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**Findings from the Second Phase of a
Study of the Transition from Welfare to
Work in Hennepin County, Minnesota**

December 1, 1999

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Executive Summary

This report parallels the March, 1999 report of a study of Hennepin County participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) who had been referred to work and training (W&T) as of September 1, 1998. The March report focused on African American and European American participants (who comprised approximately 80% of the MFIP population). This report focuses on the four next largest MFIP populations in Hennepin County: Hmong, Latino, Native American, and Somali, and then makes some comparisons to the two populations studied earlier. As in the first phase of the study, data were collected through interviews of a random sample of participants, followed by focus groups conducted with some of those interviewed.

The major findings from the second phase of the study concern individual differences among the participants, participants' attitudes toward their counselors, and differences across the four racial/ethnic groups.

- Individual differences: Non-sanctioned participants were found to be significantly more conscientious and to have more positive attitudes toward work than the sanctioned participants.
- As a group, the Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants reported significantly lower levels of social support than did the African American and European participants.
- Participants' perceptions of their financial counselors were more negative than perceptions of their employment counselors, which were still quite negative.
- All groups of color perceived their financial counselors more negatively than did the European Americans.
- Noticeable differences were identified among the four racial/ethnic groups that were the focus of this study:
 - Hmong participants were especially concerned about the cultural and language adaptations that the W&T program imposed on them.
 - Somali participants were especially concerned about workplace discrimination and the lack of respect they experienced within the W&T environment.
 - Latino participants (who were the most positive of the groups) were concerned about the lack of workers who matched them in terms of language and culture.

Several recommendations emerged from the study:

- Give consideration to the formation of support groups for participants from these racial/ethnic populations.
- Review the performance appraisal criteria for both financial and employment counselors to ensure that they address participant/counselor relationships, including evaluation of their cross-cultural competence and sensitivity.
- Counselors may also need training on more appropriate behaviors in relation to participants of color, including culture-specific training.

- High caseloads or other aspects of the situation may also be contributing to the qualities of counselor-participant interaction and may need to be addressed.
- Whenever possible, provide participants with counselors of similar language and culture.
- Provide participants with more opportunities for training in English as a Second Language and more time for such training before they move into employment.

Find ways for the county to act as a bridge between participants and employers by educating employers about the contributions and cultural strengths of the participants.

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Funding for this research has been provided by the
Joyce Foundation, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, the University of
Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, and the University of Minnesota
School of Social Work.

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I. Introduction

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals: *Interviewers and focus group facilitators*: May Chuyanghue, Vivinnie Crowe, Marianna Mendes, Ernesto Martinez, Charlesetta Rolack, Mohamed Yusuf; *Data processing*: Youngmin Kim; *Support staff*: Therese Graner.

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Introduction

This report concerns the second phase of a study of Hennepin County participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) who had been referred to work and training programs. The study aims to help answer the following questions:

1. What services do welfare recipients think they need to make the transition from welfare to work?
2. What client, professional, and organizational factors influence successful participation in the work and training programs?
3. How can existing programs be tailored to enable individuals to make a successful transition from welfare to work?

The first phase of the study concentrated on African Americans and European Americans, the two racial/ethnic categories that comprise about 80% of the MFIP population in Hennepin County. The findings and recommendations from Phase I were reported in March, 1999 in *Findings from the First Phase of a Study of the Transition from Welfare to Work in Hennepin County, Minnesota*, issued by the University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. The second phase of the study focused on MFIP participants from the four next largest racial/ethnic groups in the MFIP population, using the same research methods and instruments as in Phase I, but with translation from English for three of the groups. The study's sponsors and researchers believe it is important to determine whether there are special needs among these very diverse smaller populations, many of whom are recent immigrants, that have implications for program modifications or for staff training. Consequently, special attention was paid in Phase II to the experiences and perceptions of the Hmong, Latino, Native American, and Somali participants.

This report is organized into four main sections:

Section II describes the samples of each of the four smaller populations and presents findings separately for each sample from the interviews and focus groups.

Section III then compares the findings from the four smaller populations with those from the Phase I study of African American and European American MFIP participants. In this analysis, all four of the smaller samples are combined into one larger category and then compared to the two racial/ethnic groups studied in Phase I.

Section IV resumes the discussion begun in the Phase I report of the question of psychological differences between sanctioned and non-sanctioned MFIP participants, adding in the new data collected in Phase II.

Section V summarizes the Section III and IV findings and their implications for program modification and staff training.

II. Sampling and Findings Concerning
Hmong, Latino, Native American,
and Somali MFIP Participants

Phase II Sampling

This is the second phase of the Study of the Transition from Welfare to Work. Phase I (published March 1, 1999) concentrated on the African American and European American MFIP participants in Hennepin County. Those two groups were selected to be studied in Phase I because they represented 80% of the MFIP population that had completed a mandatory orientation as of September 1, 1998. In order to reflect the diversity within the rest of the participants, Phase II was designed to create a randomly selected sample of the four next largest racial/ethnic groups on MFIP at that time. Thus, samples of individuals who identified as Hmong, Latino, Native American, and Somali were drawn and were contacted to participate in interviews.

The total set of MFIP participants who had completed orientation and were eligible to be referred to work and training (W&T) as of September 1, 1998 was identified: (N=9,638). Because of the study's emphasis on improving services and outreach to individuals who were not fully participating in W&T, the sample emphasized sanction status in its selection.

<u>Phase I participants</u>		Population	Sample	Subjects
African American	Non-sanctioned	5,147	100	30
	Sanctioned	112	112	14
European American	Non-sanctioned	2,582	100	35
	Sanctioned	33	33	12
<u>Phase II participants</u>		Population	Sample	Subjects
Hmong	Non-sanctioned	456	30	9
	Sanctioned	2	2	1
Latino	Non-sanctioned	78	30	7
	Sanctioned	3	3	1
Native American	Non-sanctioned	831	30	3
	Sanctioned	28	28	2
Somali	Non-sanctioned	366	30	9
	Sanctioned	0	0	0

The plan for Phase II was to interview 10 individuals from each of the four racial/ethnic groups drawing from a randomly drawn sample of 30 sanctioned and 30 non-sanctioned participants from each group. However, as the numbers above indicate, there were not sufficient individuals to arrive at a sample of 30 sanctioned people for any one of the Phase 2 groups because so few people were in fact sanctioned. We therefore decided to interview additional non-sanctioned individuals in each racial/ethnic group. However, even with repeated attempts to locate and interview Native American participants, we were unable ultimately to interview more than five participants in this group.

Phase II: Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants

Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali interviewers were recruited, who then sent letters to the racial/ethnically matched sample of participants, following up with phone calls to arrange the actual interview. The letters, interviews and follow-up focus groups with the Hmong,

Latinos and Somalis were conducted in Hmong, Spanish and Somali, respectively. English was spoken in the interviews and the focus group with Native American participants.

The Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants share two characteristics. Each is a member of a distinctive racial/ethnic group that has unique cultural experiences. In addition, each of the racial/ethnic communities with which they identify represents one of the next largest groups on MFIP. (African Americans and European Americans, the two largest racial/ethnic groups in MFIP, were subjects in Phase I of the study and will be discussed in the comparative racial/ethnic analysis discussed in section III of this report.)

The majority of the individuals in Phase II also share a recent immigration experience. The Somali, Hmong and Latino participants represent groups which have come to Hennepin County in large numbers in recent years and who typically do not consider English to be their primary language. Latinos are unique in that the recent immigrant population is typically aggregated with the long time Latino residents of the area who do not necessarily speak Spanish. However, the interviews and focus groups indicate that the majority of the Latinos in this study are indeed recent immigrants to Minneapolis.

The few Native Americans represented in Phase II possess a culture that is as distinctive as that of the other three racial/ethnic groups. They precede all racial/ethnic groups living in Hennepin County and thus do not share the recent immigrant experience of the other groups in Phase II. Even though Native Americans are often bilingual, they do not come to MFIP with the serious language needs of the other groups. However, they do share the experience of others in Phase II in that they have a distinctive racial/ethnic culture.

Description of the Participants in Phase II: Other Racial/Ethnic Groups

In the analysis below, it is important to caution the reader to note the small numbers within each group and to take care not to generalize these comments to all members of these groups in MFIP or to their larger communities. The Hmong, Latinos, Native Americans and Somalis in this group share most demographic characteristics. They are of similar age, tend to live in Minneapolis proper, are very unlikely to be sanctioned and are very likely to be in a Work and Training program. The Hmong do differ from the other groups in that they are more apt to be male than the other groups.

Table 1: Characteristics of Phase II Participants: Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=32)

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=8	Native American n=5	Somali n=9
Average Age	36	**	32	38
Female	60% (n=6)	**	80% (n=4)	100% (n=9)
Minneapolis Resident	100% (n=10)	**	100% (n=5)	100% (n=9)
Sanctioned	10% (n=1)	13% (n=1)	40% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
In W&T	90% (n=9)	100% (n=8)	100% (n=5)	89% (n=8)

** Missing data

Work Force Participation

Hmong participants were much more likely to be working than the other participants in Phase II. Half of them were working (n=5) and had been doing so for slightly more than five years. They were also less apt to have had a previous job. None of the Somali participants were currently employed, but they reported a longer time in a previous job (over four years) than the other groups.

Table 2: Workforce Participation Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants (N=32)

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=8	Native American n=5	Somali n=9
Currently Employed	50% (n=5)	14% (n=1)	20% (n=1)	0
Average Time on current job	61 months	6 months	2 months	0
Past Employment	30% (n=3)	88% (n=7)	100% (n=5)	67% (n=6)
Average Time in last job	9 months	4 months	5 months	49 months

W&T Program and Services

This study explored the perceptions of participants of their W&T program experience. It specifically asked interviewees why they had chosen the W&T program that they were in. As shown in Table 3, the Latino and Somali participants were most apt to indicate location as the reason for their choice; 63% (n=5) and 56% (n=5) respectively. Reputation was somewhat important to Hmong (30%, n=3) and Native Americans (40%, n=2). Nearly a third of the Hmong participants indicated that they had been assigned to their W&T program. (30%, n=3)

Table 3: Reason for W&T Program Choice of Hmong, Latino, Native Americans and Somali W&T Participants (N=27)*

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=8	Native American n=5	Somali n=9
Proximity	0	63% (n=5)	20% (n=1)	56% (n=5)
Reputation	30% (n=3)	25% (n=2)	40% (n=2)	11% (n=1)
Assigned	30% (n=3)	0	0	11% (n=1)
Don't know	20% (n=2)	13% (n=1)	20% (n=1)	0

* N is less than 32 because some did not respond to this question

Participants were asked to indicate what services they had received in their W&T programs. Table 4 (below) presents the responses to that question. It's important to note that these data represent participants' *perceptions* of their experience. It is possible that they did not recall the full range of services offered. The recent immigrant groups reported heavy involvement in job search activities: Hmong (60%, n=6), Latino (80%, n=7) and Somali (44% (n=4). The highest rate of training was reported by Latinos (63%, n=63) and Somalis (78%, n=7). English is typically not the first language of these immigrant groups, and the high rate of training mirrors the comments in interviews and focus groups that many are heavily involved in English as a

Second Language (ESL) training. It is notable that Hmong, for whom English is their second language, report no training.

Hmong and Native American participants both reported that they did not have a work and training plan. The Hmong participants reported the lowest degree of service provision and Latinos the most. No Hmong, Latino, Native American or Somali participants reported that they had received advocacy or housing services. Very few of them indicated being assessed or receiving education.

Table 4: W&T Services Received by Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants (N=28)*

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=8	Native American n=5	Somali n=9
Advocacy	0	0	0	0
Assessment	0	25% (n=2)	20% (n=1)	11% (n=1)
Child Care	0	25% (n=2)	40% (n=2)	44% (n=4)
Education	10% (n=1)	25% (n=2)	0	0
Housing	0	0	0	0
Job Search	60% (n=6)	88% (n=7)	0	44% (n=4)
Training	0	63% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	78% (n=7)
Transportation	0	88% (n=7)	100% (n=5)	44%(n=4)
W&T Plan	0	50% (n=4)	0	56% (n=5)
Other	0	25% (n=2)	0	0

* N is less than 32 because some did not respond to this question.

Participant Perceptions of Counselors

The participants were asked to tell the interviewer what had made a positive or a negative difference to their progress. Table 5 categorizes the responses to this question. The majority of the Latinos (88%, n=7) spoke positively about their employment counselor as compared to the Somali (13%, n=1), the Native American (25%, n=1) or the Hmong (38%, n=3). The most negative comments came from the Hmong (63%, n=5) and the Native Americans (50%, n=2). (Typical comments are shown in the next part of this section in the description of each racial/ethnic group's responses.)

Table 5: Perception of Employment Counselors by Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants (N=28)*

	Hmong n=8	Latino n=8	Native American n=4	Somali n=8
Positive	38% (n=3)	88% (n=7)	25% (n=1)	13% (n=1)
Negative	63% (n=5)	13% (n=1)	50% (n=2)	13% (n=1)
Neutral	0	0	25% (n=1)	75% (n=6)

* N is less than 32 because some did not respond to this question.

Table 6 shows that the participants were far less positive about their financial counselors at the county offices than they were about their W&T counselors. Hmong participants were either negative (88%, n=7) or neutral (13%, n=1) when they were asked if their financial counselor had made a good or a bad difference in their progress. Latinos' perceptions of the financial counselors were equally positive (38%, n=3) and negative (38%, n=3). Somalis were again notable in the neutrality of their responses (88%, n=7).

Table 6: Perception of Financial Counselors by Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants (N=27)*

	Hmong n=8	Latino n=8	Native American n=3	Somali n=8
Positive	0	38% (n=3)	33% (n=1)	0
Negative	88% (n=7)	38% (n=3)	0	13% (n=1)
Neutral	13% (n=1)	25% (n=2)	67% (n=2)	88% (n=7)

* N is less than 32 because some did not respond to this question.

Participant Perceptions of the W&T Experience

Participants were asked to indicate what things had made a difference to them in their progress. Table 7 categorizes these responses. Latino participants saw the experience as more positive, with only one of them (13%) indicating nothing had influenced their progress and fifty percent (n=4) speaking positively about their counselors and program offerings. The Hmong responses suggest this group had the least positive experience. Seventy percent of the Hmong (n=7) indicated that nothing had made a difference for them. Of the 30% (n=3) of the Hmong who mentioned their counselor as having made a difference, two of these comments were negative.

Table 7: Perception of Influence on Progress by Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants (N=32)

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=8	Native American n=5	Somali n=9
Counselor	30% (n=3)**	13% (n=1)	20% (n=1)	11% (n=1)
Program Offerings	0	37% (n=3)	20% (n=1)	44% (n=4)
Other	0	37% (n=3)	0	0
Nothing	70% (n=7)	13% (n=1)	60% (n=3)	44% (n=4)

** Two of the comments regarding counselors were negative.

Table 8 tabulates participants' responses as to specific areas that had made a difference to them. Several Hmong were especially expressive about the problems they faced around health issues for themselves and their families (50%, n=5), their concerns about caring for their children (40%, n=4), and problems with transportation (60%, n=6). Native Americans had comparable levels of concern expressing issues with health (50%, n=2), child care (50%, n=2), and transportation (25%, n=1). Latinos and Somali expressed few concerns about these areas.

Table 8: Barriers to Progress for Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali Participants
(N=29)*

	Hmong n=10	Latino n=7	Native American n=4	Somali n=8
Health	50% (n=5)	14% (n=1)	50% (n=2)	0
Child Care	40% (n=4)	0	50% (n=2)	0
Transportation	60% (n=6)	0	25% (n=1)	13% (n=1)

* N is less than 32 because some did not respond to this question.

Summary and Discussion by Racial/Ethnic Group

This project's interest in racial/ethnic differences among MFIP participants was facilitated by disproportionate random sampling of four groups not highly represented in the total population of MFIP participants. The project also successfully matched interviewer and facilitators with participants by racial/ethnic group. Thus, it is possible to describe the experiences of each group in Phase II of this study in some detail. It is important to remind the reader that while there was attention to randomization in the creation of the sample, much caution is warranted as to generalizing from these data. The small number of participants in the entire population, as well as the difficulties of engaging this population in interviews, lead us to the caution that these findings and discussions can only relate to the actual individuals who are members of the study and not to the entire MFIP population. Small focus groups of each ethnic/racial group were held to acquire elaboration of information gleaned from the interviews. The following summarizes the findings from the 32 interviews and the focus group discussions of the Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants in this study.

Hmong Participants

Characteristics of the Hmong participants

The Hmong in this study were MFIP participants who were expected to participate in a W&T program as of September 1, 1998. Thirty names were randomly selected from the non-sanctioned Hmong of whom 9 (27%) were interviewed. There were only 2 sanctioned Hmong in this population and one of these individuals was interviewed. The ten Hmong interviewees had an average age of 36 and all of them (100%, n=10) lived within the city of Minneapolis and were actively involved in a W&T program. The Hmong sample had the highest percentage (40%, n=4) of men of all of the interviewed groups. Hmong participants were more apt to be employed at the time of the study (50%, n=5) than all of the other groups and had worked by far the longest at those jobs (on average slightly over 5 years).

The Hmong participants who were working had been doing so for several years, often for as long as they had been in the United States. Several spoke of janitorial and other low paying jobs, which did not increase their job skills nor give them opportunity to improve their English. None of the Hmong in the study were bilingual. Most found the addition of the required job search working to their responsibilities for their intergenerational families very stressful. Those who were also working were stretched even further. One participant spoke of "already having a part-time job and not having time to look for another one."

Hmong participants considered transportation (60%, n=6), health issues (51%, n=5) and child care issues (40%, n=4), to be barriers to their progress. The following comments demonstrate the depth of the interlocking issues that confront these Hmong W&T participants.

I have five children of my own and my new wife has five. After my first wife passed away I remarried and between my new wife and I we have 10 children with two of them physically handicapped... These two children need my assistance a lot of the time and this does not allow me time to go find work... If there was a program to teach me to drive that would help.

I have only been here for 4 years. I do not drive. I used to rely on my husband until he got into a traffic accident. Is there any way for me to learn to drive? or a maybe a way for me to purchase a drivable vehicle?

Hmong perceptions of W&T services and counselors

Hmong participants reported that they had received few services at their W&T program, mentioning only job training (60%, n=6) and education (10%, n=1). They were the least satisfied of all groups in the study with their counselors. The following are typical comments:

No one has helped. They only explained that if [I] do not go to work the money will be cut off.

The worker (at W&T) did not assist us in any way. All she ever did was tell us to come in and fill out forms. I asked for child care assistance (from a Hmong agency), but they referred me to (W&T) and she did not bother to assist me.

Only a third of the Hmong (38%, n=3) had positive comments about their employment counselors with the majority of them having a negative assessment (63%, n=5). They were even more unhappy with their financial counselors. They made no positive comments and the vast majority were negative (88%, n=7).

My father-in-law has been sick. We have been trying to tell them about the stress, we have been trying to take care of him, but they don't care to listen to our family problems. They are telling us to do only according to what they say. And if we don't comply or send in our forms one day late, they will automatically cut our money.

When asked about things that had influenced their progress, only one Hmong spoke positively. The others either indicated that nothing had made a difference (70%, n=7) or that they had been harmed by a counselor (20%, n=2).

We asked the Hmong participants in the focus group to talk to us about what they considered a "good" counselor.

A good counselor will listen and direct you to services after hearing your family circumstances.

A good counselor does not have to ask me to provide proof of my children's disability when the disability is so visible.

A good counselor will tell you what can happen to you before they close my case or lower my monthly income.

Focus group participants were asked to tell us what they would teach their counselors if they had the chance. One suggestion follows:

What I can teach them is to be more sensitive to me and listen to my situation. Do not make it hard for parents to function within the system. Do not work with the parents alone. Consider the family members.

At the end of the focus group, the facilitator asked what the participants wanted us to tell the County.

Take us to go and find work. Don't just direct us to do it ourselves when we don't drive, know the streets or speak English.

They should stop harassing two parent families to work. Allow one parent to stay and raise the children properly so they don't join gangs and do go to school.

They should allow time for me to take care of my husband and lessen my stress.

The participants who were interviewed were asked what they would like to see changed about the transition from welfare to work. Some suggestions follow:

Allow time to drive and learn English first.

Allow time to learn English.

My only request is for them to allow me to care for my children now until they are in school.

The interviews and focus groups demonstrate the struggle and stress experienced by the Hmong participants. One woman spoke of finding a job, working for three months but quitting because she could not get child care for her children. She spoke of losing her benefits, but regaining them when she got a new financial worker. Her family is receiving \$260.00 a month in benefits. She told us:

I feel no one helped me find a job. and during that time I was very frustrated and felt low. I'm somewhat relieved now because they stopped harassing me and allow me to watch my children and my husband to go to college.

The Hmong participants spoke in the focus groups and the interviews of issues that demonstrate the struggles of their adaptation to a new country, a new language and a dramatically different

cultural environment. The MFIP work requirement is in direct conflict with their perception of having primary responsibility for the care of their children and other family members. Their attachment to traditional gender roles, like their lack of experience with driving an automobile and using public transportation, make the W&T expectations overwhelming. These Hmong participants' perceptions of the lack of W&T services and of employment and financial counselors are deep. Whether these perceptions are more in cultural and language miscommunications or are accurate facts, there is a consistency across the interviewees and the focus group participants. These people do not feel supported or well served by their participation in the welfare-to-work environment.

Latino Participants

Characteristics of the Latino participants

The Latinos in this study were MFIP participants who were expected to participate in a W&T program as of September 1, 1998. Thirty names were randomly selected from the non-sanctioned Latinos of whom 7 (23%) were interviewed. There were only three sanctioned Latinos in this population and one of these individuals was interviewed. Latinos from this sample also participated in a focus group. All of the Latinos in this study had been in a W&T program. Only one of the participants was working at the time of the interview but the majority of them (88%, n=7) have worked in the past.

Latino perceptions of W&T services and counselors

The majority of the Latino participants (63%, n=5) came to the W&T program they were participating in because of its proximity to their homes. These participants reported that they had received a wide range of services at their W&T program. A large majority (88%, n=7) said they had received help in their job search and for their transportation needs. All but one of them reported receiving training or education. Half of them (50%, n=4) reported having a plan that they were working on with a counselor. These Latinos reported the highest rate of service delivery among all groups studied, as well as the highest level of satisfaction with their W&T counselors (88%, n=7).

They were very open to me hearing me out and getting me a job based on my very limited skills.

They were very helpful and willing to work with me and hear me out without being too critical of my past work experience.

My English skills limit my understanding, but she's very patient.

They are good people. It just hurts me not to know much English. So my nephew had to come to interpret for me.

Even though the Latinos were generally more grateful and satisfied with their W&T experiences than members of the other racial/ethnic groups, they were comparable to the other groups in that they had a low level of satisfaction with their financial counselors (38%, n=3). We did hear some positive comments:

The financial worker has a great heart for direction and has the patience to work with me, despite my assertiveness.

However, the following participant is more representative of what we heard from Latino people. This person had spoken in superlatives about the experience at a neighborhood W&T program, but had the following comments about the financial worker.

I know I probably should not say this but I will because it should not go unheard. The financial worker is rather uncaring, or should I say, inappropriate with remarks. She treats me as though I am like, socially inept, dumb or something like that...as though I really don't understand her...kind of like my principal or teacher, just scolding me and intimidating me, and threatening sometimes about taking our money away.

The focus group participants expressed frustration and concern about financial worker attitudes about requirements and about their lack of sensitivity to them.

The problem is they say I need to bring their [the children's Dad's] paper. But, how can I bring it if he's not there, he doesn't live with us, he doesn't help at all? What they want to know is if their dad lives with us, if he pays for their living expenses. I already wrote them how the current situation is, but they don't understand it. I cannot bring any other paper because I don't know where he is.

I think we have to pay for bad things other people do. They believe all of us are similar and we are doing tricks. That is not true.

When asked about what they would change about their W&T programs the most frequent suggestions centered around language, especially about a desire to have more Spanish speaking counselors and staff. Several participants were so satisfied with their experiences that they felt nothing in the programs should be changed.

When the Latinos were asked in the interviews about how issues like health, child care and transportation had affected their progress, there was only one indication of any problem and that was around transportation. However, when the facilitator of the focus groups asked them to talk about these barriers, some issues did emerge. Using child care services was not considered a desirable option.

Leaving the kids with someone else is a big problem. They have to get used to two different environments, one with the baby sitter and the other with the mom. That's difficult for kids.

It's difficult to leave our kids with someone else. We don't know how they are going to take care of the baby. What about if the kid gets sick and that person doesn't know what to do?

When the focus group participants were asked what they would like to tell the County about their experience, they spoke of their concerns about the benefits they anticipate losing when they move into jobs.

When you get a job they start cutting your aid slowly; less [food] stamps, they don't help you with your kids anymore, no insurance, and so on until you are left out completely.

Here the important thing is to receive aid for our kids. I don't care if they don't give me insurance, but at least I want them to give it to my kids.

Latino participants were appreciative of the W&T services and counselors, but also very concerned about the behavior and attitudes of their financial workers. They expressed a genuine concern about leaving their children with non-family members as well as a fear about the loss of benefits when they became full time workers. They considered the lack of Spanish-speaking counselors to be a serious issue for their progress. However, the interviews do project a pervasive sense of appreciation for the services and support that the W&T programs have brought them in this time of dramatic cultural transition.

Native American Participants

Characteristics of the Native American participants

The five Native Americans in this study were MFIP participants who were expected to participate in a W&T program as of September 1, 1998. Thirty names were randomly selected from the non-sanctioned Native Americans. Three of these were interviewed. There were 28 Native Americans who had been sanctioned at the time of the study and two of these were interviewed. It is important to note that only five participants were interviewed. However, two participants did participate in an additional small focus group with a Native American facilitator.

The Native American participants had an average age of 32, all of them (100%, n=5) lived within the city of Minneapolis and were actively involved in a W&T program. One of the native Americans was working at the time of the study and all of them had worked in the past with an average of 5 months in their last job.

When Native Americans were asked in the interviews about issues that had affected their W&T progress, two of them (50%) indicated that health was a barrier for them, two (50%) said that child care was an issue and one (25%) said that transportation was a problem for them. We heard about short bouts of illness that kept people from W&T activities and of serious illnesses in the extended family that required the participants' concentration. One woman told a complicated story of conflicting requirements between the W&T program, the day care system and the County. However, eventually she did work out child care arrangements satisfactorily. Another person told us, *It's a problem finding good day care for the two youngest ones, especially in the summer.* In terms of transportation problems, we learned again of complicated arrangements balancing public transportation and reliance of friends and family to participate in W&T activities.

Native American perceptions of W&T services and counselors

Native American participants were more apt to choose their particular W&T program because of its reputation (40%, n=2) than because it was close to their homes (20%, n=1). They reported that they received child care services (40%, n=2), training (40%, n=2), and assessment (20%, n=1). All of the participants (100%, n=5) reported that they had received transportation assistance from the W&T program. None indicated that they had received job search services or that they had a W&T plan.

When asked in the interviews about how their counselors had helped or harmed their progress, half (n=2) of the Native American W&T participants had negative evaluations of that experience.

The worker didn't care. It's only their job. They didn't emotionally care...weren't sensitive to anything.

However, a woman who was currently working made the following positive remarks which illustrate the impact a supportive, assertive counselor can have:

The program gave me a lot of motivation. At first I didn't think I would get through because I thought he (my employment counselor) was rude and mean. But he was the one who motivated me the most. He appealed to my self esteem. It made me think about what I was doing with my life. Is it more negative or positive? They just made me see, why is this always happening to me. Why is it like this? I thought the people in my life were positive but they really weren't. When I started pushing negative people away, I started seeing that I was being a bit more aggressive. Because I always used to let people push me around. I started showing what I wanted, what I wanted for me. Just being around the kind of environment helped.

The Native American participants did not have a negative assessment of their financial workers (as did all of the other groups) but were either positive (33%, n=1) or neutral (67%, n=2). Most of them indicated that nothing in their W&T experience had influenced their progress (60%, n=3) towards work, with one participant saying that their counselor had influenced them and another indicating that the W&T had made a difference.

Somali Participants

Characteristics of the Somali participants

The Somalis in this study were MFIP participants who were expected to participate in a W&T program as of September 1, 1998. Thirty names were randomly selected from the non-sanctioned Somalis of whom nine (27%) were interviewed. There were no Somalis who had been sanctioned at the time of the study. The Somali participants had an average age of 36, all of them (100%, n=9) lived within the city of Minneapolis and all but one of them (89%, n=8) were actively involved in a W&T program. None of the Somalis were working at the time of the study. The following description of the way this participant spent her time was a typical response:

I spend the 30 hours I am required to spend in a training programs going to school and taking ESL classes.

The majority of these participants (67%, n=6) had worked in the past. We learned of jobs that ranged all the way from being a math and physics teacher to a factory assembler. The Somali participants had worked far longer (more than 4 years) in their prior job than any other group.

When Somalis were asked in the interviews about issues of health, child care and transportation, they were unresponsive, with only one of them mentioning transportation as a problem. These issues were also pursued in the focus group which reinforced the finding from the interviews that health and transportation were not seen as particular barriers to success. It was clear that the transportation assistance, especially in the form of the Trans-Pass card had eliminated barriers that transportation might present. The Somali focus group facilitator stated that the participants found the child care "somewhat helpful". But he stated that he learned that there were issues around the care of their families that had cultural underpinnings.

The difficulty lies beyond the beyond the day care help that they receive. Because of the large number of children that they have, the absence of a father, and the cultural expectation for a mother to single handedly nurture and care for all of her children (including helping them with their homework and having food ready when they come home), most participants of this focus group are struggling to get enough time or resources to raise so many children, go to school, and search for employment all at the same time.

The interviews indicate the same level of frustration and exhaustion on the part of these participants with the scale of the difficulties these Somali participants face. There were repeated references to the civil war in Somalia that they had fled. The language barrier consistently emerged in comments like the following:

I would like to see us given more time to learn the language rather than forcing us to start working before making any progress.

I wish we could be given enough time to learn the language and the skills we need to get a decent job.

These women were also very sensitive to the discrimination they have experienced in Minneapolis.

Most importantly, we are discriminated [against] because of our dress. I just wish the County or the agencies could educate our prospective employers that we are hard working people and that we dress a certain way because of our religion.

The most important [issues] of all is the discrimination many employers have against our way of clothing. Whenever they see us covering our heads they automatically dismiss us from the job opening.

Somali perceptions of W&T services and counselors

Somali participants were apt to choose their particular W&T program because it was close to their homes (56%, n=5). They reported a relatively high level of service from those programs. More than half of them had a W&T plan (56%, n=5) and most of them (78%, n=7) had received training - much of it in language classes. One participant was especially clear about his goals.

The plans I made with my counselor were: to finish the ESL classes first, look forward to going to a college when my language skills are at a comfortable level, and to look for a job in six months.

Somalis reported a relatively low level of job search services (44%, n=4) compared to some groups, possibly because of their heavy involvement in training, much of which was language related.

When asked in the interviews about how their counselors had helped or harmed their progress, Somali participants were neutral in their expressions about the quality of both their employment and their financial counselors. Three quarters of them (n=6) had neither positive nor negative things to say about their employment counselors and were also neutral about their financial counselor (88%, n=7). Several sounded like the following participant:

There is nothing with my current counselor that either hurt or helped me.

The focus group did discuss the attributes of "good" and "bad" counselors. The facilitator summarized the discussion as follows:

Most participants agreed that a good counselor is one that is 100% committed or sincere about helping them successfully achieve their goals. A counselor who will assess and evaluate their individual needs, outline specific ways to meet those needs.

A bad counselor is one who is inconsiderate and disrespectful toward them. One that instead of helping them insults their intelligence or talks to them indifferently. One who makes the general assumption that all welfare recipients are lazy people who like to live with government assistance rather than earn a living working. One who instead of encouraging them and provide with guidance on how to obtain work, forces them to accept jobs that might endanger their health or else threatens them that they will lose their assistance.

These Somalis were much more positive about the range of program offerings they had received when they spoke of what had made a difference in their progress. Nearly half of them (44%, n=4) said that the services offered had made a difference to them. Many spoke of the usefulness of the bus cards.

These participants consistently stated that very little or nothing in the welfare-to-work experience had either hurt or helped them. They perceived the W&T services as basically irrelevant to their experience. When asked what they would like to tell the County, the focus group participants asked that they be provided language classes for a longer period of time and that they be of

higher quality. They asked for help in learning culturally appropriate approaches to the employment environment which is culturally new to them. They asked that counselors acknowledge their newness in the country. The focus group participants - much like the interviewee quoted above in regard to discrimination - asked that someone in an official capacity act as a cross-cultural interpreter as they make this huge cultural transition.

It will be very helpful if the county workers or agency counselors serve as the bridge to connect us to prospective employers. Without the employment history (in the United States), a credible reference or recommendation from counselors or county workers would help a lot.

III. Comparative Racial/Ethnic
Analysis of Phase I and
Phase II Subjects

Comparative Racial/Ethnic Analysis of Phase I and Phase II Subjects

The Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants who were the subjects of Phase II of the study have been described in detail above. These participants were categorized according to their membership in one of the next largest racial/ethnic groups in the MFIP population. The rest of this report incorporates these research subjects alongside the African American and European American MFIP participants who were interviewed in Phase I of this project. This third group was added to the study in order to highlight the racial/ethnic nature of the MFIP W&T experiences. The rationale for the creation of this group is presented in the "Phase II Sampling" section found in Section II.

The African Americans who represent a large percentage (55%, n=5259) of the MFIP population and possess a distinct racial/cultural identity is considered Group 1 for the purposes of the comparative analysis that follows. Group 2 is composed of European Americans who also represent a somewhat smaller but still large percentage (27%, n=2,615) of the MFIP population and possess a distinct racial/ethnic identity. As mentioned above, the third group is composed of people of color who identify as one of the four other racial/ethnic groups (18%, n=1,764) in this study.

Description of Phase I and II Racial/Ethnic Groups

Table 9 shows that as a group, the Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants in Group 3 who were interviewed tended to be older, with a mean age of 36, than the African American and European American participants, were less apt to be female (57%, n=18), were more likely to live in Minneapolis (100%, n=32) and were less likely to be sanctioned (13%, n=4). They were also somewhat more apt than the other two groups to be active in a W&T program (93%, n=28) than members of the African American (80%, n=35) and European American (79%, n=37) communities.

Table 9: Characteristics of Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=123)

	African American n=44	European American n=47	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups n=32
Average Age	28	33	36
Female	89% (n=39)	98% (n=46)	57% (n=18)*
Minneapolis Resident	89% (n=39)	53% (n=25)	100% (n=32)
Sanctioned	32% (n=14)	26% (n=12)	13% (n=4)
In W&T Program	80% (n=35)	79% (n=37)	93% (n=28)

* Missing data

Work and Training Participants

The primary thrust of this study was to learn ways in which W&T programs can better serve the Hennepin County residents who are MFIP participants. Thus the rest of this report will emphasize the characteristics and preferences of 100 people in the three racial/ethnic groupings (African American (n=35), European American (n=37) and members of other racial/ethnic groups (n=28) who were active in a W&T program at the time of the study.

Workforce Participation

The participants in this study demonstrated a solid history of employment. The vast majority of them have worked in the past and a significant percentage of them are currently employed. African Americans and European Americans have a comparable current work rate and the category that contains several racial/ethnic groups has a lower work rate.

Table 10: Workforce Participation of Three W&T Racial/Ethnic Groups: 1. African American; 2. European American; and 3. Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=99)*

	African American n=35	European American n=37	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups n=27
Current Employment	40% (n=14)	38% (n=14)	26% (n=7)
Average Time in Current Job	9 months	35 months	45 months
Past Employment	80% (n=28)	87% (n=32)	67% (n=18)
Average Time in Past Job	28 months	35 months	36 months

* N is less than 100 because one person did not respond to these questions.

Work and Training Services and Programs

Hennepin County has made serious efforts to decentralize and to individualize W&T programs to meet the geographic and cultural needs of the MFIP participants. Consequently, there is special interest in knowing why people chose one program over another. Table 11 categorizes the answers participants gave when they were asked why they chose the W&T program that they were in. Those in Group 3, Other Racial/Ethnic Groups, were less apt to indicate that it was proximity that had attracted them (36%, n=10) than either African Americans (54%, n=19) or European Americans (57%, n=21). The Other Racial/Ethnic Group members (29%, n=8) also were more apt to mention reputation as the reason for their choice than either African Americans (11%, n=4) or European Americans (5%, n=2). This could indicate that these groups were less apt to find a culturally and linguistically appropriate program near them and that they were willing to travel some distance to find such a setting.

Table 11: Reason for W&T Choice by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=100)

	African American n=35	European American n=37	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups n=28
Proximity	54% (n=19)	57% (n=21)	36% (n=10)
Reputation	11% (n=4)	15% (n=2)	29% (n=8)
Assigned	14% (n=5)	11% (n=4)	11% (n=3)
Previous Connection	3% (n=1)	16% (n=6)	0
Don't Know	11% (n=4)	5% (n=2)	14% (n=4)
Not Ascertained (N/A)	6% (n=2)	5% (n=2)	11% (n=3)

Participants were asked to report what services they had received in their W&T program. These responses were tabulated in relation to a state prescribed list of MFIP W&T services. Table 12 indicates that the individuals in the three groupings in this study clearly had different perceptions of the services that they received.

African Americans indicated that they were more apt to receive job search services (74%, n=26) and transportation assistance (46%, n=16) than both of the other two groups. They were much less likely to report that they had an employment plan (17%, n= 6) than the European American participants (51%, n=19) and somewhat less likely than the other racial/ethnic groups (25%, n=7).

European American participants stood out in the relatively high percentage of them who stated that they had an employment plan (51%, n=19). They were also least apt to list job search as a service received (49%, as opposed to 74% for African Americans, and 68% for people in the other racial/ethnic groups.)

The Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants were much more likely to receive training services (43%, n=12) than either European Americans (22%, n=8) or African Americans (14%, n=5).

The three groupings reported comparable rates of the reception of child care and transportation services, with African Americans indicating a slightly higher percentage of use.

Table 12: W&T Services Received by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=100)

	African American n=35	European American n=37	Other Racial/ethnic Groups n=28
Advocacy	6% (n=2)	11% (n=4)	0% (n=0)
Assessment	3% (n=1)	5% (n=2)	11 % (n=3)
Child Care	34% (n=12)	27% (n=10)	25% (n=7)
Education	11% (n=4)	19% (n=7)	11% (n=3)
Housing	9% (n=3)	11% (n=4)	0% (n=0)
Job Search	74% (n=26)	49% (n=18)	68% (n=19)
Transportation	46% (n=16)	35% (n=13)	39% (n=11)
Training	14% (n=5)	22% (n=8)	43% (n=12)
W&T Plan	17% (n=6)	51% (n=19)	25% (n= 7)
Other	11% (n=4)	24% (n=9)	7% (n=2)

Participant Perception of Counselors

Participants were asked if there was something about their employment counselor that helped or hurt their progress. Table13 demonstrates that nearly half of the participants in each of the three groups share a fairly positive assessment of their employment counselors, with 48% of African Americans, 47% of European Americans and 42% of the Other Racial/Ethnic Groups responding

positively. However, Table 14 indicates a far less positive perception of the participants' financial counselors. European Americans are much more positive about their financial worker (42%) than African Americans (28%) and the other racial/ethnic groups (16%). African Americans are much more negative (56%, n=18) about their financial counselor than are the European Americans (22%, n=8) and somewhat less negative than the other racial/ethnic group (44%, n=11).

Table 13: Perception of Employment Counselors by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=87)*

	African American	European American	Other Racial/ethnic Groups
	n=31	n=30	n=26
Positive	48% (n=15)	47% (n=14)	42% (n=11)
Negative	36% (n=11)	27% (n=8)	31% (n=8)
Neutral	16% (n=5)	27% (n=8)	27% (n=7)

* N is less than 100 because 13 did not respond to this question.

Table 14: Perception of Financial Counselors by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=93)*

	African American	European American	Other Racial/ethnic Groups
	n=32	n=36	n=25
Positive	28% (n=9)	42% (n=15)	16% (n=4)
Negative	56% (n=18)	22% (n=8)	44% (n=11)
Neutral	16% (n=5)	36% (n=13)	40% (n=10)

* N is less than 100 because 7 did not respond to this question.

Participant Perceptions of the W&T Experience

Participants were asked to discuss the things that had made a difference in their progress. Table 15 categorizes these comments. African Americans were somewhat more apt to consider the counselor important to their progress and the Other Racial/Ethnic groups were more apt to consider programmatic offerings to be influential to theirs. Participants from the other racial/ethnic groups were the most apt to see nothing as influential (43%, n=12) with African Americans (35%, n=12) somewhat less apt to indicate that nothing influenced their success and European Americans (26%, n=9) the least apt to do so.

Table 15: Perception of Influence on Progress by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups (N=99)

	African American n=34	European American n=37	Other Racial/ethnic Groups n=28
Counselor Program	29% (n=10)	16% (n=6)	18% (n=5)
External **	18% (n=6)	19% (n=7)	36% (n=10)
MFIP Policy	3% (n=1)	16% (n=6)	4% (n=1)
Nothing	9% (n=3)	5% (n=2)	0
Other	35% (n=12)	24% (n=9)	43% (n=12)
	6% (n=2)	19% (n=7)	0

** External refers to economic and family issues.

Participants were asked to respond to a list of areas that might have made a difference to their progress. Table 16 tabulates the areas that they considered barriers to their progress. The participants in Group 3, Other Racial/Ethnic Groups, indicated that the areas that were seen as barriers by African Americans and European Americans were consistently less an issue for them.

Table 16: Barriers to Progress by Three Racial/Ethnic Groups: African American; European American; and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups

	African American	European American	Other Racial/ethnic Groups
Health	41% (n=14 of 34)	45% (n=14 of 31)	31% (n=8 of 26)
Child Care	37% (n=13 of 35)	35% (n=13 of 37)	19% (n=5 of 26)
Transportation	43% (n=15 of 35)	35% (n=13 of 37)	23% (n=6 of 26)

**IV. Individual Differences
Between Sanctioned and
Non-Sanctioned MFIP Participants**

Individual Differences Between Sanctioned and Non-Sanctioned Participants

Participants were asked several psychological questions to assess their levels of (1) conscientiousness, (2) employment commitment, (3) emotional stability, and (4) social support.

In Phase I, we compared individuals in work and training who had been sanctioned ($n = 25$) versus those not sanctioned ($n = 41$) on these variables. Results from Phase I showed that individuals in work and training programs who had not been sanctioned had significantly higher levels of conscientiousness and higher levels of employment commitment than individuals who had been sanctioned.

Because Phase II added 32 non-sanctioned individuals and 5 sanctioned individuals, we re-ran the analyses from Phase I with the additional cases. We also compared the racial groups (across Phase I and II) on the psychological characteristics, although it should be noted that an important limitation of this presentation is that the samples of individuals may not be representative of the general MFPI population. Following are the results.

Conscientiousness

Description of conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is a personality characteristic. Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness tend to be very dependable (e.g., careful, thorough, responsible, organized, efficient, and planful) and have a high will to achieve (e.g., high achievement orientation and perseverance). Research has demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness tend to have stronger levels of job performance and tend to engage active planning and problem solving coping strategies. Individuals with low levels of conscientiousness tend to be less organized, less dependable, and less responsible.

Measurement of conscientiousness. We measured conscientiousness using a 10-item scale. The following items were used.

(Options: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

1. I am always prepared.
2. I pay attention to details.
3. I carry out my plans.
4. I carry out my chores.
5. I make plans and stick to them.
6. I waste my time. (reverse score)
7. I find it difficult to get down to work. (reverse score)
8. I do just enough work to get by. (reverse score)
9. I don't see things through. (reverse score)
10. I shirk my duties. (reverse score)

The number of items divided the total score, so any individual could have a score that ranged from 1, which would indicate low conscientiousness to 4, which would indicate high conscientiousness.

Results. The significant difference in conscientiousness between sanctioned individuals in work and training versus those not sanctioned was retained after including the additional Phase II cases ($p < .05$). Sanctioned individuals had lower levels of conscientiousness than non-sanctioned individuals.

	Not Sanctioned N = 67	Sanctioned N = 29
Conscientiousness	M = 3.24 SD = .54	M = 2.96 SD = .66

(Scale: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

Note also that when including people in the study who were not in work and training programs, the difference between sanctioned and not-sanctioned is still significant.

We also compared all three groupings (European Americans, African Americans, and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups) on this characteristic. There were no significant differences between the groups on this variable.

Emotional Stability

Description of emotional stability. Emotional stability refers to the extent to which an individual displays anxiety, anger, hostility, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability, and depression. Individuals with higher levels of emotional stability tend to have positive appraisals of themselves and their environment, and tend to interpret ambiguous situations in a positive manner. Research has also shown that individuals with lower levels of emotional stability are less likely to cope with stressful situations through "positive reinterpretation and growth."

Measurement of emotional stability. We measured emotional stability using a 7-item scale. The following items were used.

(Options: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

1. I often feel blue. (reverse)
2. I dislike myself. (reverse)
3. I am often down in the dumps. (reverse)
4. I panic easily. (reverse)
5. I feel comfortable with myself.
6. I am not easily bothered by things.
7. I am very pleased with myself.

The total score was divided by the number of items, so any individual could have a score that ranged from 1, which would indicate low emotional stability to 4, which would indicate high emotional stability.

Results. The mean scores on emotional stability for the participants in work and training programs who were not sanctioned (n = 68) compared to those who were sanctioned (n = 29) appear below. Again, these data include individuals from both Phase I and II of our study. A statistical test showed there were no significant differences on this variable between sanctioned and non-sanctioned individuals.

	Not Sanctioned N = 68	Sanctioned N = 29
Emotional Stability	M = 3.00 SD = .72	M = 3.11 SD = .58

(Scale: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

Note also that when including people in the study who were not in work and training programs, the results did not change.

We also compared the three racial/ethnic groupings (European Americans, African Americans, and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups) on this characteristic. There were no significant differences between the groups on this variable.

Employment Commitment

Description of employment commitment. Employment commitment is an attitudinal variable that refers to the importance or centrality an individual places on employed work. Investigations by several researchers have found that individuals who have high levels of employment commitment look much harder for work while they are unemployed.

Measurement of employment commitment. We measured employment commitment using a 3-item scale. The following items were used.

(Options: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

1. Having a job is very important to me.
2. I really must get a job or I'll lose my self-respect.
3. Having a job means more to me than just the money it provides.

The total score was divided by the number of items, so any individual could have a score that ranged from 1, which would indicate low employment commitment to 4, which would indicate high employment commitment.

Results. The mean scores on employment commitment for the participants in work and training who were not sanctioned (n = 67) compared to those who were sanctioned (n = 29) appear below. A statistical test showed that individuals who were sanctioned had significantly lower levels of employment commitment than individuals who had not been sanctioned ($p < .01$).

	Not Sanctioned N = 67	Sanctioned N = 29
Employment Commitment	M = 3.29 SD = .70	M = 2.60 SD = 1.02

(Scale: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

Note also that when including people in the study who were not in work and training programs in this analysis, the difference between sanctioned and not-sanctioned is still significant, $p < .01$.

We also compared the three racial/ethnic groupings (European Americans, African Americans, and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups) on this characteristic. There were no significant differences between the groups on this variable.

Social Support

Description of social support. *Social support* refers to the availability of another individual to turn to for information, affection, comfort, encouragement, or reassurance. Individuals with higher social support tend to experience higher levels of mental and physical health during stressful life events.

Measurement of social support. We measured social support using a 4-item scale. The following items were used.

(Options: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

1. I have a friend or family member who is around when I am in need.
2. I have a friend or family member that I can share my joys and sorrows with.
3. I have a friend or family member who is a real source of comfort to me.
4. I have a friend or family member who I can talk with about getting a job.

The total score was divided by the number of items, so any individual could have a score that ranged from 1, which would indicate low social support to 4, which would indicate high social support.

Results. The mean scores on social support for the participants in work and training programs who were not sanctioned ($n = 68$) compared to those who were sanctioned ($n = 29$) appear below. A statistical test showed that there were no differences between the two groups ($p = .81$).

	Not Sanctioned N = 68	Sanctioned N = 29
Social Support	M = 2.98 SD = 1.08	M = 3.04 SD = 1.15

(Scale: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

Note also that when including people in the study who were not in work and training programs, the results did not change.

We also compared the three racial/ethnic groupings (European Americans, African Americans, and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups) on this characteristic. Importantly, individuals in the “Other Racial/Ethnic Groups” category scored significantly lower than the other two groups on social support.

	African American N=44	European American N = 45	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups N = 30
Social Support	M=3.2 SD=1.15	M = 3.5 SD = .81	M = 2.3 SD = .97

(Scale: 1= not at all like me 2 = a little like me 3 = like me 4 = very much like me)

Implications of Findings Related to Psychological Variables

Overall, results showed that *individuals who had been sanctioned had significantly lower levels of conscientiousness and employment commitment* than individuals who had not been sanctioned. Results also showed that *individuals who are in the “Other Racial/Ethnic Group” tend to have significantly less social support available to them.* We review below the implications for these three variables.

Conscientiousness. We remain convinced that employment counselors can make use of the finding that sanctioned individuals tend to be lower in conscientiousness. For example, some individuals who have been sanctioned may need to be coached (in a positive manner) about techniques they can use to become better at keeping and meeting deadlines and to become better at meeting their obligations. Employment counselors might be trained in coaching techniques to encourage individuals to become better at meeting deadlines and obligations. To do this, employment counselors need some coaching skill. Furthermore, they need to have information and tips about time management to give to the clients. There are several available books with good ideas about techniques that can be used to improve a person’s time management and reduce procrastination patterns.

Interestingly, in our February 1999 survey of 55 employment counselors (see document titled “Training Needs Assessment: Welfare-to-Work Professionals”), 59% of the employment counselors thought that a seminar that addresses how to coach welfare clients on time management would be “likely” or “definitely” useful (see results to question 13 shown in Appendix B of the training needs document). It is also interesting that a similar majority of the employment counselors thought that a time management seminar would be useful for their own work effectiveness (see results to question 25 in Appendix B of the training needs document). If Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis hire someone to do training, we recommend that this person review this report and the training needs assessment results.

Employment Commitment. Employment counselors can also make use of the finding that sanctioned individuals tend to be lower in employment commitment than non-sanctioned individuals. People tend to operate on a "What's in it for me" basis. If clients do not value work, they will be less likely to work toward the goal of employment. Employment counselors may need to communicate to clients some of the benefits of working, *beyond* income, such as:

- Work gives many people a new means of self-expression and purpose.
- Work is a good way of meeting people. It can lead to friendships and new feelings of self-respect.
- Work provides an important role model behavior for children.
- Work provides a means of allowing a break from constant care of children, which can be a very difficult job. (This argument might just be used for a mother who expresses some frustrations with her children.)
- Many employers, due to the low unemployment rate, are in high need of workers to fill shifts. (This argument appeals to the need to help others)

If the client is worried primarily about her children, and that is acting to reduce her perceived importance of work, then employment counselors might demonstrate to the client why working really can be the best thing for the children. A long-term perspective might be advocated, rather than a short-term perspective. While in the short-term it may seem to a client best to stay home with the children, in the long-term perhaps the role modeling of work is the best thing for the children. Such values may be difficult for an employment counselor to espouse, but may be shown in other ways, for example by having successful welfare-to-work clients share what work has done for them with clients that are more dubious about the value of working. The employment counselor may also let the client generate other benefits of working in a brainstorming type session, rather than just lecturing the benefits to the client. The topic can be brought up in more of a discussion-based manner, rather than in a "lecture."

Social Support. Social support refers to the availability of another individual to turn to for information, affection, comfort, encouragement, or reassurance. Our findings did not show sanctioned and non-sanctioned individuals to differ on this variable. However, the "other" racial/ethnic group had lower levels of social support than the European Americans and African Americans. Social support has been shown in the psychological literature to be an extremely important factor for individuals in almost any difficult situation. Having social support helps individuals deal with stressful situations and helps individuals solve problems. Individuals in the "other" racial/ethnic groups may be encouraged to find ways to develop new friends and to meet people who may serve as a basis of support. A programmatic response to this lack of social support would be the creation of support groups.

V. Conclusions and Implications from Phase II of the Study

Conclusions and Implications from Phase II

The March 1999 report on Phase I of the study presented conclusions and implications from the interviews with African American and European American MFIP participants, from the focus group discussions with some of the interviewed participants, from a survey of work and training professionals, and from a focus group of work and training professionals. This section of the report from Phase II of the study does not repeat the earlier findings and implications, but instead highlights findings from Phase II that add to the understanding gained in Phase I of the needs of MFIP participants as they attempt to make the transition from welfare to work.

Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis are especially interested in understanding the experiences of the MFIP participants who are members of the communities of color represented in Phase II of the study. We have therefore summarized below those aspects from the four smaller racial/ethnic groups that appear somewhat different from the patterns noted in the Phase I report. We again caution the reader to be careful not to generalize these comments to all members of these racial/ethnic groups in the MFIP population nor to their larger communities. The findings are suggestive of patterns that *may* exist in the MFIP population, but are not conclusive, given the small sample sizes.

Hmong Participants. Hmong participants were more apt to be employed at the time of the study than were other participants. The jobs tended to be low-paying, part time jobs, which made searching for a additional or new job difficult. Hmong participants tended to consider transportation, health issues, and child care to be barriers to their progress. Hmong participants reported receiving fewer services from W&T programs than did other participants, and were the least satisfied of all groups in the study with their employment counselors and their financial counselors. Some expressed frustration at not being allowed to first learn English and to learn to drive before being required to undertake a job search. The MFIP work requirement is also in direct conflict with Hmong women's perception that their primary responsibility is to take care of their children and other family members. Whether their perceptions of the W&T program are accurate or instead reflect cultural and language miscommunication, there is a consistent dissatisfaction among those interviewed and in the focus groups. In general the Hmong subjects in the study did not feel supported nor well-served by the welfare to work program and requirements.

Latino Participants. Latino participants reported receiving a wide range of services at their W&T program, including help with job search and transportation, and additional training or education. Half reported working on a plan with a counselor. Of the four groups, Latinos reported the highest level of satisfaction with W&T counselors. However, like other groups they had a low level of satisfaction with financial counselors, especially regarding worker attitudes toward them. Latinos also expressed a wish for more Spanish-speaking counselors. With regard to issues that affected their progress, there was some indication of transportation issues. Using non-relatives for child care was seen as an undesirable option.

Native American Participants. Native American participants perceived barriers to progress in the areas of health, child care, and transportation. Native American participants reported receiving child care services, training, and some transportation services. None indicated

receiving job search services nor that they had a W&T plan. Their evaluations of their employment counselors were mixed, some positive and some negative. Unlike the other three racial/ethnic groups in Phase II, they did not have a negative assessment of their financial workers.

Somali Participants. Most Somali participants were actively involved in the W&T program, primarily in training and in ESL classes. Most had worked in the past. None were currently employed. Many expressed deep frustration at having to simultaneously care for their families, attend training, and search for employment. Some asked that they be provided ESL classes for a longer time before being required to search for a job, and some expressed concerns that employers discriminated against them because of their dress and religion. Somali participants tended to be neutral about their employment and financial counselors. Many spoke positively about the services they had received from the W&T programs. Some also expressed the wish that employment counselors or other workers serve to connect them with prospective employers, in view of the language and cultural barriers between them and prospective employers.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The major findings in Phase II centered on individual differences among the participants, participant attitudes toward their counselors and differences across the four added racial/ethnic groups.

Individual Differences

When exploring the individual differences among the participants, non-sanctioned participants were found to be significantly more conscientious and to have more positive attitudes toward work than the sanctioned participants. As a group, the Hmong, Latino, Native American and Somali participants report significantly lower levels of social support than African American and European American participants do.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the formation of support groups for participants from these racial/ethnic populations.

Attitudes Toward Employment and Financial Counselors

Participants were asked two questions about the two types of counselors they encountered in the W&T experience:

Was there something about your employment counselors that helped or hurt your progress?

Is there anything about your financial counselor that has made a difference - good or bad - in your progress?

Participants' perceptions of their financial counselors were more negative than perceptions of their employment counselors. All groups of color perceived their financial counselors more

negatively than did the European Americans. And even though all groups were more positive about the employment counselors, their perceptions were still quite negative.

It is recommended that in performance appraisals of both types of counselors the evaluation process itself be reviewed to ensure that it addresses participant/counselor relationships. Counselors may also need training on more appropriate behaviors. In addition, situation analysis may indicate that something about the situation (such as high caseloads) may prevent appropriate behavior. Attention should be paid to the negative perceptions of the groups of color in counselor training.

Racial/Ethnic Differences

Noticeable differences were identified across the four racial/ethnic groups that were the focus of this study. Among participants were especially concerned about the cultural and language adaptations that the W&T program imposed on them. Somali participants were especially concerned about workplace discrimination and the lack of respect they experienced within the W&T environment. Even though the Latino participants were generally the most positive of the groups, they were concerned about the lack of workers who matched them in terms of language and culture.

It is recommended that financial and employment counselors receive more cultural specific training and that their performance appraisal include individual evaluation of their cross-cultural competence and sensitivity. It is also suggested that clients be provided counselors of similar language and culture whenever possible and that more translators be made available. Clients also need to have more opportunity for training in English as a Second Language and more time for such training before they move into a job.

It is recommended that the County act as a bridge between participants and employers by finding ways to educate employers about the contributions and cultural strengths of the participants.