

**Effectiveness of Life Skills Training  
on the Total Behaviour of Six  
Individuals in a Job Preparation Program**

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## Abstract

In the first week of a Job Preparation Program all twelve female members of the class were invited to be part of a study to determine the effect of Life Skills training on their behaviour over the twelve-week period of the program. Six females volunteered and each was interviewed four times during the Job Preparation Program and once after the program ended. The interviews focused on three areas of skill deficiency addressed in Life Skills lessons: their knowledge about themselves and attitude towards themselves; their interpersonal relationships; and their problem-solving ability. The participants' comments over the sixteen-week period of the interviews were used to decide if the total behaviour of the participants, (i.e., what they did, thought, and felt) changed so that each became more effective in satisfying her needs.

The study suggested that the total behaviour of three of the six women changed so that they became more effective in satisfying their needs. The fourth female's total behaviour changed in only two of the three areas focused on in the interviews, and the total behaviour of the fifth and sixth females showed no change.

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## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

The community college that provided the setting for this study twice yearly accepts sixteen adults to participate in its Job Preparation Program. Clients are referred to the program by employment counsellors from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, and referral is based on the individual's need for a job, and on her<sup>1</sup> abilities to find one without the Ministry's assistance. To be eligible to enter the program, an individual must show that she needs a job to support herself and her dependents. Each individual is considered a disadvantaged adult, as defined by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. In A conceptual framework for the life skills program (1985) the Commission states:

Individuals may have or lack a job; they may be on welfare or may have money in

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<sup>1</sup>In this thesis I have used feminine pronouns to refer to both male and female participants in the Job Preparation Program since most of those referred to in the program are female.

the bank. No matter where they may locate themselves on a socioeconomic scale, they are disadvantaged in the management of personal affairs to the extent that they do not have sufficient knowledge and confidence to resolve life problems creatively. (p.70)

The Ministry of Employment and Immigration pays the students' tuition fees and provides them with a weekly training allowance. Six weeks after the end of the program the Ministry sends each student a follow-up letter asking whether or not she has found employment.

An essential part of the Job Preparation Program is its Life Skills component. The main objectives of Life Skills is to produce graduates who will draw on their developed knowledge of problem-solving behaviours to meet problems of everyday life. A secondary objective is to develop an individual confident enough to express herself through the discriminating use of these new behaviours. The criterion for success in meeting these course objectives is a demonstration by the course graduates that they use the new problem-solving behaviours in daily life.

This study attempts to evaluate the effect of Life Skills training on six participants of the April 1986 Job Preparation Program at a community college in Ontario. With each student acting as a co-researcher I

conducted four in-depth interviews during the twelve weeks of the program and a fifth interview one month later. Together we explored the skills that students learned weekly to find out if they were working outside as well as inside the classroom for each student.

### Background

Of the seventeen participants<sup>2</sup> enrolled in the 1985 Job Preparation Program at the community college discussed in this study, four had found jobs by the final week of the program. By that same week, three participants were enrolled in programs to upgrade their academic abilities; eight were actively job searching; and two had been referred to their Canada Employment and Immigration counsellor for further assessment and individual counselling.

At the time of the study the Ministry was in the process of deciding whether or not to continue

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<sup>2</sup>Because of the nature of the disclosures in Chapter Four of this thesis the details of the program under discussion and the names of those involved with it have been changed to ensure the anonymity of the six participants of my study. To further preserve the participants' anonymity the coach of the Life Skills lessons will be referred to as Mrs. Laura Smith.

paying for the participation of its clients in the Job Preparation Program under consideration. A factor in their decision appeared to be the small number of individuals who found employment during or soon after attending the program.

#### Purpose

The goal of my research was to produce six case studies that would interpret how the Life Skills component of the Job Preparation Program affected each student's way of relating to her job, family, leisure, and community. From these interpretations, and from the student's retrospective look at the program after she had been away from it for a month, I attempt to provide evidence of recurring themes in their interpretations: themes which, by their presence or absence, help me to make sense of the effect the Life Skills component of the program had on each student.

Although I could not generalize these interpretations to those of all students who attend the program, each student's insights have enabled me to form my own conclusions, and thus to develop the following themes: (1) the nature of the conditions under which

students will continue to apply the problem-solving skills learned in class to their lives after the program has ended; and (2) the effect of group support on the students in a Job Preparation Program, since group interaction is a fundamental part of Life Skill's training.

Integral to the development of these themes is discussing the responses to the main research questions:

1. Over the twelve-week period of the Job Preparation Program does the total behaviour of the six individuals change, so that each becomes more effective in satisfying her needs?
2. Is each individual effective in satisfying her needs even after the Job Preparation Program ends?

#### Definition of Terms

##### Job Preparation Program:

The Job Preparation Program is a twelve-week program offered at community colleges in Ontario for adults who counsellors at the Ministry of Employment and Immigration designate as disadvantaged or as special needs clients. The purpose of the training is to assist these adults to learn to solve their personal problems creatively, and to find a job. At the community college under discussion, Life Skills training and two five-day

work experiences are the central components of the program. However, students also work individually on mathematics and English exercises that vary according to their academic level on entry into the Job Preparation Program. Students are also encouraged to spend some of their classroom time in the carpentry workshop that is located at the centre where their Job Preparation classes are held.

Total behaviour:

William Glasser (1984) defines a total behaviour as the doing, thinking, feeling, and physiological changes that we generate in a constant attempt to reduce the difference between what we want and what we have. For the purpose of this study I will confine my analysis of the participants' total behaviour to their behaviour in the three core areas that Mullen (1985) suggests are the areas of deficiency common to the participants of all Job Preparation Programs. These are:

1. their knowledge about themselves and attitude towards themselves;
2. their interpersonal relationships; and
3. their problem-solving ability.

The females in my study focused on the lack of a job as

their most difficult problem, but by concentrating on problem-solving ability, rather than on job-finding ability, I looked at participants' ability to identify any problem, foresee consequences, decide, act, and evaluate their actions.

Needs:

Glasser (1984) identifies five basic needs that together make up the forces that he believes drive all individuals. These are: the need to survive and reproduce; the need to belong - to love, share, and co-operate; the need for power; the need for freedom; and the need for fun. For whatever period of time, however short, that we satisfy a need, we are in control of our lives. Glasser (1984) writes:

It is not important to the thesis of this book that I establish with any certainty what the basic needs are that drive us. To gain effective control of our lives, we have to satisfy what we believe is basic to us and learn to respect and not frustrate others in fulfilling what is basic to them.  
(p.16)

Regardless of how an individual describes his basic needs Glasser maintains that the fundamental way we each learn to satisfy these needs and thus to take control of our lives is to ask ourselves two essential questions: (1) "What is it that I really want?" and,



(2) "Is what I am now doing helping me to get what I want?" Our answers to these questions should, according to Glasser, show us where to focus our attention and how we can behave to narrow the gap between what we have and what we want.

Glasser's claim that what we really want is what we need springs from his description of persons as control systems acting upon the world and upon themselves as part of the world in an attempt to get the picture that they want. According to Glasser, these wants begin at birth and are felt as urges or needs even before an infant has a specific awareness of what will satisfy them. Only as others satisfy them does a baby develop an image of a need-satisfying picture, and this in future will be the specific picture that fills a baby's thoughts when she feels a similar urge.

Though it will be several years before the baby begins to understand what the urges inside her mean, and even longer before she has a specific idea of what her general needs are, yet her method of ensuring that her needs are met is essentially the same that she will use as she grows. She will develop at least one picture or image for every need and will generate a persistent desire for this picture, a desire that will continue until the need is satisfied or until one

need-satisfying picture is replaced with an alternative one. It is the existence of these desires that suggests to Glasser that what we can identify in thought as something that we want, something that is essential to our leading a satisfying life, is basically a specific picture of one of the five general needs that drive us all.

Dewey's (1938) discussion of desire as the ultimate moving spring of action is closely linked to Glasser's notion of desire as a driving force in our lives. Desire for something may be so strong, Dewey claims, that we act on impulse to achieve it. In doing so we forget to consider the consequences that will follow our actions. It is only when action is preceded by the intellectual operations of (1) observing surrounding conditions; (2) knowing what happened in similar situations in the past; and (3) judging what is observed and what is recalled that there can be foresight of the consequences of executing an impulse. Only by these intellectual operations can we ensure that the desired is desirable.

Bearing in mind that Glasser considers those things that we want specific pictures of our more-encompassing needs, I sought to learn from each participant in my study what she identified as her

desires. Then, through a series of interviews, we attempted to decide if the skills she had learned during the Job Preparation Program had helped her to get what she really wanted. To follow Glasser, in my study I considered these desired things specific pictures of each individual's more general needs.

#### Theoretical Framework

William Glasser's Control Theory: A new explanation of how we control our lives (1984) forms the theoretical framework for my research. Glasser, as previously mentioned, discusses four separate components of a total behaviour: (1) doing or active behaviours; (2) thinking; (3) feeling; and (4) physiology. As my goal is to chart change in each student's behaviour I focused on only the first three of these behaviours. According to Glasser, "If, however, we want to change a total behavior, the way we can do it is to choose to change its doing and thinking components" (p.49). I do, however, want to include the feeling component in my study because, although Glasser's opinion is that we have almost no control over this component of a total behaviour, feelings will reflect the changes that have occurred in our actions and thoughts. A recording of feelings, then, will be one further substantiation of

the changes in each student's active and thinking behaviours.

Glasser defines physiology as the ability "to generate the voluntary and involuntary body mechanisms involved in all we do, think, and feel" (p.47), but when writing of his work with clients he often ignores this aspect of their behaviour. Unless I become convinced that physiology is important in my case I, like Glasser, will include a discussion of it in my study only if the student volunteers information on her body mechanisms during any of our interviews.

The five basic needs together make up the forces that Glasser believes drives all individuals. To understand the relationship between what each participant in my study really wants and the forces that she believes are enabling her to, or constraining her from getting it, I need to turn from Glasser and his focus on the individual to the writings of critical theorists. The start of my research is Giddens' (1979) contention that "all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them" (p.72). Using this as my premise I have explored the concept of control from the point of view of the individual as social actor. Further, Giroux (1983) contends that the behaviour of subordinate groups

in society needs to be understood in terms of domination and resistance. Their resistance to change is often one way in which they exercise power and seek to struggle against the social nexus of domination and submission. Through my research I sought to examine the concept of resistance as it related to the six females of my study, and to suggest why, when we look at their lives, the constraining, not the enabling, quality of social structure is more apparent.

#### Delineation of the Research Problem

At the crux of this thesis is the observation of the close relationship that exists between the goals of Control Theory and those of Life Skills theory. Both seek to change an individual's approach to life, and to develop balanced, self-determined persons creatively solving problems in everyday life. To accomplish these goals, Life Skills involves the learner in a group training process. The process begins with some kind of concrete experience. It may be a modeled behaviour or the learners' own actions. This experience leads to feedback, often in the form of a videotape recording, enabling learners to visualize themselves and their behaviours in a concrete rather than an abstract way. After this feedback, learners are given the opportunity

to practise a specific new behaviour.

As the new behaviour is practised learners participate in exercises that train them to reflect on its effects. They are encouraged to make critical evaluations, judging whether or not the behaviours they choose to put into practice are appropriate and responsible. When learners perform the new skills in other concrete experiences it is again analyzed, and the training process continues in another cycle.

Control Theory and Life Skills theory both stress the need to do. Glasser suggests that we reflect on what we really want, decide what we can do to satisfy ourselves and then act on our decision. Using Life Skills theory, coaches first train individuals to master specific behavioural skills and subsequently guide them through the process of accomplishing "higher-order actions", i.e., skills that enable the student to see, implement, and evaluate short and long term goals and to resolve personal problems. Through my research I have attempted to chart the changes in students who are in the process of acquiring Life Skills of an increasingly higher order. My interviews tried to ascertain whether, having practised even these higher-order skills, the females in my study increased their effectiveness in satisfying their needs.

### Importance of the Study

Life Skills theory measures the success of each training program to the degree in which course graduates use their new problem-solving behaviours in their daily lives. Despite this, few attempts have been made to ascertain and document how participants in Job Preparation Life Skills classve used their new skills in the management of their personal affairs either during or after the twelve-week period. Moreover, the Ministry of Employment and Immigration customarily receives few replies to the letter of inquiry sent to class participants six weeks after the end of the program. Consequently, unless participants of a Job Preparation Program return to the Ministry to seek further counselling or financial assistance little is known of them.

My study attempts to document the skill use of six individuals during the twelve weeks of the Job Preparation Program and four weeks after the program. In documenting skill use I intend to provide one example of how research from a specific theoretical basis can ascertain what impact Life Skills training has on individuals during and after a training session. More importantly, by evaluating two approaches that seek to

change an individual's approach to life - that of Life Skills theory and of Control Theory - I hope to suggest how the strengths of both theories can be combined to promote successful practice.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Overview

In order to form a conceptual framework for the problem outlined in Chapter One, I intend to explore the recent literature in the following areas: Control Theory, Life Skills theory, and Social theory.

### Control Theory

"What blocks most of us from taking effective control of our lives is our resistance to changing a lifetime of feeling as if our misery happens to us" (Glasser, 1984, p.71). Glasser (1984) goes on to give numerous examples of people choosing depression, anxiety, or illness as a response to disappointments in their lives. His charge to each of these people is succinct: focus on what you are doing; choose an active behaviour over a painful one like depression, and invariably you will think and feel more able to cope with your situation. Although, according to Glasser, total behaviour has four separate components, Control Theory emphasizes the doing component of our behaviour. In support of this, Glasser's contention is that if we

markedly change that component, we cannot avoid changing the thinking, feeling, and physiological components as well. Despite the emphasis on doing as leading to change in thinking, the strength of Control Theory is its less obtusive message that doing must be preceded by active, responsible thought processes, developed over time.

Glasser's Control Theory is both an expansion of the psychiatrist's reality therapy ideas and a re-affirmation of his conviction that our behaviour is our constant attempt to control our perceptions. Glasser (1965) presents reality therapy as an unconventional psychiatric treatment technique since it denies the Freudian belief that mental illness exists, and that mentally ill people cannot be held responsible for their behaviour. From Glasser's (1965) point of view, the basic problem of all psychiatric patients is their inability to fulfill their needs. Because of this inability, Glasser suggests that patients deny the reality of the world around them. Consequently, the goal of reality therapy is to help patients to grapple successfully with the tangible and intangible aspects of the real world.

Glasser (1972) further develops his reality therapy ideas when he outlines how his principles work

not only with the disturbed or emotionally upset, but with all people who have failure identities. Nor should professionals helping irresponsible people or teachers helping failing children be the only ones to use reality therapy, he argues. Anyone, e.g., parents, ministers, wives, can use reality therapy to help others gain and maintain successful identities.

Control Theory developed from a combination of the principles of reality therapy and the ideas presented by Powers (1973) and expanded by Glasser. Powers, Glasser (1981) maintains, provided him with the key to understanding how all living organisms function as control systems to act on the world in order to fulfill their needs. With this knowledge, Glasser (1984) moves beyond reality therapy to suggest how individuals, without the aid of a therapist, can learn to recognize and to fulfill the basic needs that he suggests are common to all people.

The psychological studies that best support Glasser's Control Theory are those compiled and documented by Langer (1983). While Glasser primarily uses theoretical arguments and descriptive examples to expound his ideas, Langer presents empirical research to show that a belief in control is crucial to psychological health, whether or not the perception is

either true or acted upon. Control, according to Glasser, means the ability of individuals to satisfy their five, separate, conflicting needs to the extent that they would like. Langer defines control as the active belief that one has a choice among responses that will achieve the desired outcome. Although Langer's research speaks less specifically of need satisfaction than does Glasser's, since Langer states that involvement and mastering are crucial elements of control and thus also of psychological health, it is clear that both writers are referring to a similar concept: the mindful process of mastering a situation to derive a sense of fulfillment from it.

Langer, like Glasser, provides varied evidence of individuals who fail to analyze the alternative responses that are available in an everyday situation, and one study in particular relates closely to this thesis since it seeks to explore the means by which people cope with the difficulties that follow a divorce. Langer bases her research on the notion that the manner in which individuals think about their divorce may directly promote individuals' feeling of self-recrimination and their difficulties in adapting to divorce.

To carry out her study Langer recruited

sixty-six divorced females through New York newspaper advertisements by requesting volunteers for psychological research on adaptation to divorce. Individuals ranging in age from twenty-four to fifty-seven, who came from lower and middle-class backgrounds, responded to the advertisement. These were requested to complete questionnaires to explain the reasons why they had become divorced. The questionnaires were then classified by raters into explanations that focused on person attributes and those that focused on interactive attributes. Person attributes referred to characteristics of either one's spouse or one's self and included categories such as emotional immaturity and inconsideration. Interactive attributes referred to features of the jointly established relationship and included categories such as incompatibility and lack of closeness or love. The subjects were given a second questionnaire to find out how socially active, optimistic, and socially skilled they were, and were also asked to keep a ten-day diary to show the main events and activities of their lives.

Langer's research showed that subjects rated as having made interactive attributions for their divorce blamed themselves significantly less for any personal failure than those who made person

attributions. On the other hand, people who made person attributions now were significantly less active, less socially skilled, and felt they had less strong personalities by their own reports than the interactive group. Her findings give evidence to the clear relationship that exists between self-esteem and the attribution of responsibility that one makes for a divorce. Langer concluded that the ability of the females to make interactive attributions seems to lessen the feelings of worthlessness and resentment that accompany many divorces.

The major question left unanswered at the end of Langer's study is whether interactive explanations for divorce lead to better adjustment for the divorced person, or whether people who made interactive attributions were happier or more confident to begin with, and Langer admits her uncertainty on this point. Nevertheless, since the study does establish a positive relationship between one's self-esteem and the making of interactive attributions it clearly supports Glasser's Control Theory.

When describing responses to the questionnaire on factors that lead to the women's divorce Langer notes that although abundant person attributes were supplied, in every case those who made person attributions

consistently referred to characteristics of the spouse rather than to self. The blame, therefore, rested on the inabilities of their spouses. Thus, for these women, their divorce and misery happened to them. Conversely, a high self-esteem is positively linked to the making of interactive attributions because, despite the failure of their relationships, these women have gone beyond blaming to involve themselves in the conflict and have taken responsibility for their actions. In doing so, in Glasser's terms, they have been able to change the feeling component of their behaviour and thus are in greater control of their lives than persons in the study who made person attributions.

While Langer's psychological research completely supports Glasser's Control Theory ideas, a review of the literature reveals that no criticism has yet been aimed directly at his theory. Instead, each researcher who writes of Glasser focuses his attention on the treatment technique that precedes Control Theory, reality therapy. Reality therapy differs from Control Theory in that it is based on the belief that people have two, not five psychological needs, the need to belong and be loved, and the need for gaining self-worth and recognition. But a reading of Glasser (1980) shows that reality therapy is essentially the treatment

technique that Glasser feels will enable people to take control of their lives. Since no specific discussion of Control Theory has yet been documented, only by reading the current interpretations of and programmes based on reality therapy can we gain the insight of others on Glasser's desire to have clients focus on the doing part of their behaviour and to help them to fulfill their needs in better ways than they have already learned.

Despite the variety in the ages and situations of the clients discussed in the literature, all the programs based on reality therapy have in common the determination that individuals take responsibility for their actions. Banmen (1985) attempts to use Glasser's concepts to explain what happens when young adults do not accept responsibility for their career choices, and to decide which intervention strategies would be most effective in helping these youths. He suggests that while programs for unemployed frequently emphasize providing occupational information and testing, few focus on the concept of meeting basic needs and developing self-determined decisions. Banmen concludes that since all behaviour stems from an individual's desire to avoid pain and to satisfy needs, the job of the counsellor must be to help individuals to identify their needs, and to assist them to realize that their



needs can be satisfied in socially and economically responsible ways.

Banmen's discussion is noticeably free of any criticism of Glasser's theory. He suggests that although scholars such as Super, Tiedeman, Ginsberg, and Osipow have looked at different facets of works, their theories fail to help the many youth who are floundering in their career choices. By contrast, Banmen feels that Glasser's reality therapy provides a tangible way to help youth prepare for the world of work. In Banmen's general acceptance of Glasser his article suffers, however, since he offers no analysis of how unemployment counsellors could help individuals to identify their needs.

Like Banmen, Cohen and Sordo (1984) also present general praise rather than an analysis of Glasser. But they are more convincing in their support for Glasser since they illustrate their ideas with specific examples drawn from their program. In describing how they used a modified version of reality theory among adults involved in a community corrections program in Israel the authors first outline the five-step treatment technique, the goal of which was to help each individual commit himself to a specific, responsible behaviour. Then, using brief case

vignettes, the authors effectively show examples of the stages of the program at work. In conclusion, Cohen and Sordo admit that their condensed version lacks the complexity of reality therapy, and thus warn the reader against either oversimplifying the treatment technique, or of viewing reality therapy as a cure-all for every problem in life.

While not a cure-all, programs based on the reality therapy premise that individuals must take responsibility for their behaviour can be as effective with children as they are with adults. Morris (1982) describes the use of a modified Pow-Wow among children with special needs in Connecticut public schools. The Pow-Wow is a classroom support group in which the teacher and his entire class work together to support students in achieving their daily behavioural goal. The theory behind the Pow-Wow is based on Glasser, and it functions by helping the child to choose a behavioural goal at the beginning of each day. At the end of the day the child states his goal and gives his evaluation of whether or not he achieved it. The other children in the Pow-Wow then give their evaluation of the child's day, supporting his observations with examples. Morris concludes his article with the information that, with the exception of one teacher, others who have instituted

the Pow-Wow in their class have achieved positive results.

Although Morris' article gives detailed, helpful, steps to anyone intending to set-up a Pow-Wow and reiterates Glasser's emphasis on the role of responsibility in effecting changed behaviour, his conclusions raise as many questions as they answer. One wonders about the teacher whose Pow-Wow was unsuccessful, but Morris chooses to remain silent on this experience. The reader is also left to interpret what the author means by positive results since Morris fails to elaborate on this vague term. Despite these uncertainties one is left with the encouraging message that reality therapy, in all its modified versions, appears to be successful as a treatment technique used both with adults and with children.

A review of the literature on Glasser reveals that Control Theory has received little critical examination by psychologists or educators. Instead, the focus of articles on Glasser continues to be on reality therapy. Nevertheless, since the goal of this treatment technique is to enable people to take control of their lives, the successful programs based on reality therapy, coupled with Langer's empirical research, reiterate and support the fundamental message of Control Theory:

individuals must allow active responsible thoughts to precede their decisions if they intend to control their behaviour and their lives.

### Life Skills Theory

Since 1971, Life Skills courses have been a part of Canada Manpower training programs. Conger (1973) explains that the initial theoretical formulation for Life Skills training originated in 1965 from two psychologists in New York City, Winthrop Adkins and Sydney Rosenberg. According to Conger, the courses as they are practised today developed at the Life Skills Division of Saskatchewan NewStart in 1969. Under the direction of Ralph Himsl, Saskatchewan NewStart sought to find a way to increase adults' ability to use problem-solving behaviours to manage their personal affairs. The result was the Life Skills course that is now part of Canada Employment and Immigration's Job Preparation Program. In the seventeen years since the development of a Life Skills approach, the related theory has suffered from an ongoing tensions between process and product orientations in its approach to learning. But, in attempting to integrate both orientations the theory consistently overlooks factors that should be considered essential to a process

oriented program.

From the inception of Life Skills training, its developers have cautioned their followers that a process orientation to learning must come before a product orientation. Martin and Himsl (1973) concede that although the Life Skills' coach has an interest in knowing whether or not a student can perform a given skill, he must have a greater interest in measuring the process the student uses to acquire new skills. Similarly, Himsl (1973b) cautions that persons using a Life Skills course must concern themselves with the process of greatest importance in Life Skills, that of the transfer of skills from the training centre to everyday life. According to Himsl (1973b), the final expectation a Life Skills course holds for students is that they be able to teach their skills to another person. To teach the skill, he says, persons must have analyzed the skill, to know it in the cognitive domain, and must also have developed a loyalty to the skill, since they would be motivated to teach the skill only if they valued it. Despite Himsl's mention of process, it appears that one predominate intent of the program is to promote the students' accumulation and competent use of skills. This cumulative goal enables Himsl to readily believe that if the product can be accomplished, i.e.,

if the student can teach a skill, the process will take care of itself, and the student will come to understand and value the skill.

To Mullen (1985), Life Skills theory successfully integrates both process and product orientations to learning. But one can best see that in Life Skills theory the orientations are blurred rather than integrated by examining Stanton, Clark, Stradling, and Watts (1980). Two years prior to the publication of their report Stanton et al. (1980) began working on improving the design and curricula of Social and Life Skills courses in England. Their research identified seven models of Social and Life Skills teaching and enabled them to categorize different approaches to Life Skills. The team admitted their models represented only a starting point to understanding Social and Life Skills since any real teaching and learning situation is too complex to fit neatly into a model. Nevertheless they saw all Social and Life Skills teaching centring on one approach even if it included others. Of the seven models identified, four were product oriented and three described process approaches. The Life Skills training developed at NewStart, Mullen claims, was able to integrate these seven models to produce one approach to learning in which process and product harmonize.

The reflective and the counselling models are two examples of process approaches to learning identified by the Stanton team. The reflective model aims to help the student to perceive relationships and develop conceptual frameworks while the counselling model focuses on individual and group reflection on experience in order to increase the individual's understanding and control of his own behaviour. The potential advantage of these models, according to the team, is that they encourage the intellectual autonomy and critical understanding of learners. On the other hand the team notes that a "risk" of both models is that they may conflict with the participants' conventional view of the role of students and teachers.

The competency and information based models are examples of product oriented approaches to learning according to the Stanton team, and the emphasis in these models is on the mastery of specific skills in pre-specified tasks. The potential advantage here is that skill acquisition is attractive to learners because of the possibility of quick results and immediate success. The risks associated with the models include the possibility that too many things may be mislabelled as simple skills, and the problem that simply teaching transferable skills will not ensure that students will

be able to transfer them from the classroom.

Juxtaposing the risks and advantages of process and product approaches to Life Skills, as outlined by Stanton et al. (1980), leaves one doubting Mullen's belief that Life Skills theory can simultaneously be process and product oriented. If that were true theorists would need to constantly juggle opposing approaches to learning since one approach stresses critical understanding, and the other stresses quick results and immediate success. Instead of being both process and product oriented Life Skills theory has, in reality, only hinted at process. The competent performance of specific skills is repeatedly emphasized in Life Skills theory, and in Life Skills practice.

A product orientation is a recurring theme throughout the research of Himsl, the director of the NewStart Life Skills program. In his words, "All Life Skills training aims at promoting the transfer of skill training from the learning setting to an application in the life of the individual outside his training" (Himsl, 1973b, p.276). True learning, Himsl explains, means changed behaviour, so to develop a skill means to accomplish changed behaviour. With this concept of learning in mind Himsl (1973a) describes the Life Skills course as a way of providing a student with the



opportunity and the skills to study his problem, "or to put it another way, to study himself as a problem" (p.59).

To the extent that one can glean anything conclusive from the early evaluations of the Life Skills course it appears that practitioners, like theorists, saw Life Skills primarily as an opportunity to help learners accumulate and master a number of specific, practical skills. Riediger (1973), through his analysis of the Life Skills program used by Mental Health/Alberta, seeks to learn if the eleven participants who complete the program improve in their level of functioning and in their interpersonal adjustment as a result of taking the Life Skills course. His description of the study gives the reader every reason to doubt that his findings will be either accurate or conclusive:

The study was designed to be exploratory and description in nature. The Life Skills course is treated as a global entity and the participants are treated as a total group. As a result, the study does not show differences between individuals nor the effects of various facets of the course. (p.7)

Riediger increases the mysterious implications of treating a course as a global entity and participants as

a total group by concluding that his data shows a picture of general global improvement. Nevertheless, since he intimates that there was some indication that the course participants showed some potential for upgrading their vocational skills and for improving their interpersonal adjustment, one can only assume that the course did try to help the participants master some specific skills and that it was partially successful.

Similarly, Korzeniwski and Gander (1974) in their evaluation of a Life Skills course conducted by the Winnipeg Probation Service suggest that a product orientation to learning was the primary approach used in the course that they analyzed. Once again, however, the writers' own description of the hypothesis that guides the study leaves one doubting their ability to think clearly and conclusively:

Through employment of the Life Skills training approach and course content combined with trial work experience youth with delinquent behaviour patterns and ill equipped and poorly motivated for work can be motivated and trained to find and hold employment and live within the law. (p.43)

Guided by this hypothesis, Korzeniwski and Gander ramble through extensive, repetitious information on the daily activities of the group, the highlights of which are the

coaches' descriptive ratings of their students: "He was such a chronic sniffer that he was pretty well out of the picture most days that he attended" (p.51), and "He appears realistic in his outlook on life and is taking positive steps to improve" (p.65).

Korzeniowki and Gander (1974) conclude their report with the assurance that those completing the course did profit significantly from it. Based on their hypothesis I assume they mean that the course was able to snap the learners out of their old models, motivating and training them to be law abiding citizens. Since Korzeniowki and Gander failed to follow the progress of the learners after they had completed the program I doubt their optimism that the course did significantly change its participants.

In more recent literature on Life Skills the desire of the theory to be both process and product oriented, and its inability to combine both approaches successfully, continues. This inability shows itself most clearly in the writings of Smith (1981), and Mullen (1985). Smith's comprehensive taxonomy of Life Skills charts two hundred and twenty-two skills to show the terminal performance behaviour and corresponding sub-skills required to become a balanced self-determined person. A major idea guiding his taxonomy is that there

is a logical sequence for skill development beginning with simple behaviours and sub-skills, and ending with higher-order complex skills to facilitate coaches' use of skill drills in the classroom. After his extensive charting of simple and complex skills, Smith adds a word of caution: even people who have a complete repertoire of skills can be unsuccessful in life. The ingredients required to ensure their success, he explains, are the intervening factors of personality characteristics and attitudes. According to Smith these factors are both mediators between the skill repertoire and the use of skills, and are outcomes of successful skill use. But, he adds, since these factors are not skills they cannot be taught. Smith's solution to this dilemma is his suggestion that coaches make students aware of the role of these factors early in the Life Skills process - presumably so that if they fail to succeed in life they will know where to put the blame.

A similar tidy dismissal of responsibility can be seen in Mullen's explanation of the cognitive process of Life Skills training. Life Skills, she explains, tries to raise the cognitive functioning of students from the concrete level to a level of formal reasoning. Whether or not it does this, according to Mullen, depends not on Life Skills training but on factors

external to the program. Her examples of what she considers external to the program are factors in the students and factors in the course presentation.

Smith (1981) and Mullen (1985) can use factors external to the program as a convenient umbrella term to cover personality characteristics, attitudes, and cognitive functioning only because when they speak of the Life Skills program their focus is on the conglomeration of simple and complex skills that Smith outlines in his taxonomy. Life Skills, as theory, is still firmly rooted in the beliefs expressed in the first five years of the program: people need to study themselves as problems so that they can be trained and motivated to perform competently.

Until Life Skills theory stops struggling to be both process and product oriented in its approach to learning its only hope of facilitating critical understanding and intellectual autonomy in its students rests with the coaches of individual Life Skills programs. In discussing the training process Mullen saw the expertise of a trained coach as essential to an effective learning group. Rather than expertise, a term which in the context of Life Skills theory hints at skill competency and proficiency, I suggest that Life Skills requires coaches sensitive enough to the needs of

their students and committed enough to their conviction that changed behaviour and learning are not synonymous to take only a process orientation to learning. From my limited view of the Job Preparation Program offered at the community college under discussion I saw repeated evidence that the coach of this program tried to go beyond skill development to encourage a critical understanding of concepts in her students. Here personality, attitudes, and cognitive functioning were factors addressed in class and in the individual interviews referred to by the participants of my study.

### Social Theory

Life Skills theory and Control Theory focus on the individual to assist him to become more self-determined and responsible. But as each individual is also a participant in society, I turn now in this review to a discussion of the individual as social actor.

During the interviews with the six participants of this case study, the women occasionally expressed resignation and anger at their situation because "their lives couldn't improve since the system worked against them." In opposition to this passive, hopeless view of the system is the stance of social

theorists, expressed most clearly by Giddens (1979) when he states that "all social actors no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them" (p.72). It is this penetration that, according to Giddens, permits social structure to be both enabling and constraining. At the same time that social structure limits the scope of human conduct, it makes certain forms of activity possible. The enabling and constraining character of social structure is directly linked to Giddens' notion of unacknowledged conditions and unanticipated consequences. Social structure appears to enable the participants of my study when the following conditions are present: when the females perceive themselves as actively part of their condition; when they share viable alternative maps of reality; and when they view their dependence on social financial assistance as a temporary necessity. Conversely, social structure appears to constrain the participants of this study when unacknowledged conditions and unanticipated consequences dominate their lives. Those who feel powerless maintain their belief in self by resisting what they are taught, and those who see social assistance adequately meeting their needs continue to depend on it indefinitely. But in doing so they suffer the unanticipated consequence of a loss of

faith in their ability to meet their needs without the safety net of social assistance.

Giddens' concepts of social structure as both enabling and constraining, and of actions escaping from the social actors intentions to produce unintended consequences are part of his theory on structuration. Although reactions to his theory range from praise to a determination to re-write the theory to make Giddens' ideas more lucid, critics appear to agree with Giddens' ideas on the contradictory character of social structure. Dickie-Clark (1984) praises Giddens for his determined recovery of the active role of individuals in social life, and the consequent rejection of determinism. By insisting on the active role of people Dickie-Clark feels that Giddens has renewed the possibility of knowledge as emancipatory and of human social life as at least part open to the conscious efforts and hopes of individuals.

Callinicos (1985) suggests that Giddens should go farther than simply insist on the active role of people and discuss agency and resistance in terms of the variable conditions which, throughout history, have tempered oppressed groups' ability to act. Giddens, Callinicos maintains, needs to analyze resistance in different social formations since his theory does not



clearly show, for example, that the scope of resistance of a slave differ greatly from that of an autoworker. Callinicos concludes that Giddens is so preoccupied with an abstract account of human subjectivity that he fails to follow through the consequences of his own insight into the way in which social structures enable as well as constrain.

McLennan (1984) levels a similar criticism at Giddens when he states that the theorist covers many social contradictions under the umbrella term of structuration. Giddens, he contends, fails to specify the concrete social elements which are to count as predominantly structural in his theory, and speaks of rules and resources as having a virtual existence but never explains what he means by this. For McLennan any merits of Giddens' theory of structuration are obscured by his tendency to cast his concepts in excessively figurative terms.

Giddens' preference for a philosophical general explanation of people's capacity to resist, while completely overlooking the historical dimension of resistance, is clearly a weakness in his theory of structuration. His tendency to write only in abstractions without saying exactly what he means is a second flaw in his work. Nevertheless, Giddens does

write with insight when he speaks of the enabling and constraining aspects of social structure. In response to Callinicos, I suggest that Giddens fails to follow through the consequences of this idea because to do so he would need to admit the importance of human subjectivity and individuality in his analysis of social action. Rather than admit this, he chooses to write in abstract, general, and sometimes vague, terms.

A similar belief in the contradictory nature of social structure and an understandable reluctance to try to limit the conditions that work for and against social actors can be seen in Willis' notion of cultural production. In response to the either/or mentality, which suggests that some things reproduce a given society and that other things challenge it, Willis (1983) promotes his theory of cultural production to insist on the active, transformative nature of cultures. Willis explains that to create culture agents work individually and collectively to "explore, make sense of and positively response to 'inherited' structural and material conditions of existence" (p.112). Cultural production, he says, is the process of gaining insight into the conditions of existence. In Willis' words it is the "activity creativity and social promise of subordinated groups" (Willis, 1983, p.108). Expressing

a belief that closely parallels Giddens' view of social structure as enabling and constraining, Willis argues that cultural production needs to be viewed as both challenging and confirming. Cultural production, he maintains, can offer no guarantees since it is a creative process which in different material or political circumstances can produce different outcomes.

In stating that society gives the appearance of public stability only through a thousand uncertainties, Willis goes one step further than Giddens. While Giddens writes only of abstractions, Willis admits that, although social agents are not passive bearers and transmitters of structure and ideology, their ability to challenge or confirm their culture depends on their differing circumstances. Thus, though Willis defines cultural production as the social promise of subordinated groups, to find out whether or not anyone ever fulfills this promise one needs to go beyond the thousand uncertainties of society to study specific cultural groups and individuals as he did in Learning to labour (1977), and as I am attempting to do in the case studies of Chapter Four.

When one looks at the case studies and the women's attempt to control their lives Glasser, I believe, writes of concepts that are essential to our

understanding of the learning processes that developed during the sixteen-week period outlined in Chapter Four. Glasser (1972) discusses how behavioural change begins with the involvement of a helping person who, having established a trusting relationship, encourages patients to focus on what they are doing in the present. Guided by the concerned person, patients learn to evaluate their behaviour, plan alternative actions, and carry them out. In Control Theory, Glasser (1984) suggests that, without the aid of a helping person, individuals can learn to behave in ways that satisfy their needs if they first understand how they function as control systems. It is this functioning that the psychiatrist explains before he details how individuals can analyze their behaviour, choose alternative behaviours, and thus take effective control of their lives.

Whether or not they successfully take control of their lives, the six women who participated in my research are also social actors. Their behaviour, as Giddens (1979) contends, shows a penetration of the social forms in which they live. Each can only be discussed individually in terms of the degree to which she became more successful at fulfilling her needs. But the women can also be discussed collectively in terms of the shared social conditions which I believe had a

direct influence on their behaviour. My understanding of these shared social conditions became the link between the ideas of the social theorists discussed in this review and my own empirical findings.

Social structure appears to enable those females in my study who perceive themselves as actively part of their condition; who share viable alternative maps of reality; and who view their dependence on social financial assistance as a temporary necessity, while they anticipate the personal benefits of meeting their own financial needs. Individuals who see themselves as actively part of their condition realize that they contribute to their situation, that they are not simply passive victims of the system. This awareness, as shown in the work of Langer (1983), Glasser (1965, 1972, 1981, 1984), and his followers is the beginning of change, since only with acceptance of the reality of one's present behaviour can one evaluate it, and make realistic and responsible plans to change that behaviour in the future. It is awareness, perhaps, that Willis (1983) alludes to when he speaks of cultural production in terms of alternative knowledge. The process of accepting responsibility for one's situation is one undertaken by the individual. Consequently, social theory treats it as both a creative force that is

present or absent in social groups, and as one of the uncertainties that makes it impossible to predict the effect that agents will have on society.

The second condition that contributes to social structure's ability to enable the females of this study is their participation in what Willis (1977) terms alternative maps of social reality. In his ethnography of twelve working class lads in an English comprehensive high school Willis details how the lads are able to create their counter-school culture through the existence of their informal groups. The groups, he contends, give bits of information to the individual for him to work out for himself what makes things tick. Through informal contacts, school groups link to neighbourhood groups to form a network that passes on distinctive kinds of knowledge and perspectives. In the case of the lads, the perspective is primarily that of an opposition to authority. Denegating formal school rules, the lads replace them with the power that stems from their own masculinity.

Although their informal groups pass on markedly different knowledge and perspectives to the females in the Job Preparation Program, these groups - like those of the lads - sensitize their members to how dubious publicly accepted descriptions of reality are.

For many of the women discussed in Chapter Four the zone of the formal has been not school but home, where the husband has held completely the role of authority. The theme of the male financially and intellectually in charge of the family, and of the female accepting his decisions on career, child-care, and life in general recurred throughout my interviews. Though the women admitted dissatisfaction with the amount of authority their husbands yielded, each felt unwilling to defy or even to question it, since their husband was the family's wage earner. They knowingly traded decision-making for their and their children's financial security, accepting this reality as an unpleasant but necessary part of marriage.

Ironically, even when the marriage failed, because their husbands were still financially responsible for the family, many of the women discussed in Chapter Four continued to accept their husbands' authority, opinion, and even their verbal abuse. Only as they shared the reality of their marriage with informal groups of women involved with social programs for the separated or abused did they gradually realize how much freedom, initiative, and confidence they traded for financial security. As Willis' lads gained sufficient strength from their informal groups to

challenge their school's authority, so too did some of the women of this thesis gain a new perspective on their responsibilities as women and mothers through their participation in the informal groups that they turned to for help after their marriage failed.

The final condition present when cultural production appears to enable the females of this study is their recognition of social financial assistance as a temporary necessity, not a substitute for the financial security that marriage used to bring. Gerstel, Riessman, and Rosenfield (1985) directly link the mental health problems of separated women to the financial strain characterizing separation, and to their increased parental responsibilities. Their research suggests that separation, and the distress associated with it, reflects the gender-linked capacities and incapacities that the division of labour and emotion in marriage often promotes. Thus, for many separated women financial incapacity or the inability to provide for oneself and for one's children appears to be a major source of distress, and one that follows naturally from the division of labour that existed in their marriage.

In Ontario, Family Benefits Assistance, commonly called Mother's Allowance, alleviates some of this distress by providing financial assistance to those



single parents who need help with living expenses. Further, men and women without dependents who are in financial need may be eligible to receive assistance through the General Welfare Assistance program. This government sponsored program provides individuals with financial help to pay for necessities until they can find employment.

Five of the six women discussed in Chapter Four were receiving either Family Benefits Assistance or General Welfare Assistance at the time of our interviews. The sixth woman continued to receive financial support from her estranged husband. My research suggests that social structure appears to enable those females who are determined to leave the financial incapacity promoted by their marriages behind them. These are the women who, supported by the alternative knowledge of their informal groups, and aware of their active contribution to their situations, realize that the personal benefit of meeting their own financial needs far outweigh either the financial security they clung to in marriage, or the basic security that Family Benefits Assistance and General Welfare Assistance provide.

The constraining nature of social structure is most clearly seen among those participants in my study

in whose lives unacknowledged conditions and unanticipated consequences dominate. The unacknowledged conditions that I became aware of early in my interviews revealed themselves in responses such as: "I really shouldn't be in this program since I don't have any problems;" or: "I can't use much of what we're talking about in class because I've been told this all before." Responses such as these came from women who, in our interviews, suggested that they were able to transfer few ideas generated in class to their own lives since there was no fit between the two. They felt that the ideas they would have when the program ended were essentially those they had brought to class twelve weeks earlier.

One way of understanding the responses of these females is to consider them an example of the type of resistance Giroux speaks of when he discusses the behaviour of subordinate groups in society. For Giroux (1983) resistance has a contradictory nature. Instead of being simply a reaction to authority and domination resistance, he maintains, may be a form of refusal that highlights the need of subordinate groups to struggle against both domination and submission. Giroux suggests that resistance must provide individuals with the theoretical opportunity for self-reflection and with the

opportunity to struggle in the interests of self and social emancipation. In the creative actions of resistance, Giroux claims, one can find images of freedom.

Giroux's optimistic view of resistance as a creative act parallels Willis' (1983) belief in the active, transformative nature of cultures and "on the collective ability of social agents, not only to think like theorists, but to act like activities" (p.114). Both Giroux and Willis choose to emphasize the potentially liberating effect of resistance in their theories. If we interpret the behaviour of the females in the case study from their point of view, then their resistance to learning becomes an expression of hope for emancipation from life as they know it. But the interpretation which appears more convincing when applied to those females is that provided by Walker (1985) in his examination of the empirical data of Learning to labour.

Walker criticises Willis for what he terms his political interpretation of resistance, and seeks to determine if the behaviour of the members of the counter-school culture actually or potentially contributes to progressive social change by undermining the reproduction of oppressive social structures.

Willis' data, Walker contends, is vague and ambiguous on this point, giving every reason for a positive and every reason for a negative answer. To avoid this ambiguity Walker suggests the use of the term recusancy to describe the lads' behaviour. He defines a recusant as one who "refuses to acknowledge established authority in matters of ideological commitment and practice" (p.65). Explaining that historically the term was first applied to religious dissidents, Walker maintains that the lads of Learning to labour are recusant since it is clear that they are antagonistic to the school and its dominate values. But, states Walker, not only is it unclear that they are resisting the system of domination/subordination that school appears to be a part of, but it is even less clear whether they are actually or potentially eroding the mechanisms that reproduce the system. Walker refuses to accept Willis' conclusions that because the lads are school recusants they may be seen as resisting the social relations of reproduction of oppressive social structures, even though, paradoxically, they are perhaps more thoroughly incorporated into those structures than other people. Instead Walker offers his own conclusion which contains no paradox. The lads, he suggests, chose one option within an oppressive system, thereby rejected any other

options - some of which were more constructive.

I can no more see the resistance to learning on the part of some of the participants in my study as an example of their struggle against domination and subordination than can Walker accept Willis' interpretation of the lads' behaviour. Giroux and Willis are either overly optimistic in their discussion, or they refer to a type of resistance that I have yet to meet outside the realm of their theories. The idea of recusancy that Walker develops, however, appears to offer a plausible explanation for the resistance that I encountered during my interviews.

While the lads are recusant to the authority and values in their school because they see the sexual and manual privileges of the present as superior to the intellectual privileges of the school curriculum, the recusant females in my case study appear to demonstrate this attitude to maintain their consistent perception of themselves as powerless victims of the system. Consistency, then becomes its own victory, achieved by disavowing or refusing to acknowledge the conditions of life. Like the women previously discussed, who remain committed to the domestic arrangements imposed on them because they fear financial insecurity, these women will continue to rely on consistency as their way of

maintaining self-image until they learn more effective ways of dealing with their lives. One can only speculate on whether the Life Skills lessons will have significant impact on their lives sometime in the future, or whether another influence will change their ineffective way of dealing with life. By its nature the future contains unlimited potential. But in the present, as long as these women remain committed to consistency, their social structure can only act as one of many constraining forces to entangle them.

Finally, the relationship between Giddens' notions of the unanticipated consequences of social actions and of social structure's constraining character is most evident in the lives of these women when we examine the impact of social assistance on their attitude towards financial independence. While many of the participants in my study balked at the idea of accepting or continuing to accept General Welfare Assistance their attitude towards Family Benefits Assistance or Mother's Allowance was noticeably different. According to the Income maintenance handbook (1985), distributed by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the benefits provided by Mother's Allowance include a sum of money to cover general items such as food, clothing, and shelter; subsidized health

insurance under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan; and dental care. The handbook states that if an individual is separated, deserted, or divorced and has a spouse who is not providing financial support but he is able to do so, the individual is expected to make some attempt to get support payments before he or she can qualify for Family Benefits.

It became apparent during my interviews that the women who were on Mother's Allowance either had husbands who were unable to provide support or who, protected by expert lawyers, simply refused to pay. Regardless of their husbands' situation, many of the women understandably saw their acceptance of Family Benefits Assistance as the most reliable way to provide for the immediate financial needs of their children and themselves. Additionally, the monthly income, some suggested, would give them the extra time they need to update their skills, job hunt and begin a new and different career.

From a practical point of view their intentions are sound and appear full of potential. But for some of these women these intentions, like the social actions described by Giddens, slip from their control to produce an unanticipated consequence. Instead of freeing them to begin new careers, social

assistance becomes a safety net which ironically erodes their ability to meet their own financial needs.

Removal of Family Benefits Assistance is not the solution to this problem. These women need to be convinced that they can become capable of meeting their own financial needs, and until they are social structure will continue to constrain them. The question of how to convince them is answered, I believe, more directly by Glasser's Control Theory than by the theories of Giddens, Willis, or Giroux.

The concept of human agency, Giddens contends, means that the agent always maintains some control over his actions. Even an act of suicide, Giddens explains, is an act of power since it is an agent's ultimate refusal to accept another's oppression. Whether an agent's act of power reveals the enabling or the constraining quality of social structure depends on the variable conditions which temper his actions. It is likely that whenever unacknowledged conditions or unanticipated consequences dominate their lives agents will appear constrained by their social structure. Further precision about the outcome of an agent's action is impossible since, as Willis (1983) said of society, each agent "is always moving, always self transforming, always giving of the appearance of public stability only



through a thousand uncertainties" (p.128).

### Summary

Were Life Skills theory to take only a process approach to learning the theory would fully support coaches' attempts to consider the personality, attitudes, and cognitive functioning of members of their training groups since these are factors that must be considered by anyone hoping to invite learning. Because of the ongoing struggle to be both process and product oriented Life Skills theory continues to consider these factors ones that are external to a Life Skills program. Consequently, the effectiveness of training groups rests with the coaches of individual Life Skills programs, and with their willingness to go beyond the theory to meet the needs of their students.

Although much has been written to show the effectiveness of programs based on Glasser's reality therapy, few researchers have directly addressed the psychologist's Control Theory. The empirical research that best supports the ideas presented by Glasser is that of Langer (1983). Her empirical research and Glasser's theoretical arguments together emphasize that individuals must allow active responsible thoughts to proceed their decisions if they intend to control their

behaviour and their lives.

While Life Skills Theory and Control Theory focus on the individual, Social theory considers the interaction between the individual and his society. Giddens' notion of unacknowledged conditions and unanticipated consequences appears to explain how individuals can be both enabled and constrained by their social structure. Based on my findings in Chapter Four I suggest that social structure appears to enable the six women of my study when the following conditions are present: when they perceive themselves as actively part of their condition; when they share viable alternative maps of reality; and when they view their dependence on social financial assistance as a temporary necessity. Conversely, those females who appear constrained by their social structure are the individuals who either maintain their belief in themselves as powerless victims of society by resisting what they are taught, or who lose faith in their ability to meet their needs without the safety net of social assistance.

## CHAPTER THREE: PROCEDURES

### Introduction: The Interview as a Research Tool

H. J. Rubin (1983) best describes the ideas that led me to decide on the interview as my most effective tool to find the answers to the controlling questions of my thesis when he wrote:

In qualitative research, truth is always layered. That is, there are multiple interpretations of any given social phenomenon. No matter how exhaustively the subject is studied, no single common truth may emerge. (p.341)

Rather than attempt the impossible, i.e., to establish a single, objective truth about each of the participants in the case study, I saw the interview as an opportunity to come to a mutual interpretation of their experiences. The strength of my interpretations rests not, as Finch (1984) would suggest, on my identity as a woman. Rather, it rests on a combination of trust and doubt: trust in our common humanity as a strong starting point for my understanding of the experiences of the informants; but doubt in my interpretations until I verified them with the informants and with their coach,

with whom the women shared many of the experiences discussed in our interviews.

Finch bases her suggestion that the success of her interviews with women rests on her identity as a woman on two studies where she was the sole researcher. The first involved ninety-five clergymen's wives, and the second, forty-eight women who were running and using preschool play groups. According to Finch, these women were almost always enthusiastic to talk to a woman researcher, and were glad of the interviews because they lacked other opportunities to talk freely about themselves. Further, she suggests that the easy flow of information that characterized each of her interviews resulted from the particular kind of identification that develops in a woman-to-woman interview. Admitting that she lacks any research to show the comparative effect of men in interviews Finch nevertheless maintains that in a woman-to-woman interview a particular kind of identification will develop because both parties share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender. She cites intimate comments from her interviews as evidence of the easy flow of information that typifies a woman-to-woman interview and insists that these comments would not have been forthcoming had she tried to maintain an unbiased and objective distance

from the interviewees.

Finch's determination to avoid maintaining an objective distance from her interviewees is clearly the key to her rapport with them, and one which she erroneously links to her notion of a gender-related subordinate portion in society. By acknowledging that she lacks any research to show the comparative effect of men in interviews Finch reveals that her discussion contains more conjecture than proof. The women in Finch's studies may have been glad to talk to her, and they may have welcomed the interview as a chance to make sense of the contradictions in their lives. But to attribute their reaction to her identity as a woman is to suggest that self-disclosure and self-understanding in an interview are likely only when people share a common gender. Finch's article understandably lacks any research to support this questionable point of view.

Like Finch, I was conducting interviews with women, and an easy flow of conversation also characterized our interviews. But I can attribute nothing of the rapport that developed in the interviews to what Finch termed the particular kind of identification that is part of a woman-to-woman interview. Instead, the trusting relation was one that I deliberately tried to establish as an interviewer.

Douglas (1976) explains that trust is an essential prerequisite to any interview that seeks to get at inner emotional experiences. Douglas further suggests that the main appeal of the interview is self-awareness, self-disclosure, and self-understanding, and my experience substantiated his findings. The willingness with which the women agreed to the interviews and with which they spoke about their personal lives at first surprised me. Then, it became apparent that for many of these women self-disclosure brought greater understanding, and that consequently, they welcomed the interview as an opportunity to think about and clarify their experiences.

Douglas' (1985) observation that an interviewer's own humanity is the beginning of his understanding of all human beings is the premise that guided my interpretation of the women's experiences. To go beyond my initial understanding, however, during the final two interviews with the six women I shared my interpretations of their experiences with them, and sought their reactions. I also elicited the reactions of the women's coach to my interpretations of their experience since she too was involved, either directly or through discussion, in many of the situations that formed the data for my case studies. Only after

considering all their reactions did my doubt in the interpretations lessen. Though no single common truth emerged from my interviews, yet the interpretations presented in Chapter Four reflect the agreement of the interviewees and their coach on experiences that contributed both content and direction to the Life Skills lessons of the April, 1986 Job Preparation Program. Though the interpretations provided me with the answers to the controlling questions of this thesis, and as such are the end of my research, yet the interviews that produced them are only tentative beginnings. In Douglas' (1985) words: "A researcher's search for truth is never done and his only certainty is uncertainty" (p.158).

#### Research Design

A semi-structured interview was the primary tool that enabled me to gather data for the six case studies in Chapter Four. At intervals of three weeks, while the Job Preparation Program was in session, and one month after the final class I held individual interviews with the six participants of the study. By using open-ended questions I encouraged each female to reflect on the skills she had been using. My questions specifically focused on the skills pertaining to the

three core areas of deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985):

1. participants' knowledge about themselves and attitudes towards themselves;
2. participants' interpersonal relationships; and
3. participants' problem-solving ability.

In each interview I sought to record the student's interpretation of what skills she had been using, her thoughts about these skills, and her feelings when using them. Since the problems that Life Skills address are one that concern self in relation to job, family, leisure, and community these too are the areas of her life that I asked the student to comment on in our interviews.

An essential part of each interview was the following three questions suggested by Glasser (1981):

1. Is there anything you really want that you do not have?
2. Is anything that you are doing in class helping you to get what you really want? and
3. Is anything that you are doing outside of class helping you to get what you really want?

By asking these questions I followed only Steps One, Two, and Three of Glasser (1981). In other words, because the relationship between each student and myself



was evaluative and not therapeutic I sought to find out if each felt that she was becoming more effective in satisfying her needs without making any suggestions as to what else she could be doing to become more effective.

In an attempt to provide evidence of the skill acquisition which my interviews sought to document, I also interviewed the coach of the Job Preparation Program, Mrs. Laura Smith, at three-week intervals. During each three-week period her students were encouraged to practise skills corresponding to Mullen's (1985) three core areas of skill deficiency. And since students' ongoing feedback was an essential element in the training process her observations of their skill use increased my understanding of each students' reaction to the Life Skills training process.

Although the semi-structured interview was the primary tool that enabled me to gather data for my case studies, I also based my interpretation of the participants' use of Life Skills on two written sources: the referral form that each student completed at the start of the program; and the individual written evaluation that was completed and sent to the Ministry of Employment and Immigration at the end of the program. As these reports specify needs and objectives, as well

as job goals, they also proved further information on the participants' knowledge about themselves and attitude towards themselves, their interpersonal relationships, and their problem-solving ability.

As part of my consideration of each student as a co-researcher in this study, the fifth and sixth interviews were retrospective in nature. In the fifth interview, which took place during the twelfth week of the program, I shared my interpretations of recorded data with each student and elicited her reaction. Especially by reflecting on the answers that she gave to Glasser's three key questions, we together decided if her total behaviour had changed so that she had become more effective in satisfying her needs.

One month later, I again interviewed each of the six women, and requested that she take a second retrospective look at Life Skills. This time my interview included only two of Glasser's questions, the first and the third. Based on her answers to these, each of my co-researchers and I decided whether she began, continued, or ceased to be effective in satisfying her needs.

### Pilot Study

My interview questions were piloted with two

participants in the Women into Trades and Technology course at the community college under discussion. The Women into Trades and Technology course includes Life Skills, and consequently the two women were able to offer their comments as to the clarity of my interview questions.

#### Instrumentation

The questions for my interviews were in open format. I allowed an hour for each interview to give each student time to reflect on Life Skills, and on her answers to Glasser's three questions. In order to focus the interview on skills that pertain to the three core areas of deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985) my initial interviews began with open-ended questions regarding each participant's attitude towards herself, the skills she was using in her interpersonal relationships, and her use of the Life Skills problem-solving techniques. The interviews closed with Glasser's three questions. In subsequent interviews the open questions that pertained to the three skill areas under discussion developed from the responses that each participant gave to her examples of skill use in the preceding interviews.

### Interview Procedures

At the beginning of each interview I reminded the student that there could be no right or wrong answers to the questions I asked. My goal was to record and to understand her interpretations of her total behaviour. To the extent that she shared this with me she was responding to my invitation for us to be co-researchers. I ensured that she remained aware of this throughout the course of our relationship.

### Selection of students

During the first week of the April 1986 session of the Job Preparation Program Mrs. Laura Smith, the program's coach, informed her students that I would be needing six female volunteers to participate in a research project in order for me to complete my studies at Brock University. The students were told that I would be conducting a series of interviews to find out more about the Life Skills that they would be using during the program. Based on this request seven women volunteered to participate in the research project. Only six completed the series of interviews, since the seventh withdrew from the program after attending for three weeks.

### Data Recording

I recorded each student's responses in note form by hand as I felt that a tape recorder would inhibit both of us.

### Limitations

Because of the self-disclosures that were made by the six females during the interviews the reliability and validity of my study falls upon the interviewer. In an attempt to validate the data collected all information and interpretations were shared with the participants, and their reactions to the data are included in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE CASE STUDIES

### Introduction

This chapter presents a narrative report of data collected over the twelve-week period of the Job Preparation Program, and four weeks after the end of the program. As mentioned in the footnote on page three of Chapter One, the names of those involved in these cases have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

### Elizabeth: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Elizabeth was a forty-year-old mother of two children (a daughter age ten, and a son age six). Having separated from her husband two years before our first interview, Elizabeth came to the Job Preparation Program to improve her job search and interview techniques in order to find a full-time job doing typing and receptionist duties in an office. In her last job, which she held twelve years ago, Elizabeth worked in the personnel office of a department store as a reserve staff co-ordinator. There she was responsible for placing staff in departments requesting help.

Elizabeth felt that she lacked the confidence necessary to apply for and keep a job because of the sudden changes in the roles that she had been accustomed to for the past seventeen years. With the failure of her marriage she saw herself working from the bottom up; her husband had left the matrimonial home and had a girlfriend, and the children who were now her responsibility, were difficult to communicate with and to care for. Despite her lack of confidence, Elizabeth felt that it was essential for her to find a job quickly since her husband had given her twelve months to update her skills and start working. At the end of that period he had said he would no longer be financially responsible for his wife and children.

Elizabeth entered the Job Preparation Program during these twelve months. Unsure of exactly when her husband intended to end his support, unsure of whether or not he could legally stop providing for them, and unsure of her job hunting abilities, Elizabeth felt determined to find a job. Only by working would she be able to support herself, and pay the expenses associated with her home if her husband carried out this threat and abruptly stopped supporting his family.

In the Fourth Week of the Program

On the day following our interview Elizabeth had an appointment to see a lawyer who had advertised in the local newspaper for a legal secretary. This would be her first job interview since the start of the Job Preparation Program. Elizabeth explained that although Laura, the coach of the program, had seen the advertisement in the paper and had made the initial telephone contact with the lawyer, she, Elizabeth, had made the call to arrange the appointment for the job interview. She felt apprehensive about going to the interview, and about her job skills since she thought she was underqualified for the advertised position. Yet, because of the practice interviews that she had participated in during the course, and because of the television interview that she had watched in class, she felt she knew how to project herself well. She was confident that she would be appropriately dressed for the interview, and that she would remember to appear calm and not fiddle with her hands. Her main apprehension was in her qualifications for the position but she intended to do her best since, as she said, "I don't want to let Laura down."

In addition to improving her job search



techniques Elizabeth felt that the Life Skills lessons were a help to build up her confidence in herself since most of what she was learning was information that she already knew, but was only now applying to herself. Elizabeth admitted that even before her separation but increasingly since her husband left home she, with his help, had been blaming herself for the way their marriage was. She had been comfortable at home and remained there caring for the children and leaving her husband responsible for their total financial support, and for most of the major decisions that affected the family. Now in their separation he blamed her for constantly caring for the children and for never bettering herself. In accepting her husband's criticism Elizabeth also accepted the guilt for the marriage breakdown. Her attitude towards herself worsened during the separation since, with her increased personal and financial problems, the care of the children became one more problem to deal with. Her son was stubborn, her daughter distant, and she felt inadequate as a mother.

When asked if there was anything that she really wanted that she did not have Elizabeth replied that finding a job was her first concern. She saw both the group Life Skills sessions and the individual discussion periods with Laura helping her towards this

goal as she had now written an impressive resume, and was generally clearer on how to go about searching for a job. Elizabeth felt that what she was doing outside of class was also helping her to get what she wanted. She had just completed a grade ten typing and word processing course at a local high school and now, based on what she had found out about her job skills during her last three weeks in the Job Preparation Program, she had decided to apply to the high school to attend its co-operative business course that would start in September. At the business course Elizabeth would receive more on-the-job experience than the Job Preparation Program provided and this, she felt, would improve her chances of finding a job.

"I don't know how I'll finance going to school," Elizabeth concluded, "but if all else fails I'll do it somehow."

#### In the Eighth Week of the Program

Elizabeth spoke first about her job interview at the lawyer's office. She thought she had muffed the entire interview. She lost her composure early in the interview and became discouraged when they said they were looking for someone with more real estate experience. Elizabeth then read from a card in her

purchase a summary of the lawyer's comments to Laura about the interview. He said that though he needed someone with more real estate experience he intended to keep Elizabeth's application on file should a more general position come open in his practice. He was impressed with Elizabeth and felt she would definitely be an asset to any office in which she worked.

Elizabeth said she repeatedly read the lawyer's appraisal of her interview since it told her that she could apply for a job. She felt that she needed to practise more skills to help her to project herself in interviews and to feel more confident in her job search.

Because of an incident that occurred the day before our interview Elizabeth felt that her life was in a frenzy and that it was hard to project the confidence she did not have. A member of the Job Preparation Program, with whom she had developed a friendship, took a drug overdose on the weekend and it was Elizabeth who afterwards drove her to the hospital. This woman was also separated from her husband and her attempt at suicide frightened Elizabeth. It was for her "a bit of a pull down," one that shattered her confidence. But she knew she had to get herself together and keep looking for a job.

In class Elizabeth had been practising how to express her feelings without hurting another person but she had not yet been able to use anything from Life Skills in her relationship with John, her husband. At the start of their separation he had agreed to pay two thousand dollars per month to her to cover all the expenses relating to their home, herself, and their children. Now he wanted to end the support. Elizabeth hoped to convince him to extend the time limit on their agreement without involving a lawyer since she wanted to maintain their friendship, and because her savings were dwindling. Each visit to the lawyer, she said, meant one more bill to pay.

Despite the communication skills that she was learning Elizabeth continued to feel that talking with her husband was like having an interview with a brick wall. In an effort to build her confidence Elizabeth planned to have one more work experience under her belt before talking to John, and then she hoped she would find her husband in a good mood so that he would extend their financial agreement to give her more time to job hunt.

When asked if there was anything that she really wanted that she did not have Elizabeth replied that she wanted a job, and for her husband to keep

supporting their family until she found one. Although nothing was helping her to broach the subject with her husband Elizabeth felt that her activities both in and out of class were helping her to become employed. She continued to work on her resume in class, and had been to the Land Registry office in an attempt to secure a work experience there. After learning from a friend that the Ministry of Commercial Relations was looking for a counter and records clerk she had also personally delivered her application there to ensure that it would be in their office before the advertised deadline. If all else failed Elizabeth was still determined to attend the high school business course in September to improve her secretarial skills.

#### In the Twelfth Week of the Program

Elizabeth had just completed a two-week work experience in an accounting office where she worked as a secretary to three chartered accountants. Her eyes, she said, were opened by this job as she found out that she was not as capable as she thought she was. She was able to cope with the daily office routine, which included answering the phone, distributing the mail, and typing letters, but she became disconcerted when asked to type to meet a deadline, or to change the ribbon in the

typewriter.

Nevertheless, when she reflected on the comments she had made about herself during the twelve-week period of our interviews Elizabeth thought that the job related life skills had been essential in preparing her for the interviews and work experiences that she completed. At the start of the program she had had neither the confidence nor the specific knowledge to project herself in an interview, write an assertive cover letter, or update her resume.

Elizabeth said she finally gathered enough strength to confront John on the topic of financial support. Their conversation lasted about an hour and in that time she constantly tried to remember what she had been taught about effective confrontation during Life Skills. She remembered not to make accusing critical remarks and for the first time since their separation she felt that while talking with him she had made all the points that she had intended to. Her confrontation, Elizabeth said, showed her husband that she too could make decisions about her life, since he claimed that her refusal to make decisions was one of the reasons why he had left her.

One result of their conversation was that John agreed to continue the financial arrangement on a

monthly basis. The second result was that he now asked for custody of the children so that he would not have to pay Elizabeth support costs. Dissatisfied with either result Elizabeth went home, cried for the night, and then decided that their relationship had deteriorated so much that she was ready to see a lawyer. It was about time, she said, that she had some legal advice to know exactly where she stood, and to ensure that John fulfilled his financial obligations to the family.

The two things that Elizabeth really wanted and did not have during our previous interviews were a job, and for her husband to keep supporting their family until she found one. When asked if what she had been doing during the twelve weeks of the Job Preparation Program had helped her towards achieving these goals Elizabeth replied that she felt certain that it had. She intended to keep job hunting and on the following day was going to put her application in at a credit union in the city. The job related activities over the past twelve months, including her interviews, applications, and especially her work experience, had given her job search increased direction, and her the courage to actually enter offices and apply for jobs. Elizabeth still intended to return to the high school business course in September if she had not found a job

by the fall. In the meantime she planned to follow all the job leads that she had found out about from Laura and from the job search techniques that she had learned in her Life Skills classes.

When Elizabeth spoke of the arrangement she had made with John to ensure that he kept supporting their family her feelings were mixed. She was dissatisfied with the month to month verbal agreement and considered it unfair. Yet she realized that it was better than his stopping payments abruptly, as he had threatened to do. She would never know if he withdrew his threat because of their recent conversation but felt that without the communication skills that had been part of her Life Skills lessons she would not have known how to go beyond his verbal abuse, confront him, and argue persuasively.

A second result of her Life Skills lessons, Elizabeth felt, was that she was gradually refusing to feel guilty about accepting financial support from John. Her decreasing guilt, she said, came as she began to believe that she was worthwhile, and not the useless wife and mother that her husband had accused her of being. The Life Skills lessons that showed her how to evaluate her strengths and her weaknesses helped her to realize that she need not accept John's berating



comments as the truth. Further, the fact that she was actually searching for a job and thus working towards financial independence from her husband also helped to convince her of her worth as a person. Elizabeth felt that since she was working as hard as she could to find a job, it was John's responsibility to give her the time she needed to update her skills and to make up for the years she had spent out of the workforce raising their children. By involving a lawyer in their dispute she hoped to ensure that he did keep supporting his family until she could assume some of the household costs, and that she retained custody of the children.

### Interpretation

In the three core areas of skill deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985) Elizabeth's total behaviour had changed so that by the end of the Job Preparation Program she was more effective in satisfying her needs. From the beginning of the program Elizabeth had known that she wanted a job in an office, but through her interviews and her work experience she became more aware of her job related competencies and weaknesses. This knowledge, coupled with her Life Skills training, also helped to increase her confidence and her feeling of self-worth. Although the incident with her friend who

attempted suicide temporarily shattered Elizabeth's confidence, by the twelfth week of the program she had sufficiently regained it to be able to accept the chartered accountant's criticisms, and to consider them a help since they showed her what job skills she ought to concentrate on.

Confidence and diminishing feelings of guilt also contributed to her finally confronting her husband on the issue of financial support, a task that she feared to attempt at the beginning of the program. When they discussed the problem of support Elizabeth relied on the communication skills that she had practised in class to help her present her side of the argument, and to prevent herself from returning to what she termed the passive victim role that she had been accustomed to throughout their marriage. Since their discussion failed to effect the financial arrangements that Elizabeth had hoped for she decided to see a lawyer, a fact which further shows that Elizabeth was more in control of her life at the end of the Job Preparation Program than she had been at the start. Earlier in the program she avoided legal advice because it was costly, but in doing so she lived with the fear that her husband could effect his threat and abruptly end his financial support. Consequently, she depended on John's being "in

a good mood" when they spoke about finances as this would make it less likely that he would stop supporting her. In going to the lawyer Elizabeth was freeing herself from her depending on John's temperament and from his threats.

Finally, in dealing with her problem of being without a job Elizabeth's total behaviour changed to enable her to be more effective over the twelve weeks of the Job Preparation Program. Her in-class job preparation, the interviews, her work experience, and her active job search together made her feel more confident about returning to work after her twelve-year stay at home. Moreover, in all aspects of the job search Elizabeth was beginning to apply the problem-solving methods discussed in Life Skills to her own life. Instead of hoping that she would not let Laura down during the interview Elizabeth, by the twelfth week of the program, was evaluating her work experience to learn what skills she needed to concentrate on and improve in order to manage the office job that she wanted. She was also actively applying for jobs that she had heard of through the program, from her friends, and from reading the newspaper. At the start of the program Elizabeth had felt so outdated, and so much like a failure that, although she had completed a

grade ten typing course, and a twelve-week word processing course, she had lacked the confidence to apply for any jobs. In the twelfth week of the program Elizabeth was actively searching for a job. She was also registered for the high school co-operative business program in September, determined that by the fall she would have found a way to retain custody of her children, maintain her home, and attend school.

Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

Elizabeth was continuing her job hunt independently of the Job Preparation Program, and at the time of our interview was working on her resume and cover letter to apply for a job as an office trainee. The job had been advertised in the previous night's newspaper. Although she had not yet found a job she said she knew that her lack of success was due, not to her poor job hunting technique, but to the fact that she still needed to upgrade her office skills. She felt hopeful about the job that she was now applying for since it included training in the areas in which she knew she needed upgrading.

When we spoke of her relationship with John, Elizabeth said that she had been to her lawyer and he was now involved in their financial arrangements. She

expected their separation papers to be signed within the next three weeks. Elizabeth felt that the settlement costs were fair, but she knew that she still needed a job to supplement them since her monthly house expenses were almost one thousand dollars. Elizabeth said that her husband had been displeased that she chose to involve a lawyer in their arrangements, but she realized that this was the only way to ensure that her husband did not continue to use money to threaten her.

Elizabeth called the job as an office trainee her Plan A. Plan B was to begin the high school business course in September. She had admitted to herself that it would be financially impossible for her to go to school all day if she had no earnings and had tried to acquire a short-term personal loan from her bank. When she found out that she was ineligible for this loan Elizabeth had considered finding a part-time job in the evenings as a waitress. She decided against this possibility since Elizabeth felt that her children had had enough upset in their lives in the past year. Leaving them with a baby-sitter each evening while she worked Elizabeth felt, would eventually lead to larger problems than the ones she was presently struggling with.

As a compromise Elizabeth decided to enrol in

the high school's half-day business course. This would allow her to use her afternoons to earn extra money. She had already telephoned a government agency to inquire about the possibility of her taking care of children whose mothers had to work. Elizabeth was expecting them to telephone her within the next two days. If she had not heard from them by then Elizabeth planned to telephone the agency for a second time. Elizabeth was disappointed that she would be unable to go to school all day and thus finish the course in ten months, but spreading her schooling over two years was the best course of action for herself and the two children.

When Elizabeth thought about the twelve weeks that she had spent in the Job Preparation Program she felt that her greatest benefit from the program had been the confidence she felt at being able to do something to change the unsatisfactory way she was dealing with her problems. Her confidence, Elizabeth said, came from evaluating her strengths and weaknesses and then from using the skills she had been learning to apply for jobs and present herself well at interviews. One of her goals on entering the program had been to work more consistently at job hunting and Elizabeth felt pleased that she had accomplished this goal. Her financial

situation still worried her, but Elizabeth felt that her days of sitting home with the children and crying about her situation were behind her. Today, she said, she could even laugh at how by being a passive, easily manipulated person she had made it so easy for her husband to heap all the blame for the marriage on her. Now when she looked back at their seventeen years of marriage she realized that both had stopped working at being married about seven years prior to their separation. His involvement with a women with whom he worked was simply, Elizabeth said, "the icing on the cake." She wished they had been able to give their marriage a second chance, but she refused to smother herself in guilt for all that she had not done and had not been while married to John.

### Interpretation

In the three core areas of skill deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985) Elizabeth continued to be effective in satisfying her needs one month after the end of the Job Preparation Program. Despite her lack of a job she still felt confident about herself, and she had accomplished her goal of applying herself consistently to the job search. Moreover, although Elizabeth admitted that she consistently found it

difficult to discuss anything with her husband, her decision to involve a lawyer in their financial arrangements indicates that Elizabeth no longer intended to accept John's decision as final the way she had throughout their marriage.

Nowhere is Elizabeth's changed approach to her problem seen as clearly as in her attitude towards going back to school. She had evaluated her situation, considered alternative possibilities and then decided to try to earn the money she needed baby-sitting in the afternoons. This job would ensure that she was able to remain at home with her children, but would give her the extra income that she needed to remain in the house that she presently owned. Elizabeth had acted on her decision, and at the time of our interview had already contacted the government agency.

Gloria: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Gloria was a twenty-seven-year-old single mother of a six-year-old girl. She had been supporting herself and her daughter by Family Benefits Assistance but a year before attending the Job Preparation Program she had also worked part-time as a dishwasher at a restaurant. Gloria came to the training program determined to improve her skills in mathematics as she



hoped to find a full-time job as a cashier.

In the Fourth Week of the Program

In our second interview Gloria explained that the Life Skills she had been practising in class were not new to her since they had been taught to her once before while she was recovering from a nervous breakdown in 1982. Nevertheless, through the Life Skills training she was gradually beginning to feel more at ease about herself and not as concerned about the critical things people said about her. Gloria said that from childhood she had considered herself fat and ugly, and now she was beginning to tell herself that she was not a bad person after all.

When we spoke of the interpersonal skills that she had been practising Gloria said that since she had always been a good listener the communication techniques were only reinforcing what she already knew. Nevertheless, she found that her new understanding of the responsibility an individual had for his actions and feelings had made it easier for her to intervene in the fights between her daughter and her boyfriend's eight-year-old son. She explained that the children constantly accused each other of starting disputes saying "He/she made me do it." Gloria had been trying

to help them to see that no one can make one do anything, that each person acts according to his own choices.

Gloria felt that Life Skills had not helped her to identify any particular problems since at present her life was going in harmony. When asked if there was anything that she really wanted that she did not have Gloria replied that she wanted a job and for her boyfriend and herself to live together. Gloria needed a job since once her boyfriend moved to her home she would be ineligible for further assistance from Mother's Allowance. Moreover, since he too was receiving cheques from Family Benefits Assistance unless they found jobs before they lived together they would have no money to pay their bills. Welfare, Gloria felt, was not the solution since her income from this would be even less than the inadequate amount she was presently receiving through Mother's Allowance.

Nothing that Gloria was doing in or out of class was, according to her, helping her to either find a job or to live together with her boyfriend. She knew that she needed to improve her math skills and to learn the metric system in order to become a cashier but had not yet begun to work on any mathematical problems. She was worried about living with her boyfriend since she

had had such a terrible experience with her daughter's father, but felt that her Life Skills training was doing nothing to make her more comfortable with the idea of their living together. Nor was her training lessening her anxiety when she considered the bills that would face her once her Mother's Allowance cheques stopped arriving.

#### In the Eighth Week of the Program

Gloria continued to feel that she was learning nothing new in her Life Skills lessons since she had already been taught Life Skills in hospital after her nervous breakdown. She admitted that she was one of the more silent members of the training group since she had little that she felt like contributing to the classroom interaction. Her feelings about herself had not changed since entering the Job Preparation Program, nor had she developed any new interests. After working through the job interest sheets that she had been given in class she was even more certain that she wanted to be a cashier. But since this was a job goal that she had brought to the program, Gloria felt that Life Skills had had no effect on this area in her life.

When describing her interpersonal relationships Gloria felt that she was now getting along

much better with her mother than she had been in the past, but this improvement, she felt, was no reflection on Life Skills. She had been talking with another girl in class who also had an authoritarian mother, and by following the girl's suggestions she had been able to assert herself with her mother and ask her to stop interfering in her, Gloria's, life.

During her Life Skills lessons and when out of class Gloria was working towards her goal of becoming a cashier. In class she practised her way of presenting herself to a potential employer and how to effectively ask for a job. She had tried to use what she had practised when she went to a restaurant and a supermarket to inquire about the possibility of gaining a work experience at either place. In her last interview Gloria said she felt uneasy because her interviewer did not even say "Hi" to her. He afterwards told Laura that he had refused her the work experience there because she had been too quiet - a comment that Gloria felt was unreasonable since the interviewer had not given her any encouragement.

Gloria was now waiting to hear whether or not she would receive a work experience as a result of her interview at the supermarket. Gloria felt more at ease during this interview since this was where she usually

shopped for her groceries, and she had, on occasion, spoken briefly with the manager. When asking for the work experience, Gloria had directly told her interviewer that she was nervous and this admission had in turn helped her to be more at ease during their conversation.

When asked about her desire to live together with her boyfriend Gloria said that she had done nothing further towards this goal. Since they were determined to live together Gloria was prepared to accept General Welfare Assistance if she did not have a job by the end of the course.

#### In the Twelfth Week of the Program

Gloria felt that in terms of her attitude towards herself Life Skills had primarily helped her to realize that she always chooses to feel the way she does and that she cannot blame someone else for making her angry or upset. But she admitted finding it difficult to cope with the hurt she felt when her neighbours called her "witch" and "slut" as they frequently did. Life Skills had shown her no way of dealing with these feelings so she intended to seek further individual counselling from a government agency in the city.

Gloria explained that she had one year ago

sought counselling from the agency after being beaten by her present boyfriend Jake. His beating had contributed to her reluctance to live with him, but since he too had gone for counselling, and since they had received joint counselling at a hospital she was now willing to live with him.

When speaking of the interpersonal skills that she had been taught during her Life Skills lessons Gloria felt that she had used them to best effect in her relationship with her mother. Encouraged by Laura's examples of how to share your feelings openly with another person Gloria said that for the first time she began telling her mother how she felt about their relationship. By the end of the conversation Gloria said that she was in tears, had told her mother that she loved her, and had heard her mother say the same words to her. Gloria said that that was the first time she could remember having exchanged any loving words with her mother.

With the exception of her mother, and on the rare occasion with her boyfriend, Gloria felt that she used little of the interpersonal skills from the Job Preparation Program at home since her major problem at home was Jake's eight-year-old son, and his situation was more complex than Life Skills could handle. The

child had been left without care as a baby, and now he was full of anger and spite. The year before he had been sexually abusing her then five-year-old daughter. Gloria said this was particularly hard for her to forgive since she too had been sexually abused as a child. She could not believe that the same thing had been happening to her daughter in her own home. Since then the boy had been counselled by the Family and Children's Services and she and her boyfriend were constantly vigilant to ensure that the children were never left alone together. Life Skills, Gloria felt, had not made it any easier to cope with life at home.

She and Jake were now living together, hence the urgency of her getting a job. Since our last interview Gloria had received a week's work experience at the supermarket where she had had her second interview, but the week's experience had not led to a job offer. During the last week of the Job Preparation Program she had submitted job applications to three establishments that she learned were hiring additional staff. Though none of the jobs involved cashiering Gloria felt ready to accept any job since she needed the money. "I can't be picky when I have bills to pay," she explained. The applications had resulted in one request for an interview from a chicken factory that

needed forty individual to work full-time on their afternoon shift. She had learned of this job from another member of the Job Preparation Program. Gloria had her fingers crossed that she would get this job since her last Mother's Allowance cheque would arrive at the end of the month. If she did not succeed in getting a job at the chicken factory Gloria intended to apply for General Welfare Assistance.

#### Interpretation

Over the twelve-week period of the Job Preparation Program Gloria's total behaviour did not change so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs in any of the three core areas suggested by Mullen (1985). Although at the start of the program Gloria said that she was feeling at ease with herself and was seldom upset by the critical things people said about her, yet at the end of the program she still felt unable to deal with her neighbours' antagonizing comments without receiving additional counselling. Similarly, the goal of becoming a cashier was one that she came to the program with, and one that remained unchanged, although Gloria resigned herself to taking any job in order to pay her monthly expenses, and although she admitted to working infrequently on



improving her skills in mathematics.

In the area of interpersonal relationships, Gloria's total behaviour in regard to her mother had changed, and by the end of the Job Preparation Program she was working on developing a closer relationship with her. Earlier in the program Gloria had seen her only as an interfering, annoying person who created problems between Jake and herself. By the end of the Job Preparation Program Gloria appeared willing to share some of the communication skills that she had learned through the program with her mother, and to initiate telephone calls and visits with her. But the gains made in this area were offset by the ongoing daily problems that Gloria was having with Jake's son and also, as she intimated in our final interview, with Jake since the son was actively trying to pit his father against her.

With the exception of explaining to Jake's son that he was responsible for his feelings, information which she had learned in her Life Skills class, Gloria felt unable to make any headway with this boy whom she considered "completely messed up in his head."

Finally, in the area of problem-solving although Gloria's job hunting ability improved, her total behaviour did not change so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs. Prior to registering

in the Job Preparation Program Gloria had remained at home, and had made no attempt to find a job as a cashier since she had not known how to go about either improving her skills in mathematics or applying for a cashier's job. In the course of the program she spent time on mathematics when the mathematics teacher taught them. Further, she applied the job search techniques she had learned by arranging her own work experiences and by entering her application with the establishments that were hiring new staff. But if she failed to secure a job after following all the job leads that she found out about during the Job Preparation Program Gloria expected to go on welfare, a course of action that she knew of from the start of the program. She had no idea of how she could direct her own job search once the Job Preparation Program ended, hence her urgent desire to secure the job at the chicken factory.

Similarly, now that Jake's son was no longer being counselled, Gloria knew of no other way to solve her problems with him than to constantly watch and discipline him - a solution that increased the friction between all members of the family. Gloria explained that although her method of dealing with the boy was unsatisfactory she knew of nothing else that she could do. Everyone, she said, had problems and one just had

to learn to live with them. Nothing from Life Skills was helping Gloria to live more easily with her problems. With the exception of her relationship with her mother, and her active job hunt during the training program, in the three areas of skill deficiency outlined by Mullen (1985), Gloria's total behaviour at the end of the Job Preparation Program was little changed from her behaviour on entry.

Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

Gloria went for the interview at the chicken factory, but had not been hired there. The interviewer had promised to telephone her on the Monday following the interview to tell her whether or not she would be given the job and Gloria had remained home in anticipation of the job offer. No one called. Gloria had considered telephoning her interviewer to find out if she would be hired but decided not to since "nobody likes to be bugged."

Gloria had not applied for any other job since a friend had offered her temporary work on his vegetable farm. Gloria's major difficulty with this job was the fact that she could work only when the weather was good. On muddy or rainy days Gloria stayed home since she did not own a pair of rubber boots. When asked if the other

people on the farm owned boots Gloria replied that they did, but that she could not afford to buy a pair for herself.

Jake, Gloria's boyfriend, and his son were now living in Gloria's home and she was keeping her fingers crossed that he would soon find a job. He had recently applied for a job at a trucking company and would know in a week if he would be hired.

When asked about the Life Skills that she had learned during the Job Preparation Program Gloria said that they had been of help in preparing her to job hunt, She felt that she could again use the interview techniques if, at some future date, she tried to find a job. The uneasy situation at home between Jake, his son, and herself still continued and Gloria hoped that, if Jake landed the job at the trucking company, he would be away for long periods of time. She sometimes considered seeking additional counselling but had not decided whether or not she needed to go for more help.

### Interpretation

Gloria was no more effective in satisfying her needs one month after the end of the Job Preparation Program than she was at the end of the program. Her feelings about herself and her attitude towards the

problems in her personal life showed little change from one interview period to the next.

Gloria's inability or reluctance to solve the problems that faced her revealed itself in her attitude to work. She stayed home on rainy or muddy days because she did not own a pair of rubber boots. The idea of saving her earnings to purchase a pair did not appear to be one of her considerations.

Gloria's approach to the future focused on hoping for change rather than on doing anything to effect the change that she wanted. Thus, her fingers were crossed that Jake would get the job at the trucking company. This would prevent them from having to accept welfare cheques, and would keep him away from home and from her. His absence, Gloria felt, was the best solution to the ongoing problems that troubled their relationship.

Sarah: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Sarah was a fifty-one-year-old mother of two girls, one of whom still lived at home. Separated from her husband, Sarah worked two evenings a week as a cashier at her neighbourhood variety store. This work supplemented the income she received from Federal Benefits Assistance. In September of this year Sarah's

eighteen-year-old daughter would be leaving home to attend university, and consequently Sarah would no longer be eligible for Mother's Allowance. Sarah came to the Job Preparation Program in the hope of finding a full-time job since she did not want to have to apply for General Welfare Assistance.

In the Fourth Week of the Program

Sarah was enjoying her daily Life Skills lessons and the entire structure of the program since she now had something to look forward to each day. She surprised herself by particularly enjoying the mathematics classes, since before joining the Job Preparation Program she had had no interest in any academic work.

Sarah was happy to sit in the Life Skills lessons which, though they taught her nothing new, were interesting and a worthwhile way to pass the day. Her feelings about herself had not changed; nor did she want them to since she had always been friendly and gotten along well with everyone. Sarah was separated from her husband but that too, according to Sarah, was how she wanted it. She had not seen him for many years, and hoped not to have to see him in the future either.

Sarah's one problem was her need for a job.

She had lived since her separation on her Mother's Allowance income and the money she earned at the variety store. But her Mother's Allowance cheques would soon stop coming, so she had to look for a job. Sarah's job goal was to work as a member of the cleaning staff at a hospital or at a nursing home. Sarah felt that if she was going to work as a cleaner she preferred to work at an institution that would pay her well, and at hospitals and nursing home the staff earned eight or nine dollars per hour. By contract, Sarah explained, if she went to work to clean someone's home she would only be paid four dollars an hour, and the house owner would probably include a number of unreasonable requests in her contract. Sarah felt that at her age it made no sense to have a laborious, poorly paying job.

Sarah though that nothing that she was doing either in or out of class was helping her to secure the cleaning job that she wanted. Nevertheless, she was enjoying her participation in the Life Skills lessons. Although she could use little of what was taught, being in class and with other people was significantly better than staying at home alone.

#### In the Eighth Week of the Program

Sarah continued to enjoy her participation in

the Life Skills lessons, although she admitted that she seldom thought to use anything that she had heard in the classroom when she was away from school. She had no reason to since she was content to remain as she was. Although she liked being part of the group during a Life Skills lesson Sarah was especially pleased with her efforts in the carpentry shop. Before coming to the Job Preparation Program she had never touched a hammer, and now she was busy making a spice rack for her kitchen.

Sarah's only problem was that of finding a job and she felt that thanks to Laura's encouragement she was now actually looking for one. Sarah explained that since Laura liked the class participants to find their own work experience she, Sarah, had handed her application in to a hospital and to a nursing home. At the nursing home she was offered a week's work experience as a cleaner.

Sarah had just returned to the Job Preparation Program after her work experience on the day of our interview. Although there were no job openings at the nursing home she had received an excellent evaluation based on her week's performance there. Sarah felt that she deserved the good evaluation since she had worked hard on each day of the work experience. Now she was happy to be back in the Job Preparation Program where



life was more easygoing.

Sarah felt that the Job Preparation Program was helping her to find a job since with Laura's encouragement she had found her own work experience. Further, the job hunting strategies that she had heard of in class had motivated her to look daily through the "Help Wanted" section of the newspaper. Apart from reading these advertisements Sarah had no clear job-finding strategy for the four remaining weeks of the Job Preparation Program. If Laura gave the class a day off to job hunt, she would think about putting her application somewhere else. If she was given no time off Sarah was willing to wait and see how the remaining time would be structured for her.

#### In the Twelfth Week of the Program

On Laura's advice Sarah had given her job application to another nursing home in the city, and had attached a copy of the evaluation from her work experience to it. Soon after applying she was offered a job to work one day a week as a member of the cleaning staff. Sarah's starting salary would be nine dollars per hour.

In our interview Sarah said that although she was pleased to have found a job, she wished that she had

been asked to work three and not one day per week. By working only one day she would not earn enough to cover her expenses. Sarah said she felt all mixed up, as if she were taking one step forward and two steps back. She just had to wait and see if her hours at the nursing home would increase. Sarah was also considering applying for a cleaning job at another hospital, but she felt uncertain of what she ought to do, whether it was better to try for a cleaning job at the hospital or to see if the job at the nursing home would develop into full-time employment.

Although Sarah had no specific opinion about the Life Skills lessons she felt that it had been worth her while to attend the Job Preparation Program for twelve weeks. The program gave her a reason to get up in the mornings and enabled her to meet interesting people. Further, in carpentry Sarah had not only made a spice rack but had constructed two new drawers for her kitchen cupboard. She took them home, put them in place and they both fitted. Sarah's only complaint about the Job Preparation Program was that since she came to school by bus every day, at the end of each month she had spent thirty dollars on bus fare. Sarah said that many of those who withdrew from the program had left because financially it was not worth their while to

stay. She felt they had a good point but she, Sarah, had opted to stay in the program - despite its expense - since she liked to finish anything that she started.

### Interpretation

Over the twelve-week period of the Job Preparation Program Sarah's total behaviour did not change so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs. Sarah did, however, gain a large measure of enjoyment from her participation in the program, especially from the time spent in the carpentry shop. During our last interview it was apparent that Sarah's newly acquired carpentry skills meant more to her than any of the Life Skills that she had practised in class.

Through the program Sarah maintained that her only problem was her lack of a job. Although by the end of the program she had secured the type of job she wanted at the wages she wanted, Sarah's reaction to its limited hours revealed that she had no clear idea on how to apply the Life Skills problem-solving techniques to her particular situation. Moreover, though Sarah saw the program as a motivator to get her out of bed in the morning, the details of her job search suggest that her chief reasons for applying for jobs and for the week's work experience was to comply with Laura's requests.

Aside from her work in the carpentry shop Sarah initiated few actions during the course of the program and readily admitted that she used none of the Life Skills outside of the group practice sessions since what she was learning was not applicable to her life.

Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

During the preceding four weeks Sarah had only been employed one day per week at the nursing home and she was undecided as to what she could do to increase the number of hours that she was working. She felt that she might talk to her boss soon to see if he could arrange for her to be employed for three days instead of for only one. She continued to think about applying to another hospital for a job on their cleaning staff, but had not yet sought an application from them.

When Sarah reflected on her time spent in the Job Preparation Program her only comment was that, although it had enabled her to meet interesting people, she felt that she had lost too much of her Mother's Allowance income by attending. In terms of the money it had cost her, Sarah felt that her time in the program had not been well spent.

Interpretation

Sarah was no more effective in satisfying her needs four weeks after the end of the program than she was while attending the Job Preparation Program. The only need that Sarah identified during our interviews was that of finding a job. Although she continued to be dissatisfied with the number of hours that she was working at the nursing home Sarah applied none of the problem-solving techniques that she had been taught during her Life Skills lessons to this problem, and at the time of our final interview, was undecided as to how she could get the full-time job that she still wanted.

Paulette: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Paulette was a twenty-one-year-old mother of two children, who were in the custody of her husband and his family. She had come to Canada six months prior to the start of the Job Preparation Program and soon after arriving had left her husband because of the abusive treatment she received from him, and because of his involvement with drugs. In Ireland, her former home, she had been a factory worker, but hoped that the Job Preparation Program would help her to find a job that she could enjoy, one that would bring her satisfaction. At the time of her entry into the program she was

unclear of her job interests, since she was only now beginning to learn how individuals identified and trained for jobs that would bring them more than a financial reward.

In the Fourth Week of the Program

Paulette credited her Life Skills lessons with the increased confidence that she felt since beginning the Job Preparation Program. For the first time in her group interaction sessions Paulette realized how quiet and shy she was but she was gradually learning how to assert herself in class. She felt that while her husband and his family had constantly criticized and mocked her, now that she was involved in a supportive honest group she was gradually realizing that her opinion did count, and that other people considered her worthwhile.

Paulette explained that in class she had been learning how to identify assumptions and how to evaluate other people's opinions. She had recognized an opportunity to practise what she had learned when she last spoke to her lawyer. The situation that led to the conversation was the following: soon after entering the Job Preparation Program Paulette had applied for a job at a service station and had been accepted to work

part-time on evenings and weekends. Paulette's children were sometimes allowed to visit her on weekends. On this particular weekend, although her husband was supposed to take the two children back to his home on Saturday afternoon he informed her that he had made other plans and that she had to keep the children for the entire weekend. Paulette was scheduled to open the service station at seven o'clock on Sunday morning so she phoned her husband's parents, explained the situation and asked them to take care of the children on Saturday night. The grandparents refused to be responsible for the children. Paulette then phoned her social worker, explained the situation and stated that since she had agreed to open the service station on the following morning she would not be responsible for her children on Saturday night. The social worker in turn telephone the children's grandparents and after her intervention they agreed to accept the children back into their home on Saturday evening.

Paulette related this incident to her lawyer since she was in the process of trying to regain custody of the children. In response the lawyer tried to convince Paulette that she was involved in too many conflicting activities by attending school, working part-time, and trying to regain custody of her children.

Instead the lawyer suggested that Paulette stay home and concentrate on trying to fight in court for the children. Paulette felt that prior to her Life Skills lessons and her growing confidence in her own opinion she would have swallowed the lawyer's suggestions and acted on her advice. Now she recognized that although she was trying to explain her goals and desires to the lawyer, she, the lawyer, was hearing little of what Paulette was saying. Paulette said that she now knew that she could think clearly for herself and that she need not accept the lawyer's advice as the gospel, simply because she was a lawyer. She therefore decided to keep her original plan, and try to regain the children at the same time that she was attending school and working part-time.

On the topic of job hunting Paulette said that by following the interest exercises in her Life Skills classes she found out that her main job interests centred around helping people, and her long term goal was to become a recreational instructor. Prior to the Job Preparation Program Paulette said she never dreamed she would work anywhere but in a factory, as this was the only employment available to her in Ireland.

Paulette cited an incident with her family doctor as one in which she was able to use both the



communication and problem-solving skills that she had been practising in class. On another occasion when the children spent the day with her she noticed that her two-year-old son was suffering from a severe diaper rash and was constantly throwing back and shaking his head. Fearing that his actions were an indication of harm that had occurred while the child was in the care of his father, Paulette took the boy to the emergency room at the local hospital. Because Paulette could give the doctor on duty no details of what had precipitated his head jerking and screaming the doctor suggested that he remain in hospital overnight. When the hospital contacted the family doctor to find out more about the boy the doctor informed them that the child's father had already brought the child's condition to his attention, so there was no necessity to admit him for further testing.

Paulette felt terrible. She believed the doctor would be angry at her stupidity and decided that she would not go back to him again. However, when in class they were encouraged to use the problem-solving technique of brainstorming, Paulette applied what she was learning to her situation with the doctor. As a result, she wrote a list of all that she wanted the doctor to know in an effort to explain her concern for

her son. On hearing her explanation the doctor assured her that she had acted as any conscientious mother would have acted, and lessened her fears for her son by telling her that each time he saw the child he was happy and appeared to be well cared for by his father and by his grandparents. Paulette was relieved and grateful that she had immediately applied her brainstorming techniques to her problem with the doctor.

When asked if there was anything that she really wanted that she did not have Paulette replied that all her thoughts centred on regaining custody of her children. At the time of her separation from her husband the court had decided that each parent should have custody of one child, but since Paulette had wanted the children to remain together she asked that both stay with their father. Paulette was living at a home for abused women and felt that if the children were with their father the grandparents would care for them until she found suitable accommodation and until she found a way to support herself financially.

Soon after having made this decision, however, Paulette regretted it since each time the children came to visit her four-year-old daughter clung to her mother, cried and refused to go home to her father and grandparents. Her disposition had changed, and at her

father's home she cried constantly for her mother.

When asked if anything she was doing was helping her to regain custody of her children Paulette replied that her court date had been set for early the following month so at present she was simply waiting for the date to come. The Job Preparation Program was helping to pass the time and to take her mind off the children. Additionally when in class they had worked on taking responsibility for one's choices Paulette said that what she learned had made it easier for her to admit to herself that the situation with the children had not simply happened to her. It was she who had chosen to put both children in her husband's custody. Paulette said, "If I did it, I believe I can undo it too. I'm willing to fight to have my kids back."

#### In the Eighth Week of the Program

After her day in court Paulette had been given custody of her children, and they would be returned to her as soon as she found suitable accommodation for them. "Now that I know I'll be getting my kids back I feel as if I'm stepping out of a storm," Paulette said.

She was grateful for all the support she was receiving through her Life Skills lessons since Paulette felt that what she was learning was helping her to make

good decisions about her life. When she learned that the children would be returned to her Paulette's initial desire was to return to Ireland and her parents' home. There, she felt, she would have help with them. Once again, as she had done after the incident at the hospital, she wrote out her problem, and all the advantages and disadvantages that a return to Ireland would bring and realized that in thinking to return to Ireland she was trying to run away from her problems. What had made Ireland look appealing was the fact that there she had a home, and in Canada she was having difficulty finding an apartment to live in with the children.

Now that she was determined to stay in Canada she was putting all her energy into hunting for a suitable apartment. She had put her name on the waiting list of several Ontario housing projects, was looking nightly through the rental advertisements in the newspaper, and was asking everyone that she knew if they were aware of any apartments for rent.

Paulette felt that the greatest benefit that came through her participation in the Life Skill's lessons was the constant encouragement she received from Laura and from the other members of the class to think positively. The phrase "light a candle in the darkness"

kept recurring in her thoughts and she now made it a habit to look for the benefit that she believed she could always find in a situation. She gave as an example the fact that, though she was eager to have custody of her children, she was jogging nightly and trying to enjoy this activity since she knew that she would no longer be able to jog at night when she had the children.

On the topic of interpersonal skills Paulette felt that she was beginning to use much of what she was learning in class in the relationship between her husband, Harold, and herself. She still loved him and was extremely lonely without him. Since he still seemed interested in her she was making a deliberate effort to replace what she now realized was her aggressive behaviour with assertive behaviour. Instead of simply criticizing him for all his faults, and especially for his drug abuse, she was trying to more calmly tell him how she felt, and to realize that since he owned the problem, it was he who had to seek counselling to learn to deal with it. Paulette was torn between hoping he would give her the chance to take him back, and realizing that unless he was willing to accept counselling their marriage would be no better now than it had been on their arrival in Canada.

In addition to her increasing use of the communication skills practised in her Life Skills lessons, Paulette felt that her two-day participation in a self-defense course that was offered through the program also improved her chances of getting along well with her husband. She deliberately showed him the wood that she had broken with the strength of her hand, and since then he had not attempted to hit or spit at her. He knew, Paulette said, that if necessary, he would be the next one broken.

Although her domestic affairs had consumed most of her time and thought over the past seven weeks, Paulette had nevertheless arranged a work experience in the Y.W.C.A. day-care program. At the end of the week's placement she had received an excellent evaluation. Her supervisor had said that she had a terrific attitude with children. Paulette had greatly enjoyed her placement, but was surprised by the supervisor's comments since she said she was unsure how she had managed to keep her composure during the week. It was then that she had been involved in the legal battle for custody of the children, a fight that she felt had "dragged her through hell."

Paulette had decided to withdraw from the Job Preparation Program once her children were returned to

her because she felt that her immediate care of them was essential. Until they, and especially her daughter, showed signs of feeling secure even when Paulette was away from them Paulette felt that being with them had to be her priority. Once they were settled she could then pursue her job-related goals. For the present she was willing to accept monthly cheques from Federal Benefits Assistance. But she had enrolled in a Dining Room Service Program that would begin at a community college in six months. When the children were older she hoped to train to work as a recreational instructor; but for the present she saw waitressing as a job that she could more easily combine with child care. In order to be allowed entry into the program in the winter Paulette needed to upgrade her high school mathematics and English to the grade twelve level. She had yet to find out how she could upgrade her high school diploma before the start of the Dining Room Service course in January.

Now that Paulette was sure of the children's return her immediate desires were for an apartment that she could afford and for her husband and herself to be able to make a second attempt at their marriage. She felt confident that she would eventually find an apartment since she was actively searching for one. She felt less certain of her marriage relationship since she

knew that unless her husband wanted to change his behaviour and his drug dependency there could be no hope for them. Nevertheless she felt that, in applying the Life Skills she had learned, she was making it more likely that they could work out their problems. Paulette specifically mentioned that in talking with Harold about his behaviour she always made sure not to put him down as a person. Additionally, Paulette said that Life Skills had showed her to depend on herself first and not think that she had to have someone - her parent or her husband - to lean on. Her increasing confidence in herself, Paulette believed, would help her marriage since she no longer intended to turn to her husband with the expectation that he would solve all her problems. In the past Harold was frequently unable to meet her expectations and met Paulette's rage as a consequence. Paulette credited Life Skills with showing her how to contribute more to their marriage than she had in the past.

#### In the Twelfth Week of the Program

Paulette withdrew from the Job Preparation Program at the end of its ninth week, but during my week of interviews we did meet and speak briefly at her apartment. Paulette's news was that soon after our last



meeting she had seen an advertisement in the paper for an apartment, one that she thought she could afford. She went to see it, and the owner and she signed a leasing agreement at once. Paulette was relieved and thankful for her perseverance.

Now that Paulette was settled with her children Harold had shown an interest in moving back into the home. He had promised to see a counsellor but as yet had only made promises without actually seeking help. Paulette had, for the present, asked him not to move into her apartment since she felt unsure that he did intend to seek counselling for his drug use or for his abusive behaviour. She tried to encourage him to go since she felt that they could not remain together unless he learned different ways of behaving. Paulette was waiting for Harold to follow through on his promises.

Paulette's life now centred around her children and she was delighted to see her daughter's calm and friendly temperament returning. She missed attending classes at the Job Preparation Program but knew that once winter came she would have another opportunity to go back to school. In concentrating on the children she had not yet made the time to inquire about upgrading her high school diploma in order to meet

the entrance requirements of the community college's Dining Room Service Program.

One practical way in which Paulette felt that she was using information that had been taught to her in the Job Preparation Program was through her changed diet. After one of the lessons on nutrition Paulette said she realized how much junk food she had been in the habit of eating. She had recently borrowed a book on healthy eating habits from the local library and was trying to plan a different menu for each day of the week. Thus far she had been able to follow through on her plan. She had also lost four pounds, which was an added incentive to her eating more sensibly.

#### Interpretation

Although Paulette withdrew from the Job Preparation Program after the ninth week of the program, by that time her total behaviour had changed so that she was more effective in satisfying her needs. At the start of the program Paulette felt so overwhelmed by all the problems in her personal life that she had been unable to complete her program referral form. Then and in the initial interview with the coach she had spent much of the time crying. In addition to feeling alone in Canada she had believed her husband's accusations and

saw herself only as a failure. She was a sloppy housewife who had produced uncontrollable children. Further, by becoming a mother she thought that she could never enjoy a career as a recreational instructor.

Nine weeks after participating in the Life Skills lessons of the Job Preparation Program Paulette felt confident that motherhood need not mean an end to schooling and to a career. Working in a recreational job became a long term goal that she was willing to wait to attain.

Through her participation in the group activities in the Life Skills lessons Paulette realized that there was more to her as a person than the barrage of criticism that she had received from her husband and from her in-laws. Her increased confidence reflected itself in the determination with which she approached her custody dispute and her apartment hunt, as well as her new interest in nutrition, diet, and exercise.

Although Paulette reinforced the interpersonal skills that she was trying to use with Harold with her two-day self defense course, yet over the duration of the program she did conscientiously try to replace her aggressive behaviours with more assertive ones, thereby making their relationship less explosive. Paulette's way of thinking about her husband also changed since she

tried to differentiate between Harold and the behaviours that she disliked in him. These changes, coupled with the loneliness of living by herself in Canada, helped to increase her desire to live again with her husband. But their second attempt would presumably differ from their first since Paulette no longer saw her husband as someone who could compensate for her own inadequacies.

From the start of the Job Preparation Program Paulette seemed eager to apply the problem-solving techniques taught in class to her personal problems, as seen in the incident with her family doctor, and to couple these techniques with a deliberate optimism. She continued to find ways to light a candle in the darkness. The one area that Paulette had not attended to with her usual determination was that of arranging to upgrade her high school diploma in preparation for the Dining Room Service Program. It appears that she intended to work through that problem but felt that she had six months in which to accomplish her goal. For the present Paulette's children and her marital relationship occupied most of her time and thoughts.

#### Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

Since her withdrawal from the Job Preparation Program Paulette had been spending most of her time at

home with her two children. In the evenings when the children were asleep she used her time to read the many books on marriage that had been loaned to her by Mary, her friend and counsellor from the abused women's centre. She also repeatedly listened to a tape on child guidance and discipline that Mary had also loaned her. She said that from listening to the tape she was beginning to learn how to guide and care for her children. Paulette felt relieved that she could manage on her own with the children.

Paulette discussed all the problems between her husband and herself with Mary, and as a result of their discussion had decided against allowing him to live with her again. Paulette said she realized that her reasons for thinking to take her husband back were all the wrong ones, and that they came primarily from her feeling of loneliness. Her husband had inadvertently helped her to make this decision when he admitted to her that he was working and collecting unemployment insurance at the same time. Further, were he to move into her apartment he intended to pay her no more than the fifteen dollars in support payments that he was currently paying. Harold thought that since she was managing on welfare, and would soon be receiving Mother's Allowance cheques, it made better sense for him

to save his earnings and buy a car than to support his family.

Paulette felt that she could not live with Harold since he showed no intention of acting as the head of their family. "Now one person is living dishonestly, but if he moved in here the kids and I would be too," Paulette explained. Though she felt reluctant to go to court again since she did wish to remain on friendly terms with him, Paulette said she was prepared to go if by the end of the summer he was still working and refusing to support the children and herself. She knew that if she went to court the Unemployment Commission would find out that Harold was working and collecting unemployment insurance, but she realized that it was likely that Harold would not support her unless she began legal action against him.

In the fall Paulette planned to return to the Young Moms' group that met twice weekly at the Y.W.C.A., and in the winter she would begin the Dining Room Service Program at the community college. While she was a school the children would received day care from a mother in her neighbourhood. Paulette had already sent away to Ireland for the necessary transcripts to ensure her admission to the program.

Paulette considered the listening skills that

she had been taught during the Job Preparation Program the skills that she found most useful in her daily life. She was especially aware of listening attentively to all that Mary said to her, and of how she phrased her requirements when she spoke to her children. She also listened closely to her husband on his visits to her apartment and realized, from his conversation, that life with him would be no better now than it was prior to their separation. In dealing with the daily problems that faced her now that she was living without her husband and caring for her two young children Paulette felt indebted to Mary whose ongoing counselling and friendship gave her the strength to manage on her own. She felt that the Life Skills that Mary used when counselling her and the resource books that she had loaned her gave her the direction that she needed to make a good home for herself and her children in Canada.

#### Interpretation

After the Job Preparation Program ended Paulette continued to be effective in satisfying her needs in the three areas of skill deficiency outlined by Mullen (1985). Her most immediate concern on her withdrawal from the program was the care of her two children, and at the time of our final visit she had

already proven to herself that she was a competent mother who could guide and care for them well. Although Paulette had decided against living with her husband their relationship was, Paulette felt, considerably less abusive than it had been in the past. Paulette realized that it was futile to insist that he change, and she also realized that there were interests and friendships that she could enjoy without him. Consequently, his visits were essentially that, without the name calling and criticism that they used to aim at each other.

Although at the time of our final interview Paulette was working at solving each of her problems and was preparing for the Dining Room Service Program, she attributed her increasing ability to manage her life not to the Life Skills that she had learned at the Job Preparation Program but to Mary's ongoing counselling and friendship. The Job Preparation Program, it appears, had helped Paulette to feel more confident about herself and had given her job search increased direction. But now that she was away from the program she felt more comfortable relying on Mary's counsel and friendship than on any of the particular skills that she had learned during her nine-week exposure to Life Skills.



Connie: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Connie was a thirty-nine-year-old mother of four children aged twenty, seventeen, fourteen, and ten. She separated from her husband three years before enrolling in the Job Preparation Program and since her separation lived with one son, and her youngest daughter. Prior to the birth of her children Connie had worked in the payroll department of a post office. Her goals on entering the program were to increase her levels of confidence and self-worth, and to be able to apply for jobs that paid more than the regulated minimum wage. To qualify for a well paying job Connie intended to train as a legal assistant by attending courses offered at a community college.

In the Fourth Week of the Program

Connie felt she had made no changes in her life since beginning the Job Preparation Program. She saw much of what she was being taught in class as repetitious of information that she had known before entering the program. Similarly, the job interest activities were of no use to her since prior to entering the program she had known that she wanted to go to school to study law. Thanks to the Life Skills lessons on deciding who owned a particular problem Connie felt

more aware of the issues that she was dealing with at home. For example, she explained that on the previous weekend her son had rented a V.C.R. and instead of taking it back on Monday morning, as he had agreed to do, he left home to play a game of tennis. Prior to her Life Skills lessons Connie said she would have immediately blasted him for his irresponsibility. Now she said nothing since she knew that his behaviour was his problem and not hers. But Connie felt that she had gained little by her silence since she was still infuriated at her son.

Similarly, the interpersonal skills that she was learning in Life Skills were making her life worse not better. Her boyfriend was a traditional man who wanted a domesticated wife to care for him. He felt threatened when Connie spoke of career goals or when she stated her opinion boldly as she was learning to do in class. One of the things that she really wanted was for him to present her with an engagement ring, but nothing that she was doing would enable her to get this. Jack considered an engagement ring a waste of money, and as Connie said "nothing from Life Skills would get him to change his attitude." Moreover, Life Skills was not helping her to deal with her anger at the fact that she could not persuade him to divorce his first wife from

whom he had been separated for six years.

The second thing that Connie really wanted was a job that would enable her to support herself. She had been in court twenty-six times in the past three years in an effort to force her husband to pay the support costs that he was supposed to, but thus far he had continued to evade his responsibilities. Because he was self-employed he used legal loopholes to avoid paying and Connie thus had to depend on monthly Federal Benefits Assistance cheques. Connie feared that Mother's Allowance would force her to sell the cottage that had been left to her in their separation, and she was determined to keep it. In order to do this, and to avoid being stuck with a poorly paying job, Connie intended to return to college and upgrade her skills. She felt that the Life Skills component of the Job Preparation Program was bringing her no closer to the job that she wanted since it had nothing to do with the training she would require to work in a court of law.

#### In the Eighth Week of the Program

On the day of our interview Connie had once again been to court and had signed the minutes of settlement completely in her husband's favour. Today for her meant "twenty-one years of marriage down the

tube." For her husband she felt it meant freedom from being hounded to pay the seventeen thousand dollars that he ought to have provided for her in their settlement. Connie felt confused, drained, and defeated. Clearly, she said, Life Skills were not helping her to become more assertive or she would not have signed the settlement as readily as she did.

Connie felt that laws were made differently depending on whether or not one had a profession. Since she did not have one she was sunk. She simply became too tired to go back to court one more time especially as she knew that she would eventually end up losing the battle to her husband. When her oldest son was sixteen, Connie added, he had told her that she only needed his father for his money, and that she was contributing nothing to the marriage. "That was his father talking," she said, "and now I'm being hung by the one thing that I didn't put into the marriage."

Connie continued to worry about her ownership of the cottage. She felt that as long as she owned the cottage she was sure to have a roof over her head, even if she ran out of money to meet the payments on her apartment in the city. Now more than ever, it was imperative that she find a job. If she had her own money Mother's Allowance could not force her to sell the

cottage. Further, a job that paid four dollars per hour was definitely not worth considering now that she had signed the settlement agreement. Had her husband agreed to pay even five hundred dollars a month to support his youngest child she would have been "high on the hog and off to the races" since even with this help and a poorly paying job she could afford to keep the cottage. But under the present circumstances a minimum wage job was a waste of time.

When asked what she had been doing to find a job Connie mentioned that she had been working on her resume, and practising her interview skills. She had intended to spend a week in a job placement at the John Howard Society, but since she knew already that it would not lead to a paying job she had decided against going there. Instead she would use the week to hunt for full-time, permanent employment.

Whether or not she received an engagement ring was one of Connie's least considerations now. Her entire intent was on finding a job.

#### In the Twelfth Week of the Program

On the day following our interview Connie was scheduled to be admitted to hospital to undergo surgery to correct the problems associated with a pinched nerve

in her right hand. She felt apprehensive about the operation and considered it one more mountain that she had to climb. "I'm tired of climbing mountains," Connie added.

When asked about her use of Life Skills Connie said that their greatest help had been to give her the confidence that she needed to apply for jobs. At the start of each job interview, she explained, she felt like a bundle of nerves. But after each she realized more clearly that interviews were not as threatening as she had once considered them to be. She felt that her job related life skills lessons, such as the ones on areas of interest, resume writing, and interview techniques, had given her job search increased direction. She was now more aware of the practical skills that she needed in order to land a job that would pay her more than the minimum wage. Consequently, until she could afford to attend law courses she was trying to improve her office skills.

For the past two weeks in addition to attending the afternoon sessions of the Job Preparation Program Connie had spent her mornings at a high school in a word processing and typewriting course. She realized that the impending operation would limit her ability to use these machines but felt that she had best

attend these courses as soon as possible since she needed the skills to land a full-time job. Connie felt that once she fully recovered from her operation she would be able to practise her typewriting and so regain the speed and accuracy that she now had.

Connie thought that her increased confidence and the communication skills that she had learned in class contributed to her new assertive way of dealing with her boyfriend. She realized that it was her need for financial security that before had made an offer of marriage from him look so appealing and that had also made her tolerate the inequalities that existed in their relationship. Now, she said, being housebound and submissive was too high a price to pay for security, and she was not about to put herself into that situation for a second time. After a three hour discussion with her boyfriend Connie said she gave him an ultimatum: "the relationship changes to suit me or we part company." He was unhappy with their discussion, and Connie felt that it was possible that their friendship would end. Although this was not what Connie desired, she knew that she could live without him.

When Connie spoke of her son she said that the relationship between them was no better, and that although they lived in the same apartment she no longer

spoke with him. In class when she had role played her way of dealing with him Connie discovered that she was being aggressive when she thought she had been behaving assertively. Now she was neither assertive nor aggressive since she had given up. Connie said that her son's room was still a disaster: he continued to strew clothes, books, and junk all over the floor. This "ticked her off" but she simply closed the door and refused to talk with him anymore about his annoying habits. "If he wants to live in a pigsty," Connie said, "I'll let him - as long as he stays out of my way."

Connie felt that by attending the Job Preparation Program and by practising the job related Life Skills that she had learned she had improved her chances of finding a good full-time job. She had applied for three specific jobs that had been posted in the Federal Benefits Assistance office as well as one to work in the payroll department of a department store. Prior to her Life Skills classes Connie felt she had been less organized in her job search. She had been so preoccupied with her financial problems that although she wanted a job she had been doing little except worrying about her lack of skills. Now she was upgrading her skills and working hard to find a job.

Unless she found a job in the immediate future



Connie stood to lose her cottage since, as she explained, Federal Benefits Assistance would not allow her to have a home that was not her primary residence. She now accepted that she might have to sell it, and had already decided that, in the event of a sale, she would buy a car and put a deposit down on a condominium. She no longer felt that it was essential for her to keep her cottage.

#### Interpretation

Over the twelve-week period of the Job Preparation Program Connie's total behaviour changed so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs in two of the three areas of skill deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985). In the third area, that of her interpersonal skills, Connie's behaviour showed little positive change.

On entry into the Job Preparation Program Connie had sought to increase her level of self-worth and confidence. By the end of the program she appears to have achieved this aim, and to have found out more about her job-related skills and competencies. Despite her weariness at always having mountains to climb, once Connie signed the minutes of settlement she appeared to spend less time and energy fretting about her husband's

refusal to support her. Instead she focused her thoughts and actions on herself and on the skills she would need to re-enter the workforce. While in the early weeks of her Life Skills lessons Connie discounted everything that would not lead her directly and promptly to a job in a court room, by the end of the program she was not only applying for jobs that she was already qualified to do, but was upgrading her office skills to further improve her chances of gaining employment. Connie, in week twelve of the program, was busy applying for jobs instead of lamenting how badly she needed a job because she had made the mistake of marrying a vindictive, miserly man.

Connie's problem-solving gains showed themselves both in her directed job search, and in her attitude towards the sale of her cottage. During the early weeks of the Job Preparation Program Connie saw her cottage as her only secure base in an unreliable world. As if it were not enough that her husband had relentlessly caused her so many financial problems, those in charge of Mother's Allowance intended to add to her misery by forcing her to sell her one important possession. By the end of the program Connie was less impassioned at the idea of the sale, and ceased to speak of the "Mother's Allowance people" as if their only

intent was to complicate her life. She had thought of a way to put another secure roof over her head in the event of the sale.

Although Connie tried to combine her growing confidence with the interpersonal skills that she had been practising in class, from her own report it appears that at the end of the program she had not yet learned how to assert herself without antagonizing those around her. Having made no headway with her son, Connie gave up on their relationship and settled for his staying out of her way. But this settlement brought her little satisfaction since she continued to feel annoyed at his behaviour. Silence only internalized the hostility that Connie felt towards her son and it was apparent that, based on her past experiences, Connie knew that one day when she tired of containing her anger, her son would have to contend with her.

Similarly, although Connie saved herself from her boyfriend's repressive expectations by telling him to change or find another girlfriend her forthright manner appears to have intimidated Jack. Instead of discussing, negotiating, and working towards a compromise Connie appears to have assumed a domineering and inflexible attitude in their relationship, one similar to the attitude that she had formally found so

annoying in Jack. As in the role play situation in her Life Skills lesson Connie still showed little awareness of the difference between acting aggressively and acting assertively. Consequently, at the end of the twelve-week Job Preparation Program Connie was no more effective in satisfying her need to successfully relate to people.

Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

Connie's predominate feeling during our interview was one of relief since she was now recovering from her recent operation. She had applied for six jobs, since completing the Job Preparation Program, but had been interviewed for only one of the vacant positions, to work in a payroll department of a department store. Connie had been one of thirty applicants interviewed, and she was not chosen for the job.

Connie explained that although her interview went well she knew that she had not been hired for the job since she lacked the necessary up-to-date academic qualifications that the job required. It was for this reason that she had enrolled in the high school business course that began in September. There she would be taught the necessary practical skills to ensure her

finding a job that would pay her more than the minimum wage. Since graduates of the high school business program consistently found jobs that they had been trained for, Connie felt confident that she too would have a job by the end of the school year.

Connie thought that there had been little change in her relationships with her son and with her boyfriend since our last interview. Her son continued to annoy her and her boyfriend, despite her ultimatum, still continued to be her lover while refusing to divorce his wife since, he told her, "he didn't want to rock the boat." Connie had advised him that, if she had not found a job by June of the following year, she intended to move to her cottage, and that this move would mean the end of their friendship. Connie felt determined to make the cottage her primary residence since this would ensure that she could keep the cottage while continuing to receive Federal Benefits Assistance.

When asked if there was anything that she wanted that she did not have Connie replied that she was determined to get a job that would pay her more than a minimum wage. She felt that by registering for the high school business program she was ensuring that she would eventually find a suitable job. Connie credited the Life Skills component of the Job Preparation Program

with helping her to adjust to the idea of school, and with helping her to feel confident in her ability to apply for jobs.

### Interpretation

Four weeks after the period of the Job Preparation Program Connie continued to be effective in satisfying her needs in two of the three areas of skill deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985). Although she lacked a job Connie continued to feel confident in her ability to be employed once she had the appropriate academic qualifications. By enrolling in the high school business course she intended to gain the practical skills that at present she lacked.

While Connie considered her decision to move to her cottage one that would solve her problem to her satisfaction if she did not have a job by June, yet it appears that her decision was heavily biased by the additional assistance that Mother's Allowance would give her were she to move there. Connie felt that Federal Benefits Assistance would not only pay her hydro-electric bills, but would also help her to put a new roof on the home. Consequently, though her decision does solve her problem to her satisfaction yet the solution is not one based on the image of creative,

responsible behaviour that is the goal of Life Skills training. Rather, it is a solution that appears to suggest how Mother's Allowance, when used as a safety net, can entrap its recipients.

Since Connie, by her own admission, continued to relate to her son and her boyfriend as she had at the end of the Job Preparation Program, she was no more effective in satisfying her interpersonal needs four weeks after the end of the program than she had been while attending the program. Connie realized that neither by quarreling with nor by threatening Jack could she effect the changes that she desired in their relationship, so she had resigned herself to accept her situation for one more year. The future, she hoped, would bring the changes that the past had not.

Terry: on entry into the Job Preparation Program

Terry was a twenty-nine-year-old separated mother of three children, ages ten, seven, and five. Four years ago Terry had asked that the children be adopted, and consequently she had no dependents. For the past seven years Terry had worked as an exotic dancer but had also, on occasion, collected General Welfare Assistance. Terry was now too old to work as a dancer since she was in competition with seventeen and

eighteen-year-old women. Terry came to the Job Preparation Program after her counsellor at the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre explained that she would be ineligible to receive further General Welfare Assistance unless she attended this course. On entry, Terry's goals were to keep busy and to be employed at a greenhouse.

#### In the Fourth Week of the Program

In our first interview Terry explained that she felt totally discouraged and "bummed out" as a result of the Job Preparation Program. After working through a job interest test that Laura had given her Terry discovered that her main strengths were in the field of interior decorating. Terry was all set to go to school to study this course when she learned that the government would not pay all her expenses to enable her to study. Since then she had been miserable. She intended to finish this course and go back on welfare as it was impossible for her to pay her own way through school. In the interim, Terry explained, thanks to her senseless Manpower counsellor she had to waste her time on the Life Skills lessons. These, she felt, were for stupid people who lacked confidence in themselves, and as she lacked neither sense nor confidence she did not



belong in the group.

When asked about the interpersonal skills that she was learning Terry admitted that she was able to use some of the suggested communication skills in her relationship with her boyfriend. Where before she was always yelling at him, now when he started to fight she calmly refused to say anything. Terry was pleased with her new way of dealing with him since it "drove him crazy." She now felt that she had the upper hand in their relationship. Although Terry felt that thanks to Life Skills she was now communicating better with Henry, she nevertheless thought that her being in the program had had a detrimental effect on their relationship. Now that she was busy at school he had begun to feel ignored since she no longer had unlimited time for him. Henry was unemployed, and according to Terry, was doing nothing with his life. Her involvement with the Job Preparation Program made Henry feel inadequate and increased the pressure between them. This, then, was one further way in which the program frustrated Terry.

The two problems of which Terry was most aware were her lack of a job and her need for glasses. She said that she constantly suffered from migraine headaches because of her poor vision, but she had no money with which to buy glasses. Terry felt she was

doing nothing in or out of class to help her find a job or to get glasses. The only activity that brought her any satisfaction was weight lifting. Although lifting weights solved none of her problems Terry explained that at least it helped her to contain the anger she felt at being in the Job Preparation Program and at being poor.

In the Eight Week of the Program

Terry had just completed a week's work experience at a greenhouse on the day of our interview. She explained that Laura had encouraged all members of the Job Preparation Program to arrange their own work experience, and had suggested that Terry contact greenhouses since she had an interest in horticulture. Terry telephoned Beautiful Gardens and was immediately accepted for the week's placement.

The owner of the greenhouse was so impressed with Terry's work and her motivation that he offered her a permanent, but part-time, job beginning in September. Terry was elated. The work at the greenhouse, she said, was gratifying, and the people actually seemed to care for her. Terry said, "I know there is a job there for me; I know that they want me, and that I'm strong enough to do the work. I don't think there is anything that could get me down." Although Terry felt that she

always had a great deal of confidence in herself, she said that the work experience had clearly given her a chance to put her confidence to good use.

When asked about her Life Skills lessons Terry replied that she was now happy to be in class since she was finally learning useful skills. While before the class spent time talking about a fictitious man with a fictitious kid getting off a fictitious bus, Terry now felt that the class was helping her to cope with real problems in her life. For example, Terry explained, the lessons on identifying and expressing feelings had helped her to get along better with members of the class and with her friends. Terry said that she was learning how to say what was on her mind without humiliating the other person. This, she felt, was hard since she was a blunt person who quickly let everyone know when she thought they were being ignorant. Because of her exposure to the classes on feelings Terry said that she now found herself less quick to attack someone for being ignorant. She was beginning to realize that what she was calling ignorant may just have been someone experiencing a bad day.

Terry felt that the communication skills that she had been learning had improved her relationships with her mother and with Henry. With both she now tried

to listen first when they were talking instead of interrupting them to ensure that they first heard what she had to say. Moreover, when giving her point of view she was trying to speak calmly instead of yelling at them and calling them names. Terry admitted that it was hard to practise what she was learning in class with Henry since he still resorted to yelling and name calling whenever they had an argument. Nevertheless, she was trying to express her real feelings to him instead of simply hiding them behind a front of anger as she used to do.

When asked if there was anything that she wanted that she did not have Terry replied that she wanted a full-time job. She felt positive that her lessons on job hunting had helped her to find her work experience, without which she would not have had a job to look forward to in September. Outside of class she was also preparing for her job at the greenhouse as she had borrowed a book on growing flowers from seeds from the local library. "When I start work in September, I want to go in with as much knowledge as possible," Terry explained.

Terry was still without glasses and had thought of no way that she could afford them. In any case, she now wanted to buy a car more than she wanted

glasses since it would be inconvenient for her to take a bus to the greenhouse once winter came.

In the Twelfth Week of the Program

In addition to her part-time job at the greenhouse, in the final week of the Job Preparation Program Terry had been accepted to work full-time at a poultry factory in the city. Terry heard of the job opening from her girlfriend, put her application into the factory, and telephoned them daily until she was interviewed and hired. The job was permanent and paid six dollars per hour.

When asked how she felt about herself and the job that she had landed Terry said, "I can't believe it. It is like I have taken over someone else's life." Terry said that having a decent job was a new experience for her, and one she was proud of since she had been used to exotic dancing and living by means of her welfare cheques. Terry was undecided what she would do about her job offer at the greenhouse but felt that by September she would know what her best plan would be. Although she preferred working at the greenhouse this job was full-time and paid more per hour. For the present Terry was happy to enjoy the feeling of having twenty dollars left over in her pocket after her monthly

bills were paid.

Terry's relationship with her boyfriend, she said, improved daily and her mother, now that she had found a good job, was constantly praising her. Terry attributed the change in her relationship with Henry not only to her use of the communication skills from class but to the fact that he too was now working. When he saw her busy job hunting Henry, Terry said, decided to stop sitting around at home and he now worked installing fences. Having money with which to pay their bills immediately lessened the tension between them.

In addition to getting a steady job, Terry's objective on entering the Job Preparation Program had been to keep busy. Now, she said, she was so busy that she did not even have the time to go to the doctor. The day before our interview Terry had been asleep at home when she ought to have been at the doctor's office. Prior to coming to the Job Preparation Program Terry said that she had nothing to do with her life, was bored all day, and spent each day cleaning house. Now she attended school all morning and then at four o'clock began her afternoon shift at the poultry factory. Terry was looking forward to the final day of the program when she would then have her mornings free. She was also looking forward to the coming weekend since that was her

time to smoke dope and make love.

Terry was still without glasses but now she knew that she would have to get them since Henry had just bought her a 1973 Charger. Terry said that she had been driving from age fourteen but had never had a driver's license. Now that she had her own car Terry thought that she ought to ensure that she was licensed to drive it.

To prevent her from having to take the bus, and because she wanted to show me her new car, Terry and I drove together to her home. On the trip Terry explained that she had asked that her children be adopted because of the constant abuse they used to receive from her husband. The children lived with a family and at age sixteen they had the option of staying with their adopted parents or of returning to live with her. Whatever decision they made, Terry said, would be fine with her.

#### Interpretation

In the three areas of skill deficiency outlined by Mullen (1985) Terry's total behaviour changed so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs. Terry's attitude on entry into the Job Preparation Program was one of anger and hostility

towards the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre, and towards the social system which she felt prevented her from leading a more productive life. The turning point came during Terry's work experience at Beautiful Gardens. There she so impressed the management and staff with her energy and determination that they offered her a permanent job as of September. As a result of all the encouragement and acceptance that she received from a potential employer Terry began to realize the value of her experience in the Job Preparation Program, and appeared, from then on, to conscientiously try to practise her Life Skills in and out of class.

By applying the Life Skills that she learned in class Terry began to communicate more effectively with her mother and with her boyfriend. The relationship between Henry and herself improved further when both began to work since money, or the lack of money, was one of their recurring problems.

Terry most clearly implemented the problem-solving skills that she learned during the Job Preparation Program in her job search. Prior to attending the program Terry had remained bored at home, aware that she was too old to continue as an exotic dancer but uncertain of how else she could support



herself. She saw General Welfare Assistance as her only alternative and reacted with indignation when her counsellor insisted that she enter the Job Preparation Program. In the fourth week of the program Terry demonstrated a similar annoyance with what she saw as the manipulative, unreasonable power of the social system when she found out that the government would not pay all her expenses to enable her to study interior decorating.

By the end of the program Terry had assumed responsibility for her job search. Instead of simply attacking the program and everyone who "caused" her misery she arranged her own job experience and applied for the job at the poultry factory. Terry had achieved the two objectives that she documented on entry into the program: she had a full-time job and was keeping busy in a productive, satisfying way. Although at the start of our interviews Terry had complained of her need for glasses, this clearly was not crucial to her since she made no attempt to acquire them, and readily considered using her earnings to pay for a car rather than using them to buy glasses.

In one important way Terry's total behaviour showed no change over the twelve-week duration of the Job Preparation Program. Although it was only in our

final interview that Terry mentioned her use of drugs, this was one topic that she frequently discussed with members of the training group. It was a subject of conversation and of laughter, but one which Terry never raised as a problem to which she applied any of the problem-solving techniques of the Life Skills lessons. Further, on one Monday Terry appeared to be so ill that she was unable to participate in class and had to be taken to a doctor's office where she underwent a series of tests.

In our final interview, Terry admitted missing the second appointment when she ought to have learned the results of her tests, and said that she intended to visit the doctor "when she had the time." Terry's substance abuse, therefore, and her attitude towards the health problems that accompanied it showed no change over the twelve weeks that she spent in the Job Preparation Program. This was one major area of her life that Terry separated from her Life Skills learning, possibly because she considered her drug use a normal activity and not a problem to be solved by Life Skills, or by any other problem-solving technique.

Four Weeks after the end of the Job Preparation Program

Terry continued to work at the chicken

factory, and since the job paid her so well, she had decided to remain there instead of returning to Beautiful Gardens in the fall. She felt pleased that she was no longer accepting welfare cheques. Further, the fact that her boss had commended her for the efficient, quick way that she folded and taped the boxes for the conveyor belt convinced her that she was the good worker that she always knew herself to be.

Terry said that Henry and she continued to get along better now than they had prior to her attending the Job Preparation Program. She still tried, Terry said, to remember to listen first before expressing her point of view, and to not tell people that they were ignorant, although she could not change the fact that she was a blunt person. Similarly, her relationship with her mother, Terry felt, was now fine since her mother was relieved that Terry had a decent job and was no longer working as an exotic dancer.

There was no longer an urgency for Terry to have glasses or her driver's license since their car needed major repairs before it would be roadworthy. And Terry had not returned to see the doctor since she was now feeling better than she had when Laura made the first doctor's appointment for her.

The one thing that Terry really wanted was to

move from the apartment that she currently rented because she had heard that the building inspectors were about to evict all the tenants since the house ought not to have been divided into four separate apartments. She had already looked at a townhouse but had decided against it since it was located far from the chicken factory. Terry felt that she still had time to find suitable accommodations since she had not yet received her eviction notice. In the meantime she continued to enjoy the novelty of having a good job to spend her time at and a bank account that had money in it. Terry felt that her time in the Job Preparation Program had been worthwhile since, in addition to job and money, she even had her first "instabank" card.

### Interpretation

One month after the end of the Job Preparation Program Terry continued to satisfy her needs in the three areas of skill deficiency suggested by Mullen (1985). Her job gave her a sense of accomplishment and, since she no longer had to depend either on General Welfare Assistance or on exotic dancing, she felt more worthwhile and more in control of her life. Her exposure to the communication skills during her twelve weeks in the Job Preparation Program, coupled with the

fact that she had a job that paid her well, continued to improve her relationship with Henry and with her mother.

In the area of problem-solving Terry still attended to those concerns that she saw as important. She could therefore afford the time to find another house to rent, but not to visit her doctor. Nor were glasses or the car pressing concerns at the time of our final interview. Finally, as in previous interviews, Terry made no mention of her drug use.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

By the end of the Job Preparation Program, and in my final interview with the participants once the program ended, the total behaviour of three of the six women had changed, so that each became more effective in satisfying her needs. These three were Elizabeth, Paulette, and Terry.

Elizabeth was actively job-searching, and had involved a lawyer in her separation to ensure that her husband continued to meet his financial obligations to the family. Having decided to enrol in the half-day secondary school business course, Elizabeth was thinking about alternative ways that she could earn enough money to meet the expenses she incurred in her home. She felt confident that she would eventually find a job since the business course would teach her the specific skills that employers looked for when they interviewed job applicants.

Paulette spent most of her time caring for her preschool children, and reading self-help books on marriage and child-care. She was planning to enrol in a Dining Room Service Program, and to return to the

Y.W.C.A.'s Young Moms' group. She also intended to seek legal assistance to ensure that her husband began supporting his family. Paulette felt so confident that she could make a good home for herself and her children in Canada, that, by the time of our final interview, she no longer wanted to return to Ireland.

Terry had accomplished the goals she expressed on entering the Job Preparation Program and was kept busy by her full-time job at the chicken factory. She was thinking about moving to another apartment and was looking for one that would be near her work place. She felt an ongoing sense of accomplishment at being in a worthwhile job, and was thrilled to have money to spend freely.

Although Connie's total behaviour changed so that she became more effective in satisfying her needs, this change was apparent only in two of the areas of skill deficiency outlined by Mullen (1985). In the area of her interpersonal relationships Connie's total behaviour showed little improvement. Connie continued to apply for jobs, and was also planning to enrol in a high school business course to ensure that she would be able to find a job that paid more than the minimum wage. She felt confident in her ability to apply the job-related skills that she would be taught at school.

In her relationship with her boyfriend Connie's doing, thinking, and feeling behaviours showed no improvement. Neither by quarrelling with nor by threatening Jack could she convince him to change. The only solution to the problem, as she saw it, was to leave town once she completed the business course. For the present she resigned herself to continue her friendship with a man she could not change and would not leave.

In contrast to Elizabeth, Paulette, Terry, and Connie are Gloria and Sarah. Their total behaviour did not appear to change so that either became more effective in satisfying her needs either during or after the Job Preparation Program. Although Gloria worked temporarily on a friend's vegetable farm she considered the job unsatisfactory. It paid low wages, and Gloria felt she could not work in wet weather since she had no boots. Gloria resigned herself to the problems she faced and hoped that her luck would change in the future.

Similarly, Sarah doubted that she could live comfortably on the income from her part-time job in the nursing home, but she was uncertain how she could increase her earnings. At the start of the Job Preparation Program she had been equally uncertain of



how she would manage once her Mother's Allowance cheques stopped arriving.

A factor that appeared to unite the interviews of Elizabeth, Paulette, and Connie and to contribute to their successful application of Life Skills was their participation in what Willis (1977) termed alternative maps of reality. It was not until these women became involved in social programs for abused women that they began to realize that in their marriages they had traded freedom, decision-making, and confidence for financial security. With the aid of these programs they gradually began to change their perspectives on their roles as women and mothers. The Life Skills training that they received in the Job Preparation Program strengthened awarenesses that developed during their involvement with other abused or repressed women.

Although Elizabeth, Paulette, Terry, and Connie appear to have been enabled by their social structure and were more effective in satisfying their needs at the end of the Job Preparation Program than they had been prior to attending the program, Giddens' (1979) notion of the constraining aspect of social structure is clearly apparent when one examines Gloria's and Sarah's reaction to Life Skills. Gloria's attitude throughout the program appeared to be one of resistance

to any suggestion that she need not be a powerless victim of society. Though not actively resistant, Sarah never appeared to involve herself in the Life Skills process since she saw no fit between the training experience and her life outside the classroom. For both Gloria and Sarah Federal Benefits Assistance and General Welfare Assistance appeared to be a safety net they could comfortably rely on should their job-seeking abilities fail them.

### Conclusions

"The things towards which people aspire will, in the final analysis, depend upon the degree to which they perceive goals as contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of the self" (Combs, Richards & Richards, 1976, p.141). In the above observation Combs et al. have directly addressed the essential condition under which students will continue to apply the problem-solving skills learned in the Job Preparation Program to their lives after the program has ended. The Ministry of Employment and Immigration pays the students' tuition fees and provides them with a weekly training allowance in the expectation that, at the end of the twelve-week program, students will have learned how to manage their personal affairs, how to apply for

jobs, and how to find their own work experience. By the end of the program students ought to be prepared for work, or for entry into a training program that will lead directly to a job.

The Job Preparation Program follows its mandate and attempts to teach students how to manage their personal affairs, and how to find a job. Those whose goals and needs coincide with the objectives of the program learn, and apply their learning during and after the program. But those who perceive themselves as powerless victims of the social system leave the program virtually untouched by the learning process. They discover no personal meanings throughout the Job Preparation Program. Consequently, the behavioural changes that ought to result from learning elude them.

Combs et al. (1976) identify three factors that appear to be necessary if change is likely to appear in the perceived self. These are:

the relation of the new concept to the existing total self-organization, the relation of the new concept to need, and the clarity of the experience of the new perception. (p.194)

For Gloria and Sarah, and for all participants, the concepts and skills that the Job Preparation Program attempted to teach related directly

to areas of personal, long-standing deficiency. But since Gloria and Sarah discovered no personal relationship to the concepts presented in the program, they held securely to their consistent, though negative, self-images. They were taught to manage their personal affairs, apply for jobs, and find their own work experiences, but they learned little that they could apply to their need for a positive self-image.

Combs et al. (1976) clearly outline the problems that face educators and learners. Educators like Dewey (1938), Purkey and Novak (1984), and Glasser (1965, 1981, 1984) go beyond Perceptual psychology to suggest tangible ways to encourage the discovery process that is the foundation of all successful learning and teaching. Each theory offers unique insights. But it is Glasser's Control Theory that I saw as the best foil for Life Skills theory since the goals of both are practically synonymous. Both seek to change individuals' approach to life, and to develop balanced self-determined persons creatively solving problems in everyday life. Consequently, in the recommendations that close this chapter my focus is on Glasser and on Control Theory.

Finally, the second theme that I sought to develop through my research was that of the effect of

group support on the students in a Job Preparation Program. In the initial weeks of the program under discussion participants appeared to readily use the group in order to socialize, since prior to attending the program most had been at home alone or with young children. They suggested that being in a supportive group helped to ease their discomfort at returning to school. Moreover, they added, the group interaction increased their confidence since at school learners gave feedback without criticism.

Once students began their work experiences, however, the group fragmented and Life Skills were then taught primarily according to the Counselling Model described by Stanton et al. (1980). The coach of the program worked either individually with students or with a group of two or three students, but there were few opportunities for all members of the training group to interact in the classroom.

### Recommendations

Were Glasser's Control Theory ideas, as well as the practical steps to apply them, used in conjunction with Life Skills theory, I believe that participants in a Job Preparation Program would be more likely to discover the persistent but often elusive

meanings behind their current behaviour. Further, the meaning of new behaviours being practised in a Life Skills training cycle would become a central element in the discovery process. In Control Theory Glasser insists that we examine our present reality, think about what we are doing and then act responsibly to satisfy our needs. His emphasis is on the individual as the agent who, with guidance and planning, can act responsibly to effect change. These core elements are frequently only hinted at in Life Skills theory, where emphasis is on training individuals to practise skills that they can then apply to their problems.

My second recommendation is meant to ensure the unity of the Life Skills group. Instead of a staggered work experience, as the program now has, I suggest that a specific two-week period be designated for all students' work placements. Thus, when students return to the classroom their Life Skills lessons can continue to include group interaction and feedback.

My final recommendation is made in the hope that all members of a Job Preparation Program can secure jobs at the end of the twelve-week program. The interviews of Chapter Four suggest that a major obstacle in the job-search activities of some of the participants of the Job Preparation Program is their lack of

up-to-date, job-related skills. The women in my study realized and admitted that they were applying for jobs that they were unqualified to hold, but they nevertheless applied because of their felt need to have a job. To overcome this obstacle I suggest that the Life Skills component of the Job Preparation Program be integrated into the community college's job-related training programs. Consequently, participants will not only be taught how to look for a job, but will gain experience in job-related skills to improve their chances of finding a job.

At the time of my study the Ministry of Employment and Immigration was undecided whether or not to continue paying for the participation of its clients in the Job Preparation Program under consideration. Regardless of its decision, individuals like the six discussed throughout these chapters will continue to bring their concerns to the Ministry's counsellors. If the Job Preparation Program focuses on (1) learning as discovered meaning rather than as changed behaviour; (2) strengthens Life Skills theory with the concepts of Control Theory; and (3) becomes part of a program that emphasizes job-related skills, I believe counsellors would feel confident in recommending them to a program that could meet the needs of all its participants.

### Recommendations for Further Study

Although this study provided the answers to the controlling research questions, other questions remain unanswered. It is in the hope that others will continue to search for the answers to these questions that I suggest the following as possible ways of approaching the problems that extend beyond the perimeters of my research.

Research could look more closely at the criteria for entry into the Job Preparation Program. One possible approach could consider if changes in the requirements for acceptance into the program lead to changes in the percentage of individuals who obtain full-time jobs by the end of the program.

Other research could examine the expectations of individuals accepted into the Job Preparation Program and the expectations of those who design and conduct the program. The purpose of this study could be to determine if the expectations complement or oppose each other, and if there are specific, observable points at which learning and teaching veer in separate directions.

My final recommendation for research springs from the apparent aim of the Job Preparation Program to provide a forum for the transformation and emancipation



of individuals. Comparative research of other private or government sponsored programs that facilitate social and economic emancipation might provide penetrating insights on specific obstacles to transformation. These obstacles exist in any relationship, but need particular attention in the relationship between a teacher and a learner.

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