chose to work. Currently, Kate works full time as a woodworker and candle maker at this smaller workshop, and volunteers once a week at a daycare and senior's centre. Kate really appreciates her supervisors at the semi-sheltered workshop. She likes that they assist her with difficult tasks and also shared several stories where these individuals listened to her and comforted her when she was feeling sad or frustrated. Kate also likes her coworkers and is happy that they have become her friends. There have also been some negative experiences for Kate in the semi-sheltered workshop. She recalled one situation where another coworker claimed that Kate was picking on her, and an upsetting accusation by a staff member ensued. Kate also was quite upset when she witnessed a staff member remove a coworker's lunch before she had finished. Whether positive or negative, social interactions were a consistently important theme in Kate's work experiences.

Receiving Support

The main task of job coaches and external employment agencies is to secure employment for people. Job coaches tend to be affiliated with sheltered workshops or with agencies who specifically seek to place workers with developmental challenges and/or other challenges. External employment agencies, however, typically offer assistance to any person who is searching for employment in the community. The majority of participants who worked in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops appeared to rely on job coaches to secure employment in these settings. There were occasions, however, when participants used the assistance of external employment agencies.

*Through [an employment agency]... I just found it through [this agency]...and he said to come here...for now...and I'll just ... I'll go and look, though, for a job sometime this year.
(Scott)*

When I finished highschool... I got into...work for what's known as a counselling services program...and they found the job here at [the sheltered workshop]. So, I came in, had an interview...with a lady who's not here anymore and I...I filled in the form and then I came in and started working here...started off at a lower pay, but now I'm up at top wages. (Bill)

In accordance with the main focus of their work, job coaches and employment agencies were identified by participants as providing much needed informational support and tangible aid.

In addition to job coaches and external employment agencies, supervisors and staff of sheltered workshops were identified by participants as providing a wide range of social support. Participants discussed how staff and supervisors provided tangible aid by assisting them to complete work tasks and helping them to fix any problems that arose. Also, and this will be discussed in the next section on community settings, several sheltered and semi-sheltered workshop settings also directly employ job coaches who assist people in locating jobs in the community. The reception of tangible aid from these staff members was discussed by many participants.

While tangible aid was an important type of support provided by supervisors and staff at sheltered workshops, the reception of emotional support from these individuals was a strong theme that emerged from many participants' stories. Many supervisors and staff were credited as providing comfort to participants when they were upset and listening to them when they had problems.

My job here really means a lot because I know that...that if I'm upset that they ask, they don't...they don't wait until you get really upset, they ask you like right away and that means a lot to me sometimes I just get so frustrated that... I get upset and I don't talk and they ask me what's wrong so I tell them... (Kate)

There's good communication between us and the boss. He listens, I've had people who won't listen...he's pretty well understanding, he'll...he'll listen, you know...and he says if you ever have problems come to him and ask...but, I know to leave him alone if he's not in a good mood...I found that out. (Bill)

Receiving social support from job coaches, employees of external employment agencies, as

well as supervisors and staff in workshop settings were important components of participants' employment experiences. Similarly, receiving support from coworkers was also an important part of most participants' work experiences. For participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, most coworkers were also individuals with developmental challenges, while those employed in community settings typically worked alongside individuals without developmental challenges. It was evident during my discussion with participants, however, that for the most part, similar types of social support were provided by coworkers in both types of settings.

The reception of tangible aid from coworkers was not discussed by too many participants, however, it was evident from a couple of participants' responses that tangible support was provided if it was needed.

Mark [co-worker] sometimes helps me...out there...and...gets out...those small...things that take out those small screws. Mark likes to help me out in the [workshop]. (Sandra)

The most common form of social support that was provided by coworkers, however, was social integration or network support. A particularly strong indication that participants in this study felt like they were a part of the social environment in their work settings was their references to coworkers as their friends.

A lot of nice people...it was rough at first because... it was confusing at first, but...cuz I was nervous and scared cuz it was my first day working here, but there's a lot of nice staff and a lot of nice people that have become my friends, so... it makes it easier. (Kate)

Similarly, participants also discussed how these coworkers provided for fun and comradery in their employment settings.

My workmates are good, you know...we joke around a lot, we have a lot of fun...you know, I can't think of anything wrong with it. (Bill)

The final group of individuals that participants indicated as providing them with social support in their work environments was people in the community. While this group of people

obviously affected the experiences of participants working in community settings far more than participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, there was some evidence of community support for people in workshop settings. One participant discussed the acceptance of his coworkers in a semi-sheltered workshop, and noted the positive impact that this has on him.

It kind of brings you up to, to know that they're welcomed... in the community as well...doing their thing...it's just a good a feeling. (Kevin)

It is clear that this participant was feeling a sense of social integration or network support for himself and his colleagues.

Providing Support

Participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops overwhelmingly discussed situations where they received social support from others in these settings. In fact, no participants specifically discussed situations where they were the ones to provide support to others in workshop settings. It could be argued, however, that the social integration and network support that coworkers provided to participants was also being reciprocated. Referring to coworkers as friends and relating stories of working together and enjoying time spent together on the job, are possible indications that participants were also providing social integration and network support to fellow employees in these workshop settings. Similarly, based on my previous experiences as a staff member in a semi-sheltered workshop setting, it is often the case that employees spend much social time together in organized recreational activities. The expansion of relationships beyond the workplace setting is also likely to increase the social integration and network support among participants and their coworkers.

A Lack of Social Support

As demonstrated, receiving social support was identified by participants as a positive

component of their jobs. It is not surprising, then, that participants saw a lack of support by various others at work as a barrier to a positive employment experience. Not being provided with enough social support, however, was mentioned considerably less often by participants than the reception of appropriate amounts and types of support. Participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops gave no indication that job coaches, employees of external employment agencies, coworkers or people in the community were not providing them with adequate amounts and types of social support. It was only in reference to supervisors and support staff that there was any mention by participants that they were not being provided with the social support that they wanted or needed.

More help. I always need it. I'd like [staff] to help me shovel snow, but he has a snow blower (Gary)

It should be noted, though, that this lack of support by supervisors and support staff was a rare event.

Disrespectful Attitudes and Behaviours

Another prevalent theme that emerged from participants' responses was the significant number of occasions where participants felt that they were being treated poorly, or disrespectfully by people in their work environments. It could be argued that disrespectful behaviour is the same as a lack of social support, and I would agree to a certain extent. I would argue, however, that treating someone with a lack of respect would take non-supportive behaviour a step further. Being non-supportive could be described as simply not providing supportive behaviours, while being disrespectful would not only involve being non-supportive, but would also include behaving in a hurtful or demeaning way towards another person. Based on careful analysis of participants' responses, this is the interpretation that I have chosen to use in this thesis project. Disrespectful

attitudes and behaviours experienced by participants in their work environments will be discussed separately from, but as an extension of, lack of social support. Similar to participants' experiences with lack of social support (and reception of social support) disrespectful behaviour was displayed by various people in participants' work environments.

Participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops did not discuss any situations where they experienced disrespectful attitudes and behaviours from job coaches and employees of external employment agencies. They did, however, have many stories where supervisors and staff in their sheltered workshop settings treated them with a lack of respect. This was a disturbingly common theme among participants. Several participants relayed stories where those in supervisory roles treated them and their coworkers like children.

If you wanted to go to the washroom they wouldn't let you go until your thing was done and, that's pretty hard cuz when you have to go, you have to go. (Kate)

One time [a coworker] was coming out... just to say hello to somebody who was coming in, and the person who was in charge was like 'No, no, no, come back here, sit down'. (Kevin)

Participants also discussed other situations where supervisors and staff acted in a disrespectful manner towards themselves and their workmates.

The boss, the odd time...if somebody does something wrong then he'll yell...he'll yell at everybody...I don't see how that can...be good or bad, but if some person does it...I don't know why he should yell at everybody then, but, I guess what he's trying to do is to get his point across to everybody in there...so somebody doesn't go and make the same mistake...well...I get involved in that too then...I don't want to go against him, you know, cuz...well, he's the supervisor, so...I try and do what he wants...to be done and...carry it on from there. (Bill)

Today two people [staff] were rude, they took lunch away from [a coworker] while she was still eating (Kate)

In addition to experiencing disrespect from supervisors and staff, participants also discussed situations where coworkers treated them with a lack of respect. In sheltered and semi-sheltered

workshops where coworkers were also typically individuals with developmental challenges, negative behaviours typically took the form of taunting and teasing. Making fun of others seemed to be a common occurrence in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops. Participants noted that this was an aspect of their jobs that they did not like.

I didn't like [the workshop] one bit... I really wanted to get out of there. Just that everybody would turn around and hurt everybody else's feelings. (Kate)

[I don't like] when people start picking on other people. (Gary)

As participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops usually did not come into contact with members of the community in the context of their work settings, disrespectful attitudes and behaviours from this group of individuals was not mentioned by participants.

Community Settings

Michelle is a determined and outspoken woman in her mid thirties. She enjoys being a leader and participating in various community projects. Michelle currently works part-time as a community worker where she gives presentations and assists other people with developmental challenges. She originally became involved with this group as a volunteer and secured her current position when her coworkers encouraged her to apply for the job. Michelle feels that her coworkers are a wonderful group of individuals who work well together. She appreciates that people take the time to explain things to her so that she understands, and really feels that there is a team-like atmosphere at work. There are times, however, when Michelle feels frustrated that certain team members do not communicate well. She recalled situations where people interrupted her when she was speaking, or talked over what she had to say. Michelle also finds it irritating when coworkers try to take over her job. Despite these frustrations, Michelle really feels a sense of connectedness with the people with whom she works. She loves when people share their personal stories with the group, even though she sometimes finds it difficult to hear people's negative experiences. While she is currently content with her job, Michelle has experienced prejudice and discrimination in the past when she has been looking for employment. She feels that people in the community often judge her and do not offer her jobs because of her appearance.

Receiving Support

Similar to individuals working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, participants working in community settings typically relied on job coaches and external employment agencies to

assist them in locating jobs. As mentioned, many participants working in the community were also currently working (or worked previously) at a sheltered or semi sheltered workshop and it was job coaches affiliated with these settings who assisted them in securing jobs in the community.

Well, I think [a job coach] had a lot to do with it, getting me a job...and [another staff member]...they come with me...and make sure that...first they come with me for a couple of days until I'm comfortable and then they leave. (Kate)

Other individuals, however, also relied on job coaches who were not affiliated with workshop settings.

I found out...by...my community placement worker at that time...there were different...jobs were coming in all the time...and there was [a local charity]...they were, needed volunteers for a lot of things...they needed... I guess they needed volunteers for...data entering, and...doing things like that, and I used to...answer the phones too... I did that too. [My community placement worker] asked 'would you like to work at the [local charity]? and I said I would...then I started with them. (Grace)

A couple of participants also sought community employment through external employment agencies.

In addition to actually identifying job coaches and external employment agencies as providing them with tangible aid and informational support, several participants also expressed their appreciation of this support and discussed how these individuals facilitated their search for employment and their eventual obtainment of a job.

Participants also discussed how tangible aid was provided by supervisors in their community settings. One participant indicated how his supervisor provided tangible assistance in the form of meals.

My boss is pretty cool...he's a nice guy...he buys me lunch all the time...since I'm not really getting paid. (Kevin)

While participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops also discussed the emotional support

provided by supervisors and staff in these settings, it is interesting to note that this theme did not emerge for supervisors in community settings. While many participants mentioned that they 'liked' their supervisors in these settings, it was rare that these individuals were identified as actually providing a specific type of social support.

When discussing the various people who provided them with social support in community settings, participants most often referred to their coworkers. Coworkers also seemed to provide the broadest range of support to participants. While no participants actually provided specific examples of tangible aid provided by coworkers, the knowledge that this type of assistance was readily available if necessary provided participants with emotional support. Knowing that coworkers were available to provide a helping hand if problems occurred at work appeared to give participants a sense of comfort and security.

The people are fine...they're great...if you have any problems, you know, you just go to them and ask...and they'll...go, help out, you know, if they're able to... (Bill)

The [charity] they have really...really nice people to work with...they're really super...like if [my supervisor's] not there...there's always someone there, like if I have troubles with something...that they're there...I really like it, working there...as a volunteer. (Grace)

In addition to coworkers providing emotional support there was also some evidence that these individuals also provided esteem support to participants in community settings. While this was not a particularly common occurrence, it was clearly evident when one participant discussed how her coworkers encouraged her to apply for a paid position within an agency where she already volunteered.

Having someone tell you and being encouraged to go to the interview. Encouragement is important to me... understanding people... caring people... we have the most caring people and understanding people in this group... that I've ever met... and that's what makes it easy for me to cope with... makes me feel comfortable... People who explain things to me in a better way. That helps make things clear (Michelle)

While emotional support and esteem support were important components of the support provided by coworkers, what appeared to be the most important type of coworker support was social integration or network support. Similar to participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, participants in community settings repeatedly discussed the various ways that their coworkers made them feel a part of the work environment. Some participants identified themselves as part of team, and spoke of the close emotional connections that they had with their coworkers.

We have a...wonderful... group...they...all of the people from [our group] are very special...and very gifted people...everyone of them, that I've met, ...they're all special and we all get together and work together as a team, not against each other...we work together, and I think that all the people that I've...worked with for last three years...are very special, gifted people...and that's what makes a team...is working together...not against each other...and that's what makes it special, and...one of the things in the group that we all like to have...is having fun...yeah, so, it's a pretty special gifted group...that I really like to work with...and I feel comfortable with...and there's no...and you can't find [a group] anywhere else, as good as [this group] is. (Michelle)

During the last job that I did, that I was acting...it was the last day there and I so-called went to a bar with them...they so-called gathered round in a circle, right, and each person said things about what they were feeling and that kind of stuff, right...and I said...things like...how much...I will miss them and I had fun and that kind of stuff, and during that time...I was trying to speak so much, right, and somehow I so-called...usually I don't show this, but...during that time I was overwhelmed, and I was so-called went into tears, because...I was saying certain things and I so-called went in tears, and I said okay, I can't go... (Tyler -Theatre)

Other participants discussed the friendships that they had with coworkers and how this sense of connectedness or comradery made their jobs fun and entertaining.

More friends...there's all kinds of friends at [the grocery store]. (Robert)

It was fun, they were good people to work with. I felt I did my best job there. (Scott)

Finally, all of the participants in this study either currently or previously held a paid or non-paid job in a community setting. Interacting with customers or other members of the public was,

thus, a common occurrence for most participants. When discussing these interactions, it was evident that people in the community also provided social support to participants. It was also clear that this support was overwhelmingly in the area of social integration or network support.

Participants discussed various work situations where other people helped them to feel accepted as an important part of the larger community.

[I like to] say hi to customers...and say hi to my people...especially those highschool kids...they say hi to me, I say hi to them very nicely. (Robert)

Being out in the community is...more of a challenge than being [at the sheltered workshop]...here...maybe you get...prepared for work you're about to do out there...you know, but I prefer to be out there in the community...meeting people, you know, and...just stuff like that, you meet... new people everyday, like...I've seen, I've seen a number of people, different people come into the [bookstore] that...I don't talk to them...you know, it's not my business to talk to them, I'm there to work...you know, but I do my job, and...well, if somebody comes in to say 'hi' or needs something, you know, I'll...try and find maybe one of the... top people there for them, you know...but I do my work and...I had a guy tell me the other day...he goes 'are you using something on the floor' and I go 'well, just what's in the bottle there' and he goes 'well, it looks pretty good...when we do it, there's streaks in it', so...he complimented me, you know...that the floors were looking good...no complaints yet. (Bill)

The importance of this public acceptance and community integration was quite evident in many participants' stories.

Providing Social Support

While the predominant theme among participant's responses was the reception of social support from other people in their work environments, several participants in community settings also discussed how they liked having the opportunity to be the providers of support. According to participants, they seemed to typically provide emotional support to others in their community employment settings.

Well, there was this one time when [a child] was crying and...I came over and played with him and made him feel better. (Kate)

I like everything, I like doing everything...it's really rewarding, I like to...help other self advocates...as much as possible....I was going to say... I like to help the self advocates, help them if there's any...questions, any questions they have, I would be able to help them...as much as possible. (Grace)

A Lack of Social Support

Similar to participants in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, participants in community settings placed a high degree of importance on the reception of social support from others in their employment settings. While not receiving adequate support was not as common as receiving appropriate amounts and types of support, participants in community settings did discuss how different groups of people within their work settings did not provide them with the support that they needed. When participants talked about their job coaches and employees of external employment agencies, they typically had positive comments about the support provided by these people. Only one participant discussed feeling unsupported by an external employment agency when they did not return his phone calls about an upcoming job opening. Similarly, another participant discussed the lack of emotional support she felt from her supervisor.

The reason why I didn't like it there, because...she was hardly there when I ...wanted to talk to [my boss] about something, she was never there because she's...a... pharmacist, she goes to...patient's home, and she does the...reflexology, or, you know...She wasn't there to talk to me.....if I had something on my mind and she's never...she wasn't there at the time. (Grace)

A lack of emotional support by coworkers was also mentioned a couple of times by participants in community settings. Tyler, in particular, discussed an emotional situation where he felt that his coworkers were not listening to him or taking his ideas and suggestions into account. As outlined in the previous section, however, coworkers appeared to be the main providers of social support so it was not common for these workmates to be regarded as non-supportive. Finally, there were no specific stories relayed by participants that identified people in the community

as not providing them with the support they wanted or needed.

Disrespectful Attitudes and Behaviours

As an extension of the previous section on lack of social support, participants who worked in community settings also experienced disrespectful attitudes and behaviours from various individuals in their work environments. Similar to stories relayed by participants in workshop settings, there were very few indications that job coaches and people in external employment agencies were treating them with a lack of respect. There was one participant, however, who did feel that his job coach was disrespectful towards him when assisting him to obtain employment.

Sometimes I don't know, I mean...going for jobs with her [job coach], because...well in fact I think sometimes she can make me look kind of 'he's a little slow'...She's like "he's a client", it's embarrassing. People at work wonder what's wrong with you...they think I'm normal until she comes in. I feel like a kid, and not the good kind. (Kevin)

Disrespectful behaviour by supervisors was also a common and unsettling theme among participants in community settings. Similar to Kevin's experience described above, other participants relayed stories where they were treated like children by supervisors.

I worked in [a factory] for one day...and they laid me off...they didn't even give me a chance...worked at [an insulation company] for three days, they didn't even give me chance...I only worked for three days...I only worked hard enough for one...they were treating me like a kid...they'd ask me the same questions over until I got sick of it. (Scott)

Other stories of participants experiencing negative treatment at the hands of supervisors were also abundant. Participants in community settings discussed situations where they were yelled at by supervisors for simple mistakes, were not paid the amount of money they had originally been promised, and were misled by supervisors in regards to hours worked and continuation of contracts. One participant discussed a situation where constant and unnecessary pressure from a supervisor caused him to become upset and lose his job.

I was...going in two days all the time, and...during that time I was working there...the person that was...observing me, I guess...she was like watching me, right, always...and I kind of felt a bit nervous, right...it was, it's like once people watch me...I get like so nervous...I'm like this is not good right, and so...I was trying to go as fast as I could...and she so-called kept telling...saying, 'go faster Tyler, go faster', and I'm like I'm going as fast as I could right...and of course, I do sometimes...get out into space or something like that...and then I keep going back to the thing, right...but all of a sudden she so-called pushed the wrong weird button on me...because sometimes when someone...so-called pushes certain buttons...I do get a bit ticked, or angry, or upset...and so she pushed...this one little button on me that...I so-called got a bit upset, and I so-called went into tears...at the time...and then she said, 'Well, we have no other choice to fire you', I'm like okay...that's fine with me...I was, I was trying to keep on going, but... (Tyler)

Supervisors were not the only people identified as treating participants with a lack of respect. Disrespectful treatment by coworkers was also discussed by participants, though these negative interactions were not as common as disrespectful behaviours by those in supervisory roles. As mentioned in the previous section on sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, participants in these settings typically experienced coworker disrespect in the form of taunting and teasing. Participants who worked in community settings with coworkers without developmental challenges, however, tended to experience similar disrespectful behaviour to that displayed by supervisors. Participants discussed situations where coworkers would talk over what they had to say or take out their anger on them.

Everybody seemed to be in a...hell of a mood. They were always mad at one another...which upset me, cuz everyone was angry and it's like they're angry at you...and it seemed everybody would dump on us dish pigs because we're...the lowest paid out of everybody who's there...well, second lowest. (Kevin)

Finally, due to their jobs in the community, many participants came into contact with various members of the general public. A few participants also relayed stories where people in the community displayed prejudicial behaviours and attitudes when they were applying for jobs.

*I've so-called done...almost everything that I could do...but...I'd also...like to get people to actually...give me the job, cuz it's...well...it's sometimes the person...actually if I ask the person, right...if they aren't hiring or anything like that...and then...they say...we're going to some time in the summer or something like that, right...and...we're not hiring right now, but probably in the future or something like that so...then they say if you want you can give us the resume, and that kind of stuff, right, and sometimes, I...sometimes think that they...say that to...ask you to leave...sometimes they say that...they say that to be...nice, but...other times I think that they say that because they know that I have a so-called problem, right, and so...it's kind of tough to get a job...it would help if they see the person on the inside, but not on the outside, because that's what they do...it's kind of tough.
(Tyler)*

It can be a challenge to get a job when you have a disability. It can be a hard time because they won't accept you to do a good job. It's a struggle to get a job, and it can take a long time. I had an experience where I was looking for a job and they would not accept me because of my appearance. This can even happen for volunteer jobs. It's sad when people don't accept you for the way you are. (Michelle)

Customers in stores and services, were also identified as treating participants with a lack of respect.

A few participants discussed situations where people were rude to them or would not listen to them when they were giving instructions.

In summary, then, most participants in this study discussed the reception of social support as an important component of their work environment. Participants explained how the different types of social support they received from various sources improved their employment experiences. Many participants also expressed their appreciation of this support. On a similar positive note, a few participants also discussed the positive impact that providing social support had on their work experiences. Having the opportunity to provide support, however, was mentioned considerably less by participants than the opportunity to receive support.

In addition to the reception and provision of social support, there were a few participants who relayed stories where they felt they were not receiving support from various others in their work environment. Lack of support was considered to be a negative aspect of participants' job

experiences. A more common, and similar theme, however, was participants' experiences of disrespectful behaviours and attitudes from those in their work settings. Participants experienced these negative behaviours from the same range of people who were also identified as providing social support. These disrespectful behaviours and attitudes were identified as barriers to obtaining employment as well as negative attributes of current work situations.

Environmental Dimensions of Work

Within the context of this current study, environmental dimensions of work refer to the physical attributes of the workplace as well as to various structural and functional elements of the employment setting. As I referred to previously in the introduction, Herzberg (as cited in Lippitt, 1982) paid particular attention to the environmental aspects of work, making an interesting and useful distinction between *hygiene factors* and *motivators*. When reviewing participants' responses in this study, it was evident that both hygiene factors and motivators played an important role in their work experiences.

Participants discussed many aspects of the work environment that resembled Herzberg's *hygiene factors*. When referring to these factors, participants typically indicated that these were important elements of work which they 'liked' to be present and 'did not like' when they were not present. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I will rename *hygiene factors* as environmental necessities. In a similar vein, participants also made many references to aspects of the work environment which were similar to Herzberg's *motivators*. In their interviews, however, participants seemed to place a differential emphasis on the importance of these factors. References to motivating factors typically emerged when participants were comparing one job to another. In many cases, the presence of motivators at work lead participants to maintain that one job was better

than another, even though they also liked the other job as well. Similarly, participants noted that motivating factors were elements of the work environment that they 'liked', but rarely mentioned the absence of such elements when discussing aspects of their jobs that they disliked. For the purpose of this study I will refer to these elements as environmental motivators.

Sheltered and Semi-Sheltered Workshops

Scott is an honest and thoughtful man in his late twenties. After he finished highschool, Scott worked in several community jobs including retail stores and factories. For various reasons, none of these jobs lasted for a long period of time and Scott spent many hours hanging out in local coffee shops. Eventually, he began to feel the need to make money, and an employment agency referred him to a semi-sheltered workshop. Scott views his job disassembling computers as temporary and spoke of his plans to seek out another job in the community. Although he does not see his job as permanent, Scott enjoys his work at the semi-sheltered workshop. He likes to take equipment apart and finds his daily tasks to be quite interesting. Scott particularly enjoys his position as 'president' of the workshop. Being in charge, helping others out, and doing the payroll are tasks that he performs as president. Overall, however, Scott is unhappy with his position in the semi-sheltered workshop, as he is not content with the amount of money he receives for his work.

Environmental Necessities

The most salient theme that emerged among participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops was the dissatisfaction they expressed with regard to their salaries. Several participants discussed how they made less than a dollar a day in larger sheltered workshops, and noted that this is something they would like to see change in the future.

The pay was only a few cents for each day. You work like crazy and they don't pay you enough. (Kate)

Maybe just an extra pay level...seventy cents doesn't go far...you know, but we're paid once a month...which is something that, that they thought would be better...instead of paying us twice a month...but...the only thing, just maybe an extra pay level up. (Bill)

[I would like to] make more money out in the [workshop]...Because I never do make enough money in woodworking. I would like to make lots in the [workshop]. (Sandra)

This lack of sufficient payment lead to feelings of frustration among participants. One participant emphasized that although he enjoyed the actual tasks he performed in the workshop, the minimal payment he received contributed to his overall unhappiness at work. Another participant indicated that the lack of sufficient payment she received at a sheltered workshop was the main reason she left this particular job.

Another environmental necessity that arose for participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops was the amount of work that was available for them to do. All participants who mentioned the volume of work at their jobs felt that there was not enough to keep them busy. One participant noted how this lack of work was something that she did not like about her current work situation.

There's not enough work, one girl goes too fast...we have nothing right now, so...like we've been doing crosswords and that, so it's like...absolutely nothing. That's why I didn't come back yesterday, because there's absolutely nothing to do, so...When we get work, then I'm in a good mood. Doing nothing all day...mmmm (Jessie)

Another participant mentioned that a lack of work at a sheltered workshop was an important reason why she chose to seek employment elsewhere.

In addition to minimal payment and a lack of work, another theme that emerged strongly from the responses of participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops focused on the amount of space they had in which to actually do their work. All participants who discussed the issue of space felt that there was not enough room for them to work. For one participant, it was the sheer number of people in the work environment who made her experience unpleasant.

Too many people...there were at least 58. It was a big group. I just didn't like that environment, not the people themselves, just the number. (Michelle)

The other two participants who discussed a lack of space were both referring to the semi-sheltered

workshop where they worked.. Both of these participants noted some concerns with the lack of space (too much dust flying around, too many objects and people) and both felt that finding a bigger space for their workshop was something they would like to see happen in the future.

The final environmental necessity discussed by a participant in a sheltered or semi-sheltered workshop centred on the equipment needed to complete certain work tasks. While only one participant in a workshop setting (and one participant in a community setting) specifically mentioned the importance of equipment, both of these participants mentioned the issue repeatedly, and therefore, I felt it was important to discuss in this section. Moreover, the participant who discussed equipment problems in the workshop setting worked in the same area as several other participants, so it is possible that his concerns would also affect these other individuals. The major concern for this participant was the lack of proper equipment which prevented him from completing his job properly. This was an obvious source of frustration for this particular individual.

I would like to get more tools...in the toolbox...because we misplaced tools. That would make it better cuz we wouldn't lose them anymore...Yeah...get more tools...get more work [done].
(Gary)

Environmental Motivators

References to the presence of environmental motivators were scarce in the stories of participants working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops. The most common environmental motivator mentioned by these individuals was their enjoyment of their work tasks. Participants noted that the tasks that they were required to complete contributed to a positive work experience.

It's interesting...it's fun. I like to take stuff apart. (Scott)

I like the sanding all the wood, it's not very hard to do, just move one sander right across
(Sandra)

In a similar vein, another participant noted that she enjoyed her new job at a semi-sheltered

workshop because it provided her with a greater variety of tasks.

I like my new job...I'm not doing the same thing everyday...there's change. (Kate)

One final indication that participants were provided with environmental motivators in workshop settings is evident in one participant's response. Having responsibilities at work is an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their skills and abilities and feel like they are making a contribution to the work setting. One participant indicated that having responsibilities at work was what he liked best about his job.

That...I'm sort of in charge. I do all the banking and all that stuff. (Scott)

As an aside, it is interesting to note that all participants who mentioned the presence of environmental motivators in their workshop settings were all employed in a smaller semi-sheltered environment. Participants in larger sheltered workshops did not discuss environmental motivators.

Community Settings

Kevin is a sensitive and intelligent man in his late teens. He has worked in several jobs in the community, and found his summer job at a local golf course to be his most enjoyable work experience. Kevin fondly recalls his days of driving the cart around the golf course retrieving golf balls and returning them to the clubhouse. He enjoyed the freedom of driving around with the sun beating down on him, but found the job to be quite tedious on rainy days. Kevin was disappointed when the summer came to an end and his contract was finished. With the help of a job coach, however, Kevin secured a job at a local video store. Kevin found the work quite interesting on most occasions, but became quite irritated during slower periods when his boss asked him to clean the store. During his probation period at the video store, Kevin was not receiving payment for his work. Initially, this arrangement was fine with Kevin and he appreciated that his boss bought him lunch and gave him free posters and popcorn instead. After the probation period, however, Kevin continued to not receive payment for his work, and became upset and frustrated with this situation. He recalled how he had experienced similar problems in other employment situations, and felt that employers often took advantage of him.

Environmental Necessities

Payment was an environmental necessity that also arose for participants in community settings.

In comparison to their peers in workshop settings, however, dissatisfaction with the amount of

money they received was not emphasized as strongly. One participant even commented that receiving minimum wage in his community job was something that he really enjoyed. Another participant, however, expressed that he constantly received minimal payment in community jobs and felt that this was related to people taking advantage of him because of his developmental challenges.

It's frustrating, it wasn't clear about being paid. They think I'm slow and can take advantage of me. I've had a lot of people do that to me in the past. (Kevin)

A second, and related, theme that emerged for participants working in the community was the difficulties that they faced when they had the opportunity to earn more money. When their salaries increased, the money that participants received from the government decreased. For some participants this was seen as a barrier to getting a better job or preventing them from taking more hours at a current job.

I want to take more days, but I have to talk to my job coach before I do...and my husband, cuz we're on FAA... Family Benefits cheque...and he doesn't want me to do that because it would be going down if I do. (Jessie)

In addition to payment concerns, participants in community settings also made references to the lack of work available for them at their jobs. This was a frustrating experience for one participant in particular.

Cleaning...sometimes I do cleaning for something to do...I cleaned out the washroom last time...didn't really appreciate that...it's just the sort of thing that kind of gets on my nerves...it's like, well I'm supposed to be here.... to sort movies...of course I guess it's the same with a lot of things when they've got nothing to do, 'Why don't you wash the walls'. (Kevin)

While participants in both workshop and community settings expressed that there was not enough work for them while actually on the job, a more common frustration for participants working in the community was their reliance on seasonal work and contract work. Participants who found

employment that they enjoyed often found themselves out of work once the contract was complete or the season was over.

I was doing...this...theatre project at one time, and...I was...doing the acting, dancing, that kind of stuff...it was a pretty good job out there...but after a certain...time, it just ended, and I...I was trying to get a job going back there, but they said I can only do it once...it sucks so much, so...I've been so-called out of a job since...last time was in...in 1999. (Tyler)

For individuals who work in the community, accessible location was another significant aspect of their employment experiences. One participant emphasized that she was happy that her job was located on a bus route as it made it easy for her to travel there independently. Another participant, however, did not like relying on public transportation. She found it difficult to depend on the city bus schedule and said she would prefer to find a job closer to her home. A third participant discussed how he chose to turn down an attractive job as it was too far away from his friends and family.

Another important aspect of the physical work environment that was mentioned by a couple of participants was a concern with the safety of their surroundings. Participants who discussed this issue felt that there were aspects of their work environment that were not safe, and this was an aspect of their jobs that they did not like.

I might get hurt...that makes me mad...because of my job. I would have to go to the hospital and I don't want to spend my day at the hospital. (Gary)

For Gary, wearing steel toe boots helped to increase the safety aspects of his environment and ease his fears of being hurt. Another participant who felt she was in an unsafe environment eventually chose to leave this job.

For several participants in this study, employment in the community involved working in outdoor settings. Weather, therefore, played an important role in the enjoyment of their jobs. Warm weather and pleasant conditions were an aspect of one participant's job at a golf course that

he liked. When it rained, however, this participant did not enjoy working. Similarly, another participant did not like that his job involved working outside in the cold weather.

Maybe just the cold weather...Well, the barn, you know, it's never warm in there...it's always cold...here in the stockyards...you know, out there in the winter time...the one area it had this...big heater and it warmed up the whole place...but I think maybe it was, maybe just the cold weather...you'd move from one barn to the other then...got to take the horses out, you've got a jacket and gloves on...then you got to take the gloves off too ...and the harness, you know, then...you have to throw your coat back on before it gets too cold...Walking back and forth, you know, and...maybe climbing up the ladder to get the sawdust down, then if there's a wind it just blows all back up again, you know...(Bill)

The final environmental necessity discussed by participants centred on the equipment that they needed to use in order to complete their work tasks. As mentioned previously, one participant in a workshop setting repeatedly discussed that a lack of equipment prevented him from completing his job properly. Similarly, one participant in a community setting frequently discussed equipment problems in his workplace. This participant did not like that the equipment that he was required to use was not readily accessible. He did eventually make a suggestion to his supervisor to move the equipment to a better location, but was told that this was not possible. Therefore, this participant continued to carry the equipment up and down several flights of stairs each day.

Environmental Motivators

Various environmental motivators were discussed by participants in reference to their jobs in community settings. Similar to those working in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, a significant aspect of the work environment that was mentioned by many participants in community work settings was the enjoyable nature of their work tasks. When participants were asked what they liked best about their jobs, many responded that it was the work tasks themselves that made for a positive job experience. For some participants, it was the physical tasks of their job that they found most enjoyable.

I guess just...driving the...cart around and I would also go out and water the greens or...put fluid in the ball washers...out at the greens...just taking the cart out...kind of fun with the sun coming down. (Kevin)

For another participant, it was the more social work tasks, such as teaching and making presentations that she found most enjoyable.

My most favourite is going out of town and speaking to people, and bragging about my job which... I never did before, a year ago, I mean before a couple years ago, ...my favourite is just telling them how to...what [our group] does and if people like to have [a group] in their own city then I would love to teach them how to do that. That's my most favourite is being a consultant. (Michelle)

In addition to enjoyable work tasks being the primary contributor to positive work experiences for many participants, several people in this study also noted that it was the enjoyment of their work tasks that lead them to identify one job as better than another.

Maybe [the grocery store]...I put stuff out...sometimes, a long time ago, they let me put stuff on different shelves... I put pizza and more stuff out at [the grocery store]. I like to put pizza on shelves. (Robert)

Another prominent theme that emerged from participants' discussions of their work environments in the community focused on the opportunity to have various and interesting experiences at work. Several participants discussed how they enjoyed doing different things each day at work and shared new opportunities that their work had provided for them.

I guess it was mainly just the horses... I like horses...same with my wife, you know...horses, the dog, any kind of animal...I actually...did get a chance to ride...I'd bare backed to Western or anything...even with the saddle was a little different for me, I've never ridden with a saddle before...so that was... kind of a... new experience there...it's different from riding Western...cuz Western you ride with one hand...English with both hands (Bill)

Similarly, other participants discussed liking their certain jobs better because they felt they were more interesting.

I would say... at the [department store]...I was...doing...the recycling and also I had to take the recycle outside, and...do some sorting and that...the library...is totally boring, like...you, you

could like just fall asleep there (Tyler)

In addition to specific features of their work tasks, another environmental motivator that was discussed by participants centred on the importance of having responsibilities at work. When asked what they liked best about their jobs, a couple of participants specifically discussed liking the importance of the tasks they were responsible for completing. This was identified as a significant positive feature of their work environment.

For my work... make sure everyone doesn't fall on ice...and...sometimes I put salt on...to make all the customers safe. (Robert)

I really like my [community worker job] a lot better...the reason I chose [this job] is that I like to help...other self advocates. (Grace)

Having freedom at work appeared to be another environmental motivator mentioned by several participants working in the community. Having more freedom at a particular job was the main reason that some participants stated for liking this job over another. Some participants mentioned a general feeling of freedom, while others discussed more specific expressions of freedom such as leaving early and being able to complete tasks of their choosing.

I like working in the Library better...then I can work on the computer down there as much as I want. (Sandra)

One final environmental aspect of work which was important to a few participants in this study was the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills. Learning how to do presentations, how to look after children, as well as learning more about oneself, were several important aspects of their jobs that participants mentioned in their interviews.

The presence of environmental motivators is obviously more apparent when participants discussed their jobs in the community as opposed to workshop settings. In fact, this exact sentiment was specifically expressed by several participants in their interviews. As mentioned

previously, the majority of participants in this study are currently working in community jobs or have done so in the past. Similarly, the majority of participants in this study are also currently working in sheltered or semi-sheltered workshops, or have worked in one of these settings at some point in their lives. It is important to acknowledge that the majority of participants who have worked (or currently work) in sheltered workshops did not dislike these jobs. While participants did have some complaints about these jobs, they also expressed their dislikes about jobs in community settings as well. When asking participants about their overall happiness/unhappiness with their jobs in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops, most participants stated that they were happy with this employment situation. On the other hand, when participants were asked to compare their jobs in community settings with jobs in sheltered or semi-sheltered workshops, it was clear that community jobs were seen as better.

The Nursing Home...gets me out...doing other stuff than...being...in [the sheltered workshop]...I'm...more...happier out... in the community... both my husband and I are both out...he's out more than I am... (Jessie)

Because the group gives me more experience than the [sheltered workshop]. I have more jobs, more freedom, and traveling. People explain things better. It's just totally different. The [sheltered workshop] was more isolated than [my community worker job], where I can spread my wings and try new things. (Michelle)

Other participants agreed that having the opportunity to participate in different experiences, interacting with a variety of people, and learning new skills were reasons that they preferred working in the community over working in traditional workshop settings.

In summary, then, participants discussed many aspects of their physical and contextual work settings which affected their employment experiences. Participants in both workshop and community settings discussed numerous environmental necessities which affected their work experiences. In regards to environmental motivators, however, participants in community settings

mentioned these elements more often than did participants who discussed their sheltered workshop experiences. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, participants liked when environmental necessities were present, and had more negative employment experiences when they were absent. When environmental motivators were present at a certain job, participants tended to like this particular job better than another job where such motivators were not present. Environmental necessities and motivators both considerably affected the work experiences of people in this study. For a summary of employment dimensions, see Table 2.

People Working Together - An illustration of empowerment excellence

Many of the sheltered workshops and community settings discussed in this study provided participants with positive and empowering work experiences. Participants who were employed in these settings also exhibited varying degrees of empowered outcomes. Over the course of this project, however, it became apparent that there was one setting that was excelling in their provision of empowering opportunities for their employees. People Working Together (PWT) is a small group that consists of employees, with and without developmental challenges, working together to improve the lives of people with developmental challenges living in the community.

The team of employees at PWT work together to assist people with developmental challenges to link with resources in their community. They also develop and facilitate workshops that focus specifically on empowerment and learning to turn dreams into realities. Adults and adolescents with developmental challenges are invited to attend these workshops. In addition to these smaller workshops, PWT holds monthly meetings for people with developmental challenges who live in the surrounding community. Employees and volunteers plan and facilitate these meetings which provide participants with opportunities to share their stories with each other, engage in lively

debates on current issues, learn about various community resources, and socialize informally to develop a sense of community. Finally, PWT also provides education and awareness raising presentations to other interested groups. Staff and volunteers travel throughout the city and province to share their experiences and discuss the PWT model. PWT was also instrumental in assisting a smaller community to develop a similar group.

Three of the participants in this study were employees of PWT. Two participants worked as part-time Community Workers, and the third participant was hired on a contractual basis to plan and lead presentations. When participants were asked about their jobs at PWT, they had many positive things to say. They appreciated the salary that they received and found it helpful that the location of the group was accessible by public transit. They also enjoyed the motivators provided by PWT: traveling, presenting, organizing meetings, meeting new people, and performing a variety of different tasks. Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to help others and to be responsible for completing important tasks. Acquiring knowledge, learning new skills, and having freedom were also aspects of the environment at PWT that participants felt were beneficial.

In addition to environmental factors, participants also mentioned many aspects of the social atmosphere at PWT that they liked. Receiving esteem and emotional support from coworkers was particularly important to one participant. Coworkers were seen as caring and understanding, and were often referred to as 'the team' - indicating a sense of network support for participants. The reception and provision of network support was also evident when participants discussed the impact that personal storytelling had on them and others at large group meetings. Finally, in addition to providing network support, participants working at PWT also had the opportunity to provide emotional support and tangible aid to others in need of assistance.

The impact of social support, and environmental motivators, is evident when reviewing the empowered outcomes for participants working for PWT. These individuals demonstrated the capacity to take initiative, the insight to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, and the appreciation that their actions were important and helpful to others. It was also apparent to me, having had the opportunity to work closely with all of my participants, that these individuals displayed more indications of empowerment than many of the other participants. They also brought this experience of empowerment to other areas of their lives - most recognizably to this study. I found that it was these participants who immediately volunteered for tasks and provided helpful feedback and suggestions at meetings. Two of these participants had amazing insight and the ability to critically reflect on their experiences, and one of these participants continued to make follow up calls to inquire about the status of the project. Having listened to their stories and spent many hours together, it was quite evident to me that these individuals experienced empowerment - and much of the credit for this empowerment was given to PWT.

Oh, I'm very happy with my job...I've had so much experience, and so much learning...so much...learning about PWT and what I can and cannot do...it's really...made me grown...and made me more open with others. (Michelle)

I do not want to create the illusion that PWT is the perfect employer. Participants did discuss their concern and unhappiness with the loss of funding that PWT was experiencing the following year. Job insecurity was definitely a concern for these participants. There were also some minor irritations with other staff members and a feeling that communication among employees could have been improved upon. Overall, however, PWT demonstrates how employment environments and social dynamics can create positive and empowering outcomes for employees. The impact that this atmosphere has on participants is particularly evident when the three PWT

participants were asked about their dream jobs. Two participants specifically indicated that they were already employed in their dream jobs at PWT, and the third participant described a workplace situation similar to PWT. I think this is a true sign of success for PWT.

Reflections on the research process

In the methods section, I outlined how I would attempt to use empowering research methods throughout this thesis project - namely Participatory Action Research Learning (PARL). In this section, I will use participants' reflections on their involvement as well as my own observations and reflections, to describe the various elements of the research process.

Telling their stories

The interview process involved participants answering several open-ended questions about their current and previous work experiences - in essence, this was participants' opportunity to share their stories. Once a participant's story was complete, I transcribed the interview, and met with each participant again to go over any areas they wished to clarify, expand upon, or delete. Participants and I also discussed several sections of their stories which they felt they would like to share on video.

When asked what they liked about telling their stories, most participants simply said that they enjoyed talking about their work and what they do on the job. Other participants identified some specific things that they liked about telling their stories. Tyler liked that the experience gave him the confidence to talk about himself and his experiences, which is something he often finds difficult to do. Grace liked telling her employment story, as it was a way for others to understand what her job experiences are like for her. In a similar vein, Kate and Bill both felt that having the opportunity to tell their stories was an important way to help inform people about the capabilities of different

people with developmental challenges.

I liked showing that I have a job like everybody else. I like working and I liked sharing that. I liked showing that people with disabilities do try and not to judge them. (Kate)

(I liked) taking you around work to show what I am capable of doing. I liked telling people more about my job at (a sheltered workshop). A lot of people aren't sure about (the sheltered workshop), so this was a chance to tell them. We do contracts - this could be a way to spread the word so they think of us for contracts. I enjoyed it. It gives me a chance to explain what I think about my job. It's a good chance to show what's going on at (the workshop). (Bill)

When asked what they did not like about telling their story, many of the participants said that there was nothing that they did not like. Kate and Michelle, however, both said that they found it difficult to discuss the things that they did not like about their jobs.

Listening to participants' stories was a particularly enjoyable aspect of this project for me. I was honoured, and a little surprised, by the amount of personal information that participants were willing to share with me. I always enjoyed asking the question about participants' dreams for the future. I think these answers really helped me to get a clearer picture of the person with whom I was talking. I do remember, on several occasions, being concerned with the lack of criticism participants had about their jobs. I was not sure if this lack of criticism was due to a true love for all aspects of their jobs, or whether participants were wary to share negative thoughts about their jobs for fear that their supervisors may find out. Once I went over the transcripts, however, I found that participants were more critical than I had originally thought, and that they had shared with me a broad range of opinions about their jobs.

There were two aspects of participants' personal story telling that really impacted me and made me reflect on this part of the research process. First, there were a few participants who had been recommended to participate in the project due to their previous job experiences in certain areas.

For example, one participant had worked as a camp counsellor and the agency contact person had suggested that this would be an interesting story to include in the project. When I went to interview this participant, she discussed many of her other jobs, but did not discuss the camp counsellor position. Similarly, there were other participants who seemed to focus on other jobs that were not mentioned by contact people as a good reason to include them in the project. This situation actually enriched the project as I heard about a wider range of job experiences than I had originally anticipated. It also reinforced for me the importance of allowing the participants to guide the research and to share the stories that are significant to them. This observation demonstrated to me that what appears to be an important aspect of an individual's life to another person could be completely different from what is actually important to that individual.

The second aspect of the story-telling that really made an impact upon me was when I interviewed participants I had known for several years. Having worked in one of the settings previously, I was a former support staff to a few of the participants. At first I was worried that this may limit the amount of information, and particularly criticism, that they would be willing to share with me. It became immediately obvious that this was not the case, and I found that some of these interviews were my longest and most interesting. These individuals shared with me thoughts and feelings about their jobs and their lives that I had never heard, or considered, prior to this thesis project. I truly did begin to see a few of these participants in a new light. This observation really emphasized for me the challenge of being a staff member in a situation where there are many people with developmental challenges. Taking the time to talk to people and really listen to what they have to say is not always encouraged, or feasible, when there are so many people requiring input and attention. I think it would definitely enrich both staff and employees with developmental

challenges' work experiences if there was more opportunity for open communication between them. (I am also aware, however, that participants in this study may not have seen me as a staff member and that was the reason they were so candid).

While the story telling was typically a positive experience, there were two instances which arose during this step of the research process which were challenging for me. First, a parent of one of the participants did not want her daughter to participate in the project at all. The daughter had actually been one of the first people to express an interest in participating, and was quite excited about the whole process. I dealt with some ethical issues at this stage as the daughter was an adult who no longer lived with her parents. I was frustrated at the power this parent could still exert over her child, and I was also distressed at the limiting views she held about her daughter's ability to participate. I met with the parent on a couple of occasions and realized that her concerns over her daughter's participation were grounded in the historically poor treatment of people with developmental challenges in research projects. Once I explained to this parent the details of the project, she was more willing to have her daughter participate. This situation did end positively as I was able to help mediate the situation. I continue to be bothered, however, by the power that the parent had over her daughter. If the mother had not provided her consent, then the daughter would not have participated in the study.

The second situation involved a participant who was not happy with his current job. At our first interview he had just found a job with the help of his job coach and was excited about the opportunities that this job would have for him. At our second interview, this participant had been working for a couple of months and was no longer happy with the job. He complained to me about many aspects of the job that he did not like. He did not ask for my advice or seem to look for my

approval or disapproval regarding his situation. This individual just seemed to want to vent his frustrations. About one week after this interview, I received a call from this person's job coach telling me that the participant had quit his job after a heated exchange and wanted to know what had happened at our interview. I explained that I could not disclose to the job coach what the participant had shared with me, but could assure her that I had in no way told the participant to quit his job. The job coach accepted my explanation and that was the end of the issue. I think, however, that having known this job coach for several years made this situation less difficult than if we had no previous interactions. I think that an unknown researcher in a similar situation would have experienced more problems in assuring the job coach that he/she had no involvement in the participant's decision. It made me aware of the ethical issues that can arise when conducting this type of research, and the difficulty of maintaining participants' confidentiality while dealing with support staff and supervisors' concerns. Despite these two challenging situations, having the opportunity to share their stories was an enjoyable opportunity for both participants and myself.

Making the video

Actually making the video involved several processes. A few of the participants, and another interested employee of the semi-sheltered workshop, learned how to operate the video camera and microphones. All participants told their stories on video and many chose to have themselves videotaped in their actual work settings. Several other participants then watched the completed stories and helped to choose the final parts to include in the completed video. Participants also got together to decide on the format of the video and to agree on the title of the video. Finally, I took their stories and suggestions to an independent media group and worked with an editor to complete the final version.

When I talked to participants at the end of the project, I asked them what they had liked best about making the video. Several participants commented that they simply enjoyed telling their stories and creating an opportunity for others to listen to their experiences.

I liked showing you around work and the different stuff that I do. (Gary)

I liked making it. I like how it comes across to others who want to know more about our experiences. (Grace)

Being heard. I think that's important. (Michelle)

In addition to having the opportunity to appear on camera, several participants also enjoyed their more technical roles during the making of the video. A couple of these participants identified these tasks as something they liked about making the video.

I liked holding the video camera. It was fun. (Scott)

I liked holding the camera and holding the sound. (Robert)

Participants were also asked if there was anything that they did not like about making the video. Most participants could not identify anything that they did not like. Two participants, however, did feel slightly uncomfortable about different aspects of the video. Tyler was not particularly comfortable telling his story on camera at the beginning - though warmed up and did an amazing performance - while Michelle did not enjoy watching herself on video afterwards. Overall, however, making the video seemed to be a very positive experience for participants.

Making the video was, for me, probably one of the most challenging and frustrating parts of the entire project. I was not prepared for the amount of time and amount of financial resources that were needed to make a video. Having had little previous experience in making videos, I took a weekend workshop to learn the basics about using a video camera as well as some helpful hints for video production. I then needed to coordinate the availability of the media centre's video camera

with convenient times for 12 participants, as well as their employers and work sites. This was a difficult task. Since the video camera cost \$50/day to rent, it was also quite important that we could fit as much filming as possible into each day. There were several frustrating experiences when participants did not show up to have their stories filmed on particular days, or when there were mechanical complications with the video camera. I had originally planned for the filming to take approximately one month. In reality, however, it took almost three months for all of the stories to be videotaped. Similarly, the final editing process took almost three full weekends in the summer, a length of time that I definitely was not anticipating. Faulty editing equipment and scheduling problems also contributed to this prolonged process.

I think one of my biggest challenges during this part of the research process was to continually adhere to PARL. It was really important that participants become completely involved in the making of their video. Therefore, they also needed to learn how to use the video camera and operate the audio equipment. This involved a half-day training workshop and an extra day of video camera rental. It was also necessary to coordinate participants' who were telling their stories with participants who were filming the stories. This scheduling typically worked out well, and I found that reminder phone calls the night before definitely helped most participants to keep to their appointments. In addition to teaching participants how to use the video camera and coordinating schedules, I also needed to create new transportation consent forms when I had to take my film crew to different cities to film (see Appendix H). Finally, extra time was also needed so that participants could help edit the video and make decisions regarding the final production and presentations. At this point, adhering to PARL just seemed more time consuming and frustrating than if I could have simply completed the tasks on my own. There were many times when I was

tempted to simply take over and do all the filming and editing myself. Knowing that using empowering research processes was a major component of my thesis, however, I managed to continuously implement these processes as we made the video. Talking to participants afterwards, and hearing how much they appreciated making the video, and how much they learned while making it, definitely reinforced for me the importance of PARL. Despite the challenges and frustrations during the actual process, the outcome was definitely worth the extra time, finances, and work.

Watching the video

We like to work in the community - Research on Employment

“I am a busy and active person...” one participant announces into the camera at the outset of the video. What follows is a half hour of 12 personal stories on the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. One man provides a tour around ‘his’ drugstore that he has been working at for 10 years, while another woman explains her job as a community worker where she runs ‘Empowerment Workshops’ for adults and teens. “I like working!” declares another man as he happily shows where he punches his time card at a local arena. Another participant becomes more reflective as he discusses the difficulties he had finding a job, and how “Being lazy” negatively impacted his job search. “I’d like to work in Australia, I think it’s a neat place to be,” shares another woman as she demonstrates how she makes candles at a semi-sheltered workshop. Police Science and Wildlife Forestry are the dream jobs of another man who has worked at a sheltered workshop for 17 years. Another woman, who works as a community worker, describes the travelling and presentations that she does for her job, but admits frankly to the camera that it is a challenge to get a job because she has a disability. “We should be able to get jobs without being judged,” she declares. The next participant explains how she often gets bored at her job in a sheltered workshop. She describes a new job in a restaurant in the community and likes this job “Because it’s close to my husband.” A young man then shares a situation where his boss took advantage of him by not paying him enough money and advises others on how to avoid these types of situations. “I like sanding,” announces another woman as she demonstrates how she builds birdhouses. Finally, the music swells and Michael Jackson’s music fills the scene where a young man begins a dance routine on an outside stage. Having taught himself to tap dance and sing, this man has performed in theatre troupes and presentations. Despite his talent, he has found it a challenge to get a job because of his disability and feels that “With disabilities or without disabilities, we’re all the same.” The video comes to a close as a participant shares a poem “Voices” that she has written. She closes with these powerful words: “I can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, but most of all speak.” Overall the video demonstrates the variety of jobs in which these individuals are employed. It shows the frustrations and the

challenges experienced by people with developmental challenges. Most of all, however, the video demonstrates the pride that people feel in their jobs and the hope that they have for the future.

I remember the first time I watched the final video the whole way through. The editor and I had just finished a long day completing the final cuts and additions in the sweltering hot editing suite. We decided to end the day by watching the completed video. I had a lump in my throat as I watched the participants tell their stories. I was so impressed with the participants' stories and how they came together to create a coherent, yet dynamic picture of their varied employment experiences. I felt that this video epitomized participants' commitment to the project and that together, we had created a tool to inform people about the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. As the final credits rolled, the editor turned to me and said "It's great. I really think you guys are getting your message across" I hoped that participants felt the same way.

Most participants watched the video together as a team, while some watched it by themselves. When participants watched the video for the first time, their initial reactions were overwhelmingly positive. There was a lot of excitement and participants immediately began to discuss various places where they wished to present the video. In the final interview, several weeks later, participants were still quite excited about the video. When asked how they felt when they watched the video almost all participants commented that they felt 'good' or that the video itself was 'good'. Another popular response was that participants really enjoyed seeing themselves and others in the video.

It was good... I like seeing myself at (work) and talking about wildlife. (Bill)

It was good. I liked seeing myself stocking shelves. I liked watching myself and everybody else. (Robert)

After the more general question was posed, participants were then specifically asked what parts

of the video made them feel happy. Once again, several participants commented that they enjoyed seeing themselves on the video. A few participants also made comments that demonstrated that they were feeling a sense of connectedness with the other participants - a feeling like they had accomplished this task as a team.

Wow, it was neat seeing myself in the video...it was neat to see the other participants stories. It was neat to work with them and learn about their stories and interests. (Grace)

That we accomplished it because it was hard getting together. It was fun watching it succeed. (Michelle).

Other participants said that they were happy because the video had the potential to break the stereotypes of people with developmental challenges.

When people saw me, because they can see the person on the inside and not on the outside (Tyler)

I felt happy because I know it will help change others' opinions about us. (Kate)

While Kate was optimistic about the potentially positive effects of the video, she also felt sad when she heard other people in the video talk about the negative way they have been treated by others.

I think people shouldn't judge us unless they know us. I was upset when people talked about that. (Kate)

When other participants were asked what made them feel sad or mad when watching the video, Bill commented that he was not happy that some of his story had been cut from the final version.

Michelle noted that she felt sad when she heard herself talking about the group she worked for because they are currently having problems obtaining funding. For most of the other participants, there was nothing that made them feel sad or mad when they watched the video.

In addition to their own feelings about the video, participants were also asked to speculate

about the reactions of other people to the video and if they thought that the video would change the general public's opinions about people with developmental challenges. For the most part, participants felt that the video would lead to more positive views of people with developmental challenges. A couple of participants thought that people who saw the video would no longer make fun of them and other people with developmental challenges.

It will change the way people think, in a good way. People usually see people with disabilities and make fun of them. But when they see this video, it will increase their good thoughts about what people's abilities are. (Tyler)

As Tyler mentioned, the video was also a method for showing what people with developmental challenges are capable of doing. Several other participants also agreed with this, and felt the video was a chance to demonstrate their, and others, abilities.

They will see (the sheltered workshop) as a place to help people and give them training. Some people think (the sheltered workshop) is for dummies, but we're out there, our picnic tables are top quality. (Bill)

It's important for the video to be done. People think we can't do stuff, but we can. Doctors say to put us in institutions, but our families have the right to have us there. I think the video will make people have a better attitude towards people with disabilities and what we can do. I think they will have a positive attitude. (Kate)

In addition to decreasing negative behaviours towards people with developmental challenges and improving attitudes, some participants also felt that showing the video may increase theirs, and others, chances of getting jobs.

The video will change employers' minds about hiring people with developmental challenges. (Grace)

While most participants felt that the video would improve people's opinions of people with developmental challenges, some participants were a little more skeptical about the capacity of the video to change people's views.

I don't think it will change, it will go on. Life will go on, nothing will change. (Gary)

I don't know if it will change the way people think, it depends on the person. I really don't know. It may, it may not. It depends on the person. (Scott)

While these opinions were definitely in the minority among participants, I think they were very important to hear to keep the project in perspective. Despite the positive viewpoints of the other participants, and myself, these individuals were very realistic about how much people can change from actually watching a video. I really appreciated hearing these thoughts, and they definitely helped to keep me grounded during the video presentations.

Overall, though, watching participants' reactions the first time that they watched the video and listening to their later reflections about the video was definitely the most rewarding part of this entire project for me. I was glad that so many participants enjoyed the video and felt proud of themselves. Moreover, having participants identify themselves as a team and feel like that they had accomplished a worthwhile task that would help to improve their lives and the lives of others with developmental challenges was inspiring. Similarly, their generally optimistic outlook about the capacity of the video to change prejudicial attitudes and behaviours was hopeful and encouraging. Participants' reactions to, and reflections on, the final video definitely made the entire project worthwhile for me.

As an aside, each participant also received a final copy of the video as a summary of the research process. As many participants could not read, or may find a written summary of the results confusing, having a copy of the video was a more accessible way for them to receive feedback about the study. Judging by their reactions to the video, I think that this means of feedback was definitely effective in helping participants to feel like their participation in this study was truly a worthwhile accomplishment.

Presenting the video

At the present time, there have been three main video presentations of which I am aware. I have been a co-facilitator at two of these presentations, and the third presentation was facilitated solely by participants. Only a few of the participants were involved in these presentations. Due to scheduling difficulties, the rest of the participants have not had a chance to be involved in a video presentation. There are plans in the works, however, to give these other participants the opportunity to facilitate a presentation in the near future.

Prior to the first presentation, I met with the three participants who were co-facilitating the presentation to develop an introduction for the video, as well as some follow-up discussion questions. We then met the evening before the actual presentation to practice in front of mutual friend of the participants and advocate for people with developmental challenges. This individual was extremely helpful in offering us support and suggestions on how to tailor the presentation for different audiences.

The first presentation was conducted at the university to a group of graduate students, professors, friends and acquaintances. Participants took the leadership role in the presentation, introducing the video and facilitating the follow-up discussion. I was quite nervous prior to the presentation about the reactions of the audience, but as it turned out, the audience was very supportive, offering us praise and helpful suggestions. Audience members reflected on specific individuals' stories that stood out for them - they enjoyed one participant's sense of humour, one participant's dance routine, and another participant's honesty about his lack of motivation to find work. Audience members also enjoyed when participants actually showed their work settings. When asked how they felt about watching the video, one audience member noted that he liked

having the opportunity to actually hear people's experiences. Another audience member commented that she felt a sense of joy when watching the video - that participants seemed to take a lot of delight and pride in their jobs. It was this last point that also spurred a discussion among audience members. There was some surprise that more frustration was not expressed by participants about their challenges of finding employment. Finally, audience members offered some useful suggestions for the future, noting that interviews with coworkers and supervisors would have enriched the video, and suggesting that the half hour video may be too long for the general public to watch. All in all, the agreement among participants and audience members was that the presentation was a success.

The same three participants also worked together to co-facilitate a presentation for a local community group of people with and without developmental challenges. Despite the fact that this was a very different crowd from the first presentation, most of the feedback during the discussion section was very similar. The one main difference in this group was that the video set the tone for further sharing of employment stories. For almost an hour after the video presentation, this group of individuals talked about their different work experiences, their good experiences as well as their frustrations and challenges. This was definitely an unanticipated outcome of watching the video, and I was really amazed at how the video had facilitated this interesting and lively discussion. I was also approached by several individuals who were interested in purchasing a copy of the video. This presentation was definitely one of my main highlights of this thesis project. The final video presentation was conducted for a small group of community researchers. Although I was not able to attend this presentation, the participants felt that it had been a very positive experience. The audience from this presentation also supplied some interesting written feedback which is included in

Appendix I.

Afterwards, I asked participants to reflect on the presentations. The main thing that participants liked was that the video had the potential to change people's negative opinions of people with developmental challenges through the sharing their stories and providing a window into their lives.

It actually showed them that I'm like everyone else, it was good to actually show them (Tyler)

I liked showing it so they can really see what our interests and stories are. So they can understand about paid and non-paid employment (Grace)

Participants also discussed some of the things that they did not like about facilitating the video presentations. Michelle found it difficult to hear criticism about the video, while Tyler was nervous when doing his part of the presentation.

Participating in the video presentations was also an enjoyable experience for me. I really appreciated the support and honest feedback from audience members. It definitely was a positive experience to hear praise for a project on which we had all worked very hard. The presentations, however, were also an important reality check for me. As Gary and Scott had mentioned after they watched the video initially, the potential of a video to change people opinions is limited. The audiences who watched the video were already very open-minded about the issue of employment for people with developmental challenges and I really began to question how this video would be received by others who are less aware of, or accepting of this social issue. I think I had been too focused on the positive feedback from participants and supportive others to clearly assess the capacity of this video to change opinions. I came to the conclusion that in all likelihood, one video was not enough to significantly change opinions about people with developmental challenges. I realized, though, that the video does have the capacity to draw attention to the issue and stimulate discussion about the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. It is

discussion and critical reflection then, that ultimately creates the capacity to change people's opinions. Therefore, based on the feedback from participants and audiences, as well as my own observations and reflections, I believe that the video is a potentially useful educational tool.

Following from this last assertion and an addition to this section, I thought it would be interesting to include some other information that participants shared with me. As using a video to inform people about the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges is only one way to attempt to change negative attitudes and stereotypes, participants were asked if they had any other suggestions on how to change people's opinions. Most participants still agreed that the video was a good way to spread the message, but they made further suggestions about showing the video on cable TV and making special presentations to employers. Some participants, however, also felt that education, through direct experience or more formal learning, would also be a way to improve others' thoughts about people with developmental challenges.

(They should) Come here and see me at work. (Scott)

Bring them here, with their kids, to see around and what we can do. Even if we're disabled, our things are good quality. There are things we can do. Everyone has disabilities, just don't let them get you down. It takes me awhile, but I can catch on. (Bill)

If they learned more about disabilities, they wouldn't judge you. They could go to the library and get books out about different disabilities. (Kate)

I think these are great suggestions, and future researchers and social interventionists may want to take them into account.

Steering Committee Meetings

There were three steering committee meetings held throughout the duration of the project. Ten of the twelve participants were able to attend at least one meeting. One other individual, who only participated in the technical part of the video production, also sat on the committee. At the first

meeting, I provided participants with an overview of the research project and asked them to consider participating if they were interested. Participants were also asked to give their opinions about the title of the project and the clarity of the interview questions. At the end of this meeting, two participants volunteered to be interviewed for the pilot test. During the second steering committee meeting I provided participants with an update on how the project was progressing. The main focus for this meeting, however, was to plan the video. We discussed how long the video should be, and what the video should look like (eg. having everyone's story told separately during the video, or have a mixture of the different questions and different people's responses to them). At the third and final meeting, I talked with participants about the main findings of the research project and asked for their thoughts and suggestions. We then watched the video and discussed our initial thoughts and reflections. Finally, participants made several suggestions about where they would like to see the video presented.

Participants typically had positive feedback about their participation in the steering committee meetings, and they particularly enjoyed meeting the other participants

(I liked) Meeting different people. I liked talking to Tyler. (Gary)

I got to know the rest of the people. I liked hearing their stories, some are interesting. (Grace)

There were different people with different interests. It was different. It was fun meeting people. (Michelle)

For one participant, it was not just meeting new people that he liked, but feeling like he had a bond, or connection with these other participants.

There was other people there that I had a lot in common with. They're all people that had disabilities. (Tyler)

Participants were also asked about the things that they did not like about the group meetings, most

of the participants could not think of anything negative. One participant did note that there were some scheduling issues.

It was hard trying to find a time for everyone to meet. (Michelle)

As participants were asked these questions about two months after the last meeting, some participants felt that the meetings were too long ago and they had difficulties remembering that far back. Overall though, participants appeared to enjoy the social part of the steering committee meetings, but they did not offer too much feedback about the process itself and the input that they often shared. Whether the opportunity to contribute their ideas was seen as a minor aspect of the meetings compared to the social aspects, or whether they felt that the actual discussions were not helpful is unclear. This issue would definitely have benefitted from further questioning on my behalf.

Despite participants' neglect to mention the discussions in the steering committee meetings, I observed very heated and intelligent deliberation of the issues with which they were presented. During the first steering committee meeting, there was an intense debate about whether or not the project should refer to participants as 'people with developmental challenges'. Several participants felt that this made them look bad and wanted the title to be changed to 'people with disabilities'. One participant stepped in at this point to argue that 'disabled' was too broad of a term as disabled people could be blind or in wheelchairs. She then explained that 'developmentally challenged' did not mean that people could not do things, but that it just took them a little longer to learn things. This argument was very persuasive and people agreed that they liked the term 'people with developmental challenges'. Intense discussions also arose at the other two steering committee meetings, and in particular surrounding issues of video format and what it should be entitled.

People tended to have strong opinions at first, but consensus was typically found on each issue.

A concern that I had at this stage of research process was the tendency for two or three individuals to dominate the discussions at the meeting. As with any group discussion, this can always provide difficulties for the facilitator. I found the most useful technique was to pose a question and begin by asking a typically quieter person for his/her thoughts and ideas. Once the stronger personalities began to dominate, I would try to intervene again to ask a quieter individual for his or her input. When making final decisions, I found that the best technique was to go around the table and ask everyone to individually share their thoughts and ideas. It was apparent, however, that those who typically dominated the discussion were higher functioning than those who were quieter during the meetings. I think that this would be a useful area for future researchers to investigate methods and strategies to help for more inclusive participation. Despite the opportunity to participate, it definitely appeared that some participants were more willing, or more capable, to engage in these group discussions.

In addition to becoming acutely aware of the limitations of participation for some individuals, the steering committee meetings were also a great opportunity for me to learn other lessons about the process of PARL. A continuous mistake that I made was using language that was difficult for some participants to understand. My introductory experience with this issue was during the first steering committee meeting when I asked if someone would like to read the agenda. I got a lot of blank stares and after some confusion eventually realized that people were not familiar with the term agenda. A few other similar situations occurred during various steering committee meetings, and it made me very aware that the process of PARL involves more than just providing people with the tangible opportunity to participate in the research process, but also being aware that true

comprehension of the issues is necessary for meaningful participation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The discussion of my research results will be presented in three broad sections. In the first section, I will use the main findings of my study to create a picture of a “Positive Job Experience” as well as an “Empowered Job Experience” for people with developmental challenges who participated in this study. As I reported in my results section, participants in this study identified three main dimensions of their work experiences. I will, therefore, discuss how the empowerment, social, and environmental dimensions of work interact to create a dynamic experience of work for people with developmental challenges who participated in this study. In the second part of the discussion, I will use the results of my study, as well as existing literature and theory to present an “Ecological Model of Employment for People with Developmental Challenges.” This model will provide future researchers with areas for further investigation, and will suggest to practitioners and policy makers specific target areas for future interventions. The final section will involve a brief discussion of the process of PARL that was used throughout the study.

Job experiences

My discussion of participants’ job experiences will be presented in two separate sections. In the first section, I will do a simple analysis of participants’ responses to determine what constitutes a positive job experience for people in my study. I will look specifically at how the social and environmental dimensions of work contribute to the job satisfaction of participants. In the second section, I will analyze participants’ responses more thoroughly to determine the components of an empowering work experience. I will look at how the social and environmental dimensions of work

influence the empowerment dimensions of work. Using participants' responses and the support of previous research and literature, I will critically assess the empowering and disempowering processes that are a part of participants' work settings. I will then make some suggestions as to how these empowering processes could be strengthened to enhance the work experiences of people in this study.

It is important to emphasize that the conclusions I will be drawing in this discussion section are based on an amalgamation participants' responses. As was evident in the interviews and demonstrated in the results section, the employment experiences of the people in this study were rich and diverse. Therefore, it is imperative to understand that some of the conclusions drawn may not specifically apply to each individual, but are intended to encapsulate the general experiences of participants based on the most salient themes that emerged from the majority of responses. Moreover, all analyses and discussion in this section are intended to apply only to participants in this study and not to all people with developmental challenges in the broader community. It is possible, however, that the ideas suggested in this section could be used by future researchers to conduct further investigations into the job experiences of a larger group of people with developmental challenges

Positive Job Experiences.

Social Dimensions

As outlined in the results section, participants were very clear about the aspects of their work experiences that they liked and that did not like. The importance of the social dimensions of the work environment emerged strongly from the responses of all participants in this study.

Participants in both sheltered workshops and community settings predominately focussed on their

interactions with job coaches, staff of employment agencies, supervisors, support staff, coworkers, and people in the community. Social interactions with others contributed to both positive and negative work experiences for participants. These findings are consistent with previous research which has demonstrated the importance of social relationships at work and have argued that positive interactions with others can contribute to increased job satisfaction and quality of life. (Mank, et al., 1998; Moseley, 1997; Ochocka, et al., 1994; Jiranek & Kirby, 1990; Pedlar, et al., 1989; McAfee, 1986; Seltzer, 1984; Locke, 1983; Gruneberg, 1979).

A major focus of the social interactions described by participants centred on the reception of social support. As I described previously, social support has been divided into five main types: emotional support, social integration/network support, esteem support, tangible aid and informational support and a proposed sixth type consisting of actual provision of support to others (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) It is evident that participants in this study received different types of social support from the various people they interacted with in the work environment. Within sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops settings, job coaches and employees of employment agencies were identified as providing tangible aid and informational support, while supervisors and staff typically provided tangible aid and emotional support. In these settings, coworkers provided tangible aid and network support. In community settings, job coaches and employees also offered tangible aid and informational support, while supervisors rarely provided a typical type of support. Supervisors in these settings were well liked, but the only evidence of support was the tangible aid discussed by one participant. Coworkers in community settings, however, provided emotional, esteem, and network support, while community members also offered network support. It is also interesting to note that a small number of participants in community settings also specifically

discussed the satisfaction they obtained from providing social support to others.

The findings of this research are similar to those described by other researchers in the field (Pedlar, et al., 1989; Ochocka, et al., 1994; Sylvestre& Gottlieb, 1992). Ochocka et al. (1994) found that external consultants are helpful in providing tangible aid by assisting people with various disabilities to achieve gainful employment. These researchers also found that 'good' supervisors provided both generalized and specific support to their employees. Pedlar, et al.(1989) indicate that support workers tend to provide tangible aid and informational support to people with developmental challenges as they look for, and begin, new jobs. Sylvestre and Gottlieb (1992) note further that support workers typically provide both specific support and general support to individuals as they become comfortable with their new tasks and environment. While Pedlar, et al. (1989) make reference to coworkers providing 'moral support' to people with developmental challenges, Ochocka, et al. (1994) assert that "The primary function of co-worker relationships involves employees helping each other with work related tasks," (p.45) This did not appear to be the case for participants in the current study.

The reason for this apparent difference is not immediately clear. It is possible that participants in the current study were employed in their jobs for longer periods of time and, therefore, no longer needed as much tangible aid from coworkers. Another explanation revolves around the feelings expressed by several participants that tangible aid would be provided by coworkers if they simply asked for assistance. This knowledge that physical help was available was coded as emotional support, but does indicate that tangible aid from coworkers was available in several work settings. A final explanation may be related to the types of settings in which participants in the current study were employed compared to those in Ochocka et al's (1994) study. Many of the participants in this

study discussed their employment in sheltered or semi-sheltered workshops, compared to the jobs in community settings detailed by participants in Ochocka et al.'s (1994) research. Tasks at the sheltered workshop may not have been as demanding as those in community placements, and therefore, tangible aid was not required as often, leaving the focus of coworker relationships on more emotional and network support.

Regardless of the type of support and provider of support, participants in this study generally identified the reception of support as contributing to their positive work experiences in both sheltered workshops and community settings. Similarly, participants indicated how a lack of social support, as well as disrespectful behaviours and attitudes, were aspects of their jobs that contributed to negative feelings and dissatisfaction on the job. This finding will be discussed further in the following section. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the current findings support much previous research in the social support field that determines that the reception of social support positively affects various aspects of a person's health and quality of life (see for example, James, 1997; House, Landis & Umberson, 1988). Therefore, for participants in this study, the reception of social support appeared to be an extremely important component of a positive job experience.

Environmental Dimensions

In addition to the contributions that social support had on the positive work experiences for people in this study, participants were also quite clear about the physical and structural elements of the work environment that they did and did not like. Participants emphasized the environmental necessities and environmental motivators that contributed to their positive work experiences. While all of these environmental elements contributed to a positive work experience, it is arguable that

certain factors take precedence over others in their contribution to a person's satisfaction with their job. As outlined in the results section, the presence of some of these elements are necessary in order for a person to have a positive job experience, while other elements add to, and improve upon, already acceptable work conditions. In addition to Herzberg's (as cited in Lippitt, 1982) support of these differential environmental contributions, several other theories of work have made distinctions between these different elements and discussed how they affect worker satisfaction, motivation, personal fulfilment and self respect (McGregor, 1989; Lippitt, 1982). Therefore, in this section, I will focus specifically on environmental necessities as these appear to be the main requirements for positive work experiences. Employment motivators were also important contributors to participants' positive work experiences, but these will be addressed in the empowerment section.

In their interviews, participants referred to environmental necessities such as payment; a sufficient amount of work; job accessibility; sufficient space to work; a safe work setting; pleasant weather conditions; and adequate and accessible equipment. It is interesting to note that participants working in sheltered workshops, semi-sheltered workshops, and community settings, all made reference to environmental necessities when talking about their work settings. When looking at these responses, it is also apparent that the absence of such factors contributed to negative work experiences and the presence of such factors either contributed to, or were predicted to contribute to, more positive experiences. Only payment seemed to have a more complex role in contributing to the satisfactory work experiences for many people in this study.

A very prominent theme in the responses of participants centred around the lack of sufficient monetary reward for their work. Minimal salary seemed to be of particular concern for employees

of sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops. Participants referred to being paid only a few cents a day, and discussed how they wished they could make more money in these settings. One participant noted that he enjoyed his work in the semi-sheltered workshop, but due to the lack of money he received, was going to search for a new job. Such problems with insufficient payment of employees in sheltered workshops has been evidenced in previous research and used to advocate for supported employment in community settings where salaries are significantly higher (Shafer, et al., 1991; Kregel, et al., 1989; Bellamy, et al., 1986.) In support of these researchers assertions, a couple of the participants who were employed in community settings made reference to liking the amount of money that they made in these jobs. One participant did indicate, however, that his 'payment' in his community job was being taken out for lunch by his supervisor. While he was originally pleased with this arrangement, in later discussions with this participant, he expressed his unhappiness with this situation and felt that he was being taken advantage of by his boss. Therefore, for most participants in this study, it appeared that the mere act of receiving some sort of payment for their work was not sufficient to contribute to a positive work experience. Participants, rightfully, felt that they should be receiving more equitable pay for their work. These findings are consistent with previous research which found that people with developmental challenges who receive equitable pay have more positive employment outcomes (Mank, et al., 1997) and increased job satisfaction (Moseley, 1988)

Receiving equitable pay (ie. minimum wage for a full time job), however, also caused problems for some participants who worked in community settings. These participants discussed how an increase in their salary inevitably lead to a decrease in the amount of money they received for their Family Benefits Allowance. The results were an overall reduction in the participants' income.

Similar findings were uncovered by other researchers who found that increased wages for workers with developmental challenges lead to decreases in various types of financial assistance (Ochocka, et al, 1994; Pedlar, et al., 1989). Thus, the benefits of increased monetary rewards are quickly diminished by government policies which subsequently minimize assistance to people with developmental challenges. While participants, then, wish for and deserve equal payment for their work, it is clear that these government policies negatively impact participants' work experiences. This is definitely an issue that needs further investigation and intervention.

It is evident that payment plays a complex role in affecting participants' positive work experiences. I think it would be fair to assert, then, that truly equitable payment - whereby participants receive adequate payment for their work and have the opportunity to receive increased payment with no loss to other income sources - would contribute to positive work experiences for people who participated in this study. Overall, the experiences of participants in this study indicate that the presence of truly equitable payment, plus the other environmental necessities outlined in the results section, would contribute to a positive work experience.

Summary

In summary, it would appear that social support and environmental necessities are the basic elements which contributed to the job satisfaction for the people with developmental challenges who participated in this study (see Figure 1). As I mentioned previously, it is important to remember that each participant's job experience is unique. Each participant may identify different types of support which are important to them, or prefer receiving support from certain people. Similarly, different environmental necessities may be more salient to some participants than others. It is evident, however, that for all participants in this study, certain aspects of social support and

some environmental necessities need to be present in order for them to have a positive job experience.

Empowered Job Experiences

As outlined in the previous section, participants identified many aspects of the social and environmental dimensions of their work settings that lead to positive job experiences. Several of these aspects, however, did not necessarily lead to empowered outcomes for participants. In their discussions on the empowerment dimensions of work, participants revealed several outcomes that indicated that they were experiencing empowered outcomes as a result of their work experiences. These outcomes included: taking the initiative in various aspects of their work lives, having the ability to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, making their own choices, feeling important at work, and dreaming of the future. Participants also identified disempowered outcomes such as feeling frustrated and demonstrating a resigned acceptance to situations in the environment. The empowered outcomes outlined by participants indicated that they were experiencing some combination of personal control, critical awareness of their environment, and participatory behaviours - the three main elements of psychological, or individual, empowerment outlined by Zimmerman (2000).

According to empowerment theory, empowered outcomes are achieved primarily through empowering processes (Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995; Kieffer, 1984). As discussed in the introduction, empowering processes can occur at the individual, organizational and community levels. Participants in this study mainly focussed on empowering processes at the individual and organizational levels. Empowering (and disempowering) processes at the organizational level were clearly evident from participants' discussion of the social and environmental dimensions of work. I

will, therefore, analyze these organizational processes first to outline how they influenced and impacted participants' empowered outcomes. I will then address the disempowering processes and outcomes discussed by participants and suggest ways that these may be improved upon in the future. I will also look at how empowering processes at the individual level were evident in participants' work experiences and propose a model that outlines these interactions.

Social Dimensions

Receiving social support is undoubtedly an empowering process that can lead to empowered outcomes for recipients. In fact, previous researchers have confirmed this assertion, noting that receiving support from others can assist people in achieving mastery over different aspects of their lives (Lord & Hutchison, 1993). Therefore, in addition to liking the support they received from others in their work environments, it is also likely that participants in this study experienced various empowering outcomes as a result of the social support that they received. For example, receiving encouragement and emotional support from others in their work settings likely influenced participants' abilities to take initiative and make their own choices. Upon closer examination, however, the interactions between providers of social support and participants appears to be more complex.

During their interviews, participants repeatedly relayed stories about support workers, supervisors, employees of outside agencies, and coworkers without developmental challenges treating them (and other coworkers with developmental challenges) with a lack of respect and in a belittling manner. What is particularly interesting is that several participants first indicated that they received and appreciated the social support given by people who also treated them poorly. For example, Bill praised his supervisor at the sheltered workshop for listening to him and being

understanding when he had problems on the job. He then relayed a story where this supervisor became angry and yelled at him and his coworkers for a small mistake made by one individual. In a similar vein, Tyler discussed how he was very upset when he had to leave a job where he had made an emotional connection with his coworkers. In another story, however, Tyler discussed how these same coworkers, while giving him the opportunity to express his ideas, never really took his thoughts and opinions into account during group brainstorming sessions. It is interesting, and somewhat disturbing, to see that it is the very same people identified as providing social support to participants that also treat them in such a disrespectful manner. Additionally, supervisors in community settings were well liked by participants, but also exhibited disrespectful behaviours and attitudes. In fact, when looking at participants' responses, almost all of their experiences of disempowered outcomes are the direct result of disempowering behaviours and attitudes from the people who provided them with support in the work environment (and, in the majority of cases, people who do not have developmental challenges). Why is it that the people identified by participants as providing them with much appreciated support are also identified as treating them so disrespectfully?

One-way Support

I believe that the answer to this question is grounded in the general societal beliefs and attitudes towards people with developmental challenges. People with developmental challenges are typically regarded in society as dependent and in need of support. While non-challenged individuals may require assistance in different areas of their lives, people with developmental challenges are often seen as in need of support in all areas of their lives. This 'neediness' placed upon people with developmental challenges in the wider community inevitably impacts their experiences in the work

environment. It is likely that before participants in this study even entered their work environments, they were seen as being in need of support- not as new employees, but as people who are not capable of functioning without constant and increased levels of support. It is arguable that this conceptualization of people with developmental challenges as dependent and needy, leads to a one-way provision of social support at work.

As was evident in participants' responses, there were numerous situations in both sheltered workshops and community settings where they *received* support from job coaches, employment agencies, supervisors and staff, coworkers, and people in the community. It was only on very rare occasions, however, that participants acknowledged that they *provided* support to other people in their work settings. As mentioned in the introduction, being the constant recipient of social support has been shown to decrease an individual's feelings of autonomy and self-efficacy (Coyne, Ellard and Smith, 1990), decrease psychological well being and self-esteem (Maton, 1988; Maton, 1987), and threaten a person's independence, self reliance, and ideas of fairness in social relationships (Nadler and Fisher, 1986). In addition, people with developmental challenges who constantly receive social support in the workplace have limited opportunities to become truly integrated into the employment setting (Sylvestre & Gottlieb, 1992; Pedlar, et al., 1989; Moseley 1988) due to the constant provision of social support which portrays the individual as being needy and deficient. (Taylor, et al, 1998; Ochocka, et al., 1994.) Not only is it likely, then, that people with developmental challenges are provided with increased and constant support due to prevailing prejudicial beliefs and attitudes in the larger society, but this continual provision of support appears to cement these beliefs for others in the work setting. Therefore, the constant provision of social support can be seen as a disempowering process.

I would also argue further that it is not only the directionality of social support which is disempowering for participants in my study, but also the way in which this support is often provided. Stemming, once again, from the idea that people with developmental challenges are deficient and needy, social support can be provided in a way which reinforces these biases. Based on participants' responses and my own observations and experiences working with people with developmental challenges, support is typically not provided to these individuals on equal footing as it would be to other colleagues in need of assistance. Support is more likely to be provided in a 'pat on the head' style to someone who is 'below' the support provider. Such support provision is similar to that given by an adult to a child, and several participants in this study referred to situations where they were being treated like children by people in their work environment. It is likely that this downward provision of support enhances the negative outcomes of one-way support, and is thus in itself, a disempowering process for those at the receiving end.

Finally, another possible way that people who typically provide social support to participants in this study may engage in disrespectful and disempowering behaviours, may also be related to one-way social support. As Tyler et al. (1983) found, there is a positive relationship between the constant provision of social support and burn out in human service workers. Based on this research, the reports of participants in this study, and my own personal experiences of being a social support worker in the past, it is highly possible that this constant giving of social support, and receiving little support in return, can begin to lead to burnout, stress and frustration for support providers. This stress and frustration is ultimately expressed, to some degree, in irritation towards the person or persons to whom the support is being provided. In this study, for example, the lack of respect shown to some participants by people providing support may be a reaction to the

constant *giving* of support to the people with developmental challenges with whom they work.

Furthermore, I think that this situation is particularly true of support workers in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops whose main work tasks involve providing support to others. The expression of this burnout, stress, and frustration may even go beyond disrespectful behaviour and be displayed as outwardly abusive behaviour as evidenced in several participants' stories (eg. not being allowed to go to washroom, having food removed before it was finished).

The frustrations of people providing support may also be enhanced by recipients' negative reactions to this support (Nadler and Fisher, 1986). A situation like this occurred in the current study. At several points during his interview, Kevin expressed his frustration with his job coach. He acknowledged that she was helpful in finding him jobs, but often embarrassed him in front of his supervisor and coworkers by treating him like child. He felt that she showed up at his work setting more than was necessary, and this made him stand out and seem different to his coworkers in the community setting. Interestingly, in an informal discussion with Kevin's support worker, she relayed how she was feeling frustrated in her attempts to place Kevin in a job. She felt he was uncooperative with her and often left jobs soon after he had been placed. The relationship between Kevin and his job coach was tense and her growing frustration and stress was evident in her interactions with Kevin.

Overall, then, it appears that people who provided support to participants in this study were at risk of being non-supportive and engaging in disempowering processes due to the way in which this support was provided. The constant reception of support, provided in a downward style, undoubtedly lead participants to feel disempowered. Similarly, constantly providing support, likely increased support providers' levels of stress and frustration, which was ultimately displayed in

outwardly disrespectful ways towards participants in this study. The result of these negative behaviours was disempowering for participants in this study.

Facilitating Natural Support

In order to minimize these disempowering processes within the social dimensions of work, a possible solution would be to correct for the negative consequences of unidirectional support by providing opportunities for recipients of social support to also become providers of support. As Maton (1988) states, “Although most social and human service programs place individuals in the recipient role only, it is possible that greater benefits will accrue if bi-directional involvement and support is incorporated into service programs.” Similarly, Tyler, et al. (1983) suggest that facilitating bi-directional support between typical support providers and recipients, may reduce burnout among human service employees. Bidirectional support opportunities are also referred to as ‘natural support’ as they typify interactions which are part of most people’s general work experiences (Rogan, Hagner & Murphy, 1993). Natural support is affirming to both people with developmental challenges and other members of the employment setting. For people with developmental challenges, natural support has been linked to empowered outcomes, particularly increased integration into their work settings (Mank, et al., 1997; Pedlar, et al., 1989; Moseley, 1988).

While creating the opportunity for naturally supportive relationships to develop seems like a relatively simple solution to the problem, I believe that this would be particularly difficult to implement for the participants in this study. As support is provided in a downward style, support providers make it particularly difficult for people with developmental challenges to reciprocate support back to them. People with developmental challenges may find it difficult to provide

support upwards to people who see them as needy and dependent. Similarly, providers of support may not believe that someone who is needy and dependent is capable of providing support back to them - or may even be unwilling to receive support from someone they regard as inferior to them. Therefore, it is my contention that the opportunities for people with developmental challenges to provide support back to others are limited within many of the participants' current work environments.

In order for the people with developmental challenges to truly have the opportunity to provide social support to others in their work settings, people in these settings need to change the way they view people with developmental challenges. McKnight (1977) suggests that people who provide social support need to view the people they support within a strengths-based philosophy. It is important that people with developmental challenges be seen as people who have personal goals, strengths, and dreams. It is then the responsibility of people in the workplace to support this person's aspirations as opposed to treating him/her as a person who needs and requires support in order to function within the employment setting.

Taylor, et al. (1998) specifically suggest how to support people with developmental challenges in workplace settings. Similar to McKnight's (1977) assertions, these researchers point to the need of social support providers to focus on the numerous aspects of an individual's personality and life experiences, as opposed to the person's challenges and needs. An employee should be viewed and treated according to their work role, not as an employee with a developmental challenge who needs help on the job. By affirming a person's goals and abilities, and interacting as equals, support providers can create an atmosphere where people with developmental challenges feel supported and are able to provide support in return, thus resulting in bidirectional support or naturally supportive

relationships. This mutual provision and reception of support is beneficial to all individuals in the work environment.

In order for these naturally supportive relationships to occur and be maintained for participants working in community settings, it is my belief that it needs to begin with employees of employment agencies, and particularly job coaches, and ‘trickle down’ through the other members of the work setting. Despite the support that job coaches normally provide, their presence has typically indicated to others in the employment setting that the person with developmental challenges needs help (Ochocka, et. al, 1994) and this impedes the development of natural supports and full integration into the work environment. (Mank, et al., 1997; Sylvestre & Gottlieb, 1992; Pedlar, et al., 1989). If, however, the job coach adheres to a strengths-based philosophy, and models supportive behaviour, it is likely that supervisors and coworkers will replicate this behaviour (Sylvestre & Gottlieb, 1992). If supervisors and coworkers are required and encouraged to model behaviour based on a strengths-based approach, more naturally supportive relationships will form for the employee with developmental challenges and his/her supervisor and coworkers.

Researchers have also emphasized the need for coworker mentors to facilitate natural support in the workplace (Sylvestre & Gottlieb, 1992; Pedlar, et al., 1989). The development of naturally supportive relationships based on a strengths-based approach is also consistent with Maton’s (1988) suggestion on developing bidirectional social support relationships. He suggests that bidirectional support is easier to develop by integrating and involving a person into a setting as opposed to teaching him/her specific skills related to supporting others.

For participants in this study who are employed in community settings, it is likely that a strengths-based approach would enhance their job experiences by minimizing the inferior treatment

often afforded them by job coaches, employment agencies, supervisors, staff and non-challenged coworkers. While the previous research on strengths-based approaches and natural social supports directly refers to situations where people with developmental challenges are employed in community settings, the same approaches and behaviours would be beneficial to those who work in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops. If supervisors and staff in sheltered workshop settings were to develop a strengths-based philosophy when interacting with their employees, it is likely that natural support would develop. This natural support might then minimize the frustration and stress often felt by support providers in these settings and that which is often displayed towards the workers. Similar to community settings, a 'trickle down' effect could occur, whereby supervisors' and staff's behaviours could directly influence coworkers' behaviours towards each other. Participants in this study who worked in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops with co-workers with developmental challenges did not indicate inferior treatment by their colleagues, but did mention a lack of respect displayed to each other through teasing and name calling. If supervisors and staff begin to focus on the strengths of their employees, then it may encourage coworkers with developmental challenges to treat each other with a similar level of expectation and respect, and thus develop or improve naturally supportive relationships among workers.

Developing a strengths-based philosophy may be particularly difficult for support workers in sheltered and semi-sheltered workshops. As mentioned previously, these individuals may experience more stress, burnout and frustration due to the sheer amount and constancy of support provision required in their jobs. This is likely to be overwhelming at times and even more effort and energy is often required to develop and maintain strengths-based support. Therefore, attempting to adhere to this philosophy might be more difficult for staff in sheltered workshops than for

community employers who are only required to support a small number of people with developmental challenges. Therefore, it is suggested that these workshop staff also receive assistance and training to develop their capacity to support people in their jobs. It would also be beneficial for staff in workshops to develop a system for monitoring and receiving feedback regarding their appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Yearly evaluations which include interviews with people working in the sheltered environments, as well as peer review, would be one suggestion to help improve the employment experiences for people with developmental challenges who are employed in workshop settings.

In summary, then, social support has the potential to be empowering for recipients. Participants in this study experienced empowered outcomes due to the support they received within their work settings. The people who provided this support, however, were also overwhelmingly identified as the same people who treated participants disrespectfully and contributed to the disempowered outcomes they experienced. It is likely that the reason behind this contradictory behaviour is grounded in societal beliefs that people with developmental challenges are needy and dependent. These views lead to a constant provision of social support that is one-way and downward. Constantly receiving support and being treated as inferior, undoubtedly lead to disempowered outcomes for participants. Similarly, the frustration of providing constant one-way support is likely to lead to frustration among support providers and is manifest in disrespectful and disempowering behaviours directed at participants. Adhering to a strengths based philosophy and providing opportunities for participants to develop naturally supportive relationships at work, is a possible solution for correcting disempowering processes, and enhancing the work experiences and empowered outcomes experienced by participants in this study.

Environmental Dimensions

In addition to the social dimensions of work impacting upon participants' personal dimensions, aspects of the environmental dimensions of work also influenced participants' empowered outcomes. Within the environmental dimensions of work, it was the environmental necessities that appeared to have the most direct influence on participants' positive work experiences. The presence of environmental motivators, however, made participants' experiences more enjoyable and satisfying. Previous research on employment and employment for people with developmental challenges has also demonstrated that the presence of such motivators increase employees' job satisfaction and job success (Ochocka, et al, 1994; Jiranek & Kirby, 1990; Moseley, 1988). Moreover, it is my contention that the environmental motivators tended to increase participants' enjoyment and satisfaction at work because they are empowering processes.

Working in the community, having freedom on the job, completing enjoyable work tasks, participating in a variety of, and interesting experiences, having opportunities to learn and be responsible, were all environmental motivators identified by participants as being provided at various work settings. It is the presence of such motivators that most likely lead to many of the empowered outcomes described by participants. For example, having responsibilities likely lead participants to feel important, while engaging in various and interesting experiences likely lead participants to recognize their strengths (and weaknesses) and in some cases, probably influenced their dreams for the future. Previous research has also indicated that environmental motivators are potentially empowering as their presence at work tends to increase workers' self confidence and self esteem (Brook, 1991; Jiranek and Kirby, 1990; Mortimer, et al., as cited in Gecas & Seff, 1989; Schwarzberg & Dytell, 1986, Staples, et al., 1984; Kohn & Schooler, 1973).

A particularly interesting finding that arose when examining participants' discussions of employment motivators, was their references to working in the community. When asked what made one job better than another, several participants answered that it was working out in the community (as opposed to working in a sheltered workshop) which made a particular job better than another job. Working in the community was associated with having more opportunities for diverse social interactions, for participation in different experiences, and for learning new skills. Similarly, when participants discussed the other environmental motivators available to them at their jobs, the majority of these motivators were available in community settings, and only a few were offered in semi-sheltered workshops. People employed at sheltered workshops typically focussed more on environmental necessities when discussing their work environments. Therefore, for people in this study, working in the community was an empowering process in that it provided more opportunities for other empowering processes to be made available to them. Working in sheltered workshops, however, appeared not to be empowering for participants in this study. Other researchers have noted a similar absence of opportunities within sheltered workshop (Griffin, et al., 1996; Shafer, et al., 1991; Jirnak & Kirby, 1990; Maxwell, 1986; Selzer, 1984;)

I think that it is important to note here that most participants in this study did not indicate that their experiences in sheltered workshops were particularly negative. It did seem, however, that these workshops did not provide the environmental motivators necessary for empowered outcomes. Supervisors and staff in sheltered workshops may want to take note of these findings, as it is possible that implementing environmental motivators within these workshops may increase participants' job satisfaction and feelings of empowerment. I do believe, however, that simply implementing such factors in sheltered workshops may not achieve the same levels of

empowerment that work in the community does. While I just asserted that working in the community was empowering for participants because it provides more of the empowering motivators described by participants, I also think that community settings provide other empowering motivators which would not likely be achieved in sheltered workshops. Opportunities such as interacting with various types of people, and feeling a part of the larger community are difficult to implement in sheltered workshops. In summary, then, environmental motivators would appear to be empowering processes in that they lead to empowered outcomes. Moreover, according to participants, environmental motivators appear to be more prevalent in community work settings as opposed to sheltered workshops, and therefore, employment in community settings typically leads to more empowered outcomes.

Process of Empowerment

As demonstrated then, elements in both the social and environmental dimensions of work affect participants' empowerment dimensions of work. Stated otherwise, empowering processes at the organizational level created empowered outcomes at the individual level (or in some cases, disempowering processes lead to disempowered outcomes). It is arguable, however, that the process of empowerment in participants' work settings was not so simple. Based on participants' responses, and empowerment literature, I would propose that the social, environmental, and empowerment dimensions of work interact to create a dynamic model of empowering work experiences.

Empowering processes such as strengths-based social support and environmental opportunities need be present in a participant's work setting. While these processes are made available by the work setting, actually participating in these processes (for example, choosing to partake in

supportive relationships, choosing to try new experiences) is up to the individual. By actually becoming involved in such processes, participants are engaging in psychologically empowering processes, and are thus not mere bystanders to empowered outcomes, but active participants. In addition, empowered outcomes can also be achieved through the interaction of various elements in the social and environmental dimensions. For example, this could occur when a supervisor or coworker encourages a participant to try new experiences offered in the work setting, or when a job in the community expands a participant's social networks. In fact, it is likely that most empowering processes in the work setting consist of intricate connections between social and environmental elements.

Once empowered outcomes are experienced by participants, the process does not stop. As Rappaport (1987) asserted, empowerment is not a scarce resource that is in danger of running out. Once empowerment is experienced, it expands the resources available to people. In this study, the empowered outcomes experienced by participants may also be manifest as empowering processes which can then be used to influence their current and future social and environmental work settings, and possibly different life domains. For example, a participant demonstrating initiative taking is showing an empowered outcome and is also participating in an empowering process of affecting his/her surroundings. It is likely that the more empowered a participant becomes, the more likely he/she is to participate in psychologically empowering processes and identify his/her role in impacting his/her environment (eg. Instead of being given the opportunity to make a personal choice, participants affirm that they actually make their own choices). Also, the more that participants experience empowerment, the more likely they are to stand-up to disempowering processes. While a person who continually experiences disempowering processes may make a

resigned acceptance to these processes, other people who are more empowered may refuse to accept these situations. This process was evident when a few participants in this study chose to quit jobs where they felt they were being treated poorly.

This model demonstrates the dynamic interactions which can occur in an empowered job experience for people in this study. It is important to note that these empowering processes are constantly changing, and one's experience of empowering and disempowering processes and outcomes is fluid and may change over time and situations. A person who typically feels empowered, may also experience disempowering outcomes on different occasions, and vice versa. For a summary of this model, see figure 2.

An Ecological Model of Employment

Participants in this study discussed the many social, environmental and empowerment dimensions that affected their work experiences. The aspects of the social and environmental dimensions to which participants referred, were typically in their immediate work environments. There were a few occasions where participants looked beyond these immediate social and environmental elements and discussed the impact that certain community features and larger social policies had on their work experiences. While references to this more distant connection between work experiences and wider social forces was not the norm for participants, it does demonstrate that participants' work experiences are affected by many different factors. The idea that one's experiences are the result of many interacting 'levels' of variables, is a common assumption in community psychology. This approach to understanding people's experiences has been referred to as the ecological approach, and is based on the concepts of Bronfenbrenner (1979, as cited in Levine & Perkins, 1997). A person's life experiences can be seen as an interaction of variables at the

individual level (e.g. age, sex, self esteem); the microsystem level (e.g. one's immediate surroundings); the exosystem, or the community-environmental level (e.g. elements of the larger community in which one lives); and the macrosystem, or level of culture (e.g. prevailing societal beliefs and social policies). In the following section, I will use participants' experiences, my own personal experiences and observations, as well as previous research and literature to present an ecological model of employment for people with developmental challenges. (see Figure 3).

Macrosystem

The meaning of work

What it means to have a job in our society undoubtedly affects the work experiences of all people. For most people in modern western society, working is synonymous with having a job and is an extremely important and necessary aspect of their lives. Work gives people the chance to make a contribution to the community and connect with other people (Toms & Toms, 1998; Fox, 1994). For people with developmental challenges, this meaning may even be enhanced due to life circumstances. "For those who have been excluded, employment is more than wages. It is self-esteem, friendship, greater independence and a seat on the roller coaster of life." (Roehrer, 1993). When a person is not working, it can be devastating. A lack of work can lead to a lack of pride, a lack of hope, and a lack of opportunity to give back to the community (Fox, 1994).

A general lack of work seems to be increasing in our modern society as machinery is continually replacing the work done by people (Rifkin, 1995). At a time when unemployment rates are steadily increasing, many scholars and self-help enthusiasts are trying to redefine the meaning of work. Toms and Toms (1994) for example, have suggested that work should become a spiritual process which encompasses more than money and goal achievement. While this notion of work as

a spiritual endeavour may begin to expand over time, it is my contention that for most people in modern western society the meaning of work is still intricately tied to identity, livelihood, social interaction and personal contribution. This meaning of work permeates our society and makes employment an integral part of life for most adult Canadians. People with developmental challenges are just as influenced by this meaning of work, and therefore, seek out employment with the same persistence as other members of the community. The employment experiences of people in this research study are, thus, influenced by the meaning of work in our culture. People with developmental challenges in other cultures may have different work experiences depending on how their culture defines work and how much emphasis is placed on gainful employment.

The economic and employment environment

In addition to the meaning of work, the actual economic and employment environment makes a significant impact on the work experiences of citizens. As Rifkin(1995) emphasizes, the employment environment is on a constant decline. Jobs, and particularly those involving simple repetitive tasks, are continuously being destroyed as machinery, robots and computers take over the jobs for which people were once employed. He argues that new jobs are not being created and that more and more people are discouraged from even attempting to search for employment. Rifkin (1995) also asserts that it will not be long until 2% of the world's current labour force will be needed to produce all the goods and services for everyone. This global employment crises is somewhat buffered in Canada. In December 2001, the unemployment rate stood at 8.0%, a moderate percentage, but still the highest that Canada has seen in three years (The Toronto Star, Jan 11, 2002). Studies have shown, however, that the unemployment rate is twice as high for people with disabilities (Roehrer, 1992). Therefore, the work experiences of people with

developmental challenges are greatly influenced by these larger employment and economic forces.

The overall unemployment rate affects people with developmental challenges as the less jobs that are available in the general population, the more difficult it is for these individuals to find and secure employment. The general reduction of jobs involving less skill is also likely to make a large impact, as these are the types of jobs in which many people with developmental challenges are employed.

People in this study are more directly affected by the unemployment rate and employment conditions in Ontario. People with developmental challenges in other parts of Canada and the world, may have more or less job opportunities depending on employment situations in their areas.

Laws, policies and programs

A person's work experiences are affected by the overall laws, policies and programs in place in their countries. For people with developmental challenges, there are sometimes additional laws, policies and programs to facilitate their employment and promote equal opportunities for them in the workplace. Roeher (1995) outlines several laws and programs which assist people with developmental challenges to obtain and secure employment in Canada. These laws and policies include Human Rights laws, Employment Equity laws, the Canadian Assistance Plan, the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act, the Labour Force Development Strategy, Enjoyability Enhancement Agreements, and Worker's Compensation. Recently, another federal policy on the Provision of Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities has been developed, "To ensure that the employment-related needs of employees with disabilities in the federal Public Service are met within reason." (Government of Canada, 2002). In addition to federal laws, policies and programs, the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges will also be affected by Provincial and Municipal governmental objectives. Participants in this study, for

example, may be affected by the Ontario Government's promise to give \$31.7 million in 2000/2001, to developmental service agencies across the province for salaries and benefits, training and staff development (Ontario Government, 2002).

While many of these laws, programs, and policies would appear to enhance the lives of Canadians with developmental challenges, Roehrer (1993) provides evidence that many of these policies and programs are not functioning as effectively as they should. Based on quantitative analysis and qualitative interviews, the Roehrer Institute found that Employment Equity initiatives are not being achieved; funding for workplace accommodations is minimal and fragmented; federal and provincial grants for training and education are not accessible to many people with developmental challenges and are not equally available throughout the country; coordination of services is poor; and criteria for disability pensions and income support is restrictive and arbitrary. This last point was of specific concern to two participants in the current study. They felt that they could not accept an increase in their salaries as their ODSP cheques would be cut and cause them financial problems. Therefore, participants in this study are likely to be both positively and negatively affected by government legislation. For people with developmental challenges in different provinces or different countries, their work experiences could be quite different depending on the laws, policies and programs in their areas.

Historical and cultural norms and attitudes

A country's laws, policies and programs are inherently grounded in the cultural norms and attitudes of its citizens. These norms and attitudes affect the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges, as well as their lives in general. Gaylord-Ross (1987) completed a cross-cultural study of 5 Western European countries to determine how cultural values affect the

employment opportunities of citizens with developmental challenges. The citizens of West Germany, for example, were still influenced by the memories of concentration camps in World War II that saw the deaths of numerous people with developmental challenges. This historical event lead to very protective behaviours towards people with developmental challenges, and therefore, the presence of segregated workshops prevails throughout the country. Italy, on the other hand, was very committed towards anti-segregation due to leftist uprisings in the 1960s and 1970s, and now has many non-sheltered work programs for people with developmental challenges.

Among equal rights advocates in Canada, there appears to be an adherence to Wolfensburger's principal of normalization (1980). The main assumption of this principal is that for people with developmental challenges to be full and integrated members of society, they should be given the opportunity to hold meaningful jobs. Policy makers and advocates also believe that people with developmental challenges are capable of working and holding jobs in the community. These values are behind the many Supported Employment Programs that are available in communities across Canada. Based on the cultural norms in Canada, participants in this study, have either more or less opportunities for community employment than people with developmental challenges in other parts of the world.

Despite the liberal views of many citizens in Canada, I would argue that the principal of normalization is not practised, or even supported, by the majority of Canadians. Canada is still a patriarchal society where hierarchies and structural inequalities are a part of everyday life for most individuals. Within this type of society, people with developmental challenges are seen as dependent, incapable, and are treated as second class citizens. I have worked with many people with developmental challenges over the past few years, and have heard stories and witnessed first-

hand the prejudice and demeaning ways in which they can be treated. As, I mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, I was startled to hear the limiting attitudes expressed by some of my friends toward the employment of people with developmental challenges. Similarly, when watching the video we produced, another friend asked disbelievingly “She’s married?” when one participant talked about her husband. It had never crossed this individual’s mind that a person with a developmental challenge would be interested in, and capable of marriage. When I have been out in the community with people with developmental challenges, I have also watched the eye rolling, snickering, and looks of disgust from others as these individuals simply try to live their lives. As I already outlined in the section on empowerment, these overall attitudes that are held and expressed by many Canadian citizens, make a huge impact on the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges.

Exosystem

Availability of employment and employment services

The actual availability of jobs and employment services in a person’s community makes an obvious impact on his/her employment experience. Some communities may have more resources and services than others. Employment agencies and job services for people with developmental challenges may be more abundant and/or accessible in some communities and employment options may be more/less diverse. Employment options in community based settings may depend on factors such as employers’ interest and willingness to employ people with developmental challenges, the actual number of available jobs for which people are competing, and the types of jobs that are available. In addition, some jobs may only be available on a contractual or seasonal basis. A few participants in this study indicated the difficulties they had relying on these short-term jobs.

The presence of large sheltered workshops, smaller cooperatives, and self-advocate run businesses and services likely affect the employment experiences of community members with developmental challenges. For example, a large sheltered workshop in the community may limit a person's experiences if it is simply assumed that an individual will work in this setting. Having a diverse range of options provides more choice for people with developmental challenges seeking employment, and may increase the likelihood that people will find jobs that are more satisfying. As mentioned in the results section, a few of the participants in this study were employed by the People Working Together group in their community. These participants were extremely satisfied with this unique employment experience. Other communities may have similar programs, or have developed community economic development initiatives to diversify the range of employment options for community members with developmental challenges (Roehrer, 2000). Whatever the options that are available to people in their communities, the number and diversity of these options will undoubtedly impact upon their work experiences.

Transportation

Unaccessible transportation has been found to be a major barrier to employment for people with developmental challenges (Roehrer, 1993). As outlined in the results section, transportation made an important impact on the work experiences of a couple of participants in this study. One participant was happy that her job was on the bus route, while another participant did not like having to rely on inflexible bus schedules in her city. As many people with developmental challenges do not drive, the availability and accessibility of public transportation in a person's community makes a significant impact on their work experiences. Flexible bus routes and schedules, as well as transportation that is equipped to deal with the physical needs of some people

with developmental challenges, would likely have a more positive impact on work experiences than inflexible and unaccommodating public transportation.

Behaviours of community members

While the impact of general societal attitudes towards people with developmental challenges has already been addressed at the macrosystem level, these attitudes are then manifest in the behaviours of community members. The way that community members actually treat people with developmental challenges, and in particular the way that they react toward them as employees in their work settings, impacts the work experiences of individuals with developmental challenges. As demonstrated in the results section, participants in this study were often quite happy with their interactions with community members. Many of these people made participants feel accepted in their work roles and as members of the larger community. On the other hand, participants also had interactions with community members that were unpleasant. On different occasions, participants felt that people in the community were not taking them seriously in their employment roles, and were not treating them respectfully when they were applying for jobs. The behaviours of community members can, therefore, have a positive or negative impact on the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges.

Location

The actual physical location of a person's community likely has a great impact on their work experiences, particularly on the availability of employment and employment services as well as accessible and reliable transportation. Employment services in rural areas may be non-existent, or may consist of a few support workers who are responsible for very large areas. Rural areas might provide more jobs involving physical labour, but may also have a smaller range of other job options

and less accessible public transportation. Urban areas likely have more employment services, more job options, and public transportation that is reliable and accessible. Unequal distribution of employment services to rural communities has been cited by Roehner (1993) as a major barrier to employment for people living in these areas.

It is also possible that the area in which one lives may affect how the people in that community treat individuals with developmental challenges. It is possible in smaller, close-knit communities, that people with developmental challenges are known by many people and are more integrated into community and work life. In larger, more urban communities, many interactions may be anonymous and integration may not be as readily achievable. Participants in this study were employed in two medium sized urban cities, and one small town. Listening to participants' discussions, and observing participants at work, there did appear to be more friendly exchanges between participants and others in the smaller community. Regardless of the positive or negative effects of living in a rural or urban community, it is more than likely that the employment experiences of residents of these communities are impacted by the location, and that these experiences could be quite different.

Microsystem

Family, peers, and support workers

The impact of family and peers (that are not coworkers) on the employment experiences of participants did not emerge as a strong theme in this study. In fact, only two participants even mentioned these individuals in their interviews. One participant told a story about how her father had taught her how to sand wood which was now helpful in her current employment setting. Another participant noted how a friend had seen a job advertisement in the paper and passed it

along to him. The minimal number of times that family and peers were mentioned, may have been due to the questioning format that focussed mainly on the elements of the workplace. It is possible that this format did not give participants the opportunity to extend their discussions to the impact of the people outside of their work environments. Other researchers, however, have found that parents and peer groups play an important role in peoples' work experiences (Ochocka et al, 1994). Similarly, as this project progressed, the involvement of family members and peers in the employment experiences of some participants became more apparent during informal conversations and observations. Additionally, for a few participants who lived in supportive housing, support staff in these residences also appeared to play an important role.

Family, peers and housing support staff seemed to play important roles in helping participants to connect with job coaches and employment agencies, assisting them to acquire appropriate work clothes and accessories, driving them to and from work, and providing emotional support. There were also occasions where family, peers and housing staff negatively impacted upon participants' job experiences by not allowing them to participate in new job experiences, by not driving them to work or not dropping them off on time, by encouraging them to miss work, and being generally unsupportive after a tough day at work. I would assert, then, that family members, friends and housing support staff definitely make an impact on the work experiences of people with developmental challenges.

Workplace Culture

As demonstrated in the results section, participants overwhelmingly indicated (for obvious reasons) that the physical and social attributes of their work settings made a significant contribution to their work experiences. Ochocka et al. (1994), used the term 'workplace culture' to refer to the

continuous interactions between the social and environmental aspects of a work setting. I think that this is a useful term to use in this section to refer to the social and environmental dimensions of work that arose during this study. As so much information was provided by participants regarding workplace culture, it was evident that the social and environmental aspects of work made unique contributions to people's employment experiences depending on their 'stage' of employment. Participants progressed through the stages of an employment search, actually working, and leaving their jobs (and often repeating this cycle). This notion that different elements of a system impact on a person differently depending on their stage of development (and in this case, job development) is analogous to the 'Ecological-developmental approach' (as described in Fraser, 1996). Therefore, I will use the basic premise of this approach when describing the impact of work culture on the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges.

Finding employment

It is my contention that workplace culture begins to form as a person seeks employment. Job coaches or employment agency staff begin to help create this culture as they assist people with developmental challenges to find employment. According to participants, at this point in time, job coaches and employment agency staff provide tangible aid and informational support. When this support assists people to find and secure employment that they like, the job coach and/or employment agency staff are seen as making a positive impact on people's job search experiences. When job coaches and employment agency staff are not supportive, or are disrespectful toward participants, they are seen as negatively impacting people's job search experiences.

At this point in time, the environmental aspects of the workplace make a small impact on a person's work experience. For example, there was one participant in this study who noted that a

building where he was going to deliver his resume was confusing and inaccessible. He was never able to figure out where to drop off the resume, and this obviously negatively impacted on his work experiences. It is also possible at this stage of the job process, that environmental aspects in a particular work setting may influence people to actually consider applying for a particular job. The presence or absence of environmental necessities and opportunities described by participants may positively or negatively impact upon their job search experience by influencing their choice to accept or not accept a job offer in a particular setting.

Working

As demonstrated in the results section, there are numerous aspects of workplace culture that impact upon a person's actual working experience. At this stage of the employment process, supervisors and support staff play an important role in providing tangible aid and emotional support to people with developmental challenges. Coworkers also play a role in providing tangible aid and emotional support, but play a more significant role in providing integration/network support. This support is seen as positively impacting upon participants' working experiences. However, when these same people treat participants disrespectfully, it makes an obvious negative impact on their work experiences. Similarly, the more physical aspects of workplace culture make an important impact on working experiences at this particular employment stage. As outlined by participants, the presence or absence of payment, appropriate and accessible equipment, as well as the amount of work, safety issues, and weather all affect working experiences. Additionally, the actual location of the job (in the community or a sheltered/semi-sheltered workshop); amount of freedom; enjoyable work tasks; various and interesting experiences; and having opportunities to learn and be responsible also make an important impact on participants' working experiences.

Leaving a job

Leaving a job was typically seen by participants as a negative experience, and thus the aspects of workplace culture that were discussed by participants at this stage of employment were seen as adverse. One participant discussed how close relationships with his coworkers made it difficult for him to leave his job. Other participants discussed how supervisors and staff did not give them a chance, or simply asked them to leave without giving them a full explanation. At the environmental level, factors such as a lack of work and unsafe working conditions often lead to participants choosing, or having to leave a job. While these circumstances were all seen as negative by participants, it's possible that elements of the workplace culture could positively impact upon a participant when he/she is leaving a work setting. Emotional and esteem support provided by supervisors, support staff and coworkers to a person when they are leaving may make this transition smoother. Similarly, these support providers in the workplace may assist a person to find a new job in another setting. The work environment may make leaving a job easier if it has provided the individual with increased knowledge and skills which will benefit them when looking for another job. Finally, if a person is not interested in working at a job anymore and aspects of the workplace culture make it impossible for them to stay at this setting, these elements may be seen as positively affecting the person in this stage of the job process.

Individual

Demographics

Basic personal demographics are more than likely to impact on a person's job experiences. A person's age, sex, religion, culture, and sexual preference all make an impact on job experiences - whether it is the influence of these characteristics in obtaining certain types of employment, or the

interaction of these characteristics with certain elements in the workplace culture. I would argue that for people with developmental challenges, their actual abilities are likely to make a significant impact on their work experiences. Whether a person has mild, moderate or severe developmental challenges is likely to impact on their work experiences. This was evident in the sample of participants in this study. Those with more mild developmental challenges tended to be employed in community settings (as opposed to volunteer in such settings). Similarly, those with less severe challenges seemed to be provided with more environmental opportunities than those with more severe challenges. Finally, it is also likely that if people with developmental challenges have additional physical impairments, these will also affect their employment experiences.

Empowerment

As previously discussed, participants' demonstration of empowered or disempowered outcomes was the most common individual attribute that appeared to affect employment experiences. As there was a lot of information relayed regarding self-worth and its influence on different stages of employment experiences, it will be useful, once again, to use the Ecological-Developmental model as a framework for describing this individual element of work experiences.

Finding employment

When looking for employment, participants' feelings of empowerment or disempowerment quite obviously affected this stage of the employment process. For people with developmental challenges, empowerment obviously leads to positive job search experience, while disempowerment leads to negative job search experiences. Empowering processes and outcomes which influenced the job search experience involved taking the initiative to search for employment, critically assessing how one's strengths and weaknesses helped or hindered their job search, and the assertion

that they had personally made the decision to work at a particular job. On the other hand, feeling frustrated with the disrespectful behaviour displayed toward them by job coaches and employment agency staff, as well as feeling frustrated with not having a job and resignedly accepting that they could not find one, were disempowered outcomes that obviously negatively affected participants' job search experiences.

Working

When participants were actually working, empowered and disempowered outcomes also affected this experience. Empowered outcomes such as taking the initiative to question supervisors' instructions, recognizing how one's strengths and weaknesses contributed to the workplace culture, and feeling important as they completed challenging tasks or helped others in need, positively affected participants' working experiences. Similarly, frustration about (and often a resigned acceptance to) not being paid appropriately, treated respectfully or offered enough support, likely made a negative impact on people's work experiences.

Leaving a job

Similar to the other two sections, empowered and disempowered outcomes and processes undeniably affect this last stage of employment. Taking the initiative to quit a job that is not interesting or where one is being mistreated would have a more positive influence on the experience of leaving a job than would a situation where a person did not feel in control. Being asked to leave a job without being given a fair chance to demonstrate one's abilities, and feeling unwanted, would negatively impact upon the experience of leaving a job. It is also arguable, however, that if a person must leave a job, but feels supported in this transitional process, more empowered outcomes may prevail than when asked to leave with no support. It is possible that when a person leaves a

job, the empowered or disempowered outcomes that they are exhibiting ultimately affect them again as they head back to the first stage and begin searching for employment again. Someone who is feeling empowered, would likely bring these feelings and behaviours to the employment search, once again making a positive impact on the first stage of the employment process. Similarly, a person who is disempowered when leaving a job, may approach the job search with these feelings and behaviours, and ultimately make a negative impact on this experience.

In summary, there are various aspects of the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem and individual characteristics that influence people with developmental challenges work experiences. Elements at any of these levels may act as barriers or facilitators to employment and, ultimately positively or negatively influence a person's job experiences. Additionally, elements within and between systems continuously interact and it is these interactions which create dynamic employment experiences at each stage for all people with developmental challenges.

Participatory Action Research Learning

Empowering Processes - Empowered Outcomes?

The major premise behind using Participatory Action Research Learning (PARL) was to give participants the opportunity to have a strong voice in research that affects them. Historically, people with developmental challenges have been a silenced population when it comes to research about them, despite the fact that they truly are the experts on the issues and concerns that surround their lives. By using a narrative framework in this study, the voices of participants were heard and ultimately guided the research results and ensuing discussion. Similarly, participants talked with each other to make decisions regarding other elements of the research, and watched as their suggestions were incorporated into the project .

The second main reason for using empowering research methods was to give participants the opportunity to participate in new experiences and acquire new knowledge and skills. By learning and experiencing new things, I hoped that participants could leave the research project with practical skills that could be applied to other areas of their lives. A major problem with research on social issues is that once the project is completed, participants are often left in the same social situation as they were prior to the project. While I did not think it would be possible to completely change the social situation of participants in this project, I did hope that active participation would give them the opportunity to enrich their lives to some degree.

I was particularly interested, then, in whether or not participation in this project was empowering for participants. As outlined, participants were involved in the project by sharing their stories, creating the video as a team, presenting the video, and engaging in critical discussions about various aspects of the project. In their reflections of this process, participants discussed how they learned new skills and increased their self confidence. This was particularly evident when participants were asked a general question about their overall learning in this project. Several participants discussed the new technical and social skills that they had learned.

(I learned) How to use a video camera. I know more about it and how to use it now (Scott).

I learned a lot. How to listen to others. I listened to other participants...picked up their interests and what they liked to do. (Grace)

Other participants indicated that they learned more about themselves by participating in the project, and in particular that their participation had improved their pride and self confidence.

(I learned) Not to be embarrassed about working here (sheltered workshop). I have a job. I'm proud of my job. (Bill)

I learned from other people's stories that it's okay to have a disability, and by doing the video, more people will learn, and we'll make positive changes (Kate).

These statements and participants' reflections that are included in the methods section, definitely indicate a sense of mastery or control over the environment - a definite indication that participants were feeling empowered as a result of their participation. Moreover, my observations of participants exercising new skills, reflecting on their life situations and involvement in the project, indulging in critical discussions, and participating wholeheartedly in creating the video, also indicated to me that participants were experiencing empowerment as a result of their participation.

I am not sure whether or not this empowerment continued for participants once the project was officially completed. This would actually be an interesting area for follow-up research. I have had the opportunity to talk with a couple of the participants in recent months. One of these participants was presenting the video at a conference in Toronto, while another participant had been asked to perform his talents live at a local highschool after a group of students watched the video. There is some indication, then, that further empowering processes have become more readily available to participants since their involvement in the project.

Another particularly interesting indication that empowerment was occurring at a different level, was participants' indication that they saw themselves as a group of individuals with similar interests, experiences and concerns. As Rappaport and Simkins (1991) noted, when people share personal stories that are similar to each other, a positive community narrative develops, allowing people to identify themselves as a coherent group of individuals. Not only was there evidence that participants in this study were beginning to identify themselves as a community, but they were also identifying themselves as a group of individuals who were capable of changing negative attitudes and improving their own, and others lives. By creating a positive community narrative that demonstrates that people with developmental challenges are capable of active workforce

participation, participants were helping to target the dominant cultural narrative that often paints a picture of these individuals as needy and helpless. Furthermore, participants had the opportunity to demonstrate this community narrative to a wider audience through the use of video. This notion that participants, as a group, felt that they could make a difference, indicated that empowerment may also be occurring at the community level.

It is definitely encouraging to discover that participants' experiences in this project were empowering. I think it is important, however, to not completely credit the project with empowered outcomes experienced by participants. As indicated in the first part of the results section, many participants in this study were already experiencing empowered outcomes as a result of their participation in their employment settings. These experiences may then have influenced participants' overall experiences of empowerment. Similarly, participants may also have been involved in other empowering projects or situations at the same time as this project, which would likely influence empowered outcomes. Finally, participants in this study may simply be more empowered due to personal perceptions and life circumstances, thus finding it easier to experience empowerment when participating in empowering processes. Therefore, conducting this study with another group of individuals may result in more or less intense empowered outcomes for participants. I would argue, however, that the process of participating in this project was in itself empowering to some degree as participants did indicate that it was these experiences that lead directly to their knowledge of new skills, increased self-confidence, and group identification.

The impact of PARL on participants is well documented (see for example Nelson, et al., 1998). However, I think it is also important to look at the affects of PARL on the researchers. I tried to include my perceptions of the process throughout the results section in an attempt to illustrate my

experiences of being a researcher involved in participatory research. This was the first time I have had the opportunity to fully engage in PARL and, as I expressed earlier, I do not feel I was completely emotionally prepared for the ups and downs involved in such research. I definitely found it frustrating when I needed to involve people in every aspect of the process, especially when it included tasks that I felt could be completed much quicker and easier by myself. I also found it hard to follow through with participants' decisions when they were different from what I thought would be best. As a researcher, there were several times when I experienced a feeling of 'lack of control' over the project. Consistently reminding myself of the benefits of PARL to participants, however, helped me to adhere to the process, but there were definitely times when it was difficult to do so.

Despite the frustration and difficulties of fully including participants and giving up some control of the process, I also found that PARL had some unanticipated positive outcomes as well. Specifically, I was not prepared for the emotional connection and commitment that I developed with many of my participants. The hours that I spent listening to stories, working on the video, leading formal discussions and engaging in informal conversations, really allowed me to connect with participants. This connection was enhanced when they made me feel like I was part of the team that was creating the video together. A climate of mutual support developed between myself and the participants. I actually became quite close to several participants, and even speak to one regularly on the telephone. In addition to making the effort to connect with me, participants also put in a lot of hard work and commitment directly into the project. Their commitment to the project enhanced my commitment to them, to ensure that the video was beneficial to them, and that this final written thesis properly encapsulated their experiences and ideas. I am truly grateful that I got

to know so many interesting and unique individuals from working on this project - an experience that is not offered by using less participatory methods. Overall then, for me as a researcher, the process of PARL, while not always easy, was ultimately a rewarding and empowering experience.

Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations of this study arise mainly from the methods that were used. First, the findings are limited in their generalizability to the population of people with developmental challenges as a whole. The use of qualitative interviews provided a rich and in-depth look at participants' work experiences, but the summary of findings and ensuing models are limited due to the small number of people that I was able to interview using these methods. Therefore, the portraits of "A Positive Work Experience" and "An Empowered Work Experience" for people with developmental challenges are meant to describe the experiences of participants in this study, and potentially the work experiences of those in similar circumstances. Future researchers, however, may choose to test these models against the experiences of a larger and more diverse group of individuals with developmental challenges.

In an attempt to account for the diversity of experiences of different people with developmental challenges, however, I used the experiences of current participants to create the Ecological Model of Employment for People with Developmental Challenges. This model hopefully captures the unique processes and circumstances that affect the employment experiences of different people with developmental challenges. Testing this model would be another interesting area of investigation for future researchers. Additionally, the model may assist self-advocates and support providers in targeting various areas for intervention.

Finally, the finding that participants experienced empowered outcomes due to their involvement

in this study (and experienced empowerment and disempowerment in their work settings) is also limited in its scope. As Zimmerman (2000; 1995) emphasized, empowerment is unique to time, individual and circumstance. Therefore, the processes that were empowering for individuals in this study, may or may not be empowering for others in different circumstances. Furthermore, empowered outcomes may be manifest differently in other people with developmental challenges.

The second major limitation of the study is the exclusion of voices of people with more severe developmental challenges. This exclusion most likely occurred in two stages. First, when agency representatives and contact people referred people for participation in the project, they most likely selected those who they felt would be most capable of telling their stories and creating a video. Agency representatives and contact people knew that participation in the project would be quite involved, and would require people to answer questions about their employment. These criteria were undoubtedly limiting from conception, and therefore, likely limited the 'type' of participants who were referred for the study.

The second stage of non- inclusion occurred once participants were referred to participate. The interview process required that participants be able to comprehend the questions and answer coherently. While the questions were put in a simplified format, and I felt I was prepared to provide clarification if participants were confused, one participant was not able to fully complete the interview. Despite numerous attempts to re-word questions, this participant demonstrated an obvious misunderstanding of the questions asked of him. Therefore, this participant's story could not be included in the written text of this study. Fortunately, however, the participant was able to demonstrate his work skills and shared this with others on the video.

This exclusion of voices of people with more severe developmental challenges makes me

question the full 'participatory' aspect of my thesis project. The use of methods that are inherently discriminating towards individuals who do not understand the questions, or who are unable to express their thoughts and feelings in the manner expected in an interview process, are definitely a limiting aspect of this thesis. The finding, however, that the individual who was unable to answer interview questions could actually perform his work tasks to demonstrate his work experiences, is interesting. Future researchers may want to use this information to develop research methods which are better able to assess the employment experiences of people with more severe developmental challenges (eg. participatory observation).

The third limitation to this study was that I knew several of the participants prior to their involvement in the research process. I had worked with these individuals as a support staff for the two summers before the thesis work began. While it was my personal observation that my prior involvement with participants did not negatively affect the amount and type information that they shared with me, it is possible that our pre-existing relationship affected their disclosure. Participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing their critical thoughts and feelings about work environments and support staff with which they knew I was familiar. Similarly, participants may have been more open with me than they would have been with an external researcher. While participants were assured that they could remove any statements that they no longer wished to share - it is possible that they originally shared more with me than they would normally be comfortable sharing for a similar purpose. Future researchers may want to keep this in mind when choosing research participants.

A final limitation and recommendation to other researchers directly addresses the heart of this project - employment experiences. All participants in this study (with the exception of one) were

currently working, and their thoughts and feelings regarding their job experiences likely reflected their current situations. It would be an interesting addition to this study to research the unemployment experiences of people with developmental challenges. Focussing on the experiences of job searches, the challenges of securing jobs in community settings, and the meaning of unemployment would provide an even more rich and textured picture of the overall employment experiences of people with developmental challenges.

A Final Reflection - The End to an Incredible Journey

As this document draws to a close, I once again find myself reflecting on my thesis journey. I clearly remember that moment two years ago when the idea for my thesis topic flashed in my head and I was charged with the excitement that follows such a moment of realization. "Great idea, but remember...it's not your life's work," my thesis supervisor, Ed, so wisely advised me at that time. I tried to remind myself of this as I navigated the highs and lows that inevitably accompany a Master's thesis. Now, here I am, at the end of the path, and as I look back I know that I am not gazing on my life's work. What I am gazing on though, is my most difficult and fulfilling accomplishment to date - and I am proud. I sincerely hope that the participants who walked beside me throughout, can also look back and feel a similar sense of pride and accomplishment with what they have achieved. It has been an incredible journey.

References

- Bellamy, G. T., Rhodes, L. E., Bourbeau, P. E. & Mank, D. (1986). Mental retardation services in sheltered workshops and day activity programs: Consumer benefits and policy alternatives. In F. R. Rusch (Ed.), Competitive Employment Issues and Strategies, pp. 257-271. Baltimore, MA: Paul H. Brookes.
- Berger, P. L. & Neuhaus, R. J. (1977). To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Booth, T. & Booth, W. (1996). Sounds of silence: narrative research with inarticulate subjects. Disability & Society, 11, 55-69.
- Brackhane, R. (1994). Pathways of learning in vocational and personal development. Part I. British Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 40, 15-23.
- Brackhane, R. & Westphal-Binder, I. (1994). Pathways of learning in vocational and personal development. Part II. British Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 40, 111-119.
- Brook, J. A. (1991). The link between self-esteem and work/nonwork perceptions and attitudes. Applied Psychology: An International Review, 40, 269-280.
- Coyne, J.C., Ellard, J.H. & Smith, D.A.F. (1990). Social support, interdependence, and the dilemmas of helping. In B.R. Sarason, I.G. Sarason & G.R. Pierce (Eds.), Social Support: An Interactional View, pp.319-357.
- Cutrona, C. E. & Russell, D.W. (1990). Type of social support and specific stress: Toward a theory of optimal matching. In B.R. Sarason, I.G. Sarason & G.R. Pierce (Eds.), Social Support: An Interactional View, pp.319-357.
- Dalton, J.H., Elias, M.J. & Wandersman, A. (2001). Community Psychology: Linking Individuals and Communities. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Dawis, R. V. & Lofquist, L. H. (1984). A Psychological Theory of Work Adjustment: An individual-differences model and its applications. Minneapolis, MT: University of Minnesota Press.
- Duckett, P. S. & Fryer, D. (1998). Developing empowering research practices with people who have learning disabilities. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 8, 57-65.
- Ezzy, D. (1993). Unemployment and mental health: A critical review. Social Science

Medicine, 37, 41-52.

Florin, P. & Wandersman, A. (1990). An introduction to citizen participation, voluntary organizations, and community development: Insights for empowerment through research. American Journal of Community Psychology, 18, 41-54.

Foster-Fishman, P. G., Salem, D. A., Chibnall, S., Legler, R. & Yapchai, C. (1998). Empirical support for the critical assumptions of empowerment theory. American Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 507-536.

Fox, M. (1994). The Re-invention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood in Our Time. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.

Fraser, M.W. (1996). Aggressive behavior in childhood and early adolescence: An ecological-developmental perspective on youth violence. Social Work, 41, 347-361.

Fullager, S. & Oowler, K. (1998). Narratives of leisure: recreating the self. Disability & Society, 13, 441-450.

Gaylord-Ross, R. (1987). Vocational integration for persons with mental handicaps: A cross-cultural perspective. Research in Developmental Disabilities, 8, 531-548.

Gecas, V. & Seff, M. A. (1990). Social class and self-esteem. Psychological centrality, compensation, and the relative effects of work and home. Social Psychology Quarterly, 53, 165-173.

Gecas, V. & Seff, M. A. (1989). Social class, occupational conditions, and self-esteem. Sociological Perspectives, 32, 353-365.

Gibson, C. M. (1993). Empowerment theory and practice with adolescents of color in the child welfare system. Families in Society, 387-396.

Griffin, D. K., Rosenberg, H., Cheyney, W. & Greenberg, B. (1996). A comparison of self-esteem and job satisfaction of adults with mild mental retardation in sheltered workshops and supported employment. Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 31, 142-150.

Gruneberg, M. M. (1979). Understanding Job Satisfaction. New York, NY: Wiley.

Hanna, R. W. (1985). Personal meaning: Its loss and rediscovery. In R. Tannenbaum, N. Margulies, F. Massarik & Associates (Eds.), Human Systems Development, pp.42-66. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

House, J.S., Landis, K.R., Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. Science, 241, 540-544.

James, K. (1997). Worker social identity and health-related costs for organizations: A comparative study between ethnic groups. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 2, 108-117.

Jiranek, D. & Kirby, N. (1990). The job satisfaction and/or psychological well being of young adults with an intellectual disability and non disabled young adults in either sheltered employment, competitive employment, or unemployment. Australia and New Zealand Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 16, 133-148.

Johnson, J. R. & Rusch, F. R. (1994). Integrated employment and vocational services for youth and adults with disabilities in the United States. In N. Bouras (Ed.), Mental Health in Mental Retardation, pp. 300-318, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kieffer, C. (1984). Citizen empowerment: A developmental perspective. Prevention in Human Services, 3, 9-36.

Kirby, S. & McKenna, K. (1989). Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins. Toronto, ON: Garamond Press.

Kohn, M. L. & Schooler, C. (1973). Occupational experience and psychological functioning: An assessment of reciprocal effects. American Sociological Review, 38, 97-118.

Kregel, J., Wehman, P. & Banks, P. D. (1989). The effects of consumer characteristics and type of employment model on individual outcomes in supported employment. Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis, 22, 407-415.

Kroeker, C. J. (1995). Individual, organizational, and societal empowerment: A study of processes in a Nicaraguan agricultural cooperative. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23, 749-764.

Levi, L. (1994). Work, worker and wellbeing: an overview. Work and Stress, 8, 79-83.

Levine, H. B. (1997). Men at work: Work, ego and identity in the analysis of adult men. In C. W. Socarides & S. Kramer (Eds.), Work and its Inhibitions, pp.143-158. Madison, CN: International Universities Press.

Levine, M. & Perkins, D.V. (1997). Principles of Community Psychology. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lippitt, G. L. (1982). Organizational Renewal: A Holistic Approach to Organization and Development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Locke, E. A. (1983). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M.D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook of industrial and Organizational Psychology, pp. 1297-1349. Chicago, IL: Rand-McNally.

Lord, J. & Hutchison, P. (1993). The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice. Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 12, 5-22.

Mank, D., Cioffi, A. & Yovanoff, P. (1998). Employment outcomes for people with severe disabilities: Opportunities for improvement. Mental Retardation, 36, 205-216.

Mank, D., Cioffi, A. & Yovanoff, P. (1997). Analysis of the typicalness of supported employment jobs, natural supports, and wage and integration outcomes. Mental Retardation, 35, 185-197.

Mankowski, E. & Rappaport, J. (1995). Stories, identity and the psychological sense of community. In R. S. Wyer Jr. (Ed.), Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story. Advances in Social Cognition, Vol 8., p.211-226. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Maton, K.I. (1988). Social support, organizational characteristics, psychological well-being, and group appraisal in 3 self-help group populations. American Journal of Community Psychology, 16, 53-77.

Maton, K.I. (1987). Patterns and psychological correlates of material support within a religious setting: The bidirectional support hypothesis. American Journal of Community Psychology, 15, 185-207.

Matthew, R. M. & Fawcett, S. B. (1984). Building the capacities of job candidates through behavioral instruction. Journal of Community Psychology, 12, 123-129.

Maxwell, M. S. (1986). Liberating the workshop. Entourage, 1, 17-22.

McAfee, J. K. (1986). The handicapped worker and job satisfaction. Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Bulletin, 19, 23-27.

McGregor, D. (1989). The human side of enterprise. In J. W. Newstrom & K. Davis (Eds.), Organizational Behavior: Readings and Exercises, pp. 14-25. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

McKnight, J. M. (1977). The professional service business. Social Policy, 8, 110-116.

Melchiori, L. G. & Church, A. T. (1997). Vocational needs and satisfaction of supported employees: The applicability of the theory of work adjustment. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 50, 401-417.

Meissner, W. W. (1997). The self and the principle of work. In C. W. Socarides & S. Kramer (Eds.), Work and its Inhibitions, pp35-60. Madison, CN: International Universities Press.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview-narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct, pp. 233-255. New York, NY: Praeger.

Moseley, C. R. (1988). Job satisfaction research: Implications for supported employment. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 13, 211-219.

Nadler, A. & Fisher, J.D. (1986). The role of self-esteem and perceived control in recipient reaction to help: Theory development and empirical validation. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol.19., pp. 81-122.

Nelson, G., Ochocka, J., Griffin, K., & Lord, J. (1998). "Nothing about me without me": Participatory action research with self-help/mutual aid organizations for psychiatric consumer/survivors. American Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 881-912.

Ochocka, J., Roth, D., Lord, J. & MacGillivray, H. (1994). Workplaces That Work. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services.

Oliver, M. (1992). Changing the social relations of research production? Disability, Handicap & Society, 7, 101-114.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pedlar, A., Lord, J. & Van Loon, M. (1989) Supported Employment and Quality of Life. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services.

Perkins, D. D. (1995). Speaking truth to power: Empowerment ideology as social intervention and policy. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23, 765-794.

Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23, 795-807.

Rappaport, J. (1993). Narrative studies, personal stories, and identity transformation in the mutual help context. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 29, 239-256.

- Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 15, 121-145.
- Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. American Journal of Community Psychology, 9, 1-25.
- Rappaport, J. & Simkins, R. (1991). Healing and empowering through community narrative. Prevention in Human Services, 10, 29-50.
- Rifkin, J. (1995). The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era. New York, NY: Putnam.
- Roher (2000). Opening Futures: An Exploration of Community Economic Development for People with Disabilities. North York, ON: The Roher Institute.
- Roher (1995). The Right to Have a Job. North York, ON: The Roher Institute.
- Roher (1993). On Target? Canada's Employment-Related Programs for Persons with Disabilities. North York, ON: The Roher Institute.
- Rogan, P., Hagner, D. & Murphy, S. (1993). Natural supports: Re-conceptualizing job coach roles. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 18, 275-281.
- Salzer, M. S. (2000). Toward a narrative conceptualization of stereotypes: Contextualizing perceptions of public housing residents. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 10, 123-137.
- Salzer, M. S. (1998). Narrative approach to assessing interactions between society, community, and person. Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 569-580.
- Sarbin, T. R. (1986). Narrative as a root metaphor for psychology. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct, pp. 3- 21. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Schwartzberg, N. S. (1996). Dual-earner families: The importance of work stress and family stress for psychological well-being. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 1, 211-233.
- Seltzer, M. M. (1984). Patterns of job satisfaction among mentally handicapped adults. Applied Research in Mental Retardation, 5, 147-149.
- Shafer, M., Revell, W. G. & Isbister, F. (1991). The national supported employment initiative: A three-year longitudinal analysis of 50 states. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1,

9-17.

Snart, F., Barton, L. E. & Hillyard, A. (1983). Future directions in the vocational training of the severe/profoundly handicapped. The Mental Retardation and Learning Disability Bulletin, 11, 6-12.

Staples, C. L., Schwalbe, M. L. & Gecas, V. (1984). Social Class, occupational conditions, and efficacy-based self-esteem. Sociological Perspectives, 27, 85-109.

Sylvestre, J.C. & Gottlieb, B.H. (1992). A critical appraisal of supported employment for persons with developmental disabilities. Developmental Disabilities Bulletin, 20, 24-40.

Taylor, A. R. & Botschner, J. V. (1998). Evaluation Handbook. Toronto, ON: Ontario Community Support Association.

Taylor, A.R., Sylvestre, J.C. & Botschner, J.V. (1998). Social support is something you do, not something you provide: Implications for linking formal and informal support. Journal of Leisureability, 25, 3-13.

Toms, M. & Toms, J.W. (1998). True Work: Doing What You Love and Loving What You Do. New York, NY: Bell Tower.

Tyler, F. B., Pargament, K.I., & Gatz, M. (1983). The resource collaborator role: A model for interactions involving psychologists. American Psychologist, 38, 388-398.

Wilgosh, L. & Covassi, S. (1988). A long-term follow-up of vocational trainees with mental handicaps. Canadian Journal of Rehabilitation, 1, 177-181.

Wolfensberger, W. (1976). The Principal of Normalization in Human Services. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Zimmerman, M.A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), Handbook of Community Psychology, pp.43-63. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23, 581-599.

Zimmerman, M. A. (1990). Taking aim on empowerment research: On the distinction between individual and psychological conceptions. American Journal of Community Psychology, 18, 169-177.

Zimmerman, M. A., Israel, B. A., Shulz, A. & Checkoway, B. (1992). Further

explorations in empowerment theory: An empirical analysis of psychological empowerment. American Journal of Community Psychology, 20, 707-727.

Zimmerman, M. A. & Rappaport, J. (1988). Citizen participation, perceived control, and psychological empowerment. American Journal of Community Psychology, 16, 725-750.

Zupko, B. W. (1999). Participatory Action Research Learning Involving Women Who Have Developmental Challenges. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University.

Table 1
Participants' Current and Previous Employment Experiences

Participant	Current Employment	Previous Employment
Bill	Sheltered Workshop - Full Time Bookstore Custodian - Part Time	Dog Walker Security at a Recycling Plant Custodian at Horse Stables
Gary	Semi-Sheltered Workshop - Part Time Custodian at Arena - Part Time Snow Shoveler - Seasonal Custodian at Gas Station - Part Time	Gas Station Attendant Custodian at Arena
Grace	People Working Together - Part Time Receptionist at 3 local charities - Volunteer	Receptionist at Employment Centre Receptionist at Aesthetician Office
Jessie	Sheltered Workshop - Full Time Dishwasher at Restaurant - Occasional Laundress at Nursing Home - Volunteer	Dishwasher at Factory
Kate	Semi-Sheltered Workshop - Full Time Companion at Nursing Home - Volunteer Assistant at Day Care Centre - Volunteer	Sheltered Workshop
Kevin	Clerk at Video Store - Part Time/Volunteer Assistant at Community Living - Volunteer	Picture Framer at Art Store Dishwasher at Camp Ball Collector at Golf Course

Michelle	People Working Together - Part Time	Sheltered Workshop Custodian at Convenience Store Assistant at Restaurant
Robert	Assistant/Custodian at Drug Store - Part Time/Volunteer	Assistant at Grocery Store
Sandra	Semi-Sheltered Workshop - Full Time	Assistant at Library
Scott	Semi-Sheltered Workshop - Full Time	Factory Worker Assistant at 2 Retail Stores
Tyler	People Working Together - Occasional	Performer in Theatre Company Recycling at Department Store Assistant at Library Assistant at Craft Store

Table 2
Summary of Results

Employment Dimension	Sheltered/Semi Sheltered Workshops	Community Settings
Empowerment	<p><i>Empowered Outcomes</i> Taking Initiative Recognizing Strengths Recognizing Weaknesses Making Decisions Dreams for the Future</p> <p><i>Disempowered Outcomes</i> Feeling Frustrated Demonstrating a Resigned Acceptance</p>	<p><i>Empowered Outcomes</i> Taking Initiative Recognizing Strengths Recognizing Weaknesses Making Decisions Making Contributions Dreams for the Future</p> <p><i>Disempowered Outcomes</i> Feeling Frustrated Demonstrating a Resigned Acceptance</p>
Social	<p><i>Receiving Support</i> Job Coaches/ Employment Agencies Supervisors/Support Staff Coworkers</p> <p><i>Providing Support</i> Coworkers</p> <p><i>Lack of Support</i> Supervisors/Support Staff</p> <p><i>Disrespectful Behaviours & Attitudes</i> Supervisors/Support Staff Coworkers</p>	<p><i>Receiving Support</i> Job Coaches/ Employment Agencies Coworkers Community Members</p> <p><i>Providing Support</i> Community Members</p> <p><i>Lack of Support</i> Job Coaches Supervisors Coworkers</p> <p><i>Disrespectful Behaviours & Attitudes</i> Job Coaches Supervisors Coworkers</p>

<p>Environmental</p>	<p><i>Necessities</i> Lack of Payment Lack of Work Lack of Space Lack of Tools</p> <p><i>Motivators</i> Enjoyable Tasks Variety of Tasks Having Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Necessities</i> Payment Concerns Contract Work Problems Safety Concerns Weather Conditions Inaccessible Tools</p> <p><i>Motivators</i> Enjoyable Tasks Variety of/Interesting Tasks Having Responsibilities Having Freedom Acquiring New Knowledge and Skills Working in the community</p>
-----------------------------	--	--

Figure 1 A Positive Job Experience

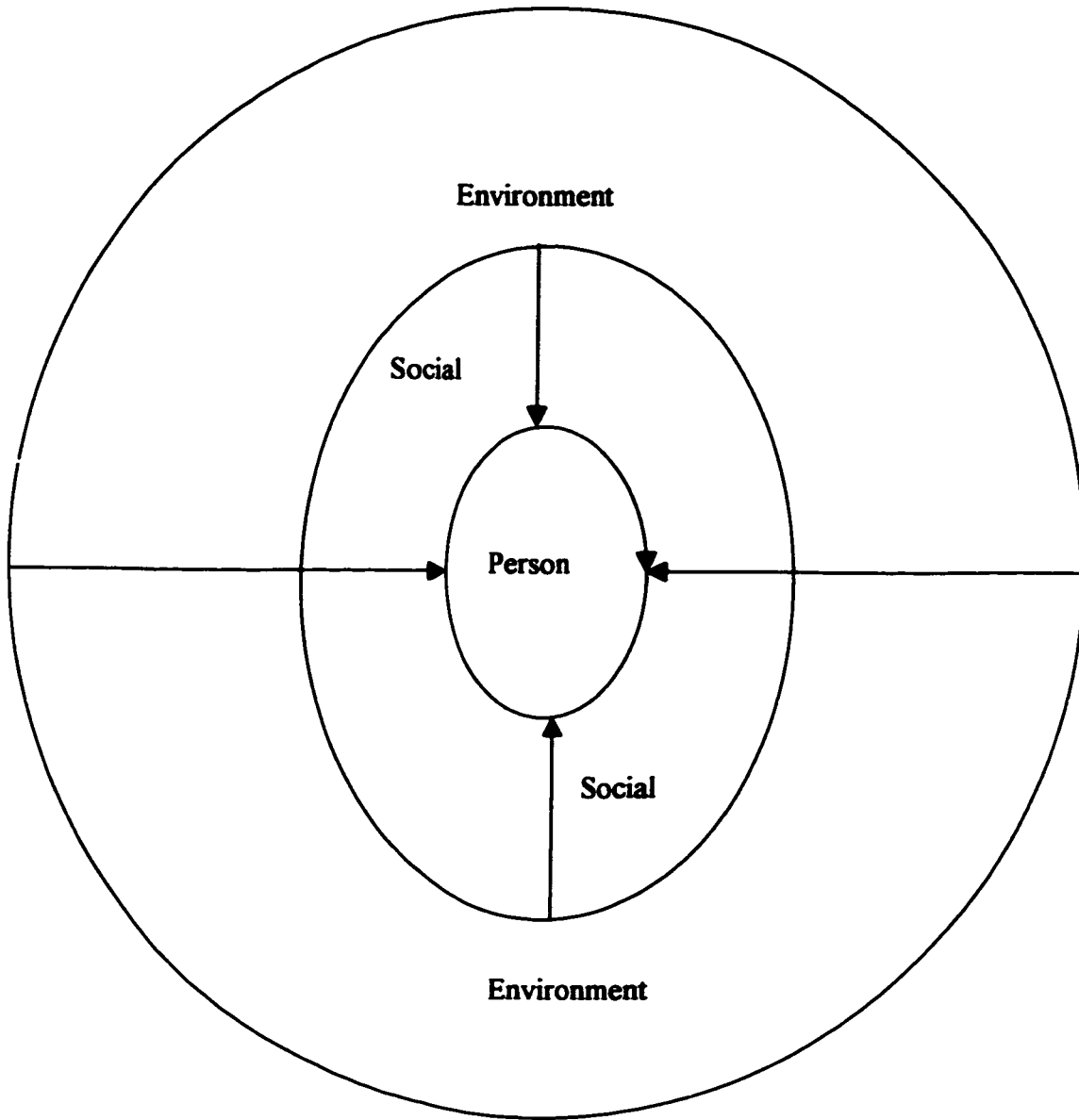


Figure 2 An Empowering Job Experience

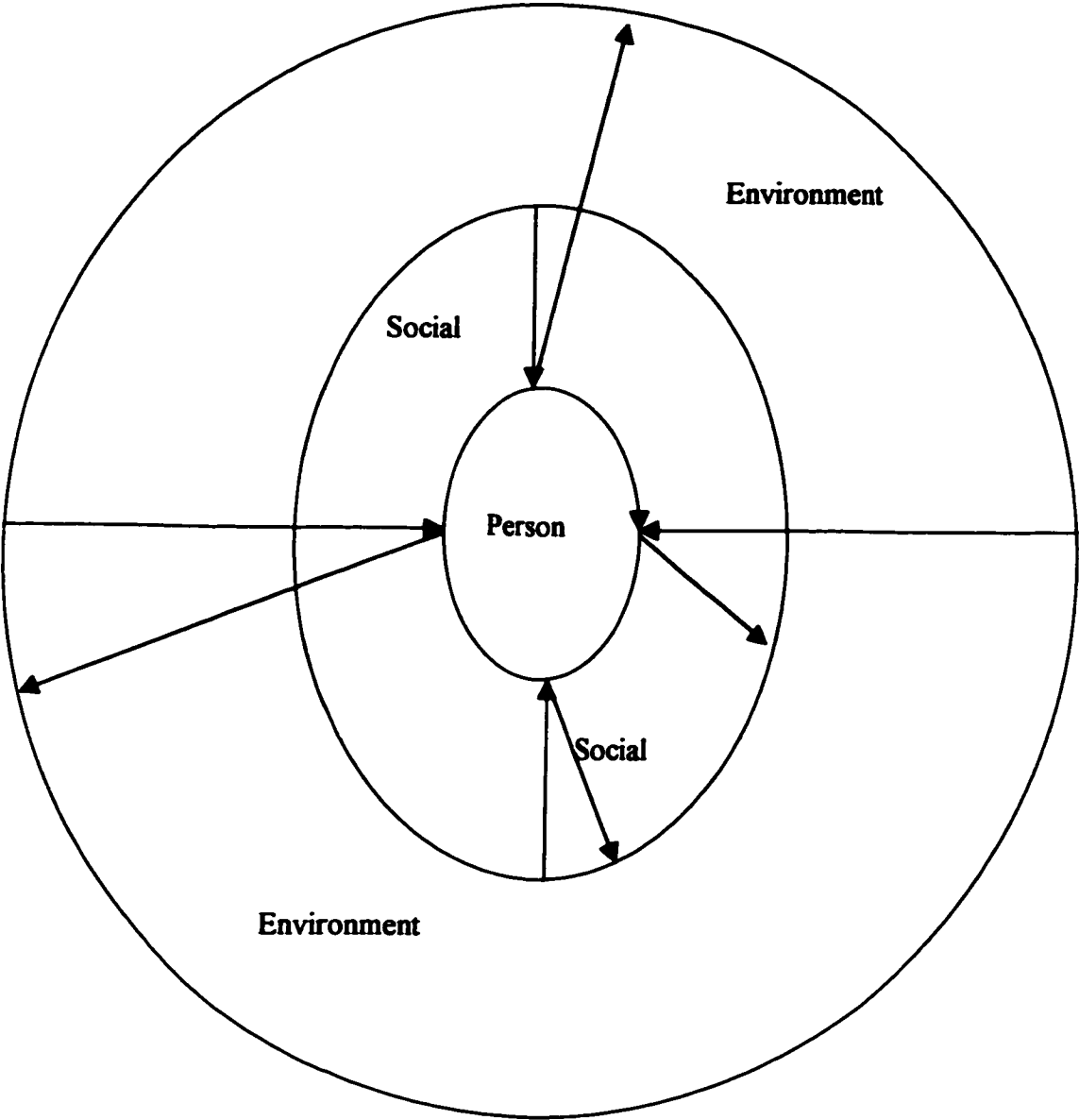
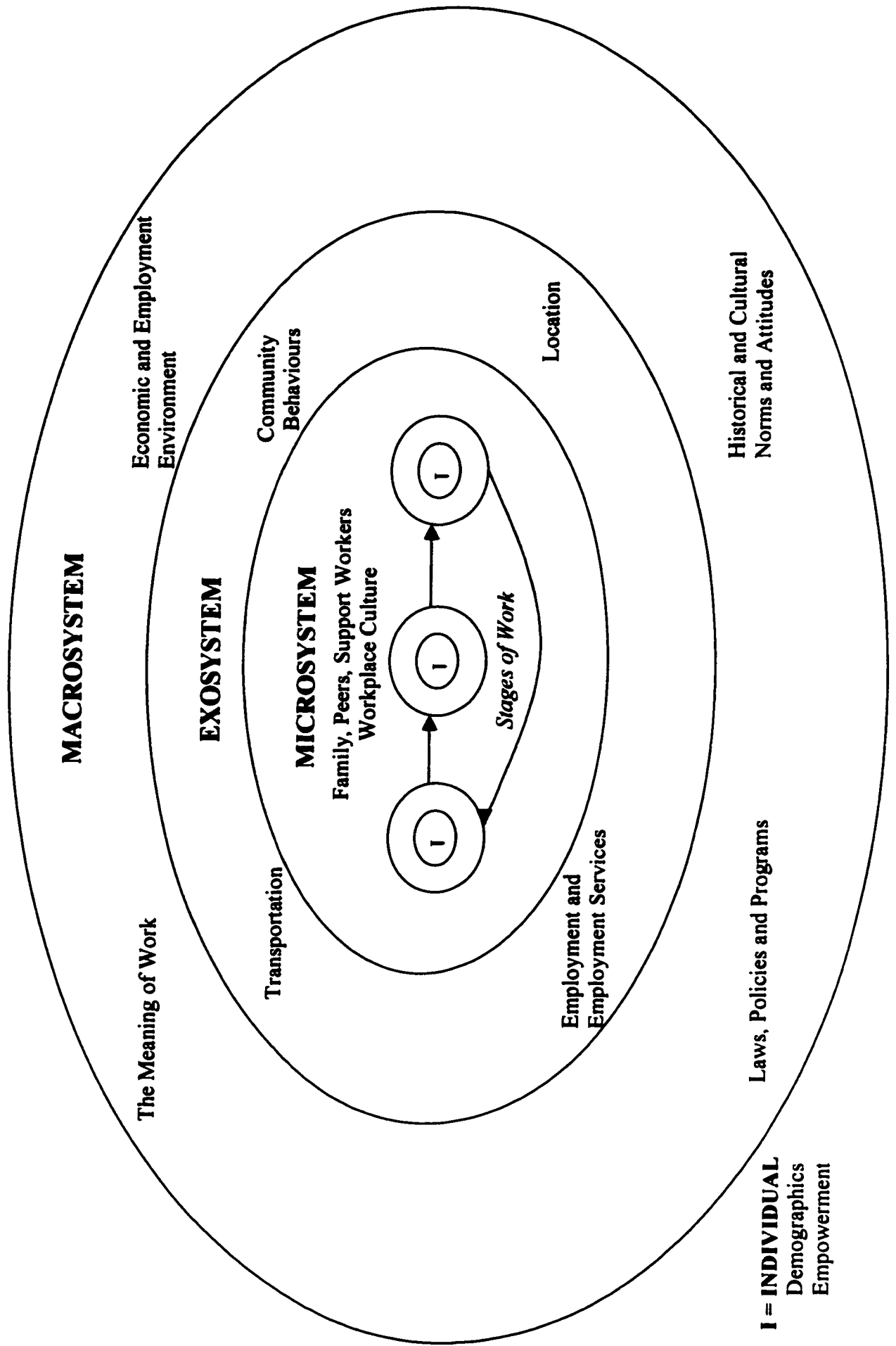


Figure 3 An Ecological Model of Employment for People with Developmental Challenges



Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about where you work right now?
 - where do you work? what do you do at work?
 - what do you like about work?
 - what do you not like about work
 - would you like to tell me any stories from work that make you happy? sad? angry?
 - how long have you worked at this job?
 - do you work anywhere else right now? (If yes, go back to top)

2. Could you please tell me how you got (found) your job?
 - did you find your job by yourself?
if so, how did you find it (newspaper, help wanted sign, etc?)
 - did someone else help you find your job?
if so, do you know how they found it?
 - did you want to work here?
 - did you make the final choice to work here?
 - what made it easy for you to get this job?
 - what made it hard for you to get this job?

3. Overall, would you say you are happy/not happy with your work?
 - is there anything you would like to change at work?
 - is there anything that would make your job better for you?

4. Have you ever worked anywhere else? Could you tell me about your old job? **(If more than one previous job, do this section twice)**
 - where did you use to work?
 - what did you do there?
 - what did you like/not like at this job?
 - why did you leave this job?
 - do you like your old job or your new job better?
 - why do you like old/new job better?

5. Imagine you could work anywhere that you wanted, where would you work? What would you do there?

6. Are there any other things about work you would like to talk about? Are there any other stories you would like to share about your work?

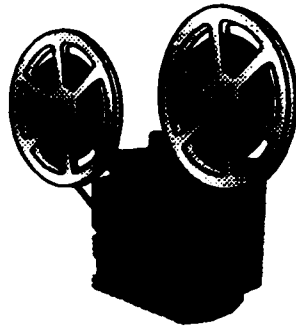
Appendix B

Final Interview Questions on Participation in the Project

1. **What did you like about talking to me about your work?**
2. **What did you not like about talking to me about your work?**
3. **What did you like about the group meetings?**
4. **What did you not like about the group meetings?**
5. **What did you like about making the video?**
6. **What did you not like about making the video?**
7. **How did you feel when you watched the video?
What made you feel happy?
What make you feel sad/ mad?**
8. **What did you like about showing this video to other people?**
9. **What did you not like about showing this video to other people?**
10. **How do you think this video will change the way other people think about people with developmental challenges?**
11. **What are some other ways to change how people think about people with developmental challenges?**
12. **Overall, what did you learn from being a part of this project?**

Appendix C

Video Confirmation Letter



Tuesday, April 17, 2001

Dear Participant,

Here are the parts of your interview that you have chosen to tell on video. If you would like to add more information, or take any information away, that is okay. You and I can talk before we videotape, and you can make any changes to your interview at that time.

I will contact you soon to talk about the day and time when we will videotape your interview.

If you have any questions please talk to me when you see me, or call me at (519) 884-0710 ext. 2988. We can then plan a time that is better for you.

Roslyn

Appendix D

Information Letter to Participants

**Roslyn Shields
Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario
(519) 884-0710 extension 2988**

January 22, 2001

Dear Participant,

Thank-you so much for agreeing to participate in this research study on the Employment Experiences of People with Developmental Challenges. I am really thankful for your participation and the stories you share will help people to understand what your job is like for you.

I will interview you and ask you to tell me some information about your job. This interview will take 1 hour and will be taped on a tape recorder. I will then listen to your interview and type out what you said. We can then go over it together as there may be changes you want to make. At another time that is good for you, you will be asked to choose some parts of your interview to tell on videotape. Your story will then be added to a group video which may be shown to other people. It will be up to you and the other participants who you want to see your video. You may choose to show your video to your friends, family, boss, or other people in the community. You will also be asked to participate in two meetings with the other participants to talk about the research results and your experience of participating in the research project. These meetings will each last two hours and will probably take place in March and April 2001.

**I
n your interview you may want to say some things that you do not want other people to know that you have said. I will make sure that no one will see, hear, or read anything that you do not want them to know. No one will hear your interview except for you and me. You will choose which parts of your**

interview that you want to share with others in a group video. No one will read your typed interview except for you, me, and three other researchers who are working with me. When I type out your interview, I will change your name so that no one will know who you are. In the final report you will also have a different name so that no one will know what you have said. This report will be shared with other people at the university and maybe people in the community. In the group video that you may choose to share with others, people will know who you are. Please remember that this video is an important part of the research and if you do not want to share some of your interview with other people, you may not want to participate.

Your taped interview and typed interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the university. At the end of the study, your tape and typed interview will be given back to you if you would like to have them. If you do not want them, I will make sure that they are destroyed so that no one else will see them.

At the time of your interview, you will receive an informed consent form. I would like to take this time to remind you that it is your choice to participate and if you wish to stop at any time, or do not want to answer a question during your interview, you can do so without any problem. Thanks again for your participation, and I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Roslyn Shields

Appendix E

Informed Consent for Participants

**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
Employment Experiences of People with Developmental Challenges:
A Participatory Approach
Roslyn Shields (Principal Investigator)
Dr. Ed Bennett (Thesis Supervisor)**

You are invited to participate in a research study on the work experiences of people with developmental challenges. The purpose of this study is for you to help the researcher learn more about your job and to give you a chance to share stories about your job with other people.

INFORMATION

In this study you will be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will last about 1 hour. The interview will be taped on a tape recorder, but no one else will hear this tape except for you and the researcher. The researcher will then listen to your tape and type out what you said in your interview. You will then be given a typed copy of your interview and asked if you would like to talk about it with the researcher. You may want to add more information or take away any information that you no longer wish to share with other people. You will then be asked to choose some parts of your interview to tell on videotape, so that your story can be added to a group video that you can show to other people. It will be up to you and the other participants who you want to see your video. You may choose to show your video to your friends, family, boss, or other people in the community. Finally, you will be asked to attend two meetings with the other participants to talk about the research findings and to discuss your participation in the research project. These meetings will probably last 2 hours each and will take place in March and April 2001. You will receive a copy of the final research findings by August 30, 2001.

RISKS

In any research study there can be problems for participants. In this study there are a few small problems that you should know about . First, you may have some things to say about your job or your boss that are not good. It is okay to share these feelings if you would like to. The researcher will not show your interview to anyone and will not use your name when writing about your story in the final report. It may be good to share things you do not like because that will help other people to understand what your job is really like for you. Another problem may be that you decide that you do not like your job and would like to find a new one. If you feel this way, the researcher will ask that you talk to your family, friends, boss or support staff. The researcher will also help you to find people in the community who can help you look for a new job. A final problem that you may have is that you may think that participating in this study will make a big change in your job or life. This probably will not happen. It is important to understand that the main purpose of this study is to talk about your job and to share your story with other people. By sharing your story with other people you will help people to understand what your job is like for you. You will also be able to talk about some changes that can help you and other people to be happy with your jobs. These are small, but very important changes that you can help make by participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you participate in this study there are also some good things that may happen for you. Telling your story to others and having them listen and ask questions may make you feel good about yourself and realize that what you have to say is important. Also, by participating in interviews and meetings you may learn some new skills. You can also feel proud that you are helping yourself and others by sharing your stories and talking with others about the work experiences of different people with developmental challenges.

Participant's Signature

CONFIDENTIALITY

You may say some things in your interview that you do not want other people to know that you said. The researcher will make sure that no one will see, hear, or read anything that you do not want them to know about. No one will listen to your interview except for you and the researcher. You will choose which parts of your interview that you want to share with others in a group video. No one will read your typed interview except for you, the researcher, and three other researchers who are working with the main researcher. During the research study, your taped interview and typed interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office at the university so that no one else will be able to see them. When the researcher types out your interview, she will change your name so that no one will know who you are. In the final report you will also have this different name, so no one will know what you have said. However, in the group video that you may choose to share with others, people will know who you are. If you do not want to share some parts of your interview with other people that is okay, but please remember that this video is an important part of the research. If you do not want to share any of your story with other people, you may not want to participate. At the end of the study (August 2001), your taped and typed interview will be given back to you if you would like to have them. If you do not want them, the researcher will make sure that the videotape is erased and the typed interview is destroyed so that no one else will see them.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study, or you are not happy with any part of the research, you may contact the researcher, Roslyn Shields at Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-0710 extension 2988. You may also contact the researcher's thesis advisor, Dr. Ed Bennett at the university, 884-0710 extension 3527. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated the way this form has described, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bruce Arai, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-0710, extension 3753.

Participant's Signature

PARTICIPATION

It is your choice to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate in this study it will not cause problems for you at work or in your life. You may also choose to stop participating at any time and this will not be a problem. If you do not want to answer any interview question, that is okay, just tell the researcher you do not want to answer it and she will move on to the next interview question. If you stop participating before the interviews and meetings are finished the information that you have shared will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____
Date _____

Investigator's signature _____
Date _____

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Employers

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
Employment Experiences of People with Developmental Challenges:
A Participatory Approach
Roslyn Shields (Principal Investigator)
Dr. Ed Bennett (Thesis Supervisor)

INFORMATION

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about the employment experiences of people with developmental challenges. The researcher will interview different participants and ask them to share their stories about their work experiences. These interviews will need to be videotaped so that a group video can be made to show to various audiences that participants choose. One of your employees, *participant's name*, has chosen to participate in this study. He/she has requested that he/she show the researcher around his/her employment setting and videotape him/her at work.

RISKS

As with any research study, there are risks to anyone who is involved. A participant may have some criticisms of their employment setting. In the final written thesis, your anonymity will be secured as pseudonyms will be used for yourself and the participant. In the final group video, your anonymity depends on whether or not you consent to your employee providing a videotaped tour of the work setting. If you do not choose to have the participant show the researcher around the work setting, your anonymity will be secured and your or your organization's name will be 'beeped out' in the final video. If you agree that the participant can videotape the employment setting, your anonymity cannot be disguised in the final group video.

BENEFITS

It is also possible that consenting to a videotaped tour of your/ your organization's work setting will be beneficial to you/your organization. If the participant is happy with his/her employment setting, you/your organization can take pride in providing a good work environment and may set an example for other employment settings.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study, or you are not happy with any part of the research, you may contact the researcher, Roslyn Shields at Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-0710 extension 2988. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated the way this form has described, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bruce Arai, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-0710, extension 3753.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this research study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw before the final group video is produced, the videotape of your work setting will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understood the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to my employee providing a videotaped tour of the work setting.

Employer's Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G

Script for agency/employer to release client's/employee's names to the researcher

Roslyn Shields (who used to work here / who is a student at Wilfrid Laurier University) is doing a research study on the Employment Experiences of People with Developmental Challenges. She is looking for about 5-10 people who would be willing to share their stories about their job experiences and also help to make a group video about these experiences. I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in a study like this? If you are interested, may I give your name and telephone number to Roslyn so that she can talk to you and give you some more information?

It is your choice whether or not you would like me to give Roslyn your phone number. If you do not want to, that is okay and will not cause any problems for you in your job. If you do want me to give Roslyn your name and phone number, and once you talk to her you decide you do not want to participate, that is also okay. You will just need tell Roslyn that you do not want to participate and this will not cause any problems for you at work. Also, if I give Roslyn your name and phone number, it does not definitely mean you will get to participate in the study. It is a very small study and only 5-10 people will be able tell their stories. So what do you think? May I give Roslyn you name and phone number and tell her you would be interested in learning more about this study?

Appendix H

Transportation Consent

**As part of the Film Crew for the project, *The Employment Experiences of People with Developmental Challenges: A Participatory Approach*,
I agree to allow Roslyn to drive me to Kitchener on April 23, 2001.**

Participant's Signature

Appendix I

Reflections on the Video

1. What are your first impressions of the video?

"I felt connected to the people in the video and I liked getting to know a variety of people on a personal level."

"Very interesting and the overall message was positive - that work is important."

2. Overall, what do you think of the video?

"It was interesting and educational. Gave me a new perspective on employment."

"Great! Inspiring."

"Well done. Liked that many people's stories were told."

3. What was your favourite part of the video?

"Part where [a participant] danced was great and the reflection of 'voices' at the end."

"[A participant] dancing and the personal aspects - getting to know a bit about each person as an individual."

4. What part of the video surprised you?

"The diversity of jobs that people have."

"The variety of jobs. The lack of focus on money."

5. Did anyone's story stand out for you?

"The guy that spoke about his employer not paying him and the advice he gave around that - very useful and insightful."

"The man in the drug store."

6. What part of the video could be improved on?

"I thought the sound quality could be improved."

"Some sense of how challenges were overcome."

7. How did you feel when you saw the video?

"Hopeful - reminded me of the importance of the issue."

"Happy for the people who loved their jobs. Connected to them - because of the personal contributions they gave in the video."

"Inspired and thought about what makes my own job enjoyable."

8. Do you think the video would be useful to show to other people?

"Yes, it could help motivate people having difficulty finding work and give people a better understanding of what it's like to live with a disability."

"Yes, because the message about how work is important needs to be heard."

9. Who do you think we should show the video to?

"Chamber of Commerce, City Council, employers."

"People who are looking for jobs, to give them hope about finding a job they'll like."

"The Working Centre, Social Work students."