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Working for work: A program evaluation

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WORKING FOR WORK: A PROGRAM EVALUATION

by

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Your file   Votre référence

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Canada

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Finally, my family has always provided a sense of secure support; regardless of my accomplishments or failures the love of my parents and siblings will always remain. Obviously, that is very comforting to know.

ABSTRACT

Working for Work: Intercultural Job Support Groups is a new program in the Waterloo

Region of Southern Ontario providing immigrants and refugees to Canada assistance in

finding employment. Having started in October of 1991, *Working for Work* operates within

a support group setting and encourages participation from group members. The program

also advocates on behalf of immigrants and refugees. This is most notably demonstrated

through the organization of work placements which offer group members direct contact with

Canadian employers. There are two general goals of the program: (1) to increase the

employability of group members, and (2) to increase group members' **sense of support** in

dealing with employment-related stress.

In my opinion, there is a need for a program like *Working for Work* in the Waterloo

Region. The changing Canadian immigration reality away from traditional European

sources contributes to employment barriers (e.g., racial discrimination, lack of English or

French language skills) experienced by many immigrants. *Working for Work* offers a unique

employment service in a region experiencing unusually high levels of unemployment. The

program attempts to address some immigrant employment barriers while also emphasizing

the strengths that immigrants already possess.

In this thesis the early stages of the program, *Working for Work* were evaluated (the

first two of the program's four support groups). Through the evaluation process it was my

intention to establish an ongoing evaluation process for the program's future.

The evaluation of *Working for Work* adopted a non-experimental approach. That is,

there were no control or comparison groups. Rather, the evaluation emphasized the

experience of the research participants within the program.

Four characteristics defined the evaluation of *Working for Work*. (1) The evaluation used a **participatory** approach encouraging input from the program's stakeholders. (2) The evaluation considered both **processes and outcomes**. (3) The evaluation was **formative** in nature. That is, through the evaluation process the program developed and changed to meet the needs of the research participants. (4) The evaluation included both **qualitative and quantitative** information.

Multiple methods were used to gather information from the research participants (group members, staff, and the volunteer advisory committee). **Quantitative** methods included an initial assessment interview of potential group members, personal progress reports filled out by group members during the group sessions, and a follow-up questionnaire administered two months after the group's completion. **Qualitative** methods included observation of 50% of the group sessions, weekly group feedback from the group members during the group sessions, review of program documents, individual interviews with 12 group members, and a staff/advisory committee focus group interview.

Evaluation information is summarized according to five qualitative themes: the **activities** of the program are described first; this is followed by a description of the **group members**; issues regarding the **relationship** between the program's stakeholders are discussed next; an **assessment** of the program's goals is followed by **recommendations** for the program's improvement.

Overall, the evaluation information suggests a positive appraisal of *Working for Work*. In terms of increasing the **employability** of group members the program helped

members to (1) improve their job search skills, (2) increase their awareness of job-related options, (3) recognize and respond to employment barriers, and (4) contact potential employers. Twenty of the 25 group members found employment-related activities (e.g., school, work placement, full-time job).

In terms of increasing a **sense of support** among group members, the program: (1) allowed group members to help each other in their job search, (2) increased the awareness in members of how to deal with stress, (3) created an environment to develop supportive relationships, and (4) gave members hope of finding a job.

However, there are areas in which *Working for Work* could improve. Recommendations are given according to **curriculum content, group process, and program structure.**

In keeping with the intent of establishing an ongoing evaluation of *Working for Work*, I outline the evaluation plans for the future of the program.

To conclude, I mention the contributions resulting from *Working for Work's* evaluation. Contributions are outlined according to (1) my **personal learning** (including issues regarding evaluating community-based programs), (2) what *Working for Work* has gained (both within and outside the group setting), and (3) the transferability of information to other **related programs** (both in terms of increasing employability of immigrants and in providing a sense of support).

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INTRODUCTION

Program Background

As the name suggests, *"Working for Work: Intercultural Job Support Groups"* (hereafter referred to as *"Working for Work"*), is a program providing newcomers to Canada assistance in obtaining employment within a supportive environment.

The idea for *Working for Work* originated in the early summer of 1991 from Sand Hills Community Development Incorporated. Sand Hills is an organization providing transitional housing for newly arrived refugees and encouraging community economic development projects in the Waterloo Region. Sand Hills, with the support of the regional Refugee Coordinating Committee, spearheaded an effort to bring together individuals from various agencies working with immigrant and employment issues to discuss the feasibility of such a program.

Another major impetus in pursuing the program came from Canada Employment Centre (CEC), a federal government agency responsible for implementing employment policies in the Waterloo Region. Under the Community Based Employment Assistance option of the Canadian Jobs Strategy, funds were available to increase the overall employability of community-based organizations (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991). A funding proposal based on input from various community members and agencies was subsequently submitted to CEC in July of 1991. An advisory committee consisting of volunteers from various immigrant and employment agencies was formed to further refine the proposal and oversee the development of the program. Having obtained the required funds from CEC, the program began on October 15, 1991 and ran until June 5, 1992 at

which time its future was re-evaluated. The program consisted of four separate groups each meeting for two months and each having a maximum of 15 participants. *Group 1* began on November 25, 1991 with a new group starting approximately every one and a half months.

Purpose

In this thesis the early stages of the program *Working for Work* were evaluated (i.e., the first two groups). Particular emphasis was given to focusing and implementing an evaluation consistent with the participatory approach of the program (i.e., using resources that are already available within the program). It was my intention that this thesis become a vehicle for establishing an on-going evaluation in the future of this program. This thesis should also serve as an example of how other similar community-based programs, with limited resources, may adopt internal evaluations.

I will begin by demonstrating the need for a program like *Working for Work* in the Waterloo Region. This will be done by reviewing the changing face of Canadian immigration, barriers to immigrant employment, and some initiatives attempting to address immigrant employment issues. Based on this review I will outline the uniqueness of *Working for Work* for the Waterloo Region.

THE NEED FOR "INTERCULTURAL JOB SUPPORT GROUPS"

In North American society, which emphasizes the importance of achievement and financial success (Wachtel, 1989), there are few life stressors as significant as those associated with unemployment. Unemployment places individuals under financial constraints. Unemployment also often strikes at the heart of an individual's sense of worth in a society which values people not so much for who they are, but for what they do (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA], 1983). Indeed, this negative impact of unemployment can affect not only the unemployed person's personal mental health, but can also adversely affect his/her physical health, and family life (see Passmore, 1988 and CMHA, 1983 for a more complete review).

In this thesis I will be focusing on issues of unemployment for a specific population: recent Canadian immigrants.

Definitions

Before proceeding I will define some terms. The term "immigrant" in this paper refers to all newcomers legally accepted into Canada. Under the *Immigration Act* (1989) persons may enter Canada under one of three categories: family class (sponsored by close relatives for the purpose of family reunification), independent class (entered on the merit of a point system), or refugee. "Refugee" refers to the U.N. criterion of a "Convention Refugee" where an individual has a well-founded fear of persecution upon returning to the country of his/her nationality or previous residence.

For the period of 1978-1987, 40% of immigrants arriving in Canada did so in the independent class, compared with 42.8% in the family class and 17.2% in the refugee class

(see figure 1).

Figure 1
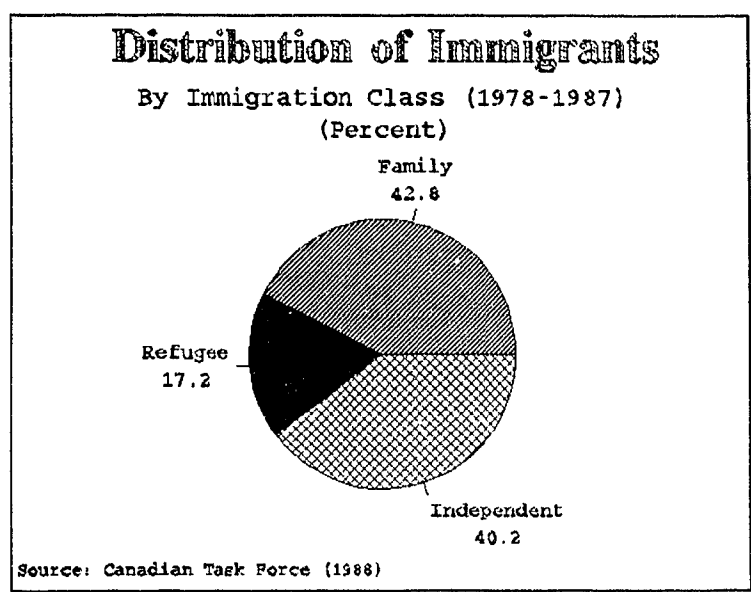
Since 1985 the Canadian government has adopted a policy of growth in immigration (Immigration Canada, 1990). The resulting increase in immigration and the projected figures until 1995 (by immigration class) can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2
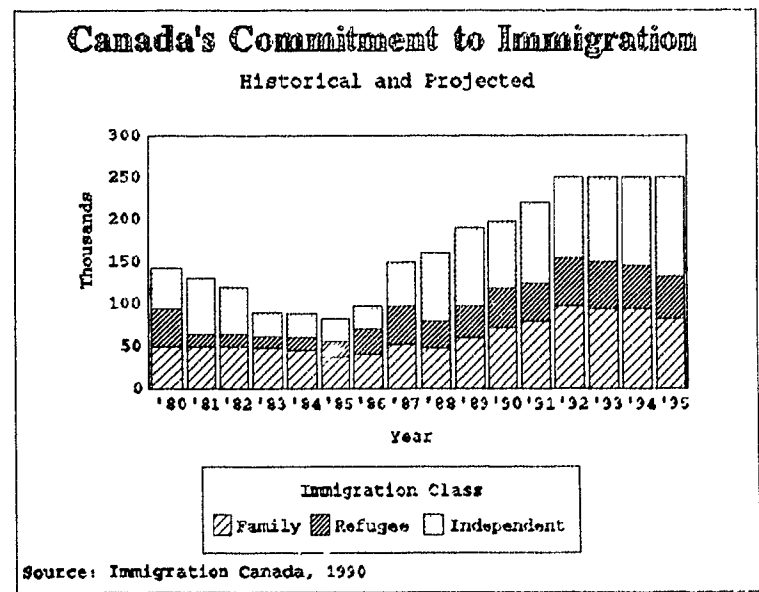
The majority of these immigrants (31.4% in 1988) intend to enter the labour market

as professionals and administrators (see figure 3 for a complete summary of intended labour

destinations).

Figure 3
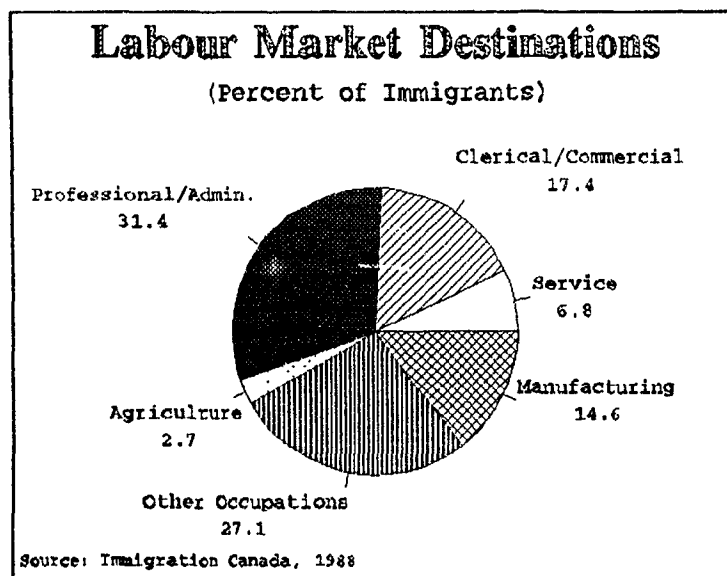
When speaking of refugees the reader should remember that a unique situation exists

not experienced by other immigrants. "People usually choose to become immigrants [i.e.,

family class or independent class immigrants], whereas they are forced to become refugees.

This increases the risk for emotional disorder [for refugees]" (Canadian Task Force, 1988,

p. 5).

Periodically the term "visible minority" will appear in this thesis. This term refers to

persons, other than aboriginal people, "who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in

colour" (*Employment Equity Act*, 1986, p. 3).

The Changing Immigration Reality

Many Canadians, like myself, have had parents, grandparents, or other relatives who came to Canada from another country. Adaptation to Canadian society was often accomplished only by sacrificial effort. The Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (CTF) (1988) poses the legitimate question often raised by host Canadians: "Yes, times were hard, but I (or my relative) overcame all that trouble without any help from the government... Why do we need special inquiries and special programs now?"(p. 5). A related question could be raised for employment programs for immigrants, and indeed for programs such as outlined in this thesis.

The Canadian Task Force (1988) responds to this inquiry in two parts. Firstly, the Task Force notes that our knowledge of how newcomers adapt in a new setting has expanded in recent years. When applied, this knowledge can help accelerate the adaptation process allowing immigrants to be productive members of society. Secondly, the Task Force mentions that although Canada's population has remained a relatively consistent one-sixth foreign-born population since Confederation, a new factor has emerged in the past twenty-five years to warrant a deeper look into immigrant issues: the changing face of immigration in Canada.

Since the mid to late 1960's there has been shift away from the traditional sources of immigrants (Great Britain, northern Europe, and the United States). As demonstrated in figure 4, the proportion of immigrants from Asia, and to a lesser extent from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa has increased substantially in the past three decades.

Immigration by Region of Origin

Canada 1956-1986

Percentage of Immigrants

Year of Landing

Legend:
- Asia
- Caribbean
- Europe
- Africa
- N. America
- Other
- Latin America
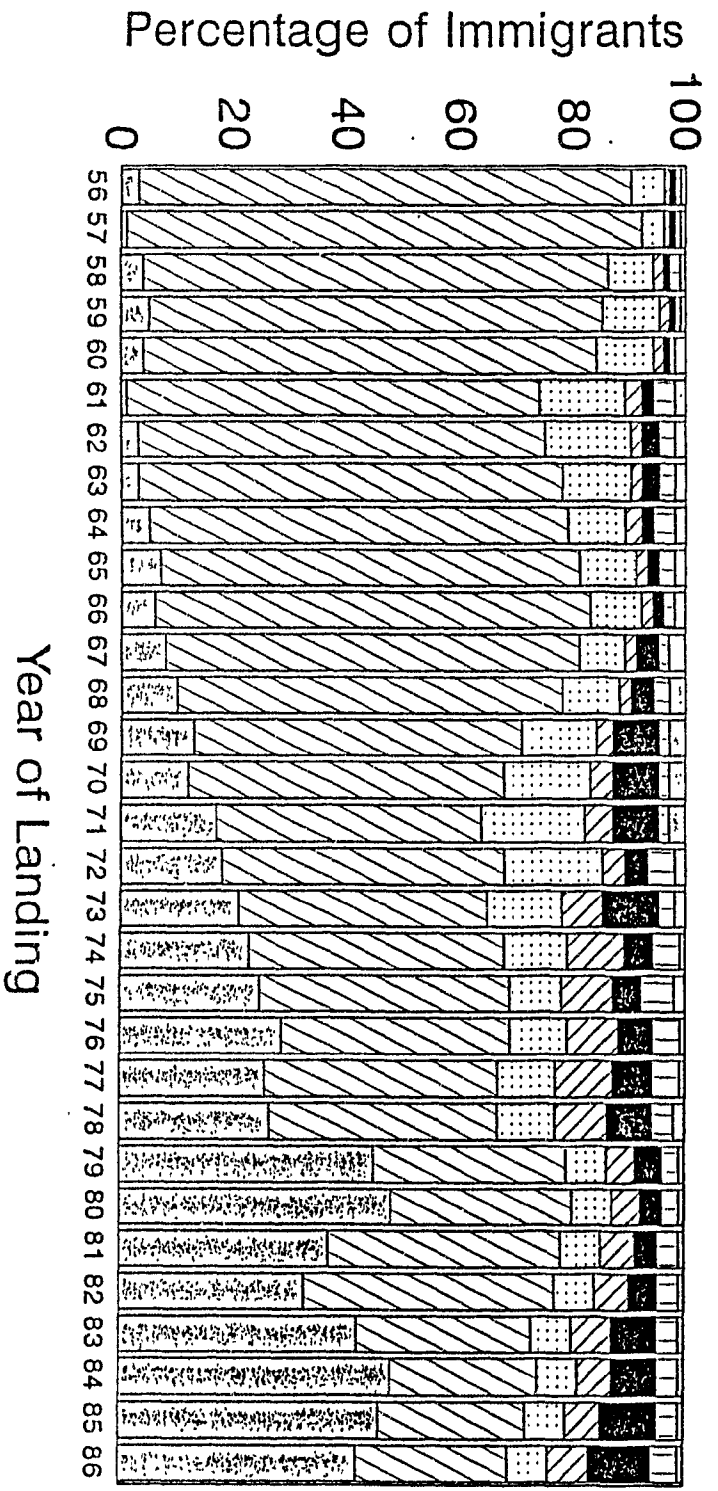
Source: Canadian Task Force, 1988

Figure 4

The most recent complete immigration statistics (1988) show that 50.1% of all immigrants entering Canada have come from Asia (see figure 5).

Figure 5
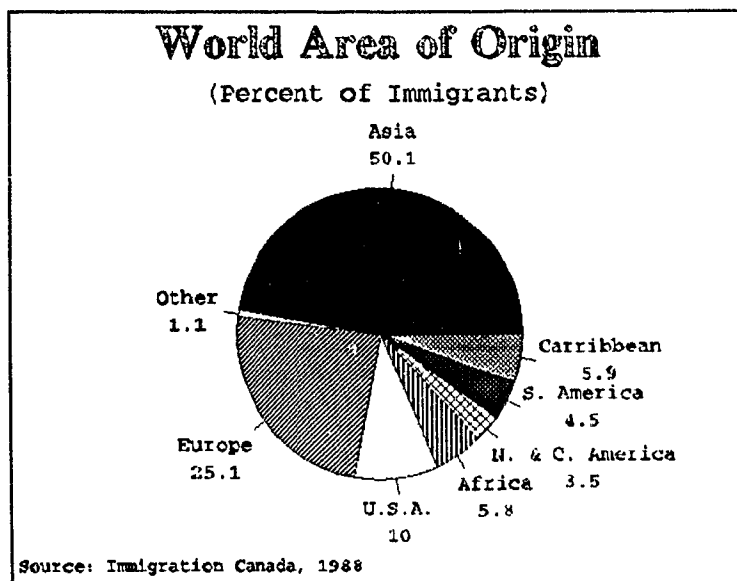
The rationale for the change in immigration trends can be attributed to the aging population and low birth rate of Canada's traditional immigrant sources (industrialized nations) since the 1960s (Naidoo, 1990). Consequently, Canada, looking for immigrants from new sources, introduced an immigration screening system aimed at providing a nondiscriminatory, objective "point system" (White Paper on Immigration, 1966). The 1976 Immigration Act created the new "refugee" and "family"classes of immigration which further encouraged immigrants from non-traditional sources. So, for example, between 1978-81, 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees entered Canada (Indra, 1987).

A certain degree of stress naturally accompanies a change in environments. All newcomers to Canada share, to some extent, the stress of adapting to the Canadian society. The majority of recent immigrants from nontraditional sources, however, have to adapt not

only to the new climate, new customs, and new surroundings shared virtually by all immigrants, but they must also adapt to additional challenges. These immigrants often speak languages rooted in the linguistic origins of Asia and Africa, rather than those of Europe. Ideas about the role of family life, religion, politics, and work in society can differ vastly as well (CTF, 1988).

Immigrant Employment Barriers

Immigrants and refugees have traditionally helped fill Canada's labour demands (Marr, 1977). Yet, finding employment often represents a major source of stress in the settlement and adaptation process (CTF, 1988).

Ubale, in his *Report on Concerns of the South Asian Community Regarding their Place in the Canadian Mosaic* (1977), suggests that a competition exists in the Canadian labour market much like the competition between foreign and domestic goods in the domestic market. According to Ubale, systemic barriers are in place in the labour market to protect Canadian citizens from losing opportunities in the labour competition. Economic market forces alone do not determine the type of labour employed in the market place.

Whether these barriers are erected and maintained intentionally, as Ubale suggests, is open for debate. The fact that barriers do exist for immigrants looking for employment is less debatable. The unemployment rate for immigrants in their first year in Canada has been reported to be two to three times higher than for Canadian born citizens (Manpower and Immigration, 1974). Monetary incentives for landing jobs are low for many refugees who have been found to earn typically much less than other Canadians (Buchignani, 1980). Several barriers to employment which bring about these conditions are listed below.

Racial Discrimination

Canada is often portrayed as a country giving equal opportunity to people from all ethnic and racial backgrounds (e.g., Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988). Yet the reality that preferential treatment exists for certain groups cannot be ignored.

Henry and Ginzberg (1985) demonstrated discrimination along ethnic lines. Telephone calls made to prospective employers in Toronto revealed that 44% of Indo-Pakistani callers (identified by their accent) were told that jobs were closed or no longer available compared with 36% of Black West Indian, 31% of White Immigrant Canadian, and only 13% of White Majority Canadian callers. Once employed, and despite higher levels of education in lower-paying occupations, members of visible minorities are paid slightly lower salaries (*Employment Equity Act Annual Report*, 1990).

Racial discrimination manifests itself in various forms. It may surface in the recruitment process, screening procedures, and promotions within a given business (Muszynski & Reitz, 1982). *Equality Now* (1984), a report of the special committee on visible minorities in Canadian society, recognizes that racism exists in our society for visible minorities. Discrimination serves to decrease both the likelihood of finding employment, and limit advancement and promotion once a job has been found. For a more complete review of racially motivated discrimination in Canada I refer interested readers to Muszynski and Reitz (1982) and Henry (1986).

In consultation with various commissions and reports in the mid 1980's (e.g., *Equality Now*, 1984; *Royal Commission on Equality in Employment*, 1985; *Toward Equality*, 1986), the Canadian government introduced the *Employment Equity Act* (1986). The Act addresses

systemic racism by requiring employers under federal jurisdiction with 100 or more employees to have visible minorities represented in their workforce. "...employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences..."(*Employment Equity Act*, 1986 p.1). Federal funds for anti-racism initiatives have also become available, such as the Canadian Labour Congress educational program on racism in the workplace (Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, 1990).

These new initiatives have borne some fruit. *The Employment Equity Act Annual Report* of 1990 notes improvements in both the representation in the work force and the share of full-time hirings for visible minorities. These improvements can be seen in figure 6.

Figure 6

Improvements for Visible Minorities

Representation in Canadian Labour Force
And Share of Full-Time Hirings

Source: Employment Equity Act Annual Report, 1990
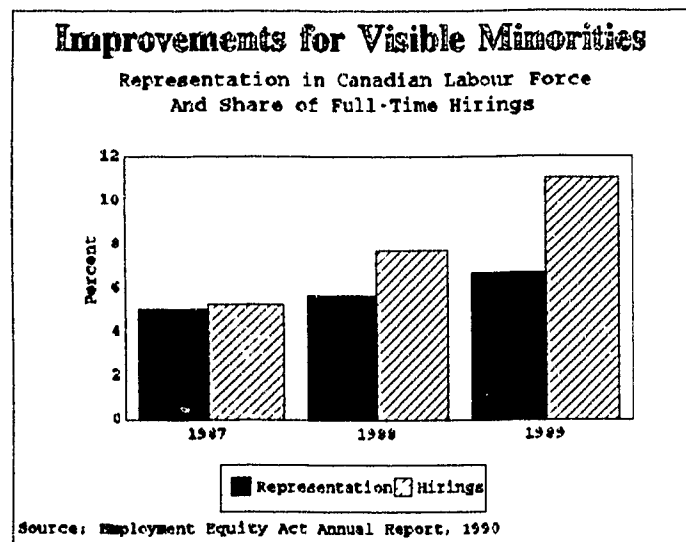
Yet discrimination in the job market still exists. In their latest annual report (1989-

1990), the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported 202 employment-related complaints on the basis of race, ethnicity, or creed. Many other cases are likely not reported to the Commission. Discrimination still prevents many immigrants from obtaining employment in Canada.

Other Barriers

There are many other barriers, beside racial discrimination, which hinder immigrant employment. Perhaps the most significant of these is the lack of English or French language skills.

For the last ten years, 43% of all immigrants entering Canada in a given year spoke neither official language (CTF, 1988). Angela Kan, speaking to the Special Committee on the Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society (1983) describes the resulting impact on employment:

> What happens for some individuals [without English language skills] is that they must immediately take low paying manual labour employment... they are caught in a blind alley of little money and no skills which can last for the rest of their lives (p. 29).

There are many additional barriers which numerous commissions and studies have identified. For example, Ubale (1977) made list which includes required Canadian work experience, lack of employment related contacts (university, business, friends), and the lack of recognition for non-Canadian educational qualifications, licences, job experience, and apprenticeships. Job search skills such as completing unfamiliar applications, conducting interviews in a language other than one's mother tongue, and completing culturally biased selection tests may be additional barriers immigrants confront (Muszynski & Reitz, 1982).

The Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1985) complements this list.

Little information about Canada is given to many immigrants prior to emigration resulting in unfamiliarity with Canadian life and institutions. According to the Commission, immigrants are often hired on the basis of the interviewer's perception of their ability to integrate easily into a given labour force; a perception perhaps irrelevant to the candidate's actual ability to integrate or the qualifications of the candidate. The lack of adequate child care facilities and culturally insensitive government counsellors are additional barriers mentioned by the Commission.

The Canadian Task Force (1988) mentions barriers to accepting foreign trade and professional accreditation. The Task Force recognizes that poorly translated documents and the lack of interpreter services may hinder the granting of professional equivalencies. Practical considerations such as being unable to produce the required original documents (particularly for refugees) becomes a frustration when applying for accreditation.

Recent efforts by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has introduced the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) as an attempt to address issues of accreditation (Ontario Council of Regents, 1991). Although in its formation stage, PLA intends to establish a system of evaluation whereby credit may be granted for past formal or academic training and for related experiential learning. At a local level, a group of interested community members have begun Skills Employment Entry and Development (SEED) during the beginning of 1992. This new program explores ways for foreign trained people to access trades and professions in Canada.

Effects of Barriers

What are the effects of these employment barriers? These barriers not only produce

unemployment among immigrants (with its destabilizing effects mentioned in the introduction), but also underemployment. Finding it impossible to obtain employment deserving of their education and training, many immigrants are prime targets for emotional disorder (CTF, 1988) and waste the very human and intellectual resources which in many cases permitted them entry into Canada (Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, 1985). The Commission notes that the threat of deportation or loss of job is sometimes used by employers to exploit those immigrants unaware of Canadian law and regulatory bodies.

An ironic consequence of unemployed and underemployed immigrants is that both the immigrant and the host country are penalized.

> People who could and should become important resources for Canada must, too often, turn to public assistance. They also resort to the health care system because their marginal status damages their physical and emotional health" (CTF, 1988 p. 30).

Moving Beyond Employment Barriers

Addressing Barriers

Programs dealing with immigrant employment must recognize the existence and impact of employment barriers confronting immigrants. Efforts to reduce barriers are needed to counteract the forces which construct them. Reports Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella through the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1985):

> We must create and maintain barrier-free environments so that individuals can have genuine access free from arbitrary obstructions to demonstrate and exercise fully their potential. This may mean treating some people differently by removing the obstacles to equality of opportunity they alone face for no demonstrably justifiable reason... The process is an exercise in redistributive justice. Its objective is to prevent the denial of access to society's benefits because of distinctions that are invalid (p. 3-4) (emphasis mine).

The reduction of barriers of which Abella speaks require large systemic changes. It would be impossible for an individual program, such as the one outlined in this thesis, to evoke changes of the magnitude envisioned in Abella's statement. However, programs designed to address specifically identified employment barriers are one vital step in the process of a more equitable job market.

Toronto, with its large immigrant population, has numerous services aimed at reducing employment barriers for immigrants. Agencies such as Accessible Community Counselling & Employment Services (ACCESS), Downtown Employment Services (DES), The Centre for Advancement in Work and Living (CAWL), and COSTI serve as examples. Services offered at these agencies which seek to minimize barriers include: teaching job search skills, offering individual vocational counselling, teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), advocating on behalf of immigrants in the market place, and conducting workshops on Employment Equity and Race Relations in the Workplace.

Recognizing Immigrant Strengths

Immigrant employment services must do more than work toward reducing barriers. Standing alone, such services can easily become iatrogenic. That is, in the process of attempting to help clients, service providers may inadvertently cause harm (Morgan, 1983). In the case of immigrant employment, harm may result when a relationship of dependency suggests that it is only the paid (sometimes non-immigrant) service providers who can effectively aid the jobless immigrant. The net result is a reaffirmation of the helplessness of the immigrant, and the disempowering acceptance that one's life is being determined by others (Rappaport, 1981).

Abella (1985) speaks of the need to "give individuals an opportunity to use their abilities according to their potential and not according to what we think their potential should be" (p. 4). Rather than dwelling only on barriers, immigrant employment programs must also acknowledge and utilize the strengths that immigrants already posses. For example, many immigrants have education and training in their home countries. Through the process of adapting to Canadian society, immigrants demonstrate a certain degree of preserverance and resilience. There is also strength in the diversity of perspective and approach that immigrants can bring to the Canadian labour force.

The importance of immigrant strengths is reflected in some of the services offered by the agencies in Toronto listed earlier in this section. For example, career planning assistance recognizes job and educational choices beyond entry-level positions. Coordination of job and training placements matches immigrant experience and skills with potential employment settings.

Services in the Waterloo Region

During 1990, the Kitchener area recr' d a total of 1809 immigrants (938 independent class, 697 family class, and 174 refugee class) (Employment and Immigration, 1990). The majority of these immigrants have come from the countries of Poland, Roumania, Vietnam, El Salvador, and India. These immigrants have entered Canada at a time when the Canadian year-to-date (September, 1991) unemployment rate was 10.3%, the highest level in six years (The Labour Force, 1991).

As can be seen in figure 7, both the Kitchener Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Ontario share with Canada in experiencing unusually high unemployment rates in 1991.

Although improvements in the unemployment rate for Kitchener CMA were noticed during the end of 1991, the increase in monthly unemployment rates for 1992 cautions against being overly optimistic for a quick recovery (figure 8).

Figure 7

Annual Unemployment Rates

— Kitchener CMA + Ontario * Canada

Source: The Labour Force, 1992

Figure 8

Kitchener CMA Unemployment Rates
3 Month Moving Average

— 1987 + 1988 * 1989 ▫ 1990 * 1991 ◇ 1992

Source: The Labour Force, 1992
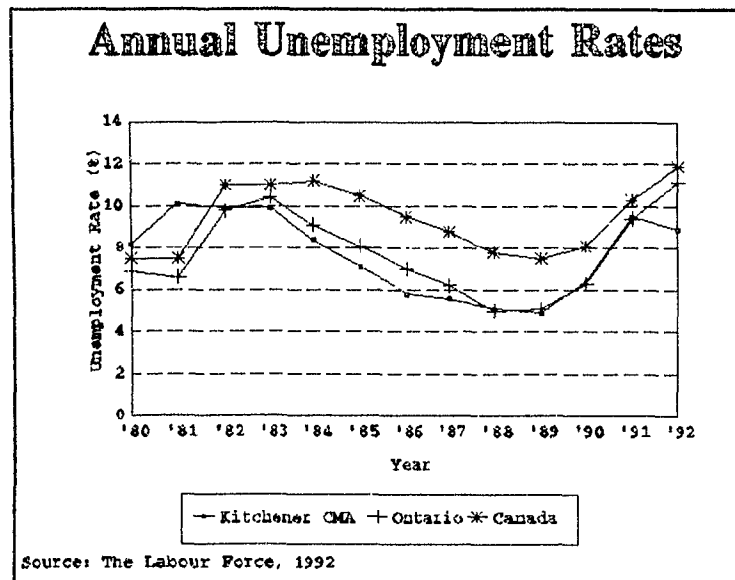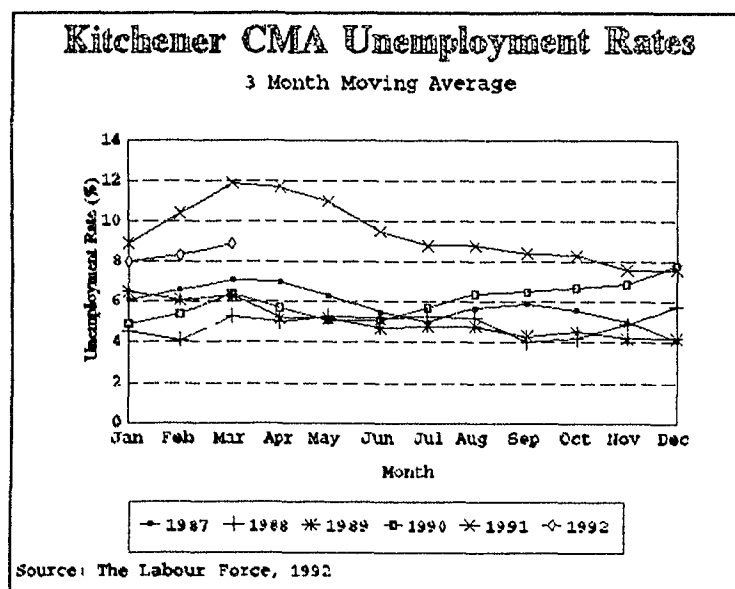
With the loss of many jobs in the Kitchener area, the impact of the recession on employment is obvious. One restaurant owner in Kitchener was surprised to find 290 applicants responding to a small "help wanted" advertisement in a local paper. The counter cashier position paid $6.50 an hour ("Sign of the Times", *K-W Record*, March 27, 1992).

Within this context it comes as no surprise that unemployment among immigrants has become a concern. In the spring of 1991 the Refugee Coordinating Committee (RCC) of the Waterloo Region recognized that efforts would have to be undertaken to address immigrant unemployment. The report of the regional Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee (IRAC) (1991) also suggested that there was a need for employment services to increase their "emphasis on the 'visible minority' population within all aspects of program and operations" (p. xiv). Finally, a recent evaluation of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaption Program (ISAP) in Kitchener indicated that while 70% of the immigrants interviewed had jobs in their home countries, only 27% presently had jobs in Canada (Akotia, 1992).

There are numerous programs in the Waterloo Region which, to varying degrees and perspectives, address immigrant unemployment. After talking to various individuals working with employment concerns, I was able to compile a list of these agencies summarized in table 1. Specific services for individual agencies are identified. Services are considered along two dimensions: (1) availability to general public versus immigrant only, and (2) group versus individual sessions.

Table 1

WATERLOO REGION EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

	GROUP SETTING	INDIVIDUAL SETTING
SERVICES FOR GENERAL POPULATION	The Working Centre (Handling Unemployment Groups ["HUG"]) Community Opportunities Development Association (planning "HUG")	The Working Centre (career planning, counselling, job search skills) Canada Employment Centre (employment counselling, job search workshops, job training) Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre/Youth Employment Service Community Opportunities Development Association (Employment Resource Centre, the Self Start Centre, Job Centre) Employment Resource Centre for Single Parents Community Social Services Employment Program University of Waterloo/ Wilfrid Laurier University Career Centre
SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS ONLY	English as a Second Language (ESL)- Conestoga College (Job shadow) ESL- St. Louis (English for work course) ESL- KW English School Focus for Ethnic Women Focus on Skills (skill development) New Canadian Work Experience (job search skills, work placements)	KW Multicultural Centre (job search skills) Cambridge Multicultural Centre (employment counselling)

Working for Work as an Alternative Program

Program's Purpose

The general purpose of _Working for Work_ is twofold: (1) to increase the employability

of program participants, and (2) to increase the participants' sense of support in dealing with

employment-related stress.

The intent of this program is not to address all barriers to employment. Barriers that are addressed include: increasing awareness of the Canadian job market, increasing contacts with employers and volunteer agencies, increasing access to work experience, and equipping participants with job search skills. Attention is also given to overcoming barriers which the participants identify.

In addition to addressing barriers, the identification and utilization of the strengths of the participants will be emphasized.

Program's Distinctive Features

Working for Work has certain distinctive features which allow it to fill some of the gaps in immigrant employment services in the Waterloo Region. This fact has been recognized by various immigrant and employment agencies within the Region. For example, The Working Centre and Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre have declared a willingness to be an ongoing resource for *Working for Work*. Obviously the need for a support group like *Working for Work* was perceived great enough for CEC to provide the necessary funds. The distinctive features of this program are outlined below.

1. English proficiency

Working for Work is intended for those immigrants who are ready and able to work and who have a working knowledge of English. Immigrants who are not eligible for ESL (because of their proficiency in English) miss out on the worthwhile employment components (understanding of the Canadian job market and job search skills) of that program. *Working for Work* includes those not accepted in ESL programs.

2. Employer Contact

Working for Work intends to increase immigrant contact with potential employers. This would largely be accomplished through the six week paid work placements which were made possible by additional funding received from Canada Employment Centre in January, 1992. The goals of the work placements are to (1) increase the self confidence of immigrants in work settings, (2) increase and adapt their employment skills, and (3) increase Canadian work experience of new Canadians.

Although the work placement component of the program was not originally planned as part of the program, *Working for Work's* advisory committee recognized the opportunities afforded by the additional funding. Consequently the work placements grew to become an increasingly important component of *Working for Work*.

The program also informs participants of expectations Canadian employers have of employees. Although some programs in the Region provide some employer contact (e.g., "Job Shadow" of some ESL classes), again not all immigrants are eligible for such programs.

3. Support Group Setting

Working for Work operates in a group setting. Some programs in the Region provide individual employment counselling for immigrants. Others which do work in a group setting (e.g., ESL) are not primarily employment focused. The employment focused Handling Unemployment Group (HUG) program recently started by The Working Centre and being planned for Community Opportunities Development Association, while operating in a group setting, is not intended to concentrate on immigrant unemployment.

In February, 1992 a new program similar to *Working for Work* began. New Canadian

Work Experience (NCWE) provides employment services for immigrants through classroom sessions and work placements. Located down the hall from *Working for Work*, there has been contact between the two programs. The programs differ in that *Working for Work* is a support group (with active participant involvement) while NCWE offers a more traditional classroom education approach.

The rationale for using a group setting is to increase an individual's social network. This serves the purpose of increasing potential job contacts and job leads. Chan (1987), in a survey of unemployed Indochinese refugees in Montreal found 70 per cent of respondents found their last job through personal networks of friends (54%), relatives (9%), and sponsors (7%) (cf, Buchignani, 1980).

Another benefit of increasing social networks is for the purpose of social support and the reduction of employment related stress. Although the program cannot address all mental health issues related to employment, its intent of increasing a sense of social support has been shown to be instrumental in managing stress for the unemployed (Gore, 1978; CMHA, 1983). The necessity of encouraging social support systems within the refugee community for the sake of maintaining mental health and psychological well-being of the unemployed has been documented by Chan (1987). Formal support groups for unemployed immigrants, such as the one outlined in this thesis, have not been found in the Waterloo Region.

4. Participatory Approach

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of *Working for Work* is the fact that it provides employment assistance using a participatory approach. The program intends to facilitate a

group process of sharing, identifying, and working towards resolving common employment concerns. The program recognizes the resources within the group, emphasizing mutual learning and mutual teaching. Each group plays an active role in defining its curriculum and approach based on the needs and strengths of that group.

A program using a participatory approach specifically for unemployed immigrants was lacking in the Waterloo Region.

Many of the characteristics of *Working for Work* outlined above are similar to those of most "self-help" (Lieberman & Videka-Sherman, 1986) or "mutual assistance" (Levine, 1988) groups. This fact really is not that surprising. Levine and Perkins (1987) claim that it is those persons who have uprooted previous natural supports, begun the search for new social networks, and have "problems" departing from the "normal ideal" (like unemployed immigrants) who are prime candidates for self-help groups.

Common to all self-help groups is the recognition that a supportive climate is possible and perhaps more beneficial (Toro, Rappaport, & Seidman, 1987) in promoting psychological well-being than professionally led therapy groups. This well-being is achieved by promoting a sense of membership in the group and sharing a common ideology (Levine, 1988). As a result, help offered by one member to another may be more helpful in reducing stress than help offered by a non-member (Levine, 1988).

Typically the planning and organization of self-help groups is carried out by group members (i.e., those sharing a similar need). The fact that the support group was initiated, and to a great extent, planned and carried out by people who are not unemployed immigrants suggests that *Working for Work* cannot truly be considered a self-help group.

PHILOSOPHY OF EVALUATION APPROACH

My Role as Researcher

Research has the potential to discover information, create new understandings and evoke change. This newly acquired knowledge is powerful in that it can influence decision-making within the field of study.

In cases where people are in a disadvantaged position, in part because of social forces beyond their control (as with unemployed immigrants), research has the potential to initiate a renewed sense of control and be an agent of social change (Kelly, 1988). Research also has the potential to further marginalize disadvantaged groups (Kirby & Mckenna, 1989). The research process may once again affirm the belief of participants that any improvement in their condition is dependent on the efforts of the often unsympathetic dominant society. It was my intention to create a research relationship which minimized dependency of research participants on "outside" or "expert" opinion. I tried to minimize dependency by working collaboratively with research participants.

James Kelly (1988), in his discussion of "prevention research", mentions that the role of the researcher is to work collaboratively with, and learn from community participants. It is a process in which both professional competencies and community participation together work for the purpose of identifying conditions in which community resources can be developed and utilized.

> In designing a community-based prevention research project the status differences between "expert" and "client" are consciously blurred. While the professional is assumed to have required competencies in the areas of research methods and knowledge of research design, the professional is also influenced by the community participants to understand the culture and the unique needs of the community. The community participants, in turn, are influenced by the professionals' knowledge and

insights about the methods and processes to understand research criteria, to define variables, and analyze data (p. 7).

I viewed my role as researcher as being similar to Kelly's "collaborator". It was my role to bring to the program some evaluation theory and skills and provide options which were helpful in focusing and implementing the evaluation. Yet it was also my role as researcher to listen to, and learn from the research participants throughout all stages of the evaluation process. It was, after all, these participants who have the best understanding of the social conditions within which unemployed immigrants live.

In addition to pursuing my role as researcher, there was another role which I assumed during my thesis involvement at Working for Work. I had become a part of the volunteer advisory committee of Working for Work (which oversees the general activities and development of the project: see page 35 for a detailed description) from its beginning in August of 1991. I had spent much of my initial involvement as a volunteer in helping the program "get off the ground". I regularly attended committee meetings and assumed responsibilities in addition to evaluation (e.g., I helped in the writing of the first funding proposal). Although my role as researcher concentrated on the Groups 1 and 2, I expect to remain a member of the advisory committee at least until the end of Group 4 (June, 1992).

Because of my role on the advisory committee, I do not claim objectivity and aloofness from the program. Rather, I align myself with many of the values of the program (e.g., the necessity for empowering immigrants to share equally in Canadian society) and find this value-laden recognition to be acceptable (and profitable) in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). This "insider" perspective served the purpose, for instance, of being more sensitive to the experiences of those involved in the program than would otherwise be

possible (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

A summary of my commitment to the program which was given to the advisory committee can be found in Appendix A.

Approaches to Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is intended to improve decision-making for the future benefit of a program (Thompson, 1982). This can be accomplished by a variety of approaches. Patton (1990) mentions the importance of choosing an evaluation approach consistent with the interests of those involved in the program. Any evaluation in the present program should, therefore, reflect the values of mutual learning, and participant involvement in program development. Such an approach differs from the traditional mainstream evaluation.

Mainstream Program Evaluation

In mainstream evaluations the evaluator is often seen as an impartial scientist reporting on the basis of objective data (Bentler & Woodwar, 1979). This is notably true in the earlier days of modern North American program evaluation during the rise of social programs in the 1960s. Effective evaluation was thought to use an experimental design with control group (Suchman, 1967), and largely concerned itself with cost-benefit analysis emphasizing an increase in monetary output as the basis for success (Glennan, 1972). Quasi-experimental designs with less experimental rigour found other creative ways of evaluating programs, but still stressed the importance of comparing objective data (Weiss, 1972).

Evaluations of employment programs have generally followed this mainstream trend. Glennan (1972) notes that in the past employment evaluations predominantly judged "the

economic efficiency of a program" (p. 191). More recently, the United States Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs have been evaluated. Evaluations have largely focused on experimental or quasi-experimental comparisons between similar programs (e.g.,Azrin, Philip, Thienes-Hontos & Besalel, 1980) or program participants and the general population (e.g.,Bloom, 1987).

Evaluating Working for Work

The approach I used in this evaluation differs from the traditional mainstream evaluations mentioned above. It did so by adopting a non-experimental approach.

Evaluations are designed to determine whether a social intervention (represented by the program) has an effect that would have been different had no intervention been pursued, or had another intervention been pursued in its place (Rossi & Freeman, 1989). This is done through the use of control or comparison groups. The present evaluation, however, did not use control or comparison groups and is therefore considered non-experimental (Weiss, 1972).

The rationale for using a non-experimental approach is rooted in my belief that predetermined categories of comparison alone cannot describe the reality of a natural setting. Lincoln and Guba (1989) insist that a setting consists of multiple perspectives and, therefore, should be studied in order to understand as many perspectives as possible. Such a view values the experiences of the evaluation participants and not just facts about them (Patton, 1990).

> The naturalistic investigator cannot confine his or her attention to a few variables of interest, ignoring the setting because it has been so carefully controlled; he or she must take account of all factors and influences in that context. If anything may make a difference, then everything must be monitored (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p.191).

In Canada many recent employment programs have adopted ongoing evaluations as a part of the program (e.g., Edmonton Immigration Services Association). Some of these "built-in" evaluations actively seek to understand the experience of program participants (e.g., Handling Unemployment Groups [HUG]). In these cases, the direct generalizability of the results to other program settings is not an issue. Understanding the setting being studied, however, may allow information to be transferred into another setting for the benefit of that setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). It is these types of evaluations which *Working for Work* looked to for direction in its own evaluation procedures.

There are four characteristics of the present evaluation which will be defined and outlined below: (1) its participatory nature, (2) its focus on both process and outcome, (3) its formative nature, and (4) its use of qualitative and quantitative data.

1. Participatory Evaluation

Recently much has been written about making evaluations more meaningful by including input from all those affected by the evaluation (e.g., Allen, 1985; Weiss, 1983; Stecher & Davis, 1987). According to Weiss (1983) the role of evaluators in this so-called "stakeholder" approach is to be both "technical experts" and "political managers who orchestrate the involvement of various interest groups" (p. 10). This approach is often used in traditional program settings where there exists a division between policy makers and those affected by policies (both staff and service recipients).

The present evaluation shares with the stakeholder approach in that it attempts to include both the advisory committee and participants in formulating parts of the evaluation design and in data collection. However, the resulting information is not only useful for the

evaluation but in fact provides the basis for formulating the evaluation design and resulting program changes. The Women's Research Centre (1990) calls such an approach "participant-focused" and is designed especially for community groups with limited budgets and alternate approaches to providing services (such as self-help groups).

> Participant focused evaluation begins with the perspective and interests of the group...Participant focused evaluation recognizes the knowledge and expertise of those who direct and do the work, and those who are the users, or the target, of the work. It encourages maximum input from the group itself...Participant focused evaluation does not work with an "us"and "them" situation. Instead, it empowers the participants and provides a useful tool for future planning. (The Women's Research Centre, 1990, p. 4-6).

Participatory evaluation was encouraged in this evaluation by allowing input from the advisory committee and program participants in defining the evaluation. Efforts were made to encourage participants to formalize their own personal outcome goals. Furthermore, data were collected with the help of those involved in the program and persons continuing to be involved in the evaluation's future.

The limitation of using a participatory approach was that it was labour intensive, requiring commitment and much time from those involved in the evaluation. The labour intensive nature of the participatory approach raises questions of the sustainability of the evaluation on a long-term, ongoing basis. For this reason the ongoing evaluation design projected beyond my thesis involvement was reduced in its scope (see section titled "Plans for Ongoing Evaluation" p. 89).

2. Process and Outcome Evaluation

Evaluations can measure both the implementations and outcomes of programs (Rutman, 1984). Traditionally, however, program evaluations have been concerned with

using only objective data to measure defined outcomes (Chen, 1990). Chen calls these solely objective/outcome oriented evaluations "black-box" or "simple input/output" evaluations. They fail to consider the stakeholders of the program and the social context within which the program exists. According to Chen, what program evaluation needs to do is answer not only if a program was successful (outcome), but also why the program was successful (process). It was my intention in this evaluation to consider both processes and outcomes of the program.

Outcome or "impact" evaluations concern themselves with "gauging the extent to which a programme effects a change in the desired direction" (UNESCO, 1980, p. 20). Such an evaluation assumes that specific measurable goals have been formulated prior to evaluation.

Some outcome goals of *Working for Work* were predetermined by the advisory committee and key informants (unemployed immigrants thought to represent various opinions). These outcomes were common to all group members (e.g., formalizing a career plan). Shared outcome goals serve the purpose of providing some common focus as well as demonstrating accountability to the funder (CEC).

Consistent with the program's participatory approach, other outcome goals were defined by individual group members. It was assumed that individual group members have personal expectations and personal goals they wish the program to meet. For this reason, the Coordinator encouraged the group members to identify these goals during the program.

Compared with outcome evaluations, process evaluations are relatively uncommon (UNESCO, 1980). The primary benefit of process evaluation is that it attempts to capture

what is inside Chen's (1990) "black-box"(i.e.,understanding the context within which change was permitted or hindered). The process information not only makes the communication and interpretation of outcome results meaningful, but it may also provide answers as to how the program can be improved (Judd, 1987). Unfortunately, process evaluations are often focused on decision-making for policy makers with the exclusion of participants.

3. Formative Evaluation

Another characteristic of the present evaluation is that the evaluation was designed to help form the approach and content of the program. In this sense this evaluation was utilization-focused with the emphasis on the evaluation as a tool for program change (Patton, 1986). Furthermore, it was intended that the information obtained from the evaluation be used during the evaluation process to improve the program both for the present group members and group members in the future.

The rationale for using formative evaluation in this program was twofold (1) the program is new and requires immediate input to refine its approach, and (2) participant needs are varied and can change over time. Formative evaluation is dynamic in that it allows the group members, staff, and advisory committee to respond to circumstances and ideas previously not considered (Patton, 1990). The evaluation can also be seen as a tool to elicit input from the participants (very few of whom had previously been a part of the planning process) as to which direction they wish the program to take.

4. Qualitative and Quantitative Information

Working for Work's evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative measures.

Qualitative measures encourage responses in terms expressed by the evaluation

participants. Patton (1990), describing qualitative methods, recognizes that "approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry." (p. 13). From its beginning, the advisory committee had stated that any evaluation of *Working for Work* must include the perspective of the participants in their own form of expression. The largely subjective nature of *Working for Work's* evaluation is a result of its emphasis on qualitative information.

Quantitative measures were also used. Quantitative measures are predetermined response categories that have been standardized (Patton, 1990). The advantage of these measures is that they gather a wealth of information with relatively little effort (Patton, 1990). The quantitative information included in this evaluation provides some objective data about the program's outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants of *Working for Work's* evaluation can be divided into three categories: (1)

members of the program's first two groups, (2) advisory committee members, and (3) paid

staff.

In order for the research participants to be placed in the context of the program, I

have included an organizational chart of *Working for Work* (Table 2).

Table 2

Working for Work
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
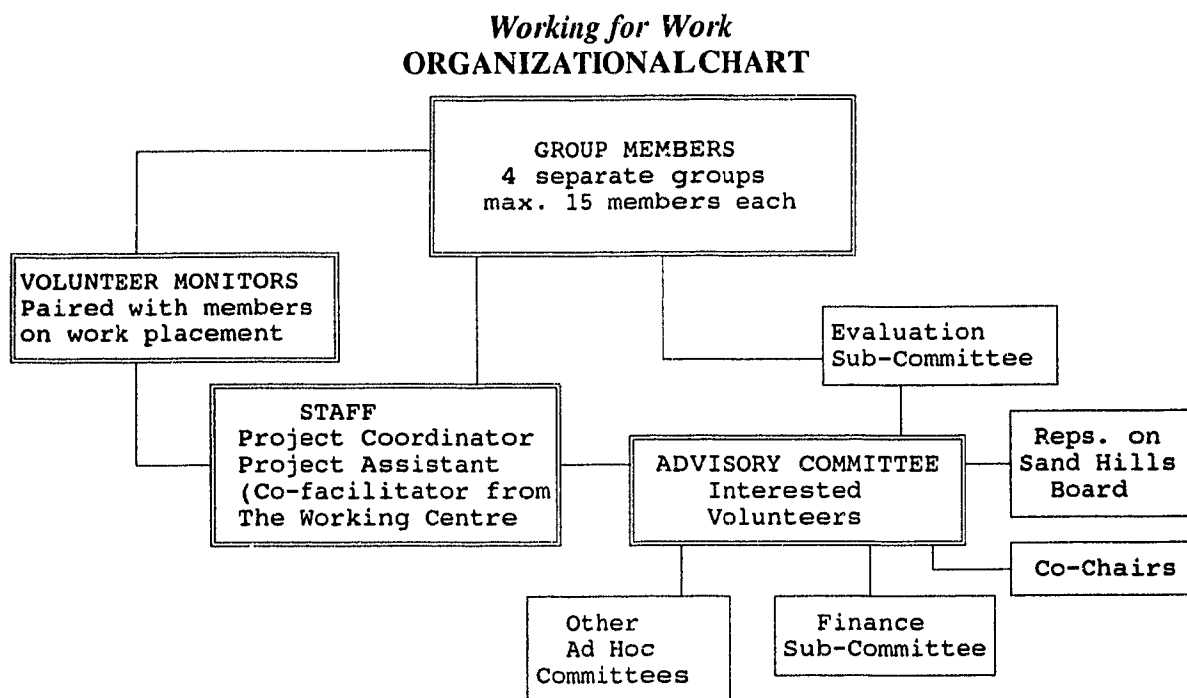
Group Members

Group members were chosen following an individual assessment interview with staff.

Potential group members were adult immigrants who had been in Canada for up to three

years, were able and ready to work, but were experiencing difficulty finding a job. Group

members had a working knowledge of English. That is, from the perspective of staff and the potential member, they could understand and speak English well enough to participate in an English-speaking group. Advertisement to immigrant and employment agencies, referrals from these agencies, posters distributed throughout public places in the Region, and advertisements in the local media were used to attract these potential group members. There was no charge for participating in this program nor were participants paid for being in the program. Group members did receive money for child care and transportation costs.

As I stated earlier, the evaluation, for the purpose of this thesis, concerned itself with only Groups 1 and 2. A maximum of 15 group members were permitted into each group. However, only 10 persons joined *Group 1* (because some potential members chose not to attend any group sessions), while 15 persons joined *Group 2* (for a total of 25 group members). Applicants were considered on a first come first serve basis and accepted into the program based on the dual criteria of compatibility with the program's participatory orientation and perceived need.

Accepted group members were informed immediately after the assessment interview that an evaluation component was included in the program. Verbal consent for participation in the evaluation was obtained at this time (verbal permission guide attached as Appendix B). Group members were informed in greater detail of this evaluation during the first group session. I mentioned that evaluation information would also be used in my thesis at Wilfrid Laurier University.

During the first group session, group members were told that the purpose of the evaluation was for them to have a chance to say what they like about the group, and suggest

what else could be done in order to make the group better. The content and purpose of the various evaluation methods were reviewed occasionally throughout the program.

Advisory Committee Members

The advisory committee was formed in the beginning of August, 1991. It was comprised of interested community members who wished to dedicate volunteer time and effort into developing and carrying out this program. At the start of the program (October 15) there were nine members on this committee (including the Coordinator and Assistant), with members being added and leaving according to volunteer time commitment. By May, 1992 the advisory committee had grown to include 18 members.

With the development of the work placements, staff recruited volunteer monitors. Five monitors were recruited by May, 1992. These volunteers were matched with group members on work placement in order to provide practical and emotional support and act as an advocate for the group member. Because volunteer monitors were organized after the evaluation was designed, they were not considered separately as participants in the evaluation. Some monitors, however, regularly attended advisory committee meetings and contributed to the evaluation as committee members.

The advisory committee was composed of both immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds and host Canadians. Many committee members worked for local immigrant and/or employment agencies. Voluntary consent from committee members for their involvement as research participants was obtained during a committee meeting prior to the start of *Group 1*. This consent was recorded in the minutes.

Paid Staff

While the Project Coordinator and Project Assistant were members of the advisory committee, they were also considered separately as evaluation participants because of their unique position in the program. Both positions were effective for approximately eight months; the Coordinator being full-time and the Assistant originally starting half-time increasing to full-time after three months. As such, these staff workers were very aware of the operations of the program, being in contact with group members on a daily basis and also meeting with the advisory committee.

In addition to the two staff persons paid by *Working for Work*, a third person paid by The Working Centre (an employment program running Handling Unemployment Groups) also assumed certain staff roles. This person helped to facilitate about one half of the group sessions.

Voluntary consent was obtained from staff persons together with the advisory committee members.

Focusing the Evaluation

Background to Evaluation

An evaluation of this program first was formally mentioned during the first draft of the funding proposal submitted in late July, 1991. At that time those preparing the proposal heard of my interest in working along with the project. The idea emerged that a final evaluation report was one possibility for collaboration and this was subsequently written in the draft proposal. Upon the request by CEC for a more specific evaluation design, the newly formed advisory committee worked out a tentative evaluation design for the final

funding proposal submitted early September.

Most of the effort of the committee up until that time had been invested in ensuring that the program would become a reality (e.g., obtaining community suggestions and support, fulfilling funding proposal requirements, finding a location, and hiring staff). As a result some of the basic questions such as the purpose of the evaluation, the questions it was to answer, and clarifying the objectives so that they were evaluable, were never explicitly addressed. Once funding was secured and the Coordinator and Assistant were hired, these questions were specifically addressed by the committee in a meeting on October 22, 1991. At this meeting questions such as the purpose of the evaluation, useful information for the stakeholders, involvement of program participants in focusing the evaluation, and limitations of the evaluation were discussed.

At this meeting an evaluation sub-committee was also formed. The purpose of this sub-committee was twofold: (1) prior to the *Group 1*, to propose specifics of the evaluation design and together with staff prepare evaluation material, and (2) during *Groups 1 and 2*, to monitor the evaluation process and prepare for continued, ongoing evaluation.

The sub-committee began with two other advisory committee members and myself and reported regularly to the advisory committee. The evaluation sub-committee was characterized by diversity of experience and ethnic background. One evaluation committee member came as a refugee to Canada with experience in community development (public health) and evaluations in his home country (in Central America). The other member was a foreign student (from Africa) working on his Master's degree. I am a Canadian-born student. A fourth member (a female Canadian University student) joined the sub-committee

in February, 1992.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The advisory committee identified the following reasons for evaluating *Working for Work*:

(1) Identify the perspectives of the group members. This would help the program to adapt to the changing needs of participants and the different groups.

(2) Document the program so that ideas can be used by other employment/immigrant agencies.

(3) Measure the impact of the program on group members for the purpose of supporting future funding possibilities.

Program Objectives

The Advisory Committee identified program objectives through its various drafts of the funding proposal. When funding was secured a concern was expressed over the limited involvement of unemployed immigrants (the group members) in program formation. For this reason, a one day retreat was held on October 27, 1991 for the purpose of hearing suggestions and responses from unemployed immigrants that would help to focus the program objectives. Five immigrant guests and seven advisory committee members attended the retreat.

With the comments from the retreat in mind, the advisory committee revised the program objectives to the following:

(1) Increase the employability of group members.

-increase awareness of Canadian job market

-increase contact with potential employers

-increase awareness of volunteer/education/training options

-improve job search skills

-increase employer understanding of immigrant issues

-expand employment-related networks

-assist in finding temporary job placements

-assist in developing personal career plans

-identify employment barriers and immigrant strengths

-assist in the accreditation process of foreign

diplomas/documents

(2) Increase group members' sense of support in dealing with employment-related stress.

-improve ability to problem-solve in a group setting

-increase awareness of the contribution of other group members in searching for a job.

-increase awareness of coping strategies

-provide the opportunity to discuss employment-related stress

Information Collection

For this thesis I limited myself to evaluating the first two groups (*Group 1*: November 25, 1991-January 31, 1992; *Group 2*: January 6, 1992-February 28, 1992). The groups met four times a week (Monday- Thursday) for the first four weeks and two times a week for the remaining four weeks. Each session was three hours in length. *Group 1* met in the afternoon, and *Group 2* met during the morning.

The method for obtaining information can be divided into two categories: (1) quantitative measures and (2) qualitative measures. Within these categories, various approaches carried out by different investigators were used to collect information from the different groups of research participants. As such the evaluation adopted data triangulation (using a variety of data sources), methodological triangulation (using multiple methods), and investigator triangulation (using different people to gather information) (Patton, 1990).

The rationale for using data triangulation was to ensure that multiple perspectives about the program were considered in the evaluation. Methodological triangulation was used in order to give participants who feel intimidated in one situation the opportunity to express opinions using another approach. Because of limited resources (volunteer/staff time, money) each approach was relatively brief, collecting only limited information. Investigator triangulation was used to increase the amount of information gathered. Also, the program intended to continue evaluating the remaining two groups. Investigator triangulation allowed committee members and staff to perform their evaluation responsibilities projected for *Groups 3 and 4*, and also enhance the trustworthiness of the data interpretation.

The various questionnaires, interview guides, and other evaluation forms we used are attached in Appendix C. All evaluation forms were developed by the evaluation sub-committee and then reviewed by the staff and the advisory committee (with the exception of the Initial Assessment Interview which was developed by staff). The evaluation committee formed questions based on the two general goals of the program. During the evaluation, research participants were asked if the various measures were clear and

understandable. Based on this feedback, the measures were refined and clarified.

During the three months of information collection, the evaluation committee made decisions which altered the design it originally had proposed. These changes were made on the assumption that the evaluation should remain relevant and effective. As such we tried to adapt the evaluation to the experiences and suggestions of participants, staff, and evaluation committee members.

Quantitative Measures

The three quantitative measures used in this evaluation addressed the outcome of only one general program goal: increasing the employability of group members. The quantitative data were summarized using frequency counts. Confidentiality was maintained by removing group members' names when the information was being coded.

1. Assessment Interview

The purpose of the assessment interview was to record group members' personal and employment background information. This information was collected by staff from each individual potential group member prior to the beginning of each group. Some questions were only relevant for program development and planning and were not considered as part of the evaluation. Information useful for the evaluation included demographics, previous work/school/volunteer experience both in home country and Canada, number of job applications filled and interviews given while in Canada, and whether group members had a resume or wanted to improve their resume.

The information was summarized by counting the frequency of the various responses.

2. Personal Progress Reports

The purpose of the personal progress (PPR) report was to record group members' completion of employment-related search tasks while in the program (i.e.,attendance, career plan and resume completed, contacts with employers/volunteer agencies, school courses taken, and placement/training/job found). Space for personal employment-related goals identified by the group members was also available. Group members placed a check mark in the appropriate category once that specific task had been completed. The number of members completing each category was recorded after the PPR's were completed.

Originally PPR's were to be filled out individually by group members during each session. I came to realize, however, that many group members were not filling out these reports. Staff decided to take group time to fill out the reports at the end of each week. Group members worked in pairs in order to help each other complete their individual reports. At the end of each group I contacted those members who had not completed their PPR and asked them to fill out the PPR's retrospectively.

Feedback about personal progress reports (PPR) was received during individual interviews with group members. Some group members mentioned that it was unclear which categories they should be checking off. As a result, for group three the categories were redefined and a sample copy of a completed PPR was attached. In group three the staff also took more time to review these reports during the group sessions.

An additional page (PPR in detail) was provided for group members to write about their employment-related contacts in more detail. A profile of the participant's background employment-related experience was also attached to the progress reports. Both these forms

were for the benefit of the group members and not directly used in the evaluation.

3. Follow-up Questionnaire

The purpose of the follow-up questionnaire was to record the employment-related experience of group members following their involvement in the group sessions. Questions asked include: present employment/education/volunteer/work placement status, whether group member were receiving social assistance, additional employment programs attended, whether employment found was desirable, and whether there were benefits gained through work placements. Information was summarized by counting how group members answered each question.

The follow-up questionnaire was to be completed at a group reunion which was organized for group members two months after the end of each group. The reunion was intended to be both a social time and an opportunity to present the summary of the group's evaluation. Only two members attended *Group 1's* reunion and there was a lack of interest for *Group 2's* reunion. Group members were, therefore, phoned for the questionnaire responses and the summary of the evaluation was mailed to them.

Qualitative Measures

The qualitative measures used in the evaluation addressed the two general goals of the program: (1) increase employability of participants, and (2) increase the participants' sense of support in dealing with employment-related stress. Methods considered both processes and outcomes. Some methods served a formative purpose (i.e., to determine future direction of the program).

1. Occasional Observation

The purpose of occasionally observing the group sessions was to document the process of these sessions. One other member of the evaluation sub-committee and myself shared this responsibility for 50% of the sessions (24 sessions minus one session cancelled due to a snow storm). Because of the time I had available to spend on this time consuming activity, I attended approximately two-thirds of the observed sessions.

A support group requires a sense of security among members in order to encourage meaningful discussion. We as observers, therefore, decided to participate to some extent in the group activities. In this way we did not want to appear to be "outsiders" and inhibit discussion. The purpose of the observation was explained to the group members during the first week of group sessions.

During the session, however, we did take field notes; recording some verbatim conversation, describing the setting and activities, and making interpretive comments. The detail with which I recorded fieldnotes increased as I became more comfortable in the group, and as the group became more comfortable with my presence. Because many other group members occasionally wrote in their notebooks during the sessions, my writing did not appear to be distracting. During the first half of the observation period we observers discussed our role as observers.

Coding was done concurrently with observations and interviews. I typed out all the fieldnotes and interviews and made them available to the other observer. During the initial stages of the coding I proposed codes to the other observer and asked for feedback from him. Because of the busy schedule of the other observer the remaining coding was largely

shared between myself and the other non-observing evaluation committee member.

The non-observing member of the evaluation sub-committee served to check the dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1989) of the emerging codes. After explaining the preliminary codes to him we both coded the available fieldnotes and transcribed interviews separately and discussed the discrepancies in coding. This procedure was repeated two times as the codes were being refined. After coding a third series of fieldnotes together and further refining the codes I felt confident in the dependability of the codes. I assumed the responsibility of the final stages of coding.

As with all other qualitative methods, confidentiality was ensured by removing all identifiers in summaries.

2. Weekly Group Feedback

The purpose of the weekly group feedback was to determine how the program was meeting group members' needs and expectations. This feedback served the formative function of improving the program. Weekly group feedback occurred approximately every four sessions (every week in the first month and every other week in the second month). Staff reviewed the purpose of this feedback periodically during the feedback times.

Various methods of asking for feedback were tried by staff. The method which seemed to encourage the most meaningful responses and eventually adopted was as follows: The staff listed the week's activities on a flip chart and asked group members to work in pairs discussing which sessions were helpful, which were not helpful, and any suggestions for future activities. The pairs later reported back to the larger group and the information was summarized on the flip chart and recorded in the fieldnotes (or by staff if no observer was

present).

3. Program Documents

The purpose of reviewing program documents for the evaluation was to understand which committee decisions were made and why these decisions were made. Documents included advisory committee minutes, sub-committee reports, curriculum outlines, and funding proposals.

4. Midway Group Member Individual Interviews

The purpose of the midway interview was to describe at a more personal level how the program content and process was meeting individual group members' needs and expectations. The purpose of the interviews was reviewed in the group session by an observer during the week of the interviews.

Questions asked in the interview included: the overall effectiveness of the program (in terms of finding a job and social support), usefulness of specific sessions, suggestions for the future, staff helpfulness, and usefulness of feedback times. The information obtained was used to determine which issues were important to consider for the remaining weeks of the group. The information was also useful in forming the content of future groups.

I interviewed three group members using an open-ended interview guide half-way through each group (one month after beginning the group for a total of 6 interviews). All interviews were carried out in the homes of the group members. Interviewees were chosen randomly adjusting for ethnic representation (i.e.,choosing another interviewee if all three persons had a common first language).

The interviews were anonymously summarized together with the fieldnotes to date

in two pages ("What was good about *Working for Work* so far?" and "How can *Working for Work* be better?"). The information was fed back for comment and discussion both separately to staff, and within a group session one week after interviews were completed. These summaries were made available to the advisory committee as well.

5. Final Group Member Individual Interview

The purpose of the final interview was to rate the overall effectiveness of the group (in terms of finding a job and social support) from the perspective of the group members.

Questions asked were similar to those asked in the midway interviews. Additional questions asked whether individual expectations were met, and what the group members' future plans beyond the program were. Based on a suggestion from one staff person, another question was adopted for the interviews of *Group 2*. Consistent with the participatory nature of the group, a question was asked about how participants thought other group members had contributed to the group.

As in the midway interviews, I interviewed three randomly chosen group members using an interview guide. For *Group 2*, an effort was made to include one of the members who had left the program because they found full-time employment-related activity. All interviews except one were carried out in the home of the group member. One interview occurred in the office of *Working for Work* following a group session.

A summary of these interviews and fieldnotes was given to staff a week after the interviews and to the advisory committee at their next meeting. The interview information was included in the two page summary of the evaluation mailed to all group members and given to the advisory committee near the end of April, 1992.

6. Committee/Staff Focus Group

The purpose of the committee/staff focus group was to rate the overall effectiveness of the group from the perspective of both committee members and the staff.

A member of the evaluation committee led the discussion at a regular advisory committee meeting after the completion of *Group 2*. Two general issues were addressed: (1) How is the program helpful in finding a job and social support (answered predominately by staff), and (2) How can the staff/committee improve the program (through committee organization and responsibilities, curriculum, and feedback times). The discussion was summarized in the minutes of that meeting.

The staff also gave additional information outside of the evaluation original design. As a part of *Group 3's* evaluation the staff interviewed themselves using the interview guide for group members interviews. The staff responded to these questions on the basis of their experience for all three groups to date. Consequently, this information was applicable to *Group 1* and *Group 2* and, therefore, included in this thesis.

Summaries of group interviews and fieldnotes were presented to the committee when available. I prepared a 16 page summary of the entire evaluation attached to the program's funding proposal which was submitted to CEC at the end of April, 1992. Copies of this summary were made available for advisory committee and group members at *Working for Work's* office.

A summary of all the various methods of collecting information is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION METHODS

Quantitative Measures

Measure	Information Gathered
Assessment Interview	sex, country of origin, languages spoken, length of stay in Canada, education, financial assistance, work/volunteer/training experience (outside/within Canada), desired job, job search activities while in Canada.
Personal Progress Reports	attendance, resume completed, career plan completed, employer contacts, school/volunteer/training/work found, job found.
Follow-up Questionnaire	work/volunteer/education/training experience since leaving program other employment programs, social assistance received, benefits of work placements.

Qualitative Measures

Measure	Information Gathered
Occasional Observation	description and interpretation of setting, activities, conversations, and group dynamics.
Weekly Group Feedback	activities/sessions helpful/not helpful, suggestions for improvement.
Program Documents	key decisions affecting program content and future direction as recorded in: advisory committee minutes, sub-committee reports, funding proposals, and curriculum outlines.
Midway Group Member Individual Interview	activities/sessions which were helpful/not helpful (in terms of finding a job and social support), suggestions for improvement, direction for next month, staff helpfulness, usefulness of feedback.
Final Group Member Individual Interview	activities/sessions which were helpful/not helpful (in terms of finding a job and social support), suggestions for improvement, nature of future contact (if desired), usefulness of feedback, staff helpfulness, expectations met.
Committee/Staff Focus Group	benefits of program to group members in terms of finding a job and social support, suggestions for improvement through: committee organization and responsibilities, curriculum, and feedback.

REVIEW OF EVALUATION INFORMATION

I will summarize the evaluation according to the themes identified in the qualitative coding procedure. Quantitative information will be added to complement these themes. For the sake of brevity I will discuss both groups together. A group will be identified only if there are obvious differences between groups (e.g.,languages spoken by group members). In my opinion the two groups were very similar in the identified themes. This became particularly evident after I had begun my observations with group three. Differences between the first two groups, and *Group 3* will occasionally be noted in order to emphasize a point.

The themes I will begin with are largely descriptive. Subsequent themes will become progressively more interpretative and reflective. The final theme makes recommendations for the program's future.

I will begin this summary by describing the **activities** of the program. This will be followed by a description of the **group members.** Issues regarding the **relationship** between the program's stakeholders will be discussed next. An **assessment** of the program's goals will follow. Finally, **recommendations** for the program's improvement will be summarized.

Description of Activities

Setting

For the first two months of the program, *Working for Work* was situated in the office space of Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre (LYEC). Although this shared space was limited, the staff at LYEC was very supportive of the new program. *Working for Work* moved to its own new location at 165 King St. E. Kitchener on January 25, 1992. This

location was in a newly renovated building housing other employment-related agencies (including LYEC, New Canadian Work Experience, and other educational programs). This arrangement provided the opportunity for networking between related agencies.

Working for Work's new space consisted of a windowless group room just large enough for the fifteen participants to sit on chairs in a circle. Over time this new space was made more comfortable with the presence of posters on the wall, a refreshment corner, coat trees, and a resource table. A small adjacent room served as the staff's office space. Two desks and a computer filled the majority of this room.

The transition from the old space to the new posed some challenges. Staff, LYEC, and other volunteers (including participants) helped in the move from one building to the other as the regular programming continued. For the first few weeks the wall dividing the group room from the staff's office space was not built. The resulting lack of privacy and the ensuing construction of the dividing wall occasionally disrupted group sessions. Group members were very understanding of these disruptions, recognizing them as part of this new program's development.

Activities in the group setting

A variety of activities was used during the group sessions. Staff often would facilitate open group discussion or provide information in a lecture format. At other times group members would work on small group exercises or "perform" role plays in the larger group setting (e.g.,job interviews). Occasionally guests would present specific information to the group (e.g.,a representative from Conestoga College). Group members would also watch employment-related videos. For special occasions a party with music or games would be

organized (e.g., at Christmas time, or at the last group session).

The content of the sessions also varied. Job search skill development (e.g., writing resumes, cover letters, job interview etiquette) was an important part of the program. Sharing employment information was also emphasized (e.g., job leads, reviewing employment-related resources on resource table, information on starting small businesses). Individual employment planning was addressed to a certain extent within the group setting. For example, group members discussed past experiences, skills, and training, developed a personal career plan, and discussed job or work placement options. Because of the supportive nature of the program, a certain amount of time was spent on issues of group process (e.g., providing orientation and information about the program, ice breaker activities, weekly group feedback). A complete summary of the curriculum proposed at the beginning of the program is noted in Appendix D. The actual curriculum varied from this proposal once input from the group members was received.

A final activity within the group setting is worth highlighting separately. At the beginning of every session an opportunity was given for each group member to "check in". During this time group members spoke in turn about what they had experienced since the last session. This was an opportunity for group members to discuss their job search activities (e.g., mention employer contacts made). Equally important was the opportunity provided to mention other life issues (e.g., family matters, stressors related to being an immigrant). The choice of not saying something ("passing") on a particular day was available. Staff usually joined in sharing experiences and providing other program information.

Activities outside the group setting

Activities of the program outside the group setting can be divided into two areas: (1) staff activities, and (2) advisory committee activities.

Staff activities included program maintenance and development (e.g., providing information to interested applicants), networking (contact and referrals with other employment agencies and employers), and counselling (e.g.,exploring job options with group members). These activities will be addressed in more detail in the group member responsibility section. A complete description of staff responsibilities is found in Appendix E.

The advisory committee met approximately once every two weeks according to perceived need. During the meetings the committee would hear reports from the staff and various sub committees and discuss issues of concern. An opportunity for the advisory committee members to meet the program participants was organized in February. While a majority of members from both groups attended this potluck party, few advisory committee members came.

Description of Group Members

Demographic Information

Both groups were characterized by diversity. A total of ten (6 male, 4 female) and fifteen (9 male, 6 female) group members belonged to *Groups 1* and *2* respectively. Group members came from five continents and a total of ten different countries (see figure 9).

Country of Origin

Figure 9

□ Group 1
▲ Group 2

Scale at Equator
Mercator Projection
0 1000 2000 3000 4000 Km

Guatemala (2) □▲
El Salvador (11) □▲

Chile (1) ▲

South Africa (1) □

Romania (2) □

▲ Albania (1)

▲ Egypt (1)

▲ Ethiopia (3)
▲ Somalia (1)

▲ Vietnam (2)

CANADA
Kitchener-Waterloo
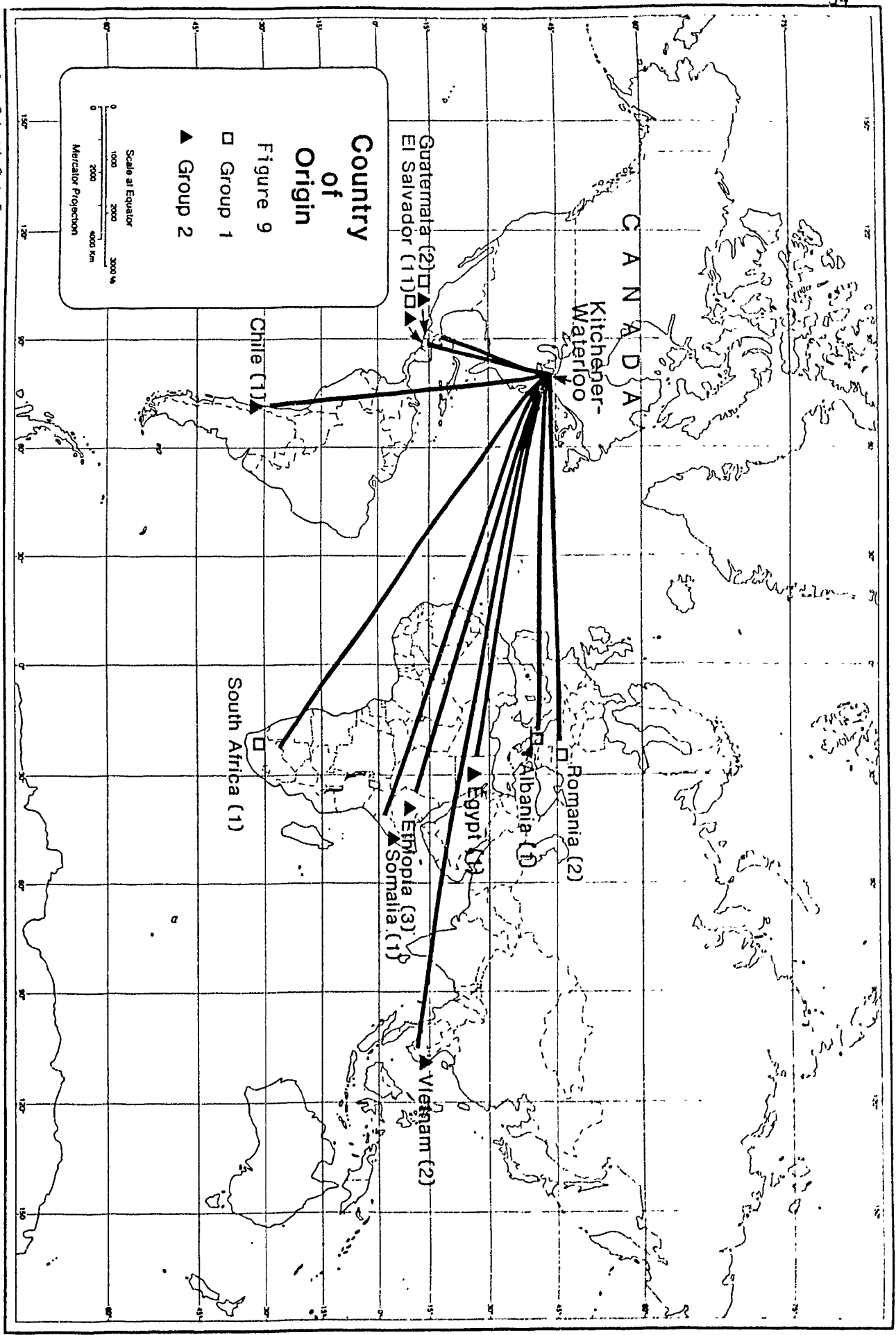
Seventy-six per cent of group members spent some time in countries other than their home country prior to entering Canada. The length of time that group members had resided in Canada varied from one month to three and a half years.

English was a second (or third) language for all group members. The majority of group members in both groups (60% in *Group 1*; 53% in *Group 2*) spoke Spanish as a first language. The variety of other first languages can be seen in figure 10.

Figure 10
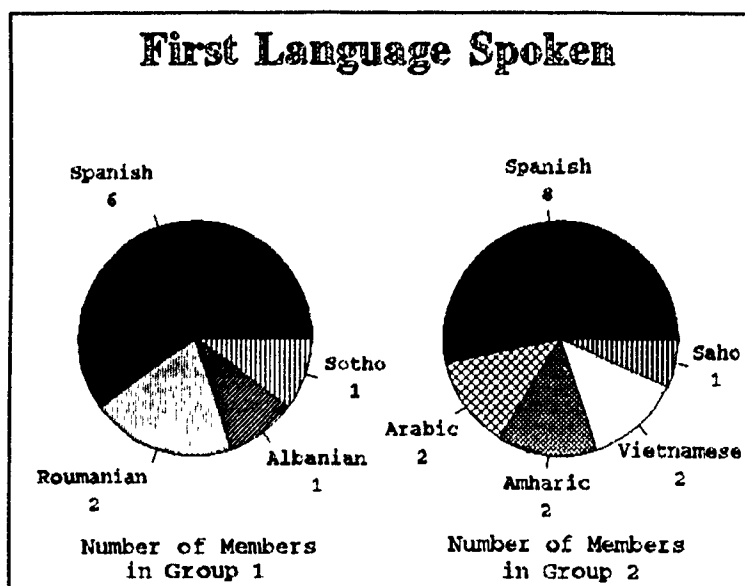
Diversity was evident in the education and work experience group members had in their home countries. In both groups the level of education ranged from less than high school equivalency to University education (see figure 11). Some examples of non-Canadian work experience included: auto mechanic, chemistry instructor, factory worker, secretary, agricultural technician, social worker, and electrician.

Figure 11
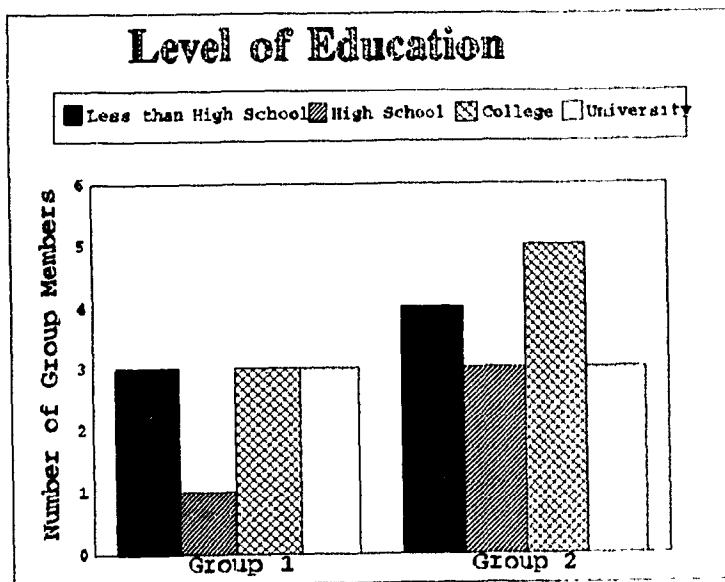
Figure 12
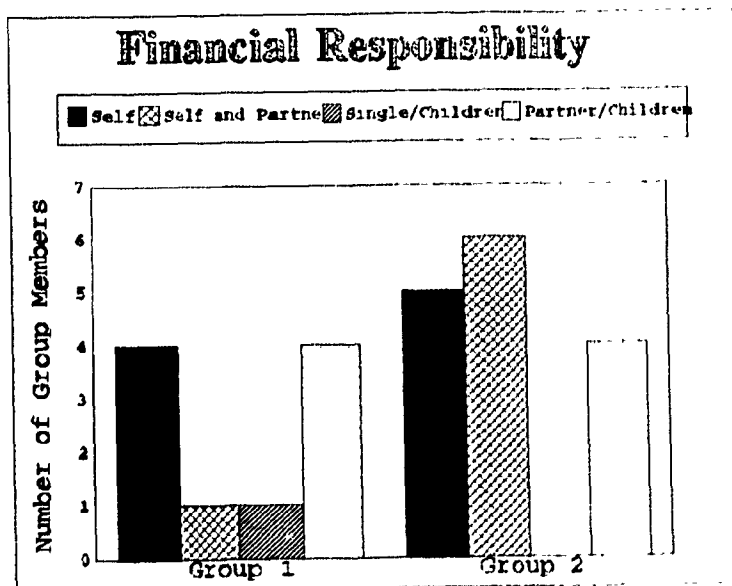
As figure 12 demonstrates, diversity within the groups was evident in whom group members were financially responsible for (only self, partner, child[ren], or partner and child[ren]). The source of financial support among group members varied as well (figure 13). The majority of group members were Social Assistance Recipients (SAR). Others, as refugees, were on the one year Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP). Finally, some group members in *Group 2* were supported by family members.

Figure 13

Source of Financial Support

■ Social Assistance ▨ Adjustment Program ▨ Family Support
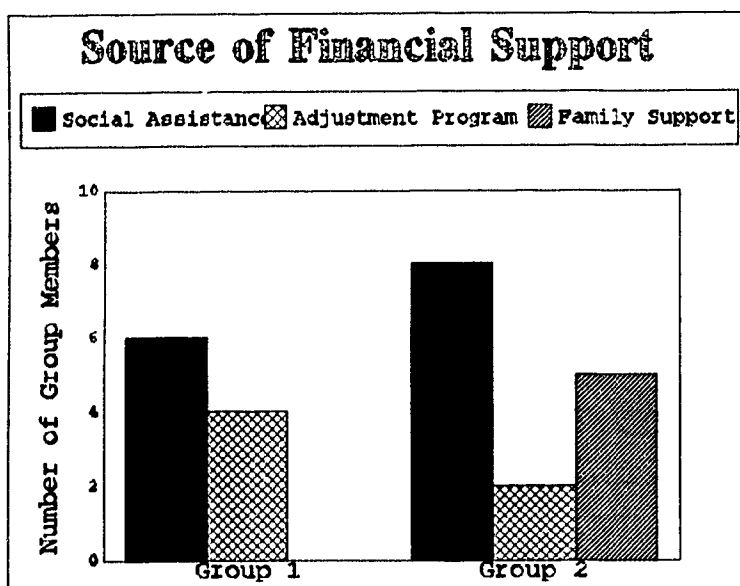
While in Canada only one group member had received job training, only three had volunteered in the community, and only one had received education other than English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Twenty-eight per cent of the total group members had been employed for some time while in Canada.

In terms of Canadian job search, 68% of group members mentioned that they had given applications to employers prior to entering the program. Only 20% had a job

interview. Sixty-four per cent of group members mentioned that they already had a resume before entering the program, but all were willing to improve on it. Naturally, most group members wanted Canadian jobs related to their education and past experiences. However, some group members did mention that they would take almost any job offered to them.

Characteristics of Group Members

Through the observations and interviews certain common characteristics of group members were identified. The following is a brief profile of these characteristics.

1. Desire to Work

One notable characteristic shared by group members was their desire to work. "I want to find a job", said one participant, "I don't want to check in every month [to the social worker]." Being unemployed was unfamiliar for many, a fact which made some angry at their resulting feelings of non-productivity.

> I don't like it that I am not working now...everyday I get a headache. I don't like to get money from welfare...in my country I work every day...welfare money is not good for me.

Some group members felt that they had to fight against stereotypes of laziness and abusers of the welfare system.

> There are some things that some people say that...people that are on welfare, they don't want to work...they are lazy. It is not true, we just haven't found a chance. It might be true for some people...nobody likes to live for free. At least that's what I feel about the Latin people.

Associated with this desire to work was a demonstration that most group members were active in their own job search. While still in the program two members found full-time jobs, two found part-time jobs, and one member found full-time job training (groups combined, n=25). Two persons from *Group 2* also began work placements before the end

of the program (despite the work placement component being only in its early stages).

During the daily check-in time group members would mention what job search initiatives they had undertaken. According to the personal progress reports of the combined groups, twelve group members had completed at least one job application during the program, while seven had completed five or more applications. Ten people mentioned that they had at least one job interview while being a member of the group.

Some limits to the eagerness in the job search, however, were noticed. Once the group sessions were completed, group members were active to varying degrees in finding work placements. While some members were actively looking for placements, staff did become disappointed when noticing the limitations in the eagerness of other members to enter the work force. Staff suggested that some members appeared more eager to talk about the benefits of having a placement than actually looking for and starting placements.

Limitations in the job search of some members were also noticed in the personal progress reports. A total of eleven members in Groups 1 and 2 combined did not record having filled out a job application while in the program. Similarly, 14 members did not record having had a job interview and only two persons indicated that they had begun to volunteer in the community while members of the group.

2. Eager to Learn

Group members also presented an image of being eager to learn. Nearly all participants would write personal notes about information shared in the group on their own initiative. One group member claimed to learn five new English words each day. Another member recognized that in order to overcome barriers to employment this would require

extra effort: "I realized that I had to do certain things in order to improve my chance at getting a job in my profession." Accordingly, ten members recorded in their personal progress reports that they had begun school courses of some kind while still in the program (groups combined).

It was a certain core of regular attenders within each group who demonstrated the greatest interest to learn and contribute to the program. For both groups the attendance of members decreased in size during the two months. The number of sessions that the different group members attended can be seen in Figure 14. Because some the personal progress reports were completed retrospectively, the attendance figures should be considered estimates.

Figure 14
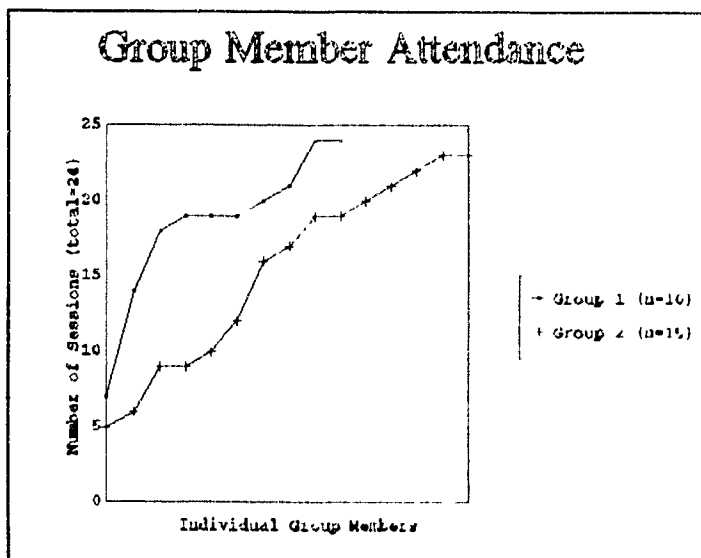
The decrease in attendance was somewhat disappointing for the regular attenders. One staff person mentioned that in her "experience, it's normal...to start with 12 [members]

and end up with five...but it is disappointing."

The reasons for the decrease in attendance varied. Two members formally dropped out of the program. Some members began jobs, training, or school. Other members, for reasons of their own, did not regularly attend sessions.

3. Optimistic and Thankful

Most group members were optimistic that they would find work soon. This optimism often stemmed from an appreciation of being a part of the program. "I think [that] I have good luck [to be in this program]."

The group members' positive, thankful nature was also seen during the group discussion when gratitude for Canada was expressed. "Canada is best country for help. A lot things for children. Right now is very hard [economically], but for all countries is the same." The educational opportunities in Canada was recognized by some members. This were especially true when group members spoke of the opportunities afforded their children. Group members also expressed an appreciation for government financial support.

4. Expressed Frustration

Despite this expression of gratitude, an underlying feeling of frustration was also evident. This frustration was rooted both in the recognition that all of Canada was experiencing economic hard times, and the feeling that immigrants confronted additional barriers to employment.

So, for example, one group member spoke of it being a "very difficult time in Canada now". Another mentioned that "I look for work. The newspaper says it [jobs] are lost...it's difficult". One member questioned why the Canadian government allowed immigrants to

come if there was little hope of employment: "[The] government help people come here...no work [available in Canada now]...everyday I cry, cry, cry."

Group members also showed frustration and anger at having to overcome barriers to employment. Many members mentioned that they thought their English proficiency hindered them from obtaining employment. Said one group member (in English): "I think I'll never work in Canada because I don't speak English."

Other members acknowledged experiencing discrimination when applying for work: "They [Canadians who were discriminating against me] don't know me...I don't know them. I don't know what is going on...Why do people hate me if they don't know me?"

Numerous group members also expressed anger at the Canadian welfare system which they felt sometimes hindered them from finding a job. "It's [a] difficulty, because I look for [work in] my profession...[and I only have time to] call for the [employers on my employer] list...it's stupid." One frustrated member felt that the system was accusing him of not wanting to work by having him prove his desire for work. In reply to this impression he said: "I want to find a job...I don't want to check in every month [to the social worker]."

Finally, group members also expressed frustration in the barriers of lacking Canadian work experience and difficulties in obtaining accreditation. The expression of frustration was not only limited to job related issues. Group members often shared anger and pain related to their personal lives.

The combination of gratitude toward Canada, and the frustration of being an immigrant and not working was poignantly captured in the words of one group member:

> [I] have food and clothes...I live and my child is safe...but here I am like a vegetable because I can't work. But I say 'thank you' because my child is safe...my husband was

killed with military...when I came here I feel safe...after I get depression...if I get a balance [between safety and pursuing my professional career I am still able to be thankful]...no future for myself, but for my child.

5. Used Humour

Both groups enjoyed laughing. Jokes would often be made throughout group discussions. It often appeared to me that group members would participate more when there was a lot of laughter. Sometimes the opportunity was given to tell a joke. Other times laughter was used in response to problems that were shared. One group member recognized the importance of humour in this way:

> It is fun...[I]laugh...helps me to feel good...For example, when I heard a small story [of one member's traumatic refugee experience] I see him very sad...I want to bring some joy...I was pleased to be a member of the group. Really I mean it...laughing, laughing.

6. Supportive

A final characteristic shared by group members was their willingness to support each other. Members mentioned that strength lay in "people helping people". "I help you anytime...no problem", said one participant to another. This supportive environment will be explored in more detail in the assessment of the program goals. I do want to emphasize, however, that the program alone cannot create a supportive environment. Group members must also be willing to support each other. I recognized this fact during my observations of the Group 3 which did not share the previous groups' eagerness to support each other.

Relationship Between Stakeholders

I will outline the relationship between stakeholders along two dimensions: 1) staff/group members, and 2) staff/advisory committee.

Staff/Group Member Relationship

Throughout the program there was a tension between staff providing help to immigrants (staff direction) and immigrants being responsible for their own success (group members' responsibility).

I mentioned earlier that *Working for Work* cannot truly be considered a self-help group. Its participatory approach was limited by the fact that the program saw immigrants, as a marginalized population, as benefiting from some degree of help by the dominant society. The program encouraged immigrants to draw on their own strengths and experiences. It also advocated on behalf of immigrants in overcoming barriers.

To ensure that group members were familiar with the support group philosophy, information sessions were held with potential participants. Referrals to other programs were made for those wanting more direction than staff's mandate permitted.

When describing the relationship between staff and the group members the tension between staff direction and group member responsibility is obvious. It is a dynamic, continuous tension in that the strengths, needs, and expectations of the group members varied. Also the changing demands on the staff's time limited their involvement with individual group members. I will begin by describing how staff offered direction to the group members and move toward a description of members assuming responsibility within the group.

1. Staff Direction

During group sessions staff would propose what was on the agenda for the day and occasionally suggest future activities. Information about community events (both job related

and social) would be mentioned by staff. Staff spoke simply and clearly, often repeating information to ensure that members understood. All group members interviewed mentioned that they understood the facilitators well.

During the sessions staff would often offer advice. This would be done both as a formal activity (e.g., a lecture on interview etiquette, cover letters, or computer skills), or in response to a spontaneous group discussion (e.g., causes for racism in Canada). Participants seemed to value this advice because of the Canadian perspectives staff was in a position to offer.

An area in which staff offered a lot of direction was helping group members in their job search. Staff would help in drafting and typing resumes, proof-reading cover letters, and offering the computer for job-related use.

Staff also advocated on behalf of group members by speaking with potential employers. Occasionally staff would arrange an interview for group members. One participant mentioned that "they [staff] help...when we have problem. Like when we want to go somewhere to apply for a job, if you tell [the staff person] she will just make a call and [tell them to expect that you are coming]."

Staff provided members with a letter explaining the program and the work placements for the purpose of handing to potential employers when applying for a job. Staff offered to contact employers to whom members had given resumes or applications. Mentioned one staff person to the group: "You can call me anytime...if you left a resume and letter and you want me to follow up, you can call me."

Other times staff would go to employers directly for the purpose of finding job

openings or "selling" work placements as is evident in the words of one staff person: "I'm going to go there [employer] myself because maybe we can do some work placements." Group members were also told that they could use staff as a reference if they so wanted.

Staff would at times offer advice regarding educational options. In one case a staff person helped arrange for one group member to enter into job training. This group member noted the staff's contribution: "I think that office [Working for Work] is good for me because I want to take a [job] training [course] and the office help me."

The staff would also provide help in a variety of other ways. For example, staff would help organize group parties, refer potential participants to other programs, and provide encouragement to participants.

I felt that the group members generally appreciated the variety of help they received from the staff. Indeed one group member acknowledged that he "felt support by the coordinators. They are very professional." Another member described the program (represented by staff) as being an advisor: "I saw the program as an advisor in order to orientate me where I should go to find a job." A few members thought that the staff could be even more directive.

2. Staff Encouraged Group Member Responsibility

Despite their involvement mentioned above, the staff was also aware of the participatory nature of the program. For this reason they often encouraged group members to take responsibility for their own learning and success. When talking with staff they mentioned to me that they realized they could continually improve in finding new ways to encourage this responsibility.

One way in which staff encouraged group member responsibility was by asking all members to sign a commitment form after the first week of sessions. This form stated that the group member was committed to attending sessions whenever possible and that they were willing to contribute in other ways to the group. The rationale for this form was to emphasize that the program was a support group which required a degree of commitment from group members. Staff would occasionally ask members to encourage one another to attend sessions.

While in the group, staff most often assumed the role of facilitator rather than lecturer. As such, the staff encouraged discussion by asking questions, providing small group activities, drawing on the experiences of the members, summarizing opinions and information from members, and encouraging members to offer suggestions and critiques to each other.

Numerous examples of staff requesting participation from members could be given. I will give only one; in the context of a discussion of how the check in times could be improved.

> I [staff] have a suggestion which would make things better for me...The check in time is not a time to report to me...it is a time to share with the whole group...people are more interested if you talk to everyone in the group at the same time...It's not just you talking to me, but you're talking to the group.

Group members recognized that the staff wanted their input. Members spoke of having "a chance to talk even though you don't speak very clear English", and that staff "would wait for you and they just ask you something even if you don't have anything to say they make you talk. So they have a great patience." One member mentioned that she appreciated the fact that the staff did not pretend to have all the answers, but asked for the

advice of other group members.

> She [staff] is trying her best. She is not acting as a lecturer. Sometimes she says 'I don't know about this things. Does anyone know about this things?'...she is not hiding what she does not know...She is as if one of the group.

Another indication that the staff wanted the group to feel that the sessions were "theirs" was seen in the staffs' flexibility. Although agendas were proposed, they were adapted to the suggestions of group members. This was done through the formal feedback times when the question was asked: "Do you have ideas and topics that are not a part of our plans?" It was also done during sessions when staff would at times change daily plans to address issues that were important to members (e.g., when the group learned that one member had an interview the next day they practised role playing interviews).

An area which staff increasingly requested involvement was in finding work placements. Staff talked about "matching their [members'] efforts", working in "partnership", and needing members' help "to work with me." Staff encouraged group members to do their own research and make a list of employers they would like to work for: "You have to think, what are my abilities, skills, and what is a place that I like?...you might want to choose a place that you would like to work after." As time went on staff encouraged members to try and make the initial contact with employers.

3. Group Members Assumed Responsibility

The majority of members recognized their input as being important in making the program a success. This was seen in their willingness to share job information and experiences, offer suggestions and feedback to each other, translate for each other, and offer advice, help, and comfort for non-employment related problems. For example, one member

stated: "Everyone has right to talk and others has to listen". Another member acknowledged the information from others in this way: "Many times other peoples give [us much] information about when we go to apply for job--for training. That help me."

Group members had a sense of accountability to the group. Group rules were made by all members during the first week. At times members expressed concern as to why certain members had not attended for a while. Someone would often call these members and report back to the group as to their whereabouts.

Members also assumed responsibility in their job search. Most group members realized that the program could not provide them with a job. Said one member: "I had it in my mind [that *Working for Work* would give me a job], but I think that it is not fair to ask this." Instead members had to take some initiative and enter the competitive job market with their own efforts.

Staff acknowledged the contribution of group members to the group. They mentioned that some group members were "very active in job search", while others gave "practical support" to each other, gave "good feedback", were "supportive of peers", and brought "information and job leads". Still the staff suggested that group members could improve in this regard: "Participants could try more to practice helping each other, listening and participating as adults."

Not all members were satisfied with the degree of responsibility assumed by group members either. Some members thought that others needed to assume more responsibility. For example, one member thought that "some people don't really go to learn, they just go to waste time". During interviews some members complained that some group rules were

not being adhered to (e.g., speak only English, come on time). Another member thought

that the emphasis should be more on individual job search and less on responsibility to the

group.

4. Nature of Relationship

Despite (or perhaps because of) this tension between staff direction and group

member responsibility, the relationship between staff and members was one characterized

by mutual respect, even friendship. All group members spoke positively about the staff.

Some phrases used by members to describe staff include: "very helpful"; "give us much trust";

"are flexible...and respect the cultures of everyone"; "listen to you"; "between students and

teachers [there] is not distance"; "very friendly...very sensitive with us and comprehend our

problems"; and "always there for you". One member expressed her appreciation for staff in

this way:

> They are very nice...I love [one staff person], the way she understand the group. She
> is always laughing, and she know how to communicate...[another staff person] is OK
> too. She is more formal...but very nice...Whatever the members ask [staff] are
> patient...we have problems...why should I go there every morning if they don't treat
> me good?

This respect seemed to be mutual. Staff spoke of members as being "friends" and a

"good group". One staff person said: "When I come here I'm so up again. This group lifts

my spirit."

Staff/Advisory Committee Relationship

The relationship between staff and the advisory committee was characterized by a

tension. The advisory committee was ultimately responsible for the program. It was the

staff, however, who were the most active in the program and assumed the daily tasks of

managing and developing the program.

Continual concern was expressed both by staff and the committee not to overwhelm the staff with responsibility. This became a challenge because of the volunteer nature of the advisory committee. Because the staff were the only persons on the committee being paid, it often seemed easy to assume the staff would do much of the work.

To address this concern certain actions were taken. The division of the program's responsibilities was occasionally reviewed by the advisory committee. Sub-committees were formed and revised for the sake of efficiency (see organizational chart in the appendix). New committee members were recruited for additional help. The committee decided to have co-chairs coordinate the committee's activities, and have committee members be responsible for chairing advisory committee meetings and recording minutes.

Because the program was new and developing this issue was continually a concern. For example, during the staff/committee focus group, one committte ember recognized that the "responsibility on staff is increasing" and suggested organizing the committee meeting so that staff didn't feel responsible for it. Another committee member echoed this concern:

> We've taken some steps to relieve the stress [of staff]... we've nominated co-chairs...someone who they can call in time of crisis...maybe we want to define further roles...look at whether [existing committees] are enough.

Assessment of Goals

Earlier I mentioned that there were two general goals of the program: (1) to increase the employability of participants, and (2) to increase the sense of support to deal with employment-related stress. These goals are by no means distinct or separate. A sense of

increased employability by group members was often inter-related with a sense of support. For the sake of clarity, however, I will assess the outcome of each goal individually.

Increased Employability

As I already mentioned, *Working for Work* did not provide jobs or training for its participants. One staff person noted that group members "come with various expectations that [staff] will find a job for them...it takes a few days...by explaining it [what a support group is] they get the concept of it." Indeed one member acknowledged after the program that "this group it can't find a job [for] you because it is not factory."

Working for Work could offer its group members the opportunity to increase the likelihood of gaining employment. In the words of the member quoted directly above: "It [*Working for Work*] give you a chance, an advantage to start a job...[we]don't have another way." Generally the comments about this goal were very positive.

I will outline how *Working for Work* increased the participant's employability from the perspective of both the staff and the group members themselves. This will be followed by a brief summary of the employment related activity found by group members.

1. Improved Job Search Skills

Working for Work improved group members' job search skills in many ways. Said one member:

> The course helped me to unwind all those mistaken ideas I had about finding a job...it show you ways to find yourself in a better position to find a job...You are not blind any more...you know what you have to do, and that's a pretty good thing about it...make you aware...it gives you the edge to find a job.

Seventeen of the 25 total members completed or improved their resume. One member mentioned that he had been in Canada for "two years and no resume...When I

come to group [*Working for Work*] I get information about resume." Another member

recognized that the program helped improve his resume to look much more professional:

"In one page the employer makes [his/her] ideas about my aptitude."

Members also mentioned that learning about cover letters was important, that they

learned "many way to fill application", and that the free bus passes made employer contact

much easier. One member also mentioned that the program taught him where to look for

jobs and other programs which could aid in the job search.

The improved skill most often mentioned by group members was learning how to

approach and talk with Canadian employers. The importance of this skill was outlined by

one member:

> Every work that you can do in a place depends on the interview. Most of the time
> we [immigrants] flunk the interview, we just don't past the test with employers.

One member said that he learned "more knowledge how to perform in the interview".

Another member claimed that "she [staff] explain about interview tips, I got a lot of

information what to do and what not to do during the interview. I didn't know all this

before."

Numerous members recognized the importance of role playing interviews because,

in the words of one member, it helps to "know the procedure of how to go through an

interview...help to review your experience to help to be prepared for when you will have a

real interview."

Members and staff saw role playing as an opportunity to learn from each other, learn

from mistakes, and become aware of cultural differences in interview approach. The net

result for most was a new sense of confidence described by this member: "Right now when

I try to find a job...I have in my mind how I can talk to people. I didn't feel confident before."

Despite these positive perceptions, one participant was frustrated that more emphasis was not given on job search in the first month of the program: "I would like to do more talking about jobs; where, how long, how to find a job."

2. Increased Awareness of Job-Related Options

Numerous group members talked about how the program gave them information about options which could lead to their preferred employment. For example, one member said:

> I think it [Working for Work] helped me to go to places where I didn't know existed...through Working for Work I found places related to what I used to do back home....I could find them and talk to people that work there. The employers [could see] how I can work here [in Canada].

Another member, excited after a field trip, said that she had met a person who had given her advice about how to use her educational background in Canada. Still another member appreciated the volunteering opportunities presented: "I [will] help other people work with children...this will help [me] get experience working with children." Naturally not all options considered were applicable to all members' situations.

Group members would often become aware of employment-related options through the input from other members. The benefits of this kind of networking was summarized well by one member:

> For example, when I have interest for [job] training [one group member] give information about when the meeting in [the training place was]. That help me...Sometimes [another member would] bring information about the address for factories, information about how [to] find a job. In other time [still another member would] bring information for address where [we] can apply for job...I think that is

good because I don't know many factories here...Good idea [networking] because many people have been in Canada for [a longer time].

3. Recognized and Responded to Employment Barriers

Improving one's chances of obtaining employment requires an understanding of the realities of the Canadian job market. I have already demonstrated that most group members were aware that Canada was in a recession (and the increased competition this implies) and that additional barriers (e.g, English proficiency, lack of Canadian experience etc.) require effort to overcome.

Many group members acknowledged that *Working for Work* helped them in addressing these barriers. Often members would say that their English was improving because, in the words of one member, "I practice my English...I listen [to others speak]". Work placements were seen as an opportunity of getting Canadian work experience. I "will have Canadian experience" said one member in reference to work placements. It "will help you to work in what you really like".

Group members also appreciated the fact that the program encouraged group members to build on their strengths and past experiences. One member was pleasantly surprised that he was considering jobs that were in line with his training and university education. "Before I came here [*Working for Work*]", he said, "I was looking for job in factories."

Most group members (15 out of 25) completed a career plan. This encouraged members to make decisions about what kinds of jobs they wanted and consider the feasibility of those choices. One member thought the program was "a way to find out what you want to do with your life. You want to find a job, you want to study, or you want a

training?" At another time a group member commented that the program allowed him to "plan [his] own future."

4. Increased Employer Contact

For some group members, *Working for Work* put them in direct contact with employers. For example, one member acknowledged that the program "really helped me...me and [another member] went to...[an] office for interview...I got this all through *Working for Work*".

Work placements were seen as a source of potential employer contact. One member spoke of the placements as a chance to "show how I am able to do [work]...because if you are a good worker they can give you a job". Another member recognized the benefits of staff advocacy: "If [*Working for Work*] make contact with factory it's easier for me...I tried myself to look for a job." According to the follow-up questionnaires, some group members who had work placements mentioned that they now had Canadian experience and more confidence which would make it easier to approach employers in the future. Staff, too, spoke of the placements as "givingincentive to employers" to consider immigrant employees.

For most members, however, the actual contact with employers did not live up to their expectations. "I like the course", said one member, "but I would prefer something more concrete. To visit factories, to be in contact with employers". Between attending ESL classes and group sessions, another member felt that he had little time to contact employers.

As the program continues and the work placement aspect of the program becomes more established, the potential for employer contact should translate into more direct contact. Indeed, the number of work placements did increase after both groups were

finished with the group sessions (from only two placements while *Group 1* and *2* were in session, up to six placements after *Group 2* finished its session).

5. Found Employment-Related Activity

It cannot be inferred that *Working for Work* caused members to find jobs, training, or education (i.e., if members were not part of the program they may still have begun these activities). Still, I believe that the factors mentioned above did contribute to the success of making participants more employable.

Of the 25 total participants in *Group 1* and *Group 2*, 20 began activities related to employment during the program, or within two months after the completion of the program. Of those who had not found employment-related activity, two formally dropped out of the program, one returned to her home country after the program, one had a painful car accident, and the final member did find a full-time job three months after completing the program.

The employment-related activities found by the remaining group members can be seen in figure 15. The numbers refer to the activities at the time of the follow-up questionnaires (two months after program completion). Some members were involved in more than one activity. Explanations of some of the activities follow.

Figure 15

Employment-Related Activity Found
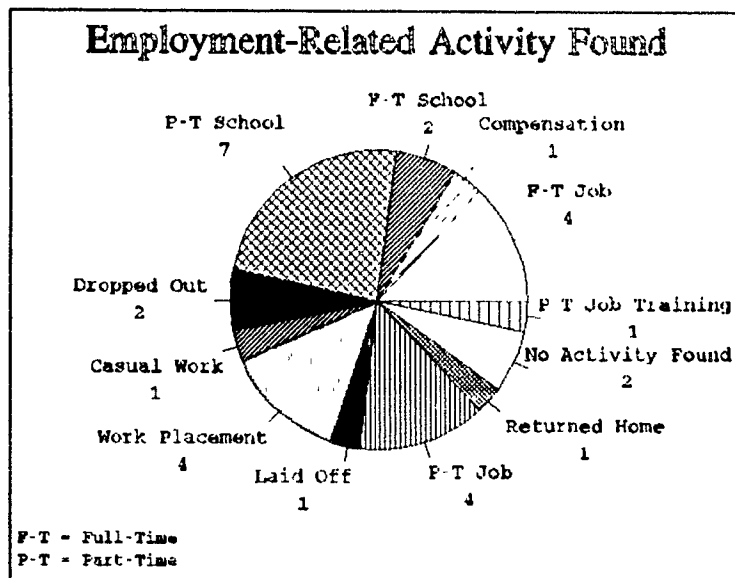
A member who had been laid off, and a member on Worker's Compensation had both been working full-time during the evaluation period. A member most recently involved with part-time job training had previously been full-time job-training before enroling in English as a Second Language (ESL) course on a part-time basis. Most members enroled in school (full and part-time) were taking ESL.

A member involved with casual work was self-employed working out of her home, but to date had not had very much work. In addition to the four work placements at the time of the follow-up questionnaires, two placements had been prematurely terminated because of incompatibility between the group member and the work place. One member on placement had already been told that she would be employed full-time once her placement was completed.

Despite the various employment-related activities the group members were involved

with, 14 members mentioned that they were still receiving some kind of government support (12 as Social Assistance Recipients and two on the Adaptation Adjustment Program) and another seven members did not answer that question. Only three members mentioned that they had gone to another job program for additional help.

Those members who found employment repeatedly mentioned the Canadian work experience the jobs afforded. Two members were grateful that the jobs they had were consistent with their past work experience.

Increased Sense of Support

Another goal of the program was to increase the participant's sense of support in order to deal with employment-related stress. Again, in general, members and staff spoke positively that this goal was being achieved.

Group members spoke of feeling "support", having a "sense of self", and feeling happy, not depressed because of the program. "It helps our spirit", said one member. "Everyday [I] go [to] this program I don't have stress", said another.

The impact of the program seemed to generalize to other areas of the member's lives. This is not surprising if the program is seen to address a concern (unemployment) which, for many members, is one of their greatest worries. Consider the opinion of one member: The program "improve your personality and give you a sense of comfort with yourself. Not feeling down because you can't find a job--its very hard times."

I will briefly outline in what ways this sense of support was achieved, again from the perspective of staff and group members.

1. Increased Awareness of the Contributions of Other Members in Job Search

Many group members felt support within the group because of what other group members had to offer them in their job search. For some this support stemmed from the fact members could help each other solve problems. One member said:

> Being in this group you don't get discouraged. You keep going because you talk about your problems and everybody understands what you are talking about because they have lived [through similar things]...Talking to the people find new and even better ideas that improves your dealings with these problems.

For another it was that the group gave him direction in life in a new country: "[The] group helps me to know direction...we [immigrants] are new here and we don't know nothing." The staff also recognized this support. In staff opinion, members saw that they were "not alone in their job search", that they were "motivated by the group working together", and that they received support from each other for "that first job in Canada."

2. Increased Awareness of how to Deal with Stress

Group members mentioned that they felt supported in learning different techniques to cope with stress.

One staff person "helped me to get rid of all those things I was thinking about", explained one member, "like stress, trying to find a job...can cope with them now." Another member acknowledged that he had learned "how to make positive stress...I must think about the past of what I did good...I think in the future [about] how I can improve my [past] mistakes". A few members mentioned that the relaxation exercises attempted in the group were helpful.

Another way members felt supported in dealing with stress was simply in being able to talk about their stress, express their feelings, and vent their frustrations. For example,

one member mentioned that discussing problems was very therapeutic:

Sometimes I have a problem and we talk about different ways [to deal with it]...so I feel high when I am there..that's why I feel good, it's just like therapy.

Similarly, another member said it was:

Very important to deal with this problem [of stress]...It [*Working for Work*] helped me to deal with and understand [stress]...[talking about stress] most important thing because you learn to be happy in a sad world.

A few members thought that the program could talk even more about stress.

Members and staff also recognized the benefit in hearing common problems. "There are other people who have the same kinds of problems...share problems", mentioned one participant. "It just makes your problem a little bit less." Hearing these problems emphasized the fact that (in the words of one member) "stress is normal for people". It was interesting to note that when individual members spoke of their problems other members would usually listen intently. I often sensed that members empathized with the common experience of being immigrants.

Finally, the program helped some members deal with stress in that it distracted them from dwelling on their problems. One member noticed that "when I stay in my apartment by myself I think many things [which are stressful]...in group I forget these things." Another member thought that the program "makes me feel as if like I am working. I have a routine...like school, like work. At least I have something to do everyday."

3. Created Environment to Develop Supportive Relationships

Group members said that they felt support because of the types of relationships they had developed within group. Although these relationships were multifaceted, I will only briefly highlight a few key points mentioned by group members.

Members spoke of feeling a sense of "group". For instance, one member mentioned that "*Working for Work*...helped me to know people and to get along with people, to cooperate and be as a good." Another member noted the new friendships formed: "I know other people who was not my friend [before]...many people I never know. But now I know...It'sno good for me to stay here in my apartment alone." During group parties the friendships that were made became obvious as members laughed and danced together, obviously enjoying each other's company.

Some members spoke of a trust that was developed between members and between members and staff. "I feel trust with you [interviewer], and everyone", said one member. "I'm feeling better, up, up, up...[You feel this way] when you feel trust."

Another member spoke of the encouragement he received from the friendships: "Everyone friendly. I [do] not feel alone...Every people encourage yourself--you encourage me, I encourage you." Other members spoke of the group making them feel "comfortable", "safe", "relaxed", "confident", and "happy". These feelings seemed evident to me as group members freely spoke with each other.

One member went so far as to describe the group as similar to a family:

It looks like a family to a certain point...we get to know each other to a point that we felt something for each other. And that very important because if you don't trust the people that are there, you are not able to speak what you feel, so the stress comes about again.

A final indication of supportive relationships developed within the group was in the instrumental help some members offered each other. For example, one member helped another fix his car. Another member helped one member in getting his driver's licence.

4. Gave Hope of Finding Job

"Hope" was a word often used by group members to describe the change they had undergone. Its importance was noted by one participant: "[If there is] no hope, your feelings go down."

For some this hope resulted from seeing other group members finding jobs. "If someone gets a job", noted one member, "they leave...this encourages [us] to look for a job...a positive thing."

Staff also noticed that members had gained a sense of hope. One staff person mentioned that members changed from a negative attitude at first, to a much more positive, confident outlook: "Towards the end they [members] are friendly...a complete change...a very good proof of the success of the program."

Of course, with hope lies the danger of unfulfilled expectations. Seeing others find employment can also bring further frustration. I noticed this frustration at one group reunion (two months after the group had completed the program). Filling out the follow-up questionnaire, one member said she felt "depressed". Her hopes of finding a job had not yet been realized.

Suggestions for Improvement

Information received from all research participants was generally positive. There were, however, suggestions made by many members as to how the program could change for the better.

I will briefly outline three areas of potential improvement noted by research participants. Because of the formative nature of the evaluation, many of these suggestions

for improvement were considered (and acted upon if the group so decided) shortly after they were made. At the end of each area I will list the general recommendations which can be applied to the program's future.

Curriculum Content

Although most group members found the majority of sessions and topics useful, some sessions were found less useful than others. Some sessions appeared very useful for some people while not interesting others. "Some thing was good for some", said one member, "and bad for others." This was particularly true for topics which had a narrow, specialized focus. For example, some members in *Group 1* said that they benefited greatly from the visit of a Conestoga College representative who spoke of educational options available at the College. For the majority of members from that group, however, college education was not an interest. Consequently, staff did not invite this representative to groups two or three.

Members also suggested that they would prefer doing more of certain activities. For example, one member mentioned that talking more about coping with stress would be useful, others mentioned that they would like to practice interviews more, while some thought more field trips could be made and more parties organized.

In the wake of two work placements which were prematurely terminated, staff recognized the need to prepare members for the Canadian work place. Staff suggested that the group explore cultural differences in the work place and differences in the expectation of employers.

Finally, two members expressed concern that the check in time was sometimes "boring" even though the value of this activity was seen. To address this concern the group

decided to reemphasize that people could "pass" thereby reducing the time spent in check in.

Recommendations:

1.   Propose an agenda to each group based on the experiences and feedback of past groups. Continue to use feedback times to evaluate the agenda.

2.   Avoid special interest topics unless a shared interest is expressed among members.

3.   Increase preparation for the Canadian work place, wi'ʼ₁ special attention given to cultural differences of employer/employee expectations.

4.   Continue to emphasize the "check in" time as a means to encourage supportive discussion. Periodically ask members to evaluate this activity.

Group Process

Suggestions for improving the process within the group reflected the greater tension between staff direction and member responsibility discussed earlier.

Many of the suggestions for improving the group process were directed toward the increased participation of members within the group. Some members mentioned that the experiences within the group could be used to a greater extent as a basis for discussion. This idea was well expressed by one member:

> I like to suggest [that staff] not just [do all the] talking....I think it is very important...to know what we [as members] have done and to improve [on this]...Have to start with what we have done...For example, fill out application form. We can share our experiences...Through this presentation people can discover themself what they did correct and what they [need to] improve [on]...Find [for] ourself the best way...We didn't have time to reflect what we did before...If you have time for to discover what you have done before, it is more difficult to forget it.

Staff also recognized their part in needing to encourage participation of group

members. One way this was accomplished was by dividing the group into small groups in order to discuss a particular topic.

Yet the staff also felt that the group members themselves should assume more responsibility for participation. Information sessions were held in order to explain to potential participants the participatory nature of the program. Group members were occasionally reminded by staff and other members (often through the evaluation feedback) of their responsibilities to the group.

In this regard, the questions asked in the evaluation need not focus only on the program and its activities. Already staff suggested asking a question about member contribution to the group at the mid point interviews. I suggest that a similar question be asked during the regular weekly group feedback times.

Recommendations:

1. Continue having information meetings in which the participatory nature of the program is explained to potential participants.

2. Have staff and observers meet at mid-point of each group (after interviews) to discuss ways to encourage member responsibility/participation and evaluate staff direction/advocacy.

3. Include the following question in the weekly group feedback: "How can the group help each other more?"

Program Structure

During the latter part of my thesis involvement at *Working for Work* the staff began placing more time and energy into promoting the relatively new work placement component

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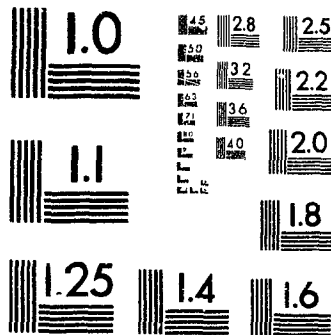
PRECISION^{SM} RESOLUTION TARGETS

of the program in the business community. This effort was intended to address the suggestions of both staff and members to increase employer contact.

Staff, however, only had limited time to organize these placements and coordinate the volunteer monitors assigned to each work placement setting. Because of this time constraint, and because of the accumulation of more members wanting placements as new groups began, the advisory committee decided to look for funding sources in order to hire another staff person. Another suggestion made by staff and one group member was to increase the amount of time spent counselling members individually. In addition to the regular group meetings, this would allow for greater opportunity to address certain needs outlined by staff: encourage the utilization of skills and qualifications that members already have; explore ways to upgrade existing skills; and consider learning new skills (e.g., keyboarding in an increasingly computer literate workforce). These needs are seen as crucial if immigrants are to adapt into the Canadian work place.

Some advisory committee members were active in promoting the utilization of immigrants' existing skills and training. Four members of the committee (including staff) helped to form Skills Employment Entry and Development (SEED), a group of interested community members finding ways to increase the access of foreign-trained persons into Canadian trades and professions.

Another suggested area of improvement centered around the advisory committee efficiency. Throughout the evaluation period some committee members suggested that the committee clarify its roles (in relation to staff's). According to some members, the committee structure should adapt to the developing program even if this meant forming new

positions or sub-committees, or dissolving old sub-committees.

A final suggestion for improvement was made during an advisory committee meeting in late April, 1992. Follow-up meetings for both groups had been poorly attended and quickly disbanded. Yet staff mentioned that group members who did not gain employment after completing a work placements could use more practical and emotional support to once again become motivated in their job search. Other members could use continued support for other reasons. Some had their hopes of finding a job, which was increased during the two months, not realized and were, therefore, frustrated. Other members wanted the positive experience they felt during the two months while in the program to continue in some way.

The advisory committee discussed this issue. The committee recognized that *Working for Work* was not the only source of support available to unemployed immigrants. Some members chose not to continue in the follow-up sessions. Yet the committee felt that other members would decide to attend follow-up meetings if they were more structured and focused on employment-related issues. The committee decided to begin regular meetings open for all past group members ("graduates") approximately once a month. Staff would facilitate these meetings.

Recommendations:

1.   Hire another staff person which would allow for:

      - the expanding of the work placement component through promotion of the program

      in the business community.

      - the provision of more individual employment counselling to members.

2. Continue to collaborate with agencies and groups in the community exploring ways for immigrants to access trades and professions.

3. Continue to regularly evaluate advisory committee roles and structure in order to adapt to the developing program.

4. Organize regular meeting times which would be open for all graduates. These periodic meetings would be for the purpose of providing ongoing employment-related support.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

Overall, the evaluation information suggests a positive appraisal of *Working for Work*.

In terms of increasing the employability of group members the program was largely successful. Group members improved their job search skills, increased their awareness of job-related options, began to recognize and respond to employment barriers, and started to contact potential employers. Many group members found employment-related activities.

However, there is room for improvement. If *Working for Work* is to continue its program in the future, particular attention should be given to better preparing group members for the Canadian work place, expanding the work placement component of the program (by promoting the program in the business community), and providing more individual employment counselling to group members. These recommendations would require the hiring of an additional staff person.

In terms of increasing a sense of support among group members the program was very successful. The program allowed group members to help each other in their job search, increased their awareness of how to deal with stress, created an environment to develop supportive relationships, and gave members hope of finding a job.

Much of the success in terms of support was due to the emphasis of group member responsibility within the program together with the advocacy staff provided. This dual emphasis should continue in the future. The program should also organize regular graduate meeting sessions in order to provide ongoing employment support.

The assessment of the two main goals of the program is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

ASSESSMENT OF GOALS

	INCREASED EMPLOYABILITY	INCREASED SENSE OF SUPPORT
POSITIVE ASPECTS	-Improved job search skills -Increased awareness of job-related options -Recognized and responded to employment barriers -Increased employer contact -Found employment-related activity	-Increased awareness of the c(itributions of other members in job search -Increased awareness of how to deal with stress -Created an environment to develop supportive relationships -Gave hope of finding job
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	-Increase preparation for the Canadian work-place -Expand work placement component of program -Provide more individual employment counselling to group members -Continue to collaborate with community groups exploring ways for immigrants to access trades and professions	-Continue to emphasize "check-in" as a means to encourage supportive discussion -Continue to explain participatory nature of program to potential participants -Continue to emphasize both group member responsibility and staff advocacy -Organize regular graduate sessions

Plans for Ongoing Evaluation

It was my intention that my thesis involvement at *Working for Work* contribute not only to the evaluation of the program's first two groups, but also help establish an ongoing evaluation within the program. The advisory committee recognized the merits of having an evaluation which would continue and which would rely on the resources within the program (i.e.,internal evaluation) (Love, 1991). The challenge was to establish a design which would be sustainable given the limited staff time and volunteer commitment.

Near the end of *Group 2* the evaluation committee began discussing the evaluation design for *Groups 3* and *4*. We talked about what information we would continue to collect. We also discussed what our personal commitments to this phase of the evaluation would be.

During the evaluation of the first two groups I had assumed the role of coordinating the evaluation efforts. From my perspective (and the perspective of the evaluation committee members) this seemed a logical role given the amount of time I had available. For the remaining groups, however, I mentioned that the time I would spend volunteering on the evaluation committee would be greatly reduced. It was an amount similar to that of the other members (i.e., a few hours a week).

I informed the committee that I did not want to continue coordinating the evaluation activities. I thought that responsibility for the evaluation could be shared to a greater extent by other evaluation committee members. In this way the program did not risk becoming dependent on one person's efforts. After discussion, the committee decided that we would try having no evaluation coordinator. Rather, the evaluation responsibilities related to a group would be assumed by the evaluation committee members observing in that group. The regular meeting times would serve the purpose providing a place for all committee members to reflect on the evaluation process.

After discussing the revised evaluation at a number of meetings (including one with staff), the following (summarized) design was presented to the advisory committee on March 5, 1992.

Quantitative Information

I would meet with one staff person in order to set up files recording the quantitative information on *Working for Work's* office computer. The following information would be recorded for each group: (1) Initial assessment interview: Information to be entered by staff once the participants of a particular group were determined.

(2) **Personal progress reports:** Information to be entered by staff at the end of each group. Staff would also be responsible to ensure that participants complete these reports while in the program.

(3) **Follow-up questionnaire:** Information to be entered by staff after the two month reunion when the questionnaire would be filled out.

Qualitative Information

The staff and the evaluation committee members all agreed that the observations and participant interviews had contributed greatly to the evaluation. The staff mentioned that they felt supported by having members of the advisory committee present and aware of what was going on in the program (other advisory committee members had not attended any sessions). We recognized that the information collected during the participant interviews was very insightful and not necessarily obtained during the group feedback time or through questionnaires. Although observations and interviewing was very time consuming and originally not planned to continue, we agreed that we did not want to lose the benefits of these methods.

The evaluation committee proposed having two members responsible for each group (myself and the other observer for *Group 3*, and the other two evaluation committee members for *Group 4*). The two individuals responsible for a particular group would decide between themselves how they would want to divide up the responsibilities. Responsibilities include:

(1) **Observations:** Observe once every four sessions and leave fieldnotes in the group file.

(2) Participant Interviews: Two group participants would be interviewed one month after the start of the group. The observers for that group would be responsible to summarize and feed the information back to the group.

(3) Staff Interviews: The staff felt that although they were members of the group, their opinions about the group were not being formally recognized. They did not, however, want their opinions to be singled out from other group participants (which would set themselves up as group "leaders" as opposed to "facilitators"). The staff, therefore, decided to interview themselves and give this information to the observers of that group to feedback together with the participant interviews.

(4) Advisory Committee: As before, the advisory committee would be led in a focus group after every two groups in order to evaluate its role in the program.

In addition to the above mentioned qualitative methods, the staff would continue to lead the weekly group feedback and record this information in the group file.

Research Participants' View of the Evaluation

The question could be asked: "How was the evaluation seen from the perspective of the research participants?" Information was gathered that indicated the perspectives of the three groups of participants: group members, staff, and advisory committee members.

Group Members

Throughout the program the evaluation was presented to the group members as an opportunity for them to say what they liked about the group, and suggest what else could be done to make the group better. This emphasis on program improvement can be seen in the words of one staff person during the weekly group feedback time:

I just want to remind everyone...you are welcome to mention suggestions...we are not afraid of hearing negative things...no group is perfect...the group is for all of us...If you don't feel comfortable saying something in the group, come talk to me personally and I can ask the group...Please don't feel that you don't have anything to suggest...It is your group...You can make the group better.

All group members interviewed acknowledged that they thought the feedback times helped to improve the program. "If it's a good suggestion [from the group member it] can help better the group and future [groups]." More specifically, group members mentioned that feedback was beneficial because it allowed the program to adapt to their changing needs, helped determine their interests, and provided a forum where one person's suggestions could be improved on by others.

Although group members consistently mentioned that during the feedback times their suggestions were being listened to and acted on, room for improvement was still seen. One person thought that group members could be encouraged to participate more through the use of games ("dynamics"), another by having the group members review the past week's activities rather than staff.

Group members were also asked about their opinion of having observers present during group sessions. Responses suggested that group members felt comfortable with our presence and saw observation as an acceptable, even necessary, part of the program. "It's all the same whether you are present [or not]...you are also one of our members....everyone see you as a member." Other members agreed that we were not objective observers but, rather, they saw us as "another member of the group", "secretary", and "part of the staff". One group member recognized the benefit of observation this way: "...it is good...you consider what we are talking here...[and can take this information] to higher authorities [e.g.,

funders] for immediate action."

Advisory Committee

The majority of the evaluation information centered on the group members. Because most advisory committee members did not have direct contact with the program their experience of the evaluation was limited to the one staff/advisory committee focus group and a theoretical understanding of the evaluation design. Despite this, in general I sensed the advisory committee was very supportive of the evaluation.

Staff

Staff had direct contact with all parts of the evaluation. Evaluation committee members would occasionally meet with staff to discuss the observations and interview information. Staff would also provide feedback to evaluation committee members. From the program's beginning the staff assumed certain roles within the evaluation (e.g., weekly group feedback and Personal Progress Reports).

During the staff/advisory committee focus group one staff person mentioned that the evaluation was doing an excellent job in giving feedback and constructive criticism: "suggestions for change...things we can do." Staff mentioned that the feedback times gave group members "ownership of the sessions", allowed group members to hear the different opinions of others, and demonstrated group member "responsibility" to the program. Finally, staff also noted that the feedback times "stimulates creativity and keeps us open to new ideas and change."

Contributions of Research

I will review from my perspective what has been gained as a result of *Working for*

Work's evaluation as outlined in this thesis. This analysis will be done at three levels: (1) myself personally, (2) the program *Working for Work*, and (3) other related programs.

Personal Learning

As a student I came to this program with an interest in immigrants and multicultural issues and a concern for immigrant unemployment. In my contact with the program participants and the advisory committee members, I expected to gain a better understanding of immigrant employment issues and how these concerns could be translated into a plan of action. I also expected to learn how to use my theoretical background in program evaluation and research, which I learned in the classroom setting, within a practical community-based project.

Through my thesis involvement at *Working for Work* I learned that the problem of immigrant unemployment requires both an emphasis on immigrant strengths as well as involvement from the host society. New immigrants have many skills and resources which they can "market" in the work place. Yet there is also benefit (and responsibility) in having host Canadians advocate on behalf of immigrants, be it in ways such as providing tax-payers' money to support employment programs or in increasing immigrants' contact with potential employers.

Regarding evaluating community-based programs, I gained valuable experience through my involvement at *Working for Work*. It was a rewarding experience in that I had the opportunity to learn through practice rather than only through studying theory.

More specifically, I learned the benefits of being an "insider" to a program while evaluating it. I did not feel like an evaluation consultant to the program as much as one

advisory committee member with evaluation skills (while other committee members had other skills). Because of my involvement in areas of the program other than evaluation, I believe that I had a broad and profound understanding of *Working for Work*. This contributed to the analysis of the evaluation information.

This subjective approach certainly runs counter to the opinion of many in evaluation research of the need for an impartial scientist or objective observer (Bentler & Woodwar, 1979). I believe, however, that such an extreme position is impossible (because of human subjectivity). Even a position leaning toward the objective end of the continuum would have detracted from the present evaluation. In my opinion, research participants were so open to offering insightful information as they were, precisely because of the trust they had in evaluators who demonstrated an ongoing stake in the program.

I also learned of the benefits of using an evaluation team in evaluating the program. With the involvement of other evaluation committee members we could have an evaluation design which used multiple methods. These members could also bring their own ideas and suggestions as how to develop and maintain an effective evaluation.

I learned about the benefits friendships made within the program brought to the evaluation. The friendly atmosphere on the advisory committee contributed to the energy and commitment committee members brought to the program in general and also to the evaluation committee. Furthermore, I enjoyed being with the group members, hearing their stories and socializing with them. This allowed me to learn about the immigrant experience beyond employment issues. It also contributed to the trust between evaluators and research participants.

In addition to these learning experiences which contributed to the success of the evaluation, there were certain difficulties which challenged us in carrying out an effective evaluation.

A question which I often asked myself was: "Is this evaluation truly participatory?" Although efforts were made to include input from all research participants, the participatory nature of the evaluation was limited by the lack of participation by group members in program planning in general. For example, no group members were involved in the planning of the program before the sessions began (although potential group members did attend a planning retreat). Similarly, no group members were involved in focusing and deciding on the evaluation design. There were perhaps legitimate reasons why this limitation occurred (e.g., unlike self-help groups, group members at *Working for Work* belonged to the program for only a designated two month period). But limitations of the participatory approach were evident.

I also learned that it is difficult to establish an ongoing evaluation in a grass-roots program like *Working for Work*. Much of the success of the evaluation I attribute to the high level of commitment and energy that certain advisory and evaluation committee members invested in the program during its exciting early stages. Now that the program is somewhat established I have a concern about the evaluation dwindling if this energy level cannot be maintained. Even with the plans for ongoing evaluation that I outlined above, the evaluation committee is left with the challenge to build flexible structures which will continue the evaluation even if volunteers change.

I consider it a strength of the program that people have risen to these challenges.

By June, 1992 a new evaluation committee was formed. I was not a member of this committee as there were other new interested members. The evaluation is planning to include monitoring of the work placements (the present emphasis of *Working for Work*).

Contributions to *Working for Work*

In my opinion the greatest contribution of the evaluation to *Working for Work* was that it helped develop and form the program. With the information collected during the evaluation, informed decisions about the program's future could be made. This was possible at two levels: (1) within the group setting, and (2) at advisory committee meetings.

1. Within the Group Setting

Through the various evaluation activities, group members and staff were able to hear from each other what was good about the program and how the program could improve. With this information the group could decide what to do in the future.

Such a view may sound idealistic. Indeed, the evaluation committee had a concern that the group members would be inhibited from mentioning criticisms they had about the program. Being newcomers to Canada, some (as refugees) having had negative experiences with governments, we thought that group members might not feel comfortable criticizing for fear of repercussions.

Reflecting back on the evaluation process I think that in general the evaluation provided the space for giving feedback including criticism. Feedback was a regular part of the program and input was acted upon. New ways of encouraging feedback were considered. Group members spoke of a trust between evaluation members, staff and themselves. Added to this was the fact that numerous group members did offer suggestions

for improvement. Overall, I felt that participants were candid in offering criticism as well as praise.

2. Advisory Committee Meetings

Through the evaluation the advisory committee was made aware of the perspectives of the group members. In addition to regular staff reports, the evaluation committee also reported to the advisory committee what they were noticing in the observations and interviews. This allowed advisory committee members (the majority of whom had not attended any group sessions) to make decisions with some understanding of the experiences of the group members.

Another contribution of the evaluation to the program was its important role in the application for the continuation of funds. Not only did the evaluation provide information about employment-related activity that group member's found, but it also allowed the funders to hear the experience of the participants in their own words. Both goals of increased employability and increased sense of support were reported. This was achieved by appending a summary report of the evaluation to the funding proposal which was submitted to the Canada Employment Centre in early May, 1992.

A final important contribution of the evaluation to *Working for Work* was that it laid the groundwork for an ongoing evaluation. Based on the experience of evaluating the first two groups, evaluation has become, to a certain extent, embedded within the program's structure. The benefits of this are obvious--the program remains effective and relevant by adapting to the varied and changing needs of the group members.

Transferability to Other Related Programs

Because the evaluation was non-experimental in design there were no comparisons made with other programs. I believe, however, that hearing the experience of research participants in *Working for Work* can be useful for other similar settings. The evaluation research documented what this experience was.

Working for Work is organizing an employment workers' workshop for August, 1992 as a follow-up to the evaluation outlined in my thesis. Employment agencies in the Waterloo Region will be invited for the purpose of sharing ideas and networking with like-minded programs. The evaluation information will be useful in presenting the uniqueness of *Working for Work* as an employment program.

The extent to which transferability of information from *Working for Work* to other similar programs is possible depends largely on the perception of those other programs (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). It is, after all, they who understand best their setting and what of *Working for Work's* experience could be of benefit to them.

I will outline two general areas of the group members' experience which I think other employment and immigrant programs would do well to consider. These two areas are based on the two general goals of *Working for Work*: (1) increase the employability of group members, and (2) increase the sense of support of group members.

1. Increase Employability

Many other employment programs in the Waterloo Region (e.g., The Working Centre, New Canadian Work Experience, Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre) have curricula with similarities to that of *Working for Work*. Indeed, *Working for Work* borrowed

many ideas from these programs.

However, group members did mention certain benefits of *Working for Work's* approach which I think might be of interest to other programs. One of these benefits was the practical, hands on experience members received in the group setting. For example, filling out "real" application forms and role playing job interviews mirrored the actual activities in the job market. Members also mentioned the benefits of *Working for Work's* participatory approach (drawing on each other's experiences rather than learning information only in a lecture format).

Perhaps the most unique benefit of *Working for Work* (in terms of increasing employability) was the employer contact and Canadian work experience that the work placements brought. The strength of the work placement lay in the networking and promotion that was beginning to take place within the business community. The work placements emphasize matching immigrant strengths with appropriate employers. The work placements also encourage a certain amount of responsibility and initiative from the group members.

For the new funding period beginning June, 1992 *Working for Work* has emphasized the importance of promoting itself in the business community. In this way the program hopes to provide more support to group members by increasing the possibilities of finding work placements. This orientation is reflected in the change of *Working for Work's* subtitle from: *"Intercultural Job Support Groups"* to the new name of *Working for Work: Intercultural Skill Partnerships.* As the work placement component of *Working for Work* continues to develop in the future, the experiences learned could prove valuable to other programs.

2. Increase Sense of Support

An important contribution of *Working for Work's* evaluation to other employment and immigrant programs is its experience of attempting to combine services to increase group member employability together with providing a supportive environment. *Working for Work* is a unique program in the Waterloo Region in emphasizing social support for unemployed immigrants. Because of the importance of social support (which I will argue below), I will describe this contribution at some length.

The benefits of social support is well documented in literature (e.g., Saulnier, 1985; Cohen & Wills 1985; Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985; Maton, 1987). Although the concept of social support needs further refining in order to be better understood (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger, Wandersman, & D'Aunno 1984), and some negative impacts of high social support have been noted (Levine, 1985), the need for social support in promoting well-being is generally undisputed (Saulnier, 1985).

Social support can be defined as the resources available within relationships by which people are able to adapt to their environment (Levine & Perkins, 1987). According to Cohen and Wills (1985), social support serves the dual purpose of being a "buffer" against the effects of specific high-stress situations, as well as generally promoting well-being in the lives of people. The reciprocal nature of social support allows individuals to both give and receive the benefits of emotional support and material or instrumental aid (Levine, 1985). Social support can be realized through "natural" networks (e.g., family, friends, churches, neighbourhoods), or through "formal" networks (e.g., professional counsellors, welfare agencies).

Working for Work's success in increasing the group member's sense of support has been well documented in this thesis. Members recognized that they could cope with life's problems in general, and unemployment stress in particular, more effectively as a support group than alone. As partners in a reciprocal relationship, group members could both give and receive emotional and instrumental help from each other. The benefits of social support are particularly important for immigrants who, either voluntarily or involuntarily, have often left many of their natural support networks.

Other immigrant and employment programs may want to reflect on how the many benefits of social support mentioned above could be applied to their clientele.

I will mention two final contributions. Both are in the form of a challenge to other immigrant programs: 1) a challenge to consider responsible service delivery, and 2) a challenge to initiate alternative approaches.

The evaluation identified the limitations of *Working for Work* in providing ongoing social support: group members were members for only a limited time; planned meetings after the two month period were poorly attended and fizzled out. It is my impression that many group members wished for some structure to facilitate ongoing support. The question arises as how to sustain the sense of social support that *Working for Work* for initiated without creating a dependency of members on the program.

Other employment programs are challenged to work through similar issues within their own setting: How can services be offered responsibly to their clients? How can ongoing support be realistically offered? What can the program do in order to discourage dependency of its clients on the program? Are clients in a position to leave the support the

program provided once the program is completed? How can ongoing service without dependence be achieved?

In the new funding period beginning June, 1992, *Working for Work* is addressing some of the questions of ongoing support. *Working for Work* has decided to decrease the number of new groups started (only two new groups for the next year). The program will rather emphasize ongoing support for its group members. Monthly structured and regular "graduate" sessions for past members have been organized. Work placements are made available indefinitely for past group members (as opposed to the two month limit previously set). In short, *Working for Work* is emphasizing quality of support over quantity of program participants.

The change in emphasis within *Working for Work's* program is an encouragement to other programs to evaluate their service and consider appropriate changes.

Another challenge to related programs is to find alternative approaches to providing employment support. *Working for Work* attempted an alternative approach to employment service. Perhaps other approaches can be attempted.

One approach I think worth considering is the potential in immigrant programs providing a greater emphasis on "self-help" (Lieberman & Videka-Sherman, 1986) or "mutual assistance" (Levine, 1988). Support groups of this nature would require greater involvement from unemployed immigrants themselves in planning, developing, and maintaining these programs.

There are obvious difficulties in establishing "true" self-help programs for unemployed immigrants. Unemployment is (hopefully) not a definite state causing high turn over in the

group. Immigrants also may lack sufficient orientation to the Canadian labour market needed for effective job search. I believe, however, that this approach could be explored by employment programs. Perhaps existing programs could help establish self-help groups. Loose affiliations of the self-help groups with existing programs could provide necessary resources.

Perhaps there are other approaches worth exploring.

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APPENDIX A

My Thesis Commitment to *Working for Work*

Scope

My involvement in the support group can be divided into three areas 1) advisory committee, 2) evaluation sub-committee, and 3) thesis student. It is the last area (thesis student) that I would like to clarify.

Although obviously interrelated, I do not see my thesis and the program's evaluation as being the same thing. The program's evaluation concentrates on improving the program. My thesis also has an academic purpose (i.e., an example of how small community-based programs can evaluate themselves).

Time frame

While I am helping with the evaluation and some tasks of the advisory committee, I will be also working on my master's thesis. My goal is to finish my thesis in the spring of 1992. Only if there is an important reason would I consider extending this time. This means that my direct involvement in the evaluation would be limited to the first two groups only. Like any other committee member, my future involvement on the committee would then depend on how much time I have available.

Information for thesis

I will use information gathered during "feedback" times and other files (e.g., initial assessment, progress reports, and committee minutes) in my thesis and at related psychology gatherings or conferences. I will be formally asking for this permission from the advisory committee members, staff, and program participants before Nov. 18. Any information used in the thesis will be kept confidential by removing identifiers.

Access to Information

It is my intention to summarize information I collect back to the group. My thesis is available for any participant or committee member who cares to read it. It may be used for the purpose of showing to potential funders.

I'm also planning to write a condensed summary of the first two groups in simpler language (theses can be so lengthy and academic!). This summary would focus only on the evaluation of *Working for Work* and not on other things I talk about in the thesis.

Given to advisory committee
October 31, 1991
Rich Janzen

APPENDIX B

VERBAL PERMISSION FOR FEEDBACK

<u>Outline purpose of feedback</u>

  A chance to say what you like about the group, and suggest what else could be done to make the group better. As a group we can then decide how we want to continue.

<u>How we hope to get feedback</u>

  We are hoping to get feedback from program participants, staff and the advisory committee members. (Various methods will be outlined)

<u>Information used in thesis</u>

  A student (Rich Janzen) will be helping us in organizing the feedback times. He would like to use some of the information from your feedback in his thesis at Wilfrid Laurier University. In order to do this, the University requires that he has your permission.

<u>Voluntary Consent/Confidentiality</u>

  You do not have to give this permission. It is alright if you choose not to give this permission. At any time you may say that you do not want your opinions to be included in the thesis. Any information in the thesis will be kept confidential. This means that you as an individual will not be named or in any other way identified within the thesis.

<u>Summaries</u>

  You will be given summaries of the different feedback times. You can expect a complete summary of a group's feedback two months after the group is finished.

<u>Contact for Questions</u>

  If at any time you have questions about the feedback or the thesis you may talk to Rich or telephone him at **725-5992**. You may also talk to Mark Pancer (884-1970 ext 2149), the thesis advisor at Wilfrid Laurier University, if you have any concerns.

This form was explained and given to group members in the first session of *Group 1* and *Group 2*.

APPENDIX C

Interview Guides and Other Forms

Used in the Evaluation

of *Working for Work*.

Code #: _____   *CONFIDENTIAL*

ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date:_____ Interviewed by:_____

Name:_____   Male ____ Female ____

What country are you from?_____

What other countries have you lived in? (include length of stay in each)

_____

_____

What languages do you speak?_____

How long have you been in Canada?_____

Are you married? What does your spouse do? Is he/she applying?

_____

What kind of financial support are you receiving (UI?, SAR?, AAP?, family?)_____

How many years did you go to school? What kind of education do you have?_____

_____

_____

What kind of work have you done before coming to Canada? (Paid, volunteer, and domestic)_____

_____

_____

What kind of experience do you have in Canada?

Training:_____

_____

Paid work:_____

_____

Volunteer work:_____

_____

What type of job(s) are you looking for?_____

_____

Are you interested in getting training or going back to school?_____

_____

What are your interests or hobbies? (e.g., sports, arts, crafts)

_____

Do you have a resume?_____ Have you applied for jobs?_____

Have you gone for any interviews (how many?)_____

What are some of your strengths or advantages to getting work?

_____

What do you think are the biggest problems for you to find work?

_____

What good things can you give to a group?_____

How do you think working in a group can help you?_____

_____

What is the best time for you to come to a group?_____

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IF YOU JOIN A GROUP WITH *"WORKING FOR WORK"*, WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK ON:

	YES	MAYBE	NO
Understanding the "Canadian" way of looking for a job?			
Filling out applications?			
Making a resume?			
Practising job interviews?			
Learning about how to communicate with an employer?			
Talking with the group about the problems and frustrations you are facing?			
Making plans for your future? Making a career plan?			
Learning about training courses?			
Learning about how you can study more?			
Getting information about volunteer work?			
Learning about starting a small business?			
Other ideas?			

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
ATTENDANCE								
CAREER PLAN COMPLETED								
RESUME COMPLETED								
APPLICATIONS/ RESUME GIVEN TO EMPLOYERS								
VOLUNTEER JOB PLACE CONTACTED								
WROTE/ PHONED POTENTIAL EMPLOYER								
JOB INTERVIEW								
VOLUNTEERING AT A JOB								
VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY								
SCHOOL COURSE(S) STARTED								
FOUND JOB TRAINING								
FOUND A JOB								

PROGRESS REPORT IN DETAIL
JOB SEARCH ACTIVITIES

DATE COMPANY/AGENCY CONTACTED   REASON FOR CONTACT   FOLLOW UP?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

WEEKLY GROUP FEEDBACK GUIDE

Purpose: Determine how program content and process are meeting participants' needs and expectations (improve program).

1. How would you rate the overall usefulness of the past week's sessions to you?

2. Which topics/sessions did you find most useful? Least useful?

3. If you could suggest or change anything in this program for next week, it would be...?

MIDWAY GROUP MEMBER INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Purpose: Determine at a more personal level how program content and process are meeting participants' needs and expectations (improve program/outcomes).

1. Overall, has the program over the last month helped you in your search for a job that you want? How, or why not?

2. Overall, have other group members over the last month supported you in dealing with the difficulties of being unemployed? How, or why not?

3. Which specific topics/sessions did you find most useful? Least useful? Why? (Consider the usefulness of all topics covered during the past month.)

4. If you could suggest or change anything in this program for the remaining month, what would it be?

5. How satisfied are you with the staff in the following areas?
- easy to understand
- understand the different needs of individuals
- help people in the group participate

6. In what way did the feedback times help the program be more meaningful to you? What suggestions do you have for the feedback times?

FINAL GROUP MEMBER INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Purpose: To rate the overall effectiveness of the group from the participants' perspective (outcomes).

1. Overall, has the program helped you in your search for a job that you want? How, or why not?

2. Overall, have the other group members supported you in dealing with the difficulties of being unemployed? How, or why not?

3. Which specific topics/sessions did you find most useful? Least useful? Why?

4. Which of your personal expectations for this program were met? In what way were these met?

5. In what way were the staff helpful? How could they become more helpful?

6. In what ways did the feedback times help the program be more meaningful to you? What suggestions do you have for the feedback times?

7. Now that you have finished this group, what are you planning to do next? What kind of things can you do in order to continue looking for a job?

COMMITTEE/STAFF FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Purpose: To rate the overall effectiveness of the group from the perspective of both the committee and staff (outcomes).

1. Do you think the program helped in the participants' search for a job that they want? How, or why not?

2. Do you think the participants supported each other in dealing with employment-related stress? How, or why not?

3. What can the committee/staff do to improve this program for future groups? through:
-committee organization
                    -staff/committee responsibilities
                    -curriculum/activities
                    -evaluation

BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE

1. What kind of experience do you have in Canada?
    Training?_____

_____

    Paid Work?_____

_____

    Volunteer Work?_____

_____

    Schooling?_____

_____

2. Do you have a resume?
    ____ Yes
    ____ No

    If you do have a resume, would you like to make it better?
    ____ Yes
    ____ No

3. Over the past six months, how often have you...
    Applied for a job?   _____
    Written to or phoned an employer?   _____
    Had a job interview?   _____

4. What kind of job programs have you been a part of while in Canada?
    ____ The Working Centre
    ____ Canada Employment Centre
    ____ ESL job classes
    ____ Other

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are you doing now (you may choose more than one)?

    ____ Working full-time
    ____ Working part-time
    ____ In school full-time   Where?_____
    ____ In school part-time   Where?_____
    ____ Volunteering in the Community
    ____ In work placement
    ____ In job training full-time
    ____ In job training part-time
    ____ Looking for a job/work placement

2. Are you getting any money from the government?

    ____ Unemployment Insurance
    ____ Welfare
    ____ Refugee Assistance
    ____ Other

3. Are you getting more job help?

    ____ Counselling at The Working Centre
    ____ Counselling at Canada Employment Centre
    ____ Another job group/ Which one?_____
    ____ Other _____

4. Have you had a job in the past two months?

    ____ Yes
    ____ No

a) If you did have a job,
    where did you work?_____
    _____

    Will this job help you in your future plans?
        ____ Yes
        ____ No

Please explain _____

_____

_____

5. Have you had a work placement?

    _____ Yes

    _____ No

a) If you had a work placement, how has it helped you in your job search?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

THE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Each session is made up of two complimentary parts. The first part, we call the "Check-in" and it is drawn from the Handling Unemployment Groups (HUG) model. During check-in, each participant has a chance to share something of interest with the group -- it could be a job lead, sharing from their personal life, venting frustration or anger, a joke, a story, an announcement about an upcoming event. It is during check-in that participants develop a sense of support and friendship and everyone has a chance to speak and practise his or her communication skills. Check-in can last from half an hour to one hour and a half, depending on the experiences of the group. Check-in allows the job search know-how and resourcefulness of the group members to benefit each other.

The second part of the session is the "workshop". The workshop consists of participatory exercises designed by the group facilitators to promote learning re: job search, stress management, etc. The curriculum outlined below focuses on the content of those workshops.

It is important to note that Progress Report recording and weekly feedback are an integral part of the group sessions. At the end of each week, participants help each other to complete their progress reports in pairs. They are also involved in small group evaluation (feedback) exercises at the end of weeks 1,2,3,4,6,and 8.

N.B. This curriculum is only an example and will be revised after needs assessment and participant input have been obtained.

SUMMARY CURRICULUM

EXAMPLE

Week One:
Introductions
Planning and setting up
Barriers and strengths of immigrants
Stress management (feeling better)
Using directories and resources

Week Two:
Networking (people helping people)
Stress Management
Introduction to resumes and Application Forms
Field Trip to the Canada Employment Centre, Kitchener
Job search planning

Week Three:
Resume and cover letters
Work placement
Field trip to a computer training centre
Practise giving resume to a manager

Week Four:
Introduction to job interviews
Guest speaker -- Canadian employer expectations and interviews
Job search planning

Week Five:
Cross-cultural Communication
Job Interview

Week Six:
Company tour
Career Planning

Week Seven:
Videotaping interviews
Rights of workers, work place law

Week Eight:
Conclusion
Review of course
Goal setting -- personal and group
Saying goodbye (party)

CURRENT JOB DESCRIPTIONS
April 6, 1992
JOB DESCRIPTION
PROJECT COORDINATOR
FULL-TIME

COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM (SIX HOURS PER WEEK)

1. Oversees the entire project and liaises with all parties involved, including the funder, staff, advisory committee members, sub-committees, volunteers, participants, employers, peer organizations (e.g., The Working Centre, Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre, Social Services, etc.), other professional associations (e.g., the landlord, etc.)

    Supervises and consults with the Project Assistant and a group of volunteer placement monitors

2. Is actively involved in the development and evolution of the project including:

    - negotiated the current space, physical set up of the office and group room, purchased equipment, etc.

    - develops and revises the curriculum in consultation with the evaluation committee, obtains resources and tools to create workshops suitable for the support groups

    - develops and revises tools for the intake process such as interview/assessment forms

    - obtains resources to aid participants in the employment seeking process

    - negotiated and developed the work placement project

    - recruits and coordinates the development of a pool of volunteer placement monitors

    - carries out public relations including ongoing contact and liaising with peer organizations, agencies and associates

    - plans for future development of the project in consultation with the ad hoc funding committee and the evaluation committee

3. Holds financial responsibilities such as approval of Petty Cash spending and signing of work placement pay cheques

JOB DESCRIPTION: PROJECT COORDINATOR PAGE TWO

GROUP FACILITATION (TWENTY THREE HOURS PER WEEK)

1. Plans and facilitates support group sessions
(average of thirteen hours in group sessions)

2. Develops workshops according to needs and desires of group members

3. Coordinates co-facilitation (The Working Centre) guest presenters and plans field trips into the community

4. Works on an individual basis with participants including career/work placement plan development, resume and cover letter development, etc.

WORK PLACEMENT (SEVENTEEN HOURS PER WEEK)

1. Develops the work placement process including:
- created and revises forms such as a contract, training plan, time sheet, etc.

- develops a pool of volunteer monitors including recruitment, orientation and on-going consultation with the monitors

- orients participants to the work placement process and their responsibilities

2. Networks with employers including:
- attends meetings of networking groups (Employment Equity Network and Employment Coordinating Committee)

- conducts continual telephone contact with employers in the area to negotiate work placement

- visits employers on request of the employer

- keeps abreast of current business/employment information (e.g., reading want ads, Business section of the K-W Record, Business Exchange Magazine, etc.)

3. Sets up work placements including:
- negotiates a work placement arrangement with the employer

- links participant, employer and volunteer monitor

- ensures that the contract and training plan are completed at the beginning of the work placement arrangement

4.   Monitors work placements including:

- conducts some employer visits, maintains on-going contact with the employer

- conducts mediation, conflict management and advocacy around issues that may arise in the work placement process

-- follows up with participants during the work placement process, job coaching

- oversees evaluation of progress of participants

INTAKE (TWO HOURS PER WEEK)

1.   Responds to inquiries from agencies, employers and potential participants

2.   Refers inappropriate inquirers to other agencies

3.   Conducts information meetings for potential participants bi-weekly

MISCELLANEOUS (TWO HOURS PER WEEK)

Completes other duties as they arise

JOB DESCRIPTION
PROJECT ASSISTANT
FULL-TIME

FINANCE (NINE HOURS PER WEEK)
- issues participants weekly payments for travel and child care
- handles petty cash including reimbursement from petty cash, maintaining records of receipts, balancing the petty cash and making weekly trips to the bank for petty cash funds
- consulted with company to set up a payroll and bookkeeping system
- conducts payroll for participants on placement
- participates in the Finance sub-committee and keeps minutes thereof

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT (EIGHT HOURS PER WEEK)
- attends advisory committee meetings
- consults with the Project Coordinator (including weekly staff meeting)
- participates in the Ad Hoc Funding Committee
- participates in miscellaneous tasks and errands required for the setting up of the program (e.g,. applying for GST exemption)

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS (SEVEN HOURS PER WEEK)
- promoted the group in the community through announcements and letters
- provides information and referral to interested, potential participants
- maintains a waiting list of participants
- sets up and conducts assessment interviews with potential participants
- selects participants for participation in support groups
- confirms participation and draws up a group list

GROUP SUPPORT (FOUR HOURS PER WEEK)
- occasionally co-facilitates support group sessions
- fills in for the Project Coordinator when she is absent
- participates in the set up of the group room
- provides individual support to the group members

MAINTAINING PARTICIPANT FILES (FOUR HOURS PER WEEK)
- opens individual participant files
- completes participant information form which is submitted to CEC
- enters and maintains participant statistical data (computer file)

RECEPTION (SIX HOURS PER WEEK)

    - responds to telephone inquiries and visitors

MISCELLANEOUS (TWO HOURS PER WEEK plus)

    - maintains office and coffee supplies
    - participates in professional development such as WordPerfect training
    - completes other duties as assigned