

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)

1995

A process evaluation of a participant-centred approach to opportunities planning and its potential for empowerment

Barbara Dian Chrysler
Wilfrid Laurier University

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



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chrysler, Barbara Dian, "A process evaluation of a participant-centred approach to opportunities planning and its potential for empowerment" (1995). *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. 560.
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/560>

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

1995

A process evaluation of a participant-centred approach to opportunities planning and its potential for empowerment

Barbara Dian Chrysler
Wilfrid Laurier University

Recommended Citation

Chrysler, Barbara Dian, "A process evaluation of a participant-centred approach to opportunities planning and its potential for empowerment" (1995). *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. Paper 560.
<http://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/560>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier.



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395 rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Document: A0111-01/0000-0

Document: A0111-01/0000-0

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

A PROCESS EVALUATION OF
A PARTICIPANT-CENTRED APPROACH
TO OPPORTUNITIES PLANNING AND ITS
POTENTIAL FOR EMPOWERMENT

by

Barbara D. Chrysler

Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University, 1992

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts Degree
Wilfrid Laurier University

1995

© Barbara D. Chrysler, 1995



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file - Votre référence

Our file - Notre référence

THE AUTHOR HAS GRANTED AN
IRREVOCABLE NON-EXCLUSIVE
LICENCE ALLOWING THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF CANADA TO
REPRODUCE, LOAN, DISTRIBUTE OR
SELL COPIES OF HIS/HER THESIS BY
ANY MEANS AND IN ANY FORM OR
FORMAT, MAKING THIS THESIS
AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED
PERSONS.

L'AUTEUR A ACCORDE UNE LICENCE
IRREVOCABLE ET NON EXCLUSIVE
PERMETTANT A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE
NATIONALE DU CANADA DE
REPRODUIRE, PRETER, DISTRIBUER
OU VENDRE DES COPIES DE SA
THESE DE QUELQUE MANIERE ET
SOUS QUELQUE FORME QUE CE SOIT
POUR METTRE DES EXEMPLAIRES DE
CETTE THESE A LA DISPOSITION DES
PERSONNE INTERESSEES.

THE AUTHOR RETAINS OWNERSHIP
OF THE COPYRIGHT IN HIS/HER
THESIS. NEITHER THE THESIS NOR
SUBSTANTIAL EXTRACTS FROM IT
MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE
REPRODUCED WITHOUT HIS/HER
PERMISSION.

L'AUTEUR CONSERVE LA PROPRIETE
DU DROIT D'AUTEUR QUI PROTEGE
SA THESE. NI LA THESE NI DES
EXTRAITS SUBSTANTIELS DE CELLE-
CI NE DOIVENT ETRE IMPRIMES OU
AUTREMENT REPRODUITS SANS SON
AUTORISATION.

ISBN 0-612-01808-3

Canada

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank-you to Ed Bennett, my thesis advisor, who put in many hours reading over drafts and encouraging me to reach towards my potential. I would also like to thank Richard Walsh-Bowers and Isaac Prilleltensky for their time and support. Thanks to Rob Stevenson for listening to me for endless hours. Also thanks to my family and friends whom I have not seen enough of these last few years. I would also like to acknowledge the individuals who participated in this evaluation; the setting, the community agencies, the ministry, and the participants. It was a great learning experience. And lastly, thanks to the spirit within which helped me preserve.

ABSTRACT

A process evaluation of an "Opportunities Planning" pilot project was conducted. Stakeholder participation was utilized to help determine the evaluation focus. Mainly qualitative methods were used. The evaluation utilized field notes, program documents, focus groups, and structured interviews. Over 40 meetings were attended and recorded, and 27 one-on-one structured interviews were conducted, as well as two focus groups where eight individuals were interviewed. These interviews were conducted with a variety of key stakeholders, including: participants (social assistance recipients), program participants (individuals receiving the service), staff, service providers, and ministry representatives.

The research results are arranged in four parts: a) the definition and framework of the participant-centred approach; b) implementation issues; c) outcomes of the participant-centred approach and d) participants' feelings about service delivery. The results of this evaluation help to: a) clarify the participant-centred approach and understand the parameters under which it operated; b) identify how the operating parameters led to implementation issues regarding power relationships; c) understand how the participant-centred process can lead to empowerment and program changes at a local level; and d) identify some of the systemic barriers program participants are struggling to overcome and their feelings about the program. The discussion section critiques the program's ability to empower social assistance recipients. Several recommendations are made which could be

utilized to avoid challenges which seem to result from using a new approach to program planning, implementation, monitoring, and service delivery.

Contents

Literature Review.....	1
Introduction and Purpose.....	1
Scope of the Problem.....	2
Social Assistance Reform.....	6
Employment Programs.....	9
Empowerment Theories.....	12
Participant Involvement.....	14
Evaluation Research.....	17
 Program Description.....	20
The Setting.....	20
Community Need.....	21
Description of Participants.....	22
Program Objectives.....	22
Program Components.....	24
Organizational Structure.....	26
Figure 1 - Organizational Structure.....	32
Service Providers.....	33
Funding Source/Budget.....	34
Management Information.....	35
 Methodology.....	36
History of Association.....	36
Planning.....	36
Methods and Analysis.....	38
Limitations.....	40
 Results.....	42
Subsection 1.....	42
The Definition and Framework of the Participant-Centred Approach.....	42
Figure 2 - The Participant-Centred Framework.....	45
Nature, Level, and Scope of Participation.....	46
A) Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring.....	46
i) Supports and Training.....	47
ii) Parameters.....	47
iii) Comfort.....	49
iv) Influence in Decision Making.....	50
v) Factors Influencing the Participant-Centred Approach.....	52
vi) Maintenance.....	53
vii) Challenges.....	54
B) Staffing.....	54
C) Service Delivery.....	55
i) Accessibility.....	55
ii) Individualized Program Planning.....	55
iii) Self-help Groups.....	56
iv) Financial Resources.....	56

Subsection 2.....	57
Implementation Issues.....	57
A) Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring.....	57
1) Participant Involvement.....	57
i) Participant Support.....	57
ii) Representativeness of Participants.....	58
iii) Attendance on the Participants' Team.....	58
iv) Participants' Personal Demands.....	59
2) Power and Influence.....	60
i) Planning Agency/Board of Directors.....	61
ii) Ministry Evaluation.....	63
3) Trust.....	65
4) Lack of Clarity.....	65
5) Time.....	66
B) Staffing.....	66
C) Service Delivery.....	68
i) Financial Support.....	68
ii) Ministry Evaluation.....	69
Subsection 3.....	70
Outcomes of the Participant-Centred Approach.....	70
A) Individual Level.....	70
i) Personal Development.....	70
ii) Resources.....	71
iii) Community Involvement.....	72
iv) Empowerment.....	72
B) Service Delivery Level.....	73
i) Understanding/Knowledge.....	73
ii) Program Changes.....	73
C) Community Level.....	74
i) Participation.....	74
ii) Community Development.....	74
iii) Resources.....	74
D) Ministry Level.....	75
Subsection 4.....	75
Participants' Feelings About Service Delivery.....	75
1) Goals.....	75
2) Resources.....	76
3) Professional Relationships.....	77
4) Empowerment.....	79
5) Community Involvement.....	82
6) Examining the Systemic Barriers.....	82
7) Program Participants' Recommendations.....	83

Recommendations.....	84
Planning Strategies.....	84
Changes/Adjustments.....	85

Discussion.....	87
Empowerment.....	87
Social Isolation.....	87
Collaborative Relationships.....	88
Acknowledging Systemic Barriers.....	88
Values.....	89
Outcomes.....	89
Hiring Social Assistance Recipients.....	91
Level of Participation.....	91
The Process.....	91
Parameters.....	92
Figure 3 - Factors Influencing the MCSS	
Evaluation 95.....	94
Systemic Barriers.....	96
Distribution of Funds.....	96
Attempts to Address Systemic Barriers.....	97
Advocacy.....	97
Self-Start Business.....	97
Community Economic Development.....	97
Home Economics.....	98
Summary.....	99

References.....	103
Appendix A - Definition of Terms	
Appendix B - Interview Questions	
Appendix C - Consent Form	
Appendix D - Participant Feedback	

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This thesis evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of a participant-centred approach utilized in the program development, implementation, monitoring, and service delivery of an Opportunities Planning pilot project. Definitions and terms that will be used throughout this paper are included in Appendix A. Opportunities planning pilot projects are part of the MCSS (Ministry of Community and Social Services) reform strategy. It is the goal of these projects to help social welfare recipients leave social assistance or live more independently in the community through developing individualized action plans. This program represents a novel effort by the MCSS to work with recipients of social welfare in a significantly different way by attempting to involve them in the implementation and service delivery.

The major purpose of this evaluation is: a) to develop a framework and appreciation of the challenges in implementing such a complex participant-centred project; b) to identify any implementation issues which may interfere with participant-centred involvement or program outcomes; c) to identify the outcomes of using the participant-centred approach; and d) to document the stakeholders' perspectives on the participant-centred approach. The evaluation results will be feedback to the project with the hope that they help to refine their use of the participant-centred approach.

Scope of the Problem

If compassion was not a strong enough force to make the ruling classes attend to the danger that the poor might starve, fear would certainly have made them think of the danger that the poor might rebel... Thus fear and pity united to sharpen the wits of the rich, and to turn their minds to the distresses of the poor (Hammond & Hammond, 1948 in Piven & Cloward, 1971; p. 20-21).

The history of social assistance, welfare reform, alternative employment programs, theories of empowerment, and participant involvement in efforts to address the causes of their employment difficulties will be discussed.

Various forms of social welfare have existed throughout history. Perhaps the earliest forms of social assistance were when the Athenians redistributed income from captured territories to the poor (Macarov, 1978). Theories of social assistance began to develop in the 1500's. In 1516, John Majors (Macarov, 1978) suggested that the poor needed to be provided for. However, since no mechanism was developed to provide for them they were often overlooked. Martin Luther (1523, in Macarov, 1978) suggested that charity was the responsibility of the church and citizens. But the poor still depended on good will and many were so hungry they gorged themselves to death on the doorsteps of those who fed them. Problems of social disorder resulted when groups of frustrated poor started to rob the wealthy and march together through the streets. The town of Lyons reacted to this by suggesting that charity not be given on a whim but that a central body regulate the distribution of bread, money, and free medical treatment. A door to door survey was conducted to determine who was in need. If individuals on assistance were caught drinking or gambling they were penalized

(Macarov, 1978). These examples may be the earliest forms of organized social assistance and surveillance of the poor.

Conflicting theories of poverty have shaped our social policy and treatment towards the poor. Malthus (1798, in Macarov, 1978) suggested that helping the poor would only result in more individuals starving in the future as agricultural progress could not keep pace with population growth. Social Darwinism suggests that the fittest individuals survive: this theory blames the poor for their position and justifies the wealth of the rich (Macarov, 1978). Martin Luther's theory of morality and work suggests that there are deserving and undeserving individuals and it is necessary to test individuals' motivation to work. The Beveridge Report in Britain (1942, in Macarov, 1978) suggested that social welfare should be stigma free and a part of the government system (Macarov, 1978). Macarov (1978) suggests that employment provides psychological benefits and that people want to work, and would, given the right opportunity.

As theories of poverty differ, so do policies designed to address it. During the Great Depression of the 1930's individuals became committed to full-employment policies. This commitment seemed to be the focus of policy until 1984, when changes in government resulted in shifting the objectives to focus on reducing the deficit and lowering inflation. As a result "social expenditures were seen as part of the problem, not part of the solution" (Ministry of Community and Social Services [MCSS], 1992; p. 19). Individuals began to question the government's ability to solve the problem of poverty.

The presence of recession and inflation at the same time has confounded Keynesian economics and has led to a collapse of confidence in the state's ability to manage a mixed economy. The problems that have arisen are material as much as ideational: material in that the affluence of the early post-war decades enabled social expenditure to be financed, more or less, out of the growing social dividend. Now the economic base is static, or even shrinking (Mishra, 1984; p.19).

With the emphasis on the deficit and the cuts in social program spending, the resistance of individuals to pay tax dollars for social assistance programs increased (MCSS, 1992).

In 1991-92 the expenditure on social assistance grew by 48 percent. During the following year, more than 1.2 million Ontarians received social assistance, costing \$ 6.1 billion (MCSS, 1992; MCSS, 1993). While social assistance expenditures represented 15% of the 1990-91 income security system cash transfers to Ontario, it was still viewed as the biggest tax burden (Canada Pension Plan accounted for 22 % of the transfers) (MCSS, 1992). This negative view towards social assistance spending persists, even though 42% of the individuals receiving social assistance are children, 0.9 % are elderly, 13% are disabled, and 14.7% are single heads of families (MCSS, 1993).

Macarov (1978) suggests that individuals receive assistance for many reasons, one of which is to relieve the needs created by the existing structure of society.

One constant that seems to run through many, if not all, definitions and descriptions of social welfare seems to be that it deals with human need...The needs that social welfare attempts to meet can be categorized in a number of ways. There are those common human needs that affect everyone at some time in his or her life, special human needs that affect only certain groups or individuals, and those needs that arise from, or are created by, the very structure of society (p. 24-25).

Within the Transitions Report: of the Social Assistance Review Committee (1988) it is suggested that "attacking the root causes of poverty must be seen as a crucial part of social assistance reform" (p.16). However, within the Time for Action: Principal Report of the Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation document (1992) the advisory committee suggested that their "mandate does not have the scope to tackle poverty or recast Canada's income security system" (p.16). Many root causes of poverty are suggested within the Transitions and Time for Action documents. Some of these are: technological changes reducing the number of blue-collar jobs, lack of training, low paying jobs, policies which do not support full employment, discrimination, lack of accessible and affordable child care, changes to unemployment insurance, family breakdown, de-institutionalization, restraints on support programs, the waiting period for refugee claimants to get work permits, and changes in the tax threshold (MCSS, 1988; MCSS, 1992).

During the late 1980's and 1990's the number of employable individuals receiving assistance has increased (MCSS, 1992; Waterloo Region Social Service [WRSS], 1993). In a three year period the number of employable vs. unemployable individuals collecting assistance rose by 26%, bringing the total number of employable social assistance recipients within the Waterloo Region to 81% (WRSS, 1993).

In 1988, the social assistance review committee members stated in the Transition Report that,

"if improvements are made to social assistance without providing comparable help to the working poor, reform efforts will prove self-defeating. They will increase the disincentives for recipients to move into the labour

force as well as increasing the incentives for people who are working to leave their jobs in order to collect social assistance" (p.17).

The 1992 social assistance review committee suggested that there was a misconception held in society that individuals are financially better off on assistance (MCSS, 1992). However, Krahn and Howe (1993) suggest that in some cases it may be irrational to work.

in many communities the number of jobless far exceeds the total number of available jobs. Furthermore, many of the jobs that may be available (and perhaps even hard to fill) are part-time positions in the lower tier services with pay rates so low that it would be impossible to support oneself, let alone a family. For many of the unemployed, accepting such work would be economically irrational, since it would force them to try to survive on very little income and discontinue actively searching for a better job (p.89).

The Time for Action document (1992) suggests that "new social assistance legislation must create a system which empowers people to make the transition to self-sufficiency and life in the mainstream of the community" (p.28).

Social Assistance Reform

The Social Assistance Review Committee was established in 1986. The Ontario government established this committee to examine the guiding principles and objectives of social assistance and propose strategies for change. In 1988, the Transitions Report was published. A total of 274 recommendations for social assistance reform were made. Opportunities Planning (OP) was one of these recommendations. OP was viewed as being a primary part of the delivery of social assistance. In this program, a staff person and a recipient of social assistance would develop an outcome-based plan which would allow the individual to leave social assistance or

participate more fully in the community. The recipient's needs and skills would be assessed and then the individual would be linked to the appropriate programs and resources needed for he/she to accomplish their goals. Sometimes the program would address social needs, at times helping the participants with very personal matters separate from employment concerns. The Social Assistance Review Committee recognized that in some cases OP may be more effectively delivered by community-based organizations. They also felt that individuals who were between the ages of 16 and 64 years of age should be required to participate in the community in order to receive social assistance benefits. While they suggested community participation be mandatory, they also suggested that they did not agree with workfare and recommended a permanent prohibition be implemented against such action. Workfare is when individuals have to work in order to receive social assistance. It was proposed that individuals on social assistance for more than two years and not involved in OP should receive an automatic review. High levels of unemployment were viewed as the largest barrier facing social assistance recipients who were trying to achieve independence (MCSS, 1988).

The Advisory Group for Social Assistance Review published Back on Track (1991) which made 88 recommendations for changing the social assistance system. One of these recommendations was that the MCSS provide \$5 million to fund at least six OP pilot projects. As previously mentioned, the main purpose of OP was to help social assistance recipients become independent of social welfare and the main purpose of the pilot projects was to determine which methods

of delivering OP were most successful. Evaluation of these projects would provide information on different methods of delivering OP. In the Spring of 1991, the government committed \$215 million dollars of the budget to implementing actions; \$5 million was committed to the implementation and delivery of at least six OP pilot projects.

On February 28, 1992, the MCSS called for proposals for OP pilot projects. The MCSS stipulated that the OP pilots projects must comply with several principles, program components, and requirements in order to be considered for funding. OP program participation was to be voluntary and based on individual need and individualized program planning. The following program components were to be provided to individuals: intake; assessment (which would include the collection of information for evaluation); development of individualized action plans; co-ordination, brokerage, and referral; support; follow-up; outreach; community co-ordination; and information collection. All pilot projects were required to comply with four conditions which were: "co-operate fully with the evaluation which will be conducted by MCSS; ... be accountable to MCSS for the expenditure of funds; in order to collect information for the evaluation, all participants must be asked to sign a consent form under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; [and]... be accessible to all who are eligible and wish to use it" (MCSS, 1992; p.15).

Time for Action, a report of the Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation, was published in May, 1992. This report discussed how OP should be implemented. It suggested OP be a

voluntary system and that pilot projects be established to provide information on future implementation of OP. The advisory group suggested that the greatest barriers facing individuals were systemic in nature. The group suggested that when evaluating OP, education and training must be considered as an outcome, otherwise those delivering OP may be tempted to deal only with job-ready program participants. They also suggested that individuals who are not going to be able to leave the system should still have access to OP. On July 22, 1992 nine OP pilot projects were approved.

Employment Programs

Past evaluations of social assistance programs designed to get recipients back to work have generally found a low but positive program effect (Porter, 1991). The Employment Supports Initiatives (ESI) and the Social Services Employment Program (SSEP) both had a positive net impact based on a comparison group (2.2 % and for ESI and 4.6% of SSEP) (Porter, 1991). However, the Youth Employment Preparation Program (YEP) had a negative net impact (-13.6%) (Porter, 1991). Another study found that 52.6% of training recipients were employed at a 12-month follow-up (Report on the CLMPC Task Forces [CLMPC], 1990). There was no comparison group reported in this evaluation. However, statistics given in the Transition Report (1988) suggest that 40 percent of people leave social assistance after three months. Other statistics for general welfare assistance suggest that 72% of employable individuals collect benefits for less than one year (WRSS, 1993).

The number of dependents, length of time on assistance, health, education, and age all impacted on an individual's ability

to achieve self-sufficiency. The CJS program found that 50 percent of single-parent women had to discontinue the program because of problems with child care (CLMPC, 1990). The other three programs (ESI, YEH, SSEP) also found a relationship between the number of dependents and success in the program. The more dependents an individual had, the less likely they were to leave social assistance. Length of time on assistance also influenced one's success. During the study period the individuals who were on social assistance the shortest period of time were the most likely to achieve self-sufficiency (Porter, 1991). The healthier an individual was the more likely he/she were to leave social assistance (Porter, 1991). Education levels also impacted on participants' success. The higher an individual's education the less likely he/she were to be on assistance for a long period of time (Porter, 1991). Age also affected the duration on assistance. Younger individuals spent less time collecting benefits.

Some evaluations of employment projects have suggested that poor program design has contributed to the low outcomes for program success (Summers, 1990; CLMPC, 1990). It has been suggested that insufficient income support, almost non-existent coordination of services, poor advertisement, disparity in training, inexperienced instructors, lack of work experience, bias, racism and poor access to day care were problems with the programs (Summers, 1990; CLMPC, 1990). On the positive side programs seemed to increase an individual's self-esteem, which was viewed as an important building block to self-sufficiency (Summers, 1990).

Dealing with pre-employment issues such as: self-esteem; life skills; attitude; and confidence may be important for program success. (Lewis, 1993; Frank, 1993; Farley, 1993; CLMPC, 1990). Lewis (1993) suggests that community-based human resource planning is often not considered in economic development. Often "people get fitted into the opportunity". Rather than a participant-centred approach, programs are based on "organizational needs" (Lewis, 1993; p.1). Career planning needs to look at skills development as a continuum which will address issues of ability and motivation. It is a process which assesses where the individual is presently and where they would like to go. Action plans are then made which may include things like counselling, academic upgrading, or life skills (Lewis, 1993). The CLMPC report (1990) suggested that an alternative community-based approach is needed; "the most successful training programs are community-based, client-driven, flexible, based on voluntary participation and focused on integration of social assistance recipients into mainstream training and employment programming" (p.114).

Several authors have commented that client-driven or participant-centred approaches are not very well defined (Johnston, 1982; Nientied, Mhenni & DeWit, 1989; Sheng, 1989). Johnston (1982) has suggested that it is problematic when people assume that this process does not require clarification. Definitions need to be thought through carefully to develop the structures and processes necessary to meet programs needs (Vanderveld, 1979). One definition of client-centred suggests that

clients ubiquitously intrude on managerial and organizational behaviour...[the] agency was created and

is maintained by the manager's myopic, single minded obsession with clients ... clients are people whose desires and needs take priority over other constituents' demands; and where organizational resources and attention are unremittingly devoted to clients' welfare and well-being" (Gowdy, Rapp & Poertner, 1993; p.3-4).

Gray and Braddy (1985) suggest that "client-centred definitions stress empowering individuals, particularly marginal labour force participants, to become more competent job seekers. These approaches are learning-based interventions" (p.328).

Empowerment Theories

The project suggested it would use an empowerment approach to help individuals to achieve their goals. Three factors which have been identified as central barriers to the process of empowerment are: a) social isolation (Lord & Hutchison, 1993), b) ineffective or inefficient social interventions (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Prilleltensky, 1994; Rappaport, 1986), and c) the social experience of poverty. Social interventions are disempowering when they: place an emphasis on professionalism and paternalism rather than collaborative relationships (Prilleltensky, 1994; Rappaport, 1986); use a participant-centred approach which focused on the individual rather than the underlying systemic barriers (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Prilleltensky, 1994; & Rappaport, 1986); do not pursue ethical questions (Prilleltensky, 1994); and use one-sided interventions which do not consider multiple solutions to divergent problems (Rappaport, 1986). The social experience of poverty can lead to dependence on the system, victim blaming, lowered self-esteem, and a lack of support (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).

Empowerment appears to be an interactive process requiring changes and responses at both an individual and organizational

level. At an individual level, the following factors are preconditions to empowerment: a) a personal experience acts as a catalyst; b) the individual acts on feelings of anger or frustration; c) the person responds to new information; d) he/she build on their strengths and capabilities and receive practical, moral, and mentoring support (Kieffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993). At an organizational level empowering agencies are ones which value: self-determination (Prilleltensky, 1994; & Rappaport, 1986); distributive justice (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Prilleltensky, 1994; & Rappaport, 1986); collaborative and democratic participation (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993; Rappaport, 1986); and recognize individuals' strengths and capacities (Kieffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993).

Empowering agencies are involved in research which: recognizes and understands oppressive systems (Lord & Hutchison, 1993); listens to the stakeholder's or citizen's needs (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Rappaport, 1986); observes and recognizes the importance of natural support systems (Rappaport, 1986); examines the empowerment process (Lord & Hutchison, 1993); and opposes structural systems of oppressive power (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Rappaport, 1986). Actions and interventions are based on empowerment research (Prilleltensky, 1994). These organizations have empowering principles (Lord & Hutchison, 1993) and there are "more rather than fewer" interventions and "different rather than the same" solutions (Rappaport, 1986; p.159). While agencies may initially help the individual become empowered, they should allow and support once disempowered individuals to become the agents of empowerment

(Prilleltensky, 1994) by: supporting participant-controlled initiatives (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993); involving participants in community agencies; hiring participants as employees (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993); giving citizen's direct access to funding (which normally would be directed to agencies) (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993); and forming new linkages between community leaders and settings (Biegel, 1984).

Kieffer (1984) and Lord and Hutchinson (1993) suggested that the outcomes of empowerment are: a) improved self-perceptions (increased self-esteem, feeling valued, and taking pride in themselves and their accomplishments); b) improved relationships; c) increased skills (improved access to resources, increased political skills and knowledge, and leadership skills; d) more influence; e) more participation; and f) feelings of empowerment or control over one's life. Finally, empowerment has been "hypothesized as the key to a genuine psychology of prevention" (Rappaport, 1984; p.7).

Participant Involvement

Involving participants in planning social programs and policy is one way in which they can gain more control over their lives. Participant involvement, therefore, is directly linked to empowerment considerations. It is the antithesis of paternalism. Participation is viewed as a right, a way of redistributing resources, and increasing project effectiveness and efficiency (Sheng, 1989). Recently, the government and programs have begun to recognize the importance of participation. In the Transitions report (1988) it was recommended that "the provincial government

should provide funding for a council of consumers of social assistance, with a mandate to provide ongoing advice on the design and development of the social assistance system" (p.110). The government did follow up on this recommendation and a Council of Consumers was established in May 1993. The Council of Consumers is a group of social assistance recipients (or past social assistance recipients) which provide advice to the government on policy and program development.

Involvement or participation in programs can take place at multiple levels (Hawker, 1989; Johnston, 1982; Sheng, 1989). Johnston (1982) suggests there are six levels of participation. The first four levels are defined by those with power for the community. The fourth and highest level, within this grouping, suggests that individuals participate by making suggestions for improvement. The fifth and six levels involve some power sharing. At the fifth level, a program may be suggested but the community assumes responsibility for its implementation and maintenance. At the sixth and highest level, individuals are involved in defining their situation, determining priorities, planning, implementation and evaluation.

While Johnston (1982) suggests that within the highest levels of involvement, individuals have control over all aspects of the initiative, Sheng (1989) and Hawker (1989) suggest that the highest levels of participation can involve some parameters. The participants do not control the process. Sheng (1989) proposed that there are four levels of involvement however, only the first level is recognized as participation. Participation is when

citizens have control or delegated power. Delegated power is when rights and responsibilities are given to the community within certain parameters.

Hawker (1989) suggests that individuals can participate in decision-making, implementing, benefitting (receiving service) and evaluation. Participation is seen as a way for individuals to become empowered and as a means of redistributing resources. He suggests that "whilst participation cannot be equated with consumer control, its role should always be to maximize the control of the consumer over his or her own life" (Hawker, 1989; p. 285).

Some constraints or barriers to participant involvement have been noted. At an individual level, transportation, time (Waterloo Regional District Health Council, 1992), pessimism (Checkoway & Zimmerman, 1992), and individualistic attitudes (Nientied, Mhenni & DeWit, 1989) present barriers to participation. At an organizational level, many variables may affect participation. Some of these are: the shortage of staff and their inexperience in building leadership (Cotton & Skinner, 1989; Johnston, 1982; Shein, 1989; Sheng, 1989); managements attitudes (Gowdy, Rapp & Poertner, 1993; Nientied et al., 1989); unwillingness to give up power (Vanderveld, 1979); and lack of trust in the people to contribute (Johnston, 1982). At a social level, barriers to participation are: policy (Johnston, 1982; Nientied et al., 1989; Routledge, 1993); lack of willingness to share power (Nientied, et al., 1989; Sheng, 1989); trust (Johnston, 1989); and practical problems like lack of funds, extent of poverty, and competing priorities (Nientied et al, 1989).

While many barriers present themselves, Johnston (1982) has suggested that building mutual trust and leadership, and providing material and non-material rewards can increase participation on an individual level. Governments can influence participation at a social level (Routledge, 1993) and perhaps accountability, social policy, and public pressure can increase participation at an organizational level.

The literature on participant-centred participation suggests the importance of a clear definition of the approach utilized and the multiple level barriers that can present difficulties when utilizing this approach. This evaluation will seek to clarify the definition of the participant-centred approach and build a framework for this process by examining factors suggested as important for the success of participatory approaches. These are: the level of participation (Hawker, 1989; Johnston, 1984 & Sheng, 1989); the level of influence in decision making (Vandervelde, 1979); participant characteristics, organizational factors, and community factors (Chekaway & Zimmerma, 1992); and the larger social and political context (Stein, 1989).

Evaluation Research

The importance of outcome evaluations is apparent, as many call for programs to be more accountable (MCSS, 1988; MCSS, 1992; CLMPC, 1990). However, most evaluations fail to include an examination of the implementation process (Freeman, 1981). Researchers have suggested that program implementation is often not evaluated. This, in turn, can result in a programs' failure to achieve desired outcomes (Freeman & Beck, 1981; Ogborne, 1982).

Freeman and Beck (1981) suggest that an integrated social system perspective be used to evaluate the implementation phase. This method can be used to analyze macro, intermediate, and micro-level processes. At the macro level the organization is examined in relation to its larger environment. For example, the social and economic climate would be considered when a program is evaluated. At an intermediate level the daily operations of the program are explored. Individual perspectives are examined at a micro level.

The evaluation of social welfare programs is particularly important today, as individuals are resistant to pay tax dollars towards such programs. Social assistance programs originally designed as a short-term emergency solution have not addressed the problems of poverty. As the number of people on social assistance continue to grow (MCSS, 1992; MCSS, 1993), reframing how we address poverty is necessary. "Reframing explicitly calls for a different way of thinking about the problem before one even looks for a solution" (Seidman & Rappaport, 1986, p.7). Government support of employment programs seems to suggest that poverty may be the result of inadequate training and that individuals need help to find jobs. As previously mentioned, poor program design can result in low outcomes. Evaluating the implementation process of employment programs can be a trouble-shooting device useful for addressing design problems which can potentially lower program outcomes. This evaluation will examine the implementation phase using an integrated social system perspective. The evaluation is meant to be used both as a means of identifying design or implementation issues which could impact on program outcomes and as

a future planning document. The success of approaches designed to involve participants in program development can help to encourage their representation in decisions which affect their lives, thereby empowering them to gain control over their lives. Evaluation of government programs is also important to legitimize the government's continued involvement in the delivery of social assistance programs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Setting

Within this evaluation, actual program names will not be used. The planning agency is a non-profit organization providing services in the areas of employment, self-employment, and community support. This agency offers various programs and support services. The pilot project is one of these programs.

The program is one of nine pilot projects, sponsored entirely by the MCSS. It is designed to test different methods of delivery. The ministry viewed the pilot projects as a philosophical reorientation to the way social assistance is currently delivered. A goal of the ministry is to reduce the cost of social assistance by involving social assistance recipients (SAR) in a process which enables them to realize their own goals for self-reliance (Time For Action, 1992).

A partnership community based approach has been utilized by the project. While the planning agency is the main sponsor of the project many agencies and SAR have assisted in the design and implementation of it. The pilot project will continue to use this partnership approach in the ongoing implementation, management, and evolution of the project.

The pilot project officially began to work with program participants on April 1, 1993. The following program description will highlight the project as it was conceived during my involvement. Many changes continue to be made as the program develops. Some people involved with the project believe that if the project is doing its job well it will never be fixed in its

program components and organizational structure but instead will unfold through a continuous and interactive process. The project has been planned and implemented as a participant-centred community development process.

Community Need

On February 28, 1992, the ministry called for proposals. Its purpose was to identify at least six pilot projects which could be tested to determine which delivery methods were most effective. The pilot projects were viewed as "a reformed social assistance system which would ensure that individuals are able to make the transition from dependence to autonomy, and from exclusion on the margins of society to integration within the mainstream of community life" (MCSS, 1992: p.1). These pilot projects had been envisioned since the Transitions: Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee prepared in 1988.

Over 200 proposals were submitted to the ministry. The planning agency project was approved July 22, 1992. Eight other pilot projects were selected throughout Ontario. The projects were intended to help individuals receiving social assistance develop goal and action plans for self-reliance and determine the necessary resources needed to reach the goals. This proposal was conceived through a collaborative process involving 13 community agencies and 12 individuals who were recipients of social assistance. Through a series of meetings, seminars, and an eidetics evaluation process (using drawings and word association to infer meaning) the proposal was developed.

Within the pilot projects's region there were 40,000 individuals receiving social assistance in 1992. Seventy-three percent of these people were on assistance for one year or less.

Description of Participants

Participants must be recipients of social assistance and live in the region in order to qualify for the program. The project will attempt to serve a minimum of 500 social assistance recipients during the first year, 750 during the second year, and 1000 during the third year.

The project will encourage individuals to remain involved in self-help groups after the attainment of their individual goals. It is expected that the average time required to attain goals will be six months to one year. Individuals will be informed of the project through sponsoring agencies, a brochure mailed with social assistance benefit checks, word-of-mouth, community outreach and publicity through the local media. Participation is voluntary.

Program Objectives

The program is designed to impact on three levels. These are: the individual, the service system, and the community. The resources, program activities (services), and short and long term objectives are outlined below.

Resources

- 1) the staff
- 2) external resources
- 3) participants (SAR)
- 4) innovation fund
- 5) funds for some participant costs

Program Activities/Services

Individual Level

- 1) develop individualized action plans
- 2) provide training & education matched to local employee's needs
- 3) supply adequate money to meet identified needs of participants
- 4) provide resources to participants
- 5) eliminate barriers to employment
- 6) provide educational and training referrals
- 7) develop evaluation techniques to monitor self-esteem

Service Level

- 8) co-ordinate services
- 9) develop effective partnerships
- 10) challenge ministry & region to update outdated legislation
- 11) co-ordinate, organize & negotiate to improve access to programs and services for SAR
- 12) identify potential partners
- 13) develop effective partnerships
- 14) empower individuals & groups to initiate change in social assistance system
- 15) distribute money & support services according to individual needs
- 16) monitor implementation of the project
- 17) develop training materials
- 18) implement, monitor, and revise communication strategy
- 19) recruit and establish advisory teams
- 20) develop and implement loan fund, transportation, supplies, and dependent care
- 21) ensure participant involvement
- 22) develop support groups

Community Level

- 23) encourage participants to maintain involvement in micro-community
- 24) create projects for economic renewal
- 25) share ideas and resources
- 26) encourage advocacy
- 27) promote community development
- 28) decrease stigma of SAR
- 29) monitor participants' involvement

Intermediate Outcomes

- Individual Level**
- 1) increase recipients' participation & control in program design & delivery
 - 2) increase educational levels
 - 3) improve literacy
 - 4) increase self-esteem
 - 5) improve marketable work skills
 - 6) increase social/emotional support
 - 7) obtain part-time & full time employment
 - 8) obtain resources needed to accomplish goals
 - 9) improve awareness & use of community supports & services
 - 10) reduce barriers to employment & independence
- Service Level**
- 11) increase resources through partnerships
 - 12) increase participant involvement in the design & delivery of programs
- Community Level**
- 13) increase social/emotional support through partnerships

Long-Term Objectives

- Individual Level**
- 1) create permanent jobs
 - 56% to 70% of participants will find or create jobs
 - 60% of jobs will be for periods of two years or more
 - 6% to 12% will start their own business, become involved in a worker co-op or community business
 - 2) acquire an educational qualification or complete a skills development or training course
 - 30-42% of participants will achieve this provided adequate funding can be achieved
- Service Level**
- 3) improve self-esteem of participants
 - 4) decrease the number of people on social assistance
- Community Level**
- 5) increase community involvement

Program Components

Program components vary depending on level of intervention. For the individual participant-level intervention the program's main components are: intake, assessment, planning and case management, information/referral/brokerage, personal and financial support, and follow-up. A participant is assessed to determine eligibility for the program. The only requirement for eligibility

is that the participants are receiving social assistance and sign a consent form to participate in the ministry evaluation. A community organizer (CO) then works with eligible participants, and together they develop an action plan which identifies the participant's contextual situation and barriers standing in the way of obtaining their job search and employment goals. Based on the individual's goals and interest, the CO provides information about available resources to the participant. Examples of resources that a participant may require are: information about affordable housing, food banks, dependant care, transportation, financial loans, or training programs. Advocacy may be needed to achieve an individual's goals. Support is provided both through the CO and through self-help groups. Follow-up of all participants enables the participant and CO to assess the action plan and determine whether changes need to be made. Follow-up also allows the participant to receive the ongoing support of the CO and it allows the program to keep up to date participant information necessary for evaluating both the individual's and program's success.

The main program components at a service level are designed to create changes in the social assistance system. These components are program design, program implementation, partnership meetings, advocacy, and evaluation. For example, within the area of program design and implementation the program has involved participants. Involving participants in the proposal design and implementation allows for documentation of the effects of participant involvement

in program planning. The involvement helps to achieve the goal of participant input in the design and delivery of programs affecting the lives of people living on social assistance. Meetings of the various groups involved in the program enable individuals to identify resources available within the community. Advocacy is seen as a way to work towards changes in the social assistance system. Evaluation of the program will provide the ministry with information about this model of social assistance reform.

The main program components involved in community level intervention are advisory group meetings, advocacy, and community economic development. Community participation in advisory meetings provides the necessary communication mechanisms whereby coordination of services, identification of resources, and linkages between various support systems can be achieved. Coordination of services can be seen in the use of various organizations' space for placement of the CO. Community development involves coordination of services and citizen participation; Both of these are evident in the planning, implementation, and management of the project. The planning agency was involved in advocating on behalf of the program participants for changes in the assessment and consent form.

Organizational Structure

Team structures are used to implement and manage the project. A discussion of the implementation team will be presented first, followed by a description of the management structure. The project utilized a nine-member implementation team to move from the

proposal to implementation of a program. Some of the members represented both SAR interests and interests of organizations. The individuals representing SAR's were or had been receiving social assistance. Of the nine members on the implementation team, six represented SAR concerns and a total of seven individuals represented agencies' interests. The main roles of the implementation team were to report to the partners and the board of directors, send out minutes, and develop and monitor implementation strategies. Some of these responsibilities were to hire staff and develop a communication strategy.

The following description will outline the organizational structure of the management phase. The planning agency is the main sponsor and legally responsible for the project. A thirteen-member coordinating team acts as an advisory body whose function is to monitor the operation of the program. Four other committees give advice to the coordinating team. The coordination team is made up of: seven representatives from the participants team (one will act as a chairperson), four representatives from the sponsoring partners team (one is a planning agency representative), and two from the key stakeholders team. An ex-officio representative from the ministry area office as well as an ex-officio from the staff team attend the meetings. Ex-officio members do not have voting privileges.

Many responsibilities are shared by all four teams. These are to advocate for change to the social assistance system, to report to the partners, to attend meetings regularly, to plan, monitor,

and evaluate strategies and timelines, and to ensure that the needs of SAR are addressed. As well, the coordinating team is also responsible to the planning agency's board of directors. The board of directors has authority in legal, financial, and policy issues which directly affect their programs as a whole. The coordinating team reports to the partners and through the planning agency representative to the board of directors.

Membership guidelines for the participant team include to be receiving some form of social assistance and registered with the pilot project or intending to register. Additional responsibilities of the participants' team include:

- * to provide input into the 'tools' used in the project
- * to recruit and promote the project
- * to be committed to the project.

The key stakeholders' team includes individuals from organizations identified by partners as key to the provision of services for social assistance recipients. Additional responsibilities of the key stakeholders' team are as follows:

- * to identify and respond to community issues to ensure the success of the program and to change and develop long-term infrastructure to support strategies.

The sponsoring partners' team consists of organizations working in partnership with the implementation of the project. These agencies are utilized as sites for community organizers to work from. Their additional roles are as follows:

- * to monitor the implementation of the project

* to identify community needs

Partners' meetings are held where all individuals involved in the project can meet and discuss issues such as community development. Members of all the above-mentioned groups can attend these meetings.

The staff team includes a team leader, two community educators, six community organizers, one communications organizer, and one administrative assistant. The team leader, with the help of the community educators will provide supervision to community organizers and the communications organizer. Additional responsibilities of the staff team are to develop, implement and monitor strategies and timelines as proposed by the coordinating team.

While the team leader, community educators, and communication organizer are housed at the planning agency, the community organizers work in six delivery areas throughout the region. Each delivery area includes one or more delivery sites. These areas have one host site which house one community organizer (CO). Accessibility to social assistance recipients is the guiding philosophy behind the different sites.

COs are front-line employees who work with individuals receiving social assistance. Together they determine an individualized program plan and the resources needed to meet the participants' goals and interests. COs and community educators help develop self-help groups and explore and implement community development activities.

Service agreements are developed between the sponsoring partners and the planning agency. An employee of a neighbourhood association was hired by the project to develop these agreements and teach the community educators the skills needed to maintain them. Responsibilities of the sites are:

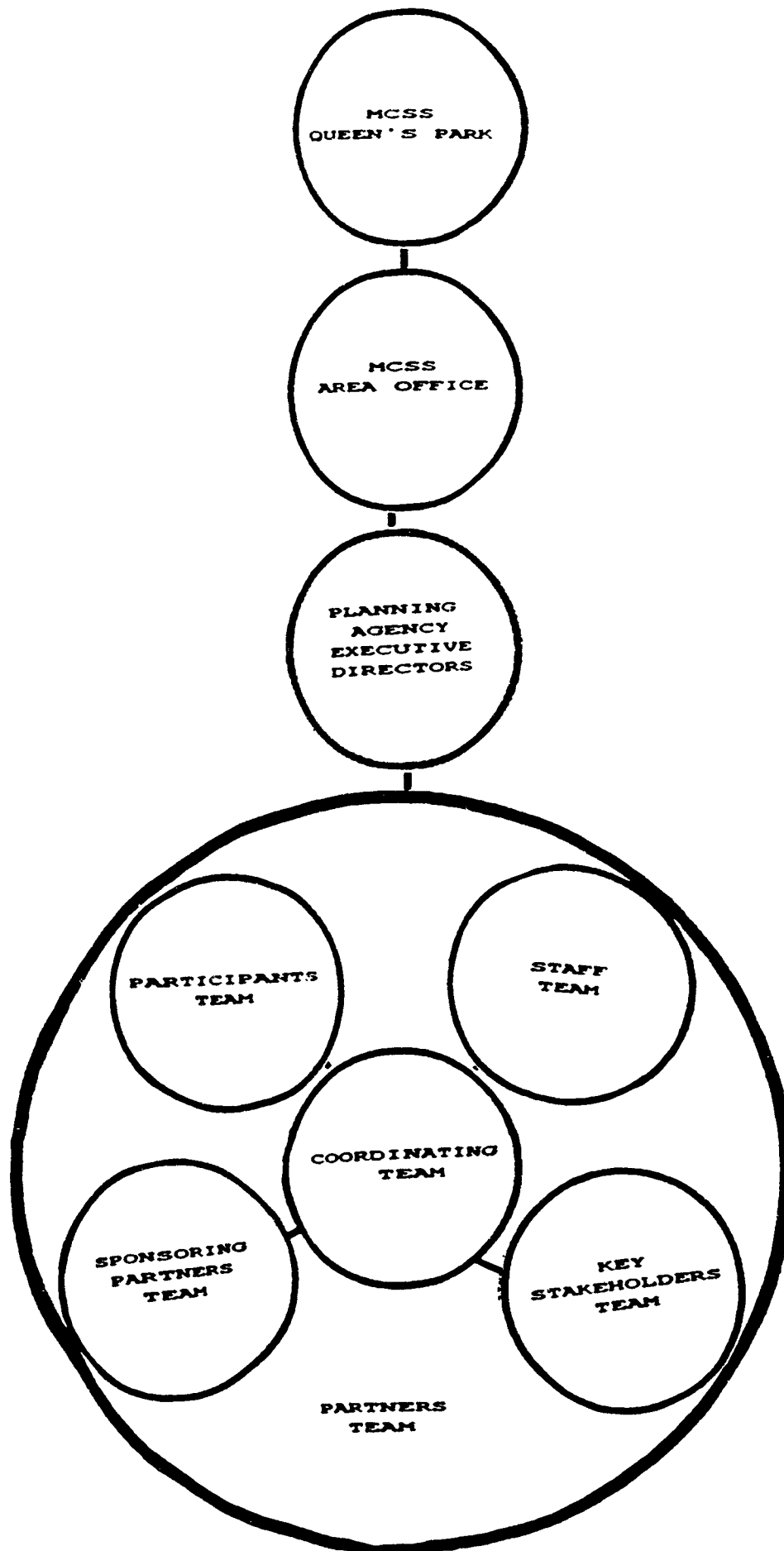
- * to provide supervision to CO
- * to invite CO to staff meetings
- * to provide the CO with office and training space;
- * to provide 10.5 hours per month of sponsoring partner's staff time to the project
- * to attend meetings of the sponsoring team
- * to maintain confidentiality
- * to provide a written termination notice of 30 days

The policy development can best be described as an interactive process between the individuals and agencies involved. For instance, the ministry is responsible for funding the program. They have goals which they will be measuring through an evaluation process. They have consulted with the project in the development and design of the evaluation process and the program's goals and objectives.

The board of directors also has authority at a legal, financial, and policy level. For instance, they approve all individuals elected to the coordinating team. The coordinating team receives input from the participants team, the key stakeholders' team, the sponsoring partners' team, and the staff team, and then advises the project on policy matters. Community

organizations provide secondary supervision to the COs. Figure 1 illustrates the above mentioned organizational structure.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Service Providers

There are a total of 11 staff working for the project. The team leader's job summary is as follows: to administrate and deliver the program; to implement the proposal; to lead the staff team by providing guidance and to assist with training, career, and employment counselling; and to seek guidance and leadership from the partners.

The community educators' roles include organizing support groups, and facilitating opportunities for self-employment, community enterprises, and worker co-operatives.

The community organizers work directly with social assistance recipients to develop their individualized plans for self-reliance which will involve assessment of barriers and resources needed to achieve the participants' goals. In the recruitment and screening of potential candidates, the emphasis was not only on skills and education but on expressed personal and professional understanding of social assistance issues.

The communications organizer educated participants, agencies, and the media about the project.

The administrative assistant was responsible for the staffs' clerical and reception needs.

Volunteers have been active in the project at the level of program design, implementation, and monitoring. Volunteers will continue to be involved in the project. Some of their contributions are in the area of participant team meetings and self-help group commitments. Self-help groups started for

participants. These groups need ongoing membership involvement to ensure their survival; this requires a commitment on the part of the group members.

Funding Source/Budget

The planning agency is a non-profit organization run by a volunteer board of directors. Currently, they receive funding from the following sources; community supporters, the United Way, the city, and various provincial, federal, regional, and municipal government ministries.

The project is funded entirely by the ministry. They hope to be funded on a yearly basis for five years. The total yearly operating budget of the project is \$699,907. The legal agreement with the ministry is with the planning agency. The planning agency distributes money to different agencies for their contributions to the community development process of the project. As well as the operating budget, additional resources are recognized through the contribution of volunteer hours. Already volunteers have contributed many hours to the design and implementation of the project.

The budget can be broken down into the following categories: salary (benefits, training, travel) \$406,484, operating costs (administration, rent, phone, supplies) \$234,965, participant and volunteer costs (participant supplies, childcare, travel, honoraria) \$58,458. As well, \$100,000 was set aside for the innovation fund.

Management Information

At present the information to be collected by the planning agency has been requested by the ministry for evaluation purposes. Other information may be collected by the project. The following list outlines the information to be collected:

- client id number(social assistance CIMS Case-id)
- name
- date of birth
- first contact date
- consent date
- proof of social assistance

- address/phone number
- emergency contact name (phone number/relationship)
- gender
- marital status

- language type and fluency
- community activity
- education level attained
- equity group
- unemployment reason
- living/marketable skills description
- dependant (date of birth/working indicator/address)

- client barriers
- current and past employment (employer/name/date/job type)
- social assistance information (reason/dates/amounts)
- training history (dates/description)
- referral source
- opportunity plan/activities (dates/objectives/cost/status)

A 10-page assessment form is also collected which assesses the participants' barriers to employment, the severity of these barriers, and the impact on goal attainment. This form asks questions about an individual's employment history, marketable skills, job seeking ability, availability, interests, material supports and needs, psycho-social supports and needs, health, systemic factors, motivation, and self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

History of Association

In August 1992, I contacted the Waterloo Area Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services expressing my interest in a placement experience. I began a placement with the Ministry in September, 1992. On September 29, 1992 I started to observe Implementation Team meetings of Opportunities Planning. I observed and recorded over 40 meetings (13 implementation, 6 participants, 5 partners, 4 staff, 3 management, 2 key stakeholder, 1 sponsoring partners, 2 with the MCSS evaluation team and the project, 2 with the MCSS evaluation team and myself, 1 project meeting involving all pilot projects, and the media launch). I also met privately with individuals involved in different levels of the project at the ministry, community, and program level. On May 3, 1993 I was hired by the project to conduct an evaluation.

Planning

While the pilots are being evaluated by the ministry, the project was interested in conducting its own internal evaluations for the purpose of improving their program. Members of the implementation team and coordination team were consulted in relation to their evaluation interests. Stakeholder concerns were identified; these concerns were then organized into three different themes. These were: a) determine the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process, b) determine the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership (community development) process, c) determine the strengths and weakness of the

participant-centred approach. The stakeholders were again consulted and asked to prioritize their interest, as time restrictions prohibited evaluating all of their concerns or interests. They chose to focus on the participant-centred approach with some emphasis on implementation. They did not want to lose the information gained by my observations and note taking. Stakeholders were then asked to identify how they would use the evaluation results. Questions and methods were developed and four stakeholders were asked to comment on them (two staff and two participants). A historical description of meetings (a separate document, not included in the thesis) was written using the field notes, program documents, and informal interviews. Individuals who were potentially recognizable through their quotes were consulted. Stakeholders were invited to comment on the thesis results in a feedback session. The method of stakeholder involvement utilized in this project is similar to that suggested by Greene (1987) who utilized an eight-phase process for stakeholder participation in evaluation.

The stakeholders were most interested in a process evaluation. This type of evaluation focuses "on ways of improving and enhancing programs" (Patton, 1986; p.66). Methods utilized in this type of evaluation include "site visits, direct observations of program activities, surveys, and in-depth interviews" (Patton, 1986; p.66).

Methods and Analysis

The evaluation used participant observation field notes (which were collected by myself from a period of September 29, 1992 until November, 1993), program documents, focus groups, and structured interviews. Questions used in structured interviews and staff focus groups are included in Appendix B. The questions and categories were determined by the process already described and a literature review; both the interviews and literature suggested areas of importance. Interviews were conducted with members of the implementation team, coordinating team, sponsoring partners, participant team, staff team and program participants. A total of 35 people were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in person and on the telephone. Twenty-seven individual interviews and two focus groups were conducted; three supervisory staff were in one focus group and five community organizers and support staff participated in the other. Of those interviewed, the following numbers of individuals were interviewed from each of the succeeding groups: seven sponsoring partners, ten staff, eleven program participants (total pool of program participants in August, 1993 was approximately 172) and five participants (involved in at least one of the following teams: implementation, coordinating, planning, or participants). Focus groups were counted as one interview response. Interviews were taped if participants agreed. However, if they did not agree the interviews were then recorded by handwritten notes. A consent form outlining the rights of participants was read or given to them; it is included in Appendix C. Interviews

were transcribed onto a computer. Only quotes were recorded verbatim.

Structured interviews were content analyzed. The content analysis was focused, using the evaluation questions and the following themes: a) define and describe the participant-centred approach; b) ascertain the nature, level, and scope of participation; c) determine what factors influence the participant-centred approach; d) discover how to maintain the participant-centred approach e) learn how the participants feel about their involvement; f) ascertain the outcomes of the participant-centred approach e) discover the barriers to the participant-centred approach f) document the issues which arose and g) determine the lessons learned. Mostly cross-case analysis was utilized. "Cross-case analysis means grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analysing different perspectives on central issues' (Patton, 1990; p.376).

A coding process was used to analyze the interviews. After reading the interviews, subjects were noted in the margins of the text, then the common themes were grouped together to determine the quantitative number of individuals who responded similarly in the interviews. Inductive analysis was utilized in that themes and categories arose from the data rather than being predetermined (Patton, 1990).

From the analysis, I attempted to find patterns and develop a categorizing system around the purpose of the research which was: a) to develop a framework for the participant-centred approach; b)

to identify implementation issues; c) determine the outcomes of the participant-centred approach; d) to identify the program participants' thoughts and feelings in relation to the participant-centred approach and lastly; e) to learn from the evaluation process. The identification of the program participants' thoughts and feelings in relation to service delivery became more important to the supervisory staff as time went by, and I was asked to conduct more interviews than I had originally intended.

Limitations

Field notes are subject to recorder error. While people in participant observation may be initially constrained, the longer the involvement in the setting the less likely the influence. There was a long observation period of 13 months. Interpretation of field notes can be subject to bias by the researcher. Wherever possible program documents were used as a second data source. Some individuals were also consulted in regard to clarifying historical descriptions where they would be recognized (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991).

Interviews are subject to interviewer effects where the individual being interviewed can be influenced by the individual conducting the interview. They may be more likely to give socially desirable answers. However, with the combination of observations and interviews there is less likelihood of interviewer effects (Judd, et al, 1991).

Telephone interviews have a smaller interview bias than one on one interviews. However, their response rate is slightly lower (5%) (Judd, et al, 1991).

Interpretation of data can be biased by the interviewer's attitudes, expectations, and characteristics. However, this can be partially overcome through supervision (Judd, et al, 1991).

Selection of program participants for interviews was done by the staff and could potentially bias results. The executive director of the project did not agree to one individual being interviewed because he thought this person had a conflict of interest. One interview was partially lost due to computer error.

RESULTS

This section will be divided into four subsections which will describe the findings in relation to the following themes: a) clarifying the participant-centred approach and developing a framework; b) implementation issues; c) outcomes of the participant-centred approach and d) participants' feelings regarding service delivery. A total of 24 individuals were interviewed to determine questions surrounding the framework, implementation issues, and outcomes. Eleven program participants were interviewed to determine questions regarding participants' feelings regarding service delivery. At the time there were approximately 172 program participants receiving services.

Subsection 1

The Definition and Framework of the Participant-Centred Approach

The first objective of this evaluation was to understand and clarify the project's use of a participant-centred approach. Figure 2 (p. 45) integrates the results of this evaluation to accomplish this objective. This framework is important, as it not only clarifies the structure which the project utilizes but it illustrates the degree of power and influence the participants had within the program. The participant-centred approach was defined, by those interviewed, as a process whereby the participants' needs and decisions are being incorporated into the program. Results indicate that this happened at three levels: a) planning, implementation, and monitoring; b) staffing; and c) service delivery. This section will define the participant-centred approach

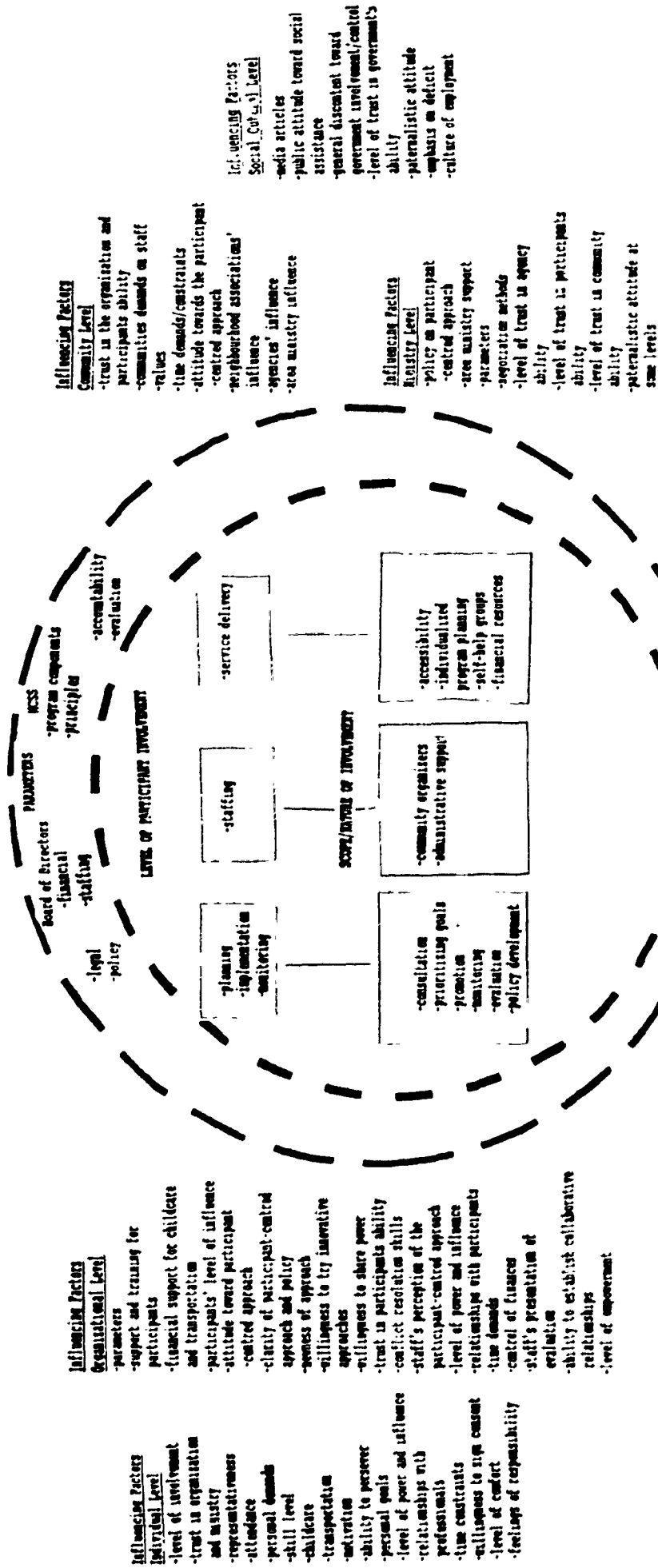
and outline the levels and nature of involvement, as well as the parameters and influencing factors.

The scope and or nature of participant involvement was: a) consultation, prioritizing goals, promotion, monitoring, evaluation and policy development at the planning, implementation, and monitoring level; b) participants were involved as community organizers and administrative support at the staffing level; and c) the program is viewed as participant-centred at the service delivery level by providing accessibility, individualized program planning, self-help groups, and increased financial resources. The level of influence and outcomes were affected by parameters within the program and external factors. Two levels of parameters existed within the program; These were: a) the board of directors which had authority over legal, policy, financial and staffing issues and b) the MCSS which had authority over program components, principles, accountability, and evaluation. These parameters are represented within a broken line because they were influenced by participant-centred involvement particularly at the board of directors level. The parameters and participant-centred approach were influenced and influence multiple levels. Individual, organizational, community, ministry, and social cultural influencing factors are also outlined on the diagram (Figure 2).

The majority of those interviewed suggested that the participant-centred approach was a process whereby the participants' needs and decisions were being incorporated into the program. Two individuals felt that participants should have more

control over the process and some of those interviewed felt that there was no clear definition but only individual perceptions which varied from one person to the next.

PARTICIPANT-CENTRED APPROACH THE FUNDING



A process whereby the participants' needs and decisions are being incorporated into the program.

1) Nature, Level, and Scope of Participation

Information from the interviews and participant observation suggested that the participant-centred approach was utilized in the following areas:

- * planning, implementation, and monitoring
- * staffing
- * service delivery

Within each of these areas the participant-centred approach is utilized in different ways; an outline of the process is described below.

A) Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

Some of those interviewed suggested that participants are involved in *consultation, prioritizing goals, promotion, monitoring, evaluation and policy development*. During the meetings I attended, I witnessed several examples of involvement in the above mentioned areas. At the first meeting I attended, the participants were consulted in relation to the program's goals and objectives. Participants suggested that finding employment be the main objective and that the program not move away from this goal even though other objectives may be easier to obtain. Participants were always involved in promotion of the program and often were in the majority when speaking about the program at the media launch or at public education presentations. They were involved in monitoring through their representation on the implementation, coordinating, and participant teams. Participants were also involved in all of the evaluations at various levels and partook in

the policy around staff hiring and confidentiality. Their level of involvement and influence in decision making, factors influencing the participant-centred approach and maintenance will be discussed later.

i) Supports and Training

Participants receive supports and training to help them participate on the teams. Some felt that more support and training was needed to help participants make decisions or express ideas. One individual suggested that emotional support is necessary, and that participants should be able to meet with an outside consultant who could advise and support them in the most effective ways to communicate and deal with their frustrations surrounding the program. Arrangements were being made for the coordinating team to receive some training. The training will be based on their identified needs. Limited financial support is given for finances related to child care and transportation. One of the community organizers suggested that while participants know they can have access to financial support they often do not take advantage of it.

One participant, I work with, has told me that as a participant she knows she has a right to those things [financial support] but, that sometimes she feels that she is asking for a hand out as opposed to a right to that.

ii) Parameters

There are certain parameters under which the program operates. One individual suggested that, while participants were consulted and the program attempted to be "sensitive to the outcomes that participants want[ed] to achieve," that there are certain

parameters within the provincial government and sponsoring agencies that are givens and that it becomes a mutually "supportive exercise between the agencies delivering the project and the outcomes they want to achieve". Indeed, the ministry had certain stipulations that pilot projects needed to agree to in terms of accountability, evaluation, program components, and principles. The board had authority in terms of financial, staffing, legal, and policy issues. As mentioned in the literature review, the MCSS parameters were clearly spelled out within the ministry's request for proposals.

The board's authority was also outlined in the first implementation team meeting and the terms of reference. Despite the fact that these parameters were outlined there were incidents where individuals attempted to change the boundaries or were unclear of their role. The participants, as well as program staff, and agency representatives attempted to change aspects of the ministry evaluation. Two areas that individuals tried to negotiate were mandatory participation in the evaluation and evaluation methods. As a result of these discussions, only minor changes were made to the consent form. The ministry evaluation will be discussed later. From my observations, the boundaries were less rigid at the organizational (board) level. The participants were involved in policy around staff hiring, decisions regarding staff dismissal, and when they requested financial program information were granted it. The following comments suggest the importance of clearly defined roles.

We need to work at defining the roles much more clearly. We were going to define the roles as we go. I don't think that is right. Without defining the roles very clearly, we can challenge the roles we define for ourselves. But we spend a lot of time worrying about what is not in our parameter to worry about. A lot of time spinning our wheels...What would have been important for participants and management in the project would be to ask the participants to define what they would have liked to do within the project and if they want to challenge things in their role then they could challenge it in an informal way; instead of everyone thinking everything is their responsibility.

Participant-centred will play an important role as long as there are clear parameters.

One individual felt that a participant-centred approach should not have parameters.

I think a truly participant-centred approach wouldn't have to pay attention to those parameters.

Another individual suggested that as participants become more aware they may challenge the parameters.

I don't know if it's a barrier but, a challenge, to stay true to the participant-centred concept. And I don't think we should fool ourselves that we are truly participant-centred. We are participant-centred within a certain context that being [the project]. And that puts very immediate and real parameters; that makes it not an ideal program. So I guess a challenge will be, to the extent that participants become sufficiently empowered that they fight back and are not willing to settle for it and require something else that is more in line with what they want to see and not with what government wants.

iii) Comfort

When participants were asked if they felt comfortable speaking up at meetings, four said they felt comfortable. However, some felt uncomfortable with some of the decisions they were involved in

or unsure of what they could offer. The following quotes illustrate this.

I don't think it was all that great, the amount of contribution I've given.

We had one important decision over [the dismissal of an employee]. I felt uncomfortable with it. It was something that had to be done.

Sometimes I may seem standoffish but I just want to use my observing skills I'm not necessarily one who is adept at dealing with meetings....I'm not sure how much I could offer.

iv) Influence in Decision Making

Service providers and participants were asked "do the participants influence decision making?" Of the seven sponsoring partners who were interviewed, five said yes, one individual was not sure, and one said no. The comments seem to suggest that while they may have input in decisions their decisions are limited by the amount of information they have, their ability to be honest, and strong leadership. However, some of the comments also seem to suggest that participant influence will change over time as participants become more empowered and educated or participants "buy in" because of their involvement. Following are some of the comments that were made.

I think there's a lot of decisions that go on. But there are a few strong leaders that seem to influence what happens. And I don't think that's on a conscious level and I don't think that they realize that decisions are being made around them. But that will change as participants become more experienced at dealing with issues, and don't allow themselves to be lead because someone is a little stronger.

I guess in a way there are some decisions they have had influence around. It's like anything else, though, is

that the only way you have influence on decisions is that the people who control information share that.

The project hasn't evolved enough ... there has been consensus ...we all come from a similar philosophical background. If they hadn't, this never would have happened. It's been fairly easy so far. If to the extent that we start to involve groups that don't have a similar philosophic base then we will have to come to grips with, okay, what is the role of the participants going to be and how influential are they really in this kind of power stuff.

I think it's valuable, and I think because we have included everyone who would be affected by that decision people really buy in. And even though everyone may not agree, because of the process they support it, because they know that at least their input has been really valued. The challenge is that sometimes decisions may have to be made quickly and sometimes one decision will affect another decision.

The question I want to know is why are we there? Why is there an implementation team? And the only thing I can come up with is a figure head? Part of what you have to have but you are not there for any purpose.

People are not totally honest. I'm at fault too; when I try to bring something up it's like, as if, what's the matter with you today. That's the feeling I get. I don't have the honesty that I wanted to have.

Four participants commented on decision making. Their responses were mixed. Two participants felt they were actively involved. Other participants felt they were not in control of decisions, but that the lack of influence was probably related to program objectives. Another individual suggested that participants are "not showing up, they're not happy with the way things are going, that's a big decision". A fourth person suggested that there was an illusion of participant influence. One individual felt the participants had not only rights but responsibilities in

regard to decisions. The following comments reflect some of the above mentioned findings.

This is not fault finding but highly steered; at times it felt like the agenda was already set...most of it was probably necessary...urgency to meet a deadline... I felt that we knew was in the driver's seat. We didn't take issue with it but we knew would get more out of it than we would.

It looks like the participants influence decision making but it's up to the board of directors; we become only sponsors of that decision, sometimes. To really have power, hopefully, in the future we will be able to amend it, we want to keep it participant-centred. This [process] will need to be changed and reviewed and be really partnership decision making. Where the participants and coordinating team are in partnership with the board instead of [just] receivers. [It's] understandable because it's in the pilot stage; maybe this is why. Hopefully, when the project matures the focus will be participant-centred not a paternalistic relationship, but, a real partnership.

It will be very important to keep alert that the program is a participant-centred approach. I have access to decision making responsibilities and rights to be an active member in the program.

One individual suggested that there were multiple levels where decisions were made. These were: a) the day to day operational level; b) the staff level; c) the service delivery level and d) the coordinating team level.

v) Factors Influencing the Participant-Centred Approach

The government, neighbourhood associations, and community agencies were viewed as the most influential in encouraging the participant-centred approach. Less often mentioned, though significant, were public opinion and participants' demands. Sixteen individuals were asked if there were "any community, social, political or government influences which encouraged the

participant centred approach?" Twelve individuals responded that the government was positively influencing the participant-centred approach through various policy and stipulations for participant involvement.

At a community level the neighbourhood associations were seen as the most positive influence with eight individuals mentioning them. Other community agencies were also mentioned. Ten individuals mentioned at least one agency. These agencies were either advocates for social assistance recipients, had social assistance recipients on their board of directors or advisory team, or some of their staff were past social assistance recipients. Two individuals felt that the support from the area ministry favourably influenced the participant-centred approach.

At a social level, the negative media articles, backlash about people using the system, and general discontent were mentioned by two individuals, one of whom tried to organize a phone-line response to the negative media articles.

vi) Maintenance

When asked "how can the participant-centred approach be maintained?", ten of the interviewees mentioned giving participants input into decision making. Four individuals felt it was important to keep reminding themselves and others of the participant-centred philosophy. Two individuals mentioned the importance of a clear framework and two individuals suggested that participants should have "real power" and "real control".

vii) Challenges

Some individuals spoke of the challenges to the program when involving participants. The following comments outline how the newness of this approach requires time for agencies to adapt.

It struck me that to a certain extent it was a new kind of approach for [the planning agency] and there were some challenges for [the planning agency] in terms of adapting to it.

I don't think all projects or organizations are ready to be participant-driven and that there needs to be a sense of preparedness and that there needs to be a substantial amount of preparedness and training and I don't think there are any textbooks or literature which suggests how to be participant-driven. I think it is something which has to evolve and it's experiential and varies from project to project. I think that what [the planning agency] has are some sound principals and philosophy in terms of working 50% of the way.

I know at some areas of the region they are trying to get participants' input and see it as beneficial. For other groups it's new. ... Some are really nervous about that because it could mean changes to their program and I'm not sure everyone is ready for that, because in some ways it's easier not to.

There is a new way to do social work, a new way to deal with clients. You can see there is a challenge to the main stream way to do social work in the 90's. We look forward to parity with clients.... Self-determination, with clients working with social workers or community organizer in a partnership client process where the participant benefits the most. With their self-esteem, dignity, and self-worth. So yes, it's a challenge for many agencies ... [they] need to be open.

B) Staffing

Another way individuals felt that the program was participant-centred was in the staffing. The majority of individuals who were hired were social assistance recipients. One of the hiring criteria for the community organizers and administrative assistant was that they had experienced the social assistant system. Two

individuals felt so strongly about this that when they believed individuals were hired who were not on social assistance they submitted a resignation to the coordinating team. This hiring criterion was being reviewed in October 1993.

C) Service Delivery

In terms of service delivery some individuals viewed some of the program components as being part of a participant-centred approach. *Accessibility, individualized program planning, self-help groups, and financial resources* were all viewed as part of a participant-centred service delivery process.

i) Accessibility

The program delivery sites were in various locations throughout the region, thus making the programs more accessible to participants. There is also an effort to make the program accessible to individuals with literacy barriers by making the program material easy to read.

ii) Individualized Program Planning

The program utilized action plans to reflect the program participants' goals and identify resources to meet these goals. Rather than fitting the participant into a predesigned program, these plans allowed for individual needs to be considered. Ideally, the achievement of the individuals' goals, whether employment, education, or community involvement, are identified by the program participants so the program is based on their wants and needs. One individual suggested that the program's willingness to

work with individuals who were not job-ready but faced a large number of barriers reflected the participant-centred approach.

iii) Self-help Groups

In the program participants group that I observed an opportunity was provided to individuals to evaluate whether or not the group worked for them. Some topics are identified by the group. This was viewed as a process which allowed a program participants to have some control over the groups.

iv) Financial Resources

Participants are compensated up to \$50 a year and in special circumstances \$100 a year for transportation. They are also compensated \$150 a year for child care related to finding employment. This money does not have to be paid back. At some of the meetings there was discussion around the small amount of money allowed for transportation and child care. Some thought it was insufficient to meet people's needs. The coordinating team decided to revisit this concern at a later time. Originally, they had hoped to address these needs through coordination with other services.

The innovation fund was created to help program participants achieve their employment goals by lending them money in which they could meet some of the financial costs involved. Currently, an individual can borrow up to \$400 interest free. Once participants have paid this amount back they can borrow \$1000. This amount of money has been increased several times as the program identified that the amounts were too small to meet the participants' needs.

However, even with the increases, this amount of money may not always be enough to help them achieve their goals as tuition may be higher. Two individuals commented on this in interviews.

In the earlier days I thought I would like to use [the project] to get some funding, to take a course... that is a substantial amount of money... I had hoped I would not have to go through a bureaucratic jungle to get it. If I had been able to get the funding I would be able to get a job to support me...[the project] was not able to meet this.

Subsection 2 Implementation Issues

This section will be divided into three areas: a) planning, implementation, and monitoring; b) staffing; and c) service delivery. Four topics will be discussed in the programming area: participant involvement, power and influence, trust and lack of clarity. Within the staffing section, the hiring criteria and training will be discussed. The service delivery section will involve a discussion of the innovation fund and mandatory evaluation.

A) Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

1) Participant Involvement

When examining participant involvement in planning, implementation, and monitoring, four areas were highlighted during the interviews. These were: participant support, representativeness of participants, attendance of participants, and participants' personal demands.

i) Participant Support

In relation to participant support this was previously discussed. It was suggested that participants have access to an

outside consultant to help them feel more comfortable at the meetings.

ii) Representativeness of Participants

Some of those interviewed felt that participation on the participants' team did not reflect the average person on social assistance. The following two quotes seem to suggest that the individuals chosen to participate in the planning process were social assistance advocates and not reflective of many who entered the OP program.

One of the difficulties I have is the term participant, because a number of people on the participants' team are not [program] participants, they are social assistance recipients. They may be strong advocates, they may be strong members of their own neighbourhood associations but they don't have an action plan with our organizers.

A lot of concerns that are raised are not the voice of actual program participants that are registered, that do feel the program has some worth. They are people who won't sign the consent form ... so you get a biased perspective.

Most of the individuals attending the participants' team meetings are those who have been involved since the planning stage or are currently on the coordinating team. They were originally asked to participate by sponsoring agencies.

iii) Attendance on the Participants' Team

Some thought that involvement of participants on the participants' team was low. Participants were interested to find out why individuals were not attending the meetings so they were developing a survey which they wanted distributed to the program participants. They were also trying to minimize conflict at the meetings by suggesting different ways of phrasing comments.

Attempts to make newcomers feel welcome were also suggested. Reasons suggested for the lack of participation were: an ongoing conflict between the board of directors and a participant who was once an employee of the project (some felt these discussions spilled over into the meetings); community organizers were not referring program participants because of the conflict within the meetings; and program participants were in a transition period and did not have time to attend. One individual had the following comment to make.

If there are 200 people involved in [the project] and 15 showing up at the participants' meeting and some of those are involved on the coordinating team, uh, why are we not getting more involved? Where are they involved? How do they want to be involved? Maybe we should be asking them up front. If they say I want to be involved as a participant and that is the extent of my involvement for many people, that is the extent of their energy; they have other complications in their lives. I guess what I am struggling with and what I have always struggled with and at what point are you just imposing a structure on them, when they have very little energy to contribute to this.

iv) Participants' Personal Demands

Participants' personal demands were also seen as a barrier. Some of the challenges mentioned were: building skills, survival, child care, transportation, literacy, perseverance (to keep pushing when getting nowhere), motivation, and some social assistance recipients not wanting to work. These barriers were mentioned by six individuals, one of whom was a participant. It seems interesting to note that agency representatives felt there were more barriers facing participants involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring than participants did. The only

participant commenting on personal demands mentioned motivation as a personal barrier affecting their ability to participate.

It takes so much effort to get yourself motivated after you've been down for awhile

The individual commenting on participants' not wanting to work suggested that social assistance recipients were more interested in volunteering and education. Perhaps this observation may be related to job quality or training needs rather than personal deficits.

One thing that I think we are all a bit ideal about is that we think that all people on social assistance want to go back to work and that's just not the case. I hear people in the program and they say, "I don't want to work, I like what I'm doing now and I'm volunteering and I don't really have to go to work." And it's a fairly strong voice, I hear it, hear people say I want to go back to school and that's really what I want to do. I don't want to have to go back to work.

2) Power and Influence

Individuals commented on power at different levels from individual, to the coordinating team, to the planning agencies' Board of Directors, to the ministry. Some individuals were viewed as more powerful or influential. Comments have been made on this previously. One individual suggested that decisions should be made within the separate teams rather than at the coordinating team level. However, most of the comments related to power revolved around the planning agency's board of directors and the ministry. One individual suggested that conflict arises as a result of sharing power.

Well I guess I've been reminded that there is a lot of potential for conflict because some power is being shared and it hasn't been shared before. So I have been

reminded that sharing power results in conflict. I don't know, I'm not sure, that by setting up a project that is participant-centred that there are going to be a lot more people in their community that feel good about themselves. And I guess, it is my understanding, that they have the opportunity to participate and feel good about themselves; that's what needs to be evaluated. And that's what I see as the concrete bottom line outcome.

Another individual suggested that while individuals had influence, influence without power was not enough.

I think there is an influence but what I've seen is that the decisions still get made in spite of the influence. There is evidence within the system, that people within the system are hearing what people say and wanting to do something about it but, it just doesn't quite make it into the places where there is power to change. These people who are employed by the project, I trust them and believe them and feel they are sincere, but then I sit down with them at meetings and they always seem to stop, just right where they might have actually been able to hope to have some change. And then they come back and say even though they would like to, they can't.

i) Planning Agency/Board of Directors

Individuals mentioned the incident where an employee of the project was dismissed but wanted to be involved in the participants' team and was elected by that team to be a representative on the coordinating team. The board of directors decided that it would be a conflict of interest for an ex-employee to participate and turned down his nomination. This incident took up a lot of time at additional meetings where individuals expressed different opinions on this topic. Two themes seemed to arise, one was in relation to the dismissal; the other was in relation to the planning agency's ability to overrule decisions made by the participant and coordinating teams. Some of the following comments were made.

How do you fire someone with dignity and still give everyone enough information?

[I] partially agree with [the planning agency] having the final word on who sits on teams. [However, it should be] stringently applied, through a meeting of the minds, rather than the hassle we went through. Sit down and discuss it, settle it.

If I could, I would give these people real power and not have ultimate decision making and veto power available to [the planning agency's] board of directors.

I respect the people [on the management team], and I think they can make decisions without having them kind of taken away from them by [the planning agency]. They probably have the best interests of the program at heart; to a great extent, matter of fact, I know they do and they can be trusted to make the decisions.

One individual felt that if this conflict had happened after the program had been implemented for awhile it would not have had the same effect.

The community, we fired a person who was once a staff person and that has had a very negative impact on defining their role. If that had happened maybe even a year from now it wouldn't have had the same effect. It's really dragging us down.

Some felt that this conflict could have been avoided with foresight.

There were steps along the way that were missed when... the situation arose. But since they were bringing in guidelines at the same time that the situation existed it did seem like a hatchet job on [the individual]. And you really had to think hard to realize the difference there. And it was just a common sense thing but why didn't we think of it earlier. But, I could see why it could be perceived that we were just doing that to get rid of ... and cut ... down or whatever and I think that was a mistake that the management team made.

Another individual felt that part of this conflict was due to the community development approach which involved multiple partners all with different opinions and the complexity of trying to work within

this environment. This individual also expressed some concerns surrounding the ethics involved in the dismissal.

For the staff, from the team leaders down, in terms of getting all this feedback and deciding what to go ahead with. And trying to meet the needs of everyone and sometimes they make decisions for example, the one I am thinking of with [the individual who was fired] is when they let ... go. And they sent a letter to us (with a fair amount of detail into why they let ... go); which I thought was overstepping the bounds of confidentiality. I thought it would be enough to say we had to let ... go and name the person because we would know anyway but we did not need to know the details. In that case we should be able to respect [the planning agency] or the staff. For some, it was just busy body, some of them just wanted to know stuff. It seems to be an issue for the staff of trying to meet the needs of everyone without meeting the needs of no one in the end. That I'm sure is very difficult. In terms of that, I was not comfortable with that, but I was comfortable with letting ... go.

ii) Ministry Evaluation

While many viewed the government as positively influencing the participant-centred approach, many also saw contradictions in the behaviour of the government and their expressed policy. They viewed this as a barrier to some individuals and the program in realizing their objectives. One individual suggested that government influence was nothing more than symbolism and bluff. The barrier most frequently mentioned during interviews was the government dictating the process. It appeared from the comments that there were two themes: the intrusiveness of the consent and assessment forms, and the lack of community control over the program. Eight individuals felt that the assessment form and consent form were barriers to the participant-centred approach. However, one individual felt that the ministry was working with the

project and should not be challenged. The following comments were made:

When we look at the proposal and the government expectations, participants' ideas are not respected in regard to the requirements the ministry has made up. The consent form, as an example, the participants would like to see things differently but, the ministry is inflexible. So it's fine to give power to the participants but, the ministry is not cooperating with us. It's a big stumbling block. I don't think it's the fault of the program.

... documentation the government wants, I think it is the biggest problem. People out there are interested in jobs. They want to get off social assistance. They want to get a job. They don't want to be scrutinized or cut apart or dissected for why they are doing that, and the government wants to do that. I understand why the government wants to, and maybe needs to do that but, the average person is not interested in that, so it's hard for them to realize why you need to sign these forms. But I think its going to be ongoing, because I think there's a big mistrust of government. It's happened for years and years and I don't think you are going to get rid of it overnight.

The ministry on the one hand were really supportive of [the project], but not all people within the ministry can understand how that plays out at the community level. So decisions are made, and people on the front line can see how that's not going to work. But it's hard for people in Toronto to understand how that plays out. So on the one hand, yes, we want participants to identify the needs, but then you have the ministry saying this and this and I'm not saying that's all people within the ministry. I'm thinking that often the decisions are made by people who haven't been out there in the community and policy doesn't always fit.

The thing that disgusted me the most was the fact that [the evaluation form] is not used one to one with the counsellor. It's all entered into a computer where every [one] has access to it. I don't care what you say, it's taken away the rights of people on social assistance. When you go to a job interview you can't ask if you're married, if you have children, but if your on welfare you're just degraded, completely degraded.

At what point are we participant-centred and at what point are we not? And that we accept that. And why

fight the oppus 2 system [computer system] and the reporting system of the government. We have had input into it. If it is an infringement on peoples' rights let's not challenge them. It's not them, they are working with us to define it. If we would stop looking over our shoulder to see what the other guy is doing.

One agency that was involved in the project as a sponsoring partner withdrew from the project after attempts to negotiate the ministry's evaluation failed.

3) Trust

Trust was also viewed as a barrier by five individuals. Some felt there was a mistrust of government. Others felt government did not trust the communities to run their own programs and others felt that agencies were not trusted.

I think there's a big mistrust of government now. It's happened for years and years and I don't think you are going to get rid of it over night.

The following comment was made in relation to the feeling one service provider had about the relationship between professionals and participants.

It's starting to become an "us" and "them". It's scary I don't know how it happened. I see it on the coordinating team. I see it in the participants' team a lot. There's a lot of projected anger on people who are attempting to work with them, and maybe for no other reason than we have the power. Maybe it's because we always do have the power. But I can't believe there's no other way to merge that. I honestly can't.

4) Lack of Clarity

Individuals were asked: "what lessons have you learned from the participant-centred approach? Are there any changes you would suggest to this process?". Nine individuals made statements indicating that more clarity would have been beneficial.

...lack of a clear understanding on what a participant-centred approach meant. Based on lack of experience and people coming from different places when you say participant-centred it essentially sounds very good. Then you question what exactly does it mean participant-centred in relation to what? To whom? About what? So [there's a] lack of a clear understanding and a lack of consensus around what it was.

I think not giving the management team a really clear definition of what they are responsible for and not responsible for. And I still to this day I'm not clear on what we have a say in I'm not clear on the employment situation. I'm not clear on whether we have a say into why that person is getting fired.

5) Time

Four individuals felt that the participant-centred approach to program planning, implementation, and monitoring required more time to accomplish goals. One individual felt the additional time spent on role clarity and participant involvement detracted from the time spend on removing barriers to employment.

Instead of everyone thinking that everything is part of their role that could be very counter productive. What needs to happen, is that, if participants are really concerned about barriers shouldn't 80% of their time be spent working on ways to eliminate those barriers and how to start partnerships; to make that happen. And spending the other 20% of their time understanding what other people are doing and or asking others to do other things that they are concerned about. And the same with staff, if it is their job to get or help participants get jobs why are they spending all that time making sure that committees function and happen and all that sort of thing.

B) Staffing

Two implementation issues arose around staffing. There were some concern and mixed feelings around the requirement for community organizers to be social assistance recipients. A few individuals felt that some of the organizers who were initially

hired were not qualified for the job. There was also some conflict regarding the hiring criteria not being followed during subsequent hirings. The following comments reflect the concerns of individuals regarding staff skill. Some individuals comments reflect their changed view of the staff.

The evaluation form, assessment form it still appals me for the simple reason that I know counsellors need tools but I don't feel these people that were hired are qualified to use that tool.

The biggest thing that I have learned is that people who are not professionals and who have not had training have a lot of valuable experience. And have been doing a lot of wonderful things in the community. And I think we like to protect ourselves and say we went to school and we are really smart but, there are a lot of smart people out there who don't have education. [During] the initial hiring process, I'm saying oh my god, why do you have to have people who have been on social assistance? You are missing out on a lot of talented people. But a year up the road I'm saying they are right, because the people who have come to the project ... who have hung in there, were really right for the job. So they don't necessarily have to have that education because they have life skills.

Within the following comment a staff person talks about the complex hiring needs and takes some responsibility for the program not being prepared for the diverse needs of the participant staff.

It's very frustrating, especially when in the planning and implementation of this project they picked people not necessarily because they had the concrete employment history background but because they had an understanding and sensitivity to social assistance which was the number one criteria. Recognizing that we are bringing people in that are untrained. When you are bringing people in on social assistance you are recognizing that yes, there are skills but not necessarily the skills you would hire with another holistic employment program. Recognizing you have got to have tools in place. You have got to have a structure in place. People feel very unstable and when they are coming from personally unstable environments we have a responsibility to create a stability here and we couldn't do that.

Another individual felt that the program made some mistakes in hiring and offered some suggestions.

There was particularly an issue with hiring. Although [the planning agency] was very sensitive around hiring the correct organizer. I think maybe they didn't properly think out what they needed. There should have been a probationary time involved, I'm not sure to what degree the participants were involved in hiring.

C) Service Delivery

i) Financial Support

The following remarks are made by compiling interview data and field notes. As was previously mentioned, the innovation fund was viewed by some on the implementation team, coordinating team, and program participants as inadequate to meet the program participants' needs. While the amount the individual can borrow has been increased several times, it still does not meet the needs for all individuals. The finances available for child care and transportation were also viewed as inadequate by the implementation and coordination team. At one participants' team meeting the participants were questioning the large amount of money spent on consulting and administration; they suggested that the money should be redirected towards them and utilized in ways which would help them find employment.

...what the financial support really consists of, it took a long time for us to learn how much, a lot of it has gone to administration.... People who have qualified for a higher salary, how can we challenge that?... When you are talking about a program to help, how does it look when the funding that is available for the applicant [meets only] the basic necessities. How is it going to be handled at that level?... I would like the funds coming to us to help us meet our objectives and raise our self-esteem; ... the funds need to be put towards the recipients to raise our self-esteem ... if some money is

lost along the way well, they write off millions and millions in business loans ... With the amount of money tied up in [the project] surely they could have done better. Better to help some than achieve mediocrity for 1000.

The first thing that I can think of is that the resources that we have are not going to be enough. We can offer them bus tickets and some help with day care but that's not going to make the difference. Their benefits should be increased so they can take advantage of the opportunities. So they do not have to worry about day care.

ii) Ministry Evaluation

As was previously mentioned, program participants must sign a consent form and agree to participate in the evaluation in order to receive services. From my observations of meetings, there seemed to be some confusion initially surrounding the consent form and whether or not it was mandatory to have it signed. The program kept statistics on the number of program participants who had signed consent forms compared to the number of individuals who had not signed consent forms. Three months after the program began seeing program participants they recorded that 107 individuals had signed the consent form compared to 68 who had not. Whether or not a program participant signed a consent form seemed to be dependent on the community organizer whom the individual was working with. Two community organizers reported everyone as signing a consent form. At a group interview conducted by the ministry, it was suggested that the way an individual presents the information to the program participants may be influencing whether or not they sign it. Some individuals expressed concern that some participants were not aware that they were involved in an evaluation and that

the information was being obtained without the participants' knowledge. At one of the participants' team meetings some individuals expressed surprise when they were informed that the evaluation forms were filled out without their consent.

Subsection 3

Outcomes of the Participant-Centred Approach

The proposal suggested that the project would:

- * create permanent jobs
- * develop partnerships
- * improve participants' self esteem and
- * increase community involvement.

The program expected to impact on three levels: the individual; service delivery system; and the community. The proposal suggested these goals would be met through empowerment and community development.

The program monthly examines its statistics in relation to employment outcomes. In this thesis, some qualitative information on the outcomes of developing partnerships between the participants and organizations was obtained from the interviews.

A) Individual Level

At an individual level, personal development, resources, community involvement, and empowerment will be discussed.

i) Personal Development

Attitude changes were noted in some of the participants and the organizations. Some participants who were involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring suggested that, while the process was sometimes frustrating, their participation increased

their self-esteem and sense of hope. "I feel good about it; there are times when I get really frustrated". "I really love sharing with others and learning to be active and productive; I lobby on own behalf; I had a part from the very beginning and as I see things grow and I see things happening that helps me, that's enough of a benefit".

As already reported, agency representatives' attitudes also changed. They noted how they learned from their jobs and from the participants. They began to see the participants as individuals, with skills who could contribute to the process.

For me it was a very humbling and eye opening experience and in meeting participants and clients in general terms there is not much separating them from us, except I have a job. Many are educated and have contributed. By listening to them, it gives me an appreciation of how bad the system really is. When you hear from a personal level, it has significant impact. It has really strengthened my conviction that consumers can have a useful role in planning it also helps bring to the forefront the issue of service quality. It's a humanistic, personal approach, you can't ignore someone sitting across the table talking from the heart.

ii) Resources

Some of the participants who were involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring suggested that their resources increased when they became program participants. They were able to borrow money for school courses. At one of the meetings I observed, participants spoke to key stakeholders about some of their barriers. This discussion resulted in some of the participants being telephoned later and informed of resources available to them. The program's human resources increased with the involvement of participants. Participants often spoke on

behalf of the program at media and public education presentations, and participants led and organized the participants' team meeting.

iii) Community Involvement

All of the participants were previously involved in the community and volunteer work prior to their involvement with the project.

iv) Empowerment

There was a mixed response concerning empowerment. Four individuals suggested that the participant-centred approach was empowering. However, one individual felt the process was not empowering. The following comment is from a service provider.

... those strengths have to do with empowering people who receive social assistance. When they work with others who are on social assistance they can begin to feel less isolated; they begin to see that they have strengths.

The next comment was made in response to questions regarding decision-making.

I feel frustrated and angry to be honest. It [the process] really, really sucks, it's unfortunate because it doesn't empower people or do any of the things that [the project] wants to do to help people take control... I don't like it at all, it really annoys me. It defeats the purpose of empowering people and giving them a say in their future and a chance to direct their own lives.

A participant suggested that language illustrates principles of empowerment and individuals refer to their abilities and their choices.

This is the first thing that comes out of [participants] mouths "I have, I have, I did", not, "they told me, I have to". I think that's the key word [participants] are saying "I did".

One participant, who was not interviewed but who read the proposal, stated that one of the questions I wrote on empowerment should be changed to self-empowerment, suggesting that individuals empowered themselves.

B) Service Delivery Level

i) Understanding/Knowledge

One participant suggested that the role of participants was to educate the service providers. This individual's goal seems to have been fulfilled. Eight of the ten service providers interviewed stated that they had developed a better understanding of issues facing social assistance recipients because of their involvement in the project. Service providers had the following comments to make.

For professionals, I think it has been an educational process that we've had to evaluate how we approach clients and what it is that we have to deliver... I think the program has become more responsive and more realistic.

It will provide us an insight into that culture and allow us a perspective on it that we never have had.

I think it will help everyone to really examine the whole concept and issues, evaluating, clarifying thoughts, defining it.

ii) Program Changes

Three service providers said the role of their organization had changed. They noted that their services became more holistic or they had adopted an advocacy role.

It has helped us to understand issues related to living on social assistance and it has brought these to the board level and staff level and it has forced us to realize the need to play an advocate role.

In terms of my role in the neighbourhood it's nice to be able to help people in that area to get back to work and

it's nice to be able to provide some financial assistance for child care and things like that. In the past we have been able to provide emotional and social support but we haven't been able to provide that piece to help people get off social assistance and that's a nice complement to what we currently do.

One individual suggested that the participants' encouraged the planning agency to play an advocate role in relation to the assessment form.

C) Community Level

i) Participation

It was also suggested that participants would become more involved in the community. However, as previously mentioned all of the individuals involved in planning, implementation, and monitoring had previously been involved in the community.

ii) Community Development

From my observations, I witnessed several exchanges develop between agencies which led to increased knowledge of services and increased collaboration. Some agencies began discussing other ways they could work together outside of the project.

iii) Resources

Four individuals mentioned comments related to finances, three with concerns, and one with support of the program. Some of the concerns were in relation to how much money the program had and how it was being used. Resources were increased for the community agencies who were paid some money for allowing community organizers to use their sites. However, as was previously mentioned, some individuals felt more money should be directed toward the

participants and others were concerned by the way the money was being spent.

D) Ministry Level

At a ministry level, some minor changes were made on the consent form. However, one area ministry representative advocated quite strongly for changes in the evaluation. This individual suggested that the assessment form went against the competency model which the program was attempting to utilize. During one of the meetings I observed, a participant suggested that the area representative was on the wrong team. A comment which seemed to indicate the participant's acceptance of the representative involvement and membership. At a participant team meeting, the area representative came and answered participants' questions. While initially the participants spoke in a fairly loud tone, their anger seemed to be defused as they lowered their voice when the representative answered their questions.

Subsection 4 Participants' Feelings About Service Delivery

Eleven program participants were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the services. The following areas will be discussed in relation to their feelings: goals; resources; relationships with the community organizers; empowerment; community involvement; and examining the systemic barriers.

1) Goals

Individuals were asked "what are your goals in the program? Nine said to learn, go to school or take training, while three said to find employment. Other goals were: help others; motivation;

[obtain] resources; and increase skills. When asked "did the community organizer ask you what you wanted to accomplish?" All of those interviewed said yes.

Nine individuals mentioned that their goals were self-determined. Others suggested that it was a collaborative process with the organizer helping them put their goals into context.

When asked if steps were identified to help them to accomplish their goals, eight said yes, two said not yet, and one said no.

2) Resources

Nine individuals said resources had been identified to help them accomplish their goals. Two individuals said no resources had been identified. When asked if the project increased their resources, five said yes and three said no. One of the individuals who said no stated that the project actually decreased his/her resources, because they paid money out and were not able to achieve his/her goals. One individual said at this time it had not increased their finances but was hopeful for the future. Two individuals mentioned that while their financial resources were not increased that in other ways they gained:

I find [the project] helps you out. It helps to not get down on myself. [The community organizer, will tell me "you don't solve your problems by staying home." I find now I can go out to the factory and fill out resumes by myself and try to improve my financial position, myself, by finding a job. [The community organizer] is very good in that area.

One of the individuals who felt the project did not increase their resources had this to say:

My husband and I are working with full time jobs. We're off of welfare; we're not making enough. We need day

care; we're making less, and I can't find day care. Our rent is going up because we are working.

Participants were asked if their awareness about community issues or resources changed in any way since their involvement in the project. Seven individuals suggested it had and four individuals suggested it had not.

3) Professional Relationships

Individuals were asked "prior to becoming involved in the project how did you feel about social assistance programs?" Seven responded in statements which indicated negative feelings towards social assistance. Some comments were: "useless; they would come in all dressed up and make you feel bad; make you feel like a fool, almost like a five-year old; sucked; very bad experience; a lot of negatives feelings because I'm in it; they are taken advantage of". Three people expressed positive feelings: "helped; help to get involved, thought it was a great system; necessary and helpful".

When asked, how do you feel about your relationship with the community organizers, nine individuals responded positively and one individual suggested they were still working on it, but that it was okay.

I feel that ...is nice ... helped me out. I can't start to say how much ... gets my hopes up now. Like I say, I feel like a different person. I can get over the situation. Where would I be, where would a lot of people be without [the project] ... someone to talk to, someone to keep your motivation going.

I feel good I can talk to ... about anything. ... give you a few examples to help with your problems.

No problem, can talk to ... about anything ... put me in my place [and I do the same], it's an equal partnership.

We're still working on that, so it's hard ...but ... it's been okay so far.

Great, gone to ... many times to find out about things, helped me a lot.

Great, always phoning asking how I'm doing, supportive.

I found ... a very nice person ... tried to help as best ... could.

It was fine ... a great person.

Individuals were asked if their relationships with the organizers were collaborative. All those interviewed said yes. One individual was not sure if this method was totally effective.

Well, we all kind of as a group decide what we want to do and sometimes I think this is not the most effective. At times, it's like, "do you want to do this? do you really want to do this? I'd like you to do this." Well, do you want us to or not? Sometimes it's just a frustrating experience.

People were asked if they felt that the project was a top down or bottom-up approach, was it the people, officials, or the planning agency who decided how the program should be run? Six individuals, suggested it was the people, two individuals suggested it was the officials. However, one of these individuals said that this was not necessarily bad. One individual suggested the planning agency, and one individual was not sure. A couple of comments have been included.

Listening to what people want and need and building on that.

Outline can be made but individuals which are acting in front of people. Their attitude will influence, not institution. People within institution act from their own feelings not guidelines.

4) Empowerment

Individuals were asked if they felt any differently about themselves because of their involvement in the project. Six said yes and four said no.

I do, I do I find I go to bed at night and it's something to wake up for in the morning. I'm more happier now ...by coming down to [the project], and real nice people. It's been a big bonus for me, I really enjoy it.

There's been some change in reaction, living in this type of environment. More people have come out of themselves, because we have some common ground.

Yeh, I'm starting to feel a bit better after doing those colours [a method used to increase ones sense of identity].

Sick and tired of being unemployed.

Nothing to do with [the project], now dedicating time to school and getting better results.

I think that my personal attitude is that each individual has to take care of himself. My attitude toward all kinds of [counsellors] is not good. When I contacted the [organizer] it changed.

Program participants were asked "did the project impact on your life in any way?" Nine suggested it had. Some of the areas the program participants felt the project was helpful was in increasing motivation, increasing their families' hope, decreasing isolation, giving them support, helping to clarify their goals, increasing their knowledge of resources, providing resumes, helping them find employment, and removing the internalized blame. The following comments were made:

Yeh, I found that with [the project] I can go home and talk to the wife and kids about what I'm doing and show them the work, show what is helping me out. Gives the wife a bit of a lift to let her know I'm out there

trying. To have [the project] out there behind you helps you get to where you are going and keep you going.

Yeh, I get to meet more people. It helps to see that I'm not the only one. Some people are happy where they are I'm not I want to do better. It helps to have people around me, I'm not alone.

I couldn't upgrade myself without assistance.

I was undecided to go to college or not when I sat down with ... I decided.

It gave me someone to talk to ...[and knowledge of] services I didn't know existed, great that way.

With resume helped, got a job ... encouragement to try again ... I know nothing I did was wrong. I can do the work.

Yeh, because going back to school was just in my mind, pipe dream now reality.

It's a boost as far as going back to school.

When asked if their opportunities changed in any way, seven individuals said yes and two said no.

Individuals were asked if their relationships with others changed in any way since their involvement in the project. Six said no and five said yes. Individuals indicating their relationships changed suggested that they were more friendly, met more people, or talked more.

Program participants were asked if the way others react to them had changed since their involvement in the project. Four individuals said yes and four said no. Of those saying yes, not all had been a positive change. These were the comments of two individuals:

I find myself getting away from it. People don't want much to do with me, other than my money. It's sad, a lot of people feel trapped. I still feel I'm in a rut. We

are not entitled to benefits etc. Even my husband said I should stay home and look after the kids. I don't see my kids. We are working our asses off to get nowhere. Someone else is raising my kids.

Some just think I'm going for a hand out.

Individuals were asked if they felt they had control over their lives. Six said yes, two said they were getting more or working towards it, and two said no. When asked if the project had helped them to gain more control over their lives six said yes and four said no. One individual suggested the project was powerless and did not have the ability to increase their control.

I feel it has, I feel that once you get out there in the field on the outside of the community you learn a lot ... With [the project] you've got control over yourself. You've got the know-how to do things and increase your educational abilities, your appearance. I find myself a lot more freer, a lot more selective about going out by myself and getting a job. At least now I know how to do that. [The project has improved] my spelling.

Yes, it makes you feel you are somebody. You want to do something with your life.

Yes, because they offered me support.

A little, yeh. It's not my fault that I'm where I am. It helps to feel a little better about yourself.

Any program would or should. If you go into something looking for something, you will find it and it will benefit you.

Useful to make next step, but we never have any control, things just happen, right now I'm working but, that could change.

A bit more self-confidence.

[No, it did not help] because they can't do anything themselves.

If I was working, I could say yes to it.

5) Community Involvement

When asked if their participation within the community had changed in any way since their involvement in the project, seven individuals said no and four individuals said yes. One individual who said that their participation within the community had changed indicated that it had lowered because of the school work load. Some of those who said that their participation within the community had not changed suggested that they were already totally involved.

6) Examining Systemic Barriers

Only two of the individuals interviewed suggested that the cause of unemployment was related to something within the individual. One individual was not sure of the cause and the others mentioned various reasons like the recession, changing economic trends, no jobs, and no respect for employees. One individual commented that in some countries in Europe when owners are experiencing difficult economic times employees are the last to go; He/she thought that in Canada, employees were the first to go.

When asked if the project had changed the way they view unemployment, six individuals said no and three said yes. One individual who felt that the project had changed their view shared the following statement.

I used to think it was more my fault and now it's kinda like the economy and the way it is, not me. It's kinda a little bit of everything.

7) Recommendations made by Program Participants

Only a few of the individuals interviewed had some suggestions for program improvements. The following comments were made: "make information about [the project] available to new citizens; unless the government changes policy nobody's going to be getting ahead ...for what they are doing, they are doing a great job but, not with [General Welfare Assistance Recipients]...if you are a single parent everyone is there for you but if you are not, there is no hope; I don't know why they quit talking to me when I went to school, I still wanted to work; give the ones who are going through the schooling process something ...feels like something is missing; a little more organization."

Recommendations

Based on the interviews and my observations I recommend the following planning strategies, changes, and adjustments. I hope that they will be of benefit to the project and to the ministry.

Planning Strategies

It is suggested that:

- 1) The program was successful in facilitating change at an organizational and community level by the involvement of participants in program planning, implementation, and monitoring. It is recommended that they continue to utilize this means of empowering participants.
- 2) When planning a participant-centred approach, directing more attention towards defining and clarifying the objectives, roles and levels of involvement may prevent conflict and confusion.
- 3) Advocating or securing funding for program planning may help programs find the time required to adequately develop new programs.
- 4) Hiring social assistance recipients as community organizers was an innovative means of empowerment. While the program has addressed the hiring issues somewhat already, the following guidelines may be useful. Developing a clear understanding of the skills needed to achieve the program objectives may help reduce some conflict around hiring.
- 5) Developing training and support prior to hiring staff may make implementation easier.
- 6) Informing participants involved in program planning that the most qualified individuals will be hired and that individuals will not be hired solely because of their involvement in planning may prevent hiring based only on planning involvement.
- 7) Holding a meeting for all those affected by the evaluation, to discuss the evaluation methods may promote better working relationships between the evaluators and the program. Patton (1990) suggests that "where the researcher expects cooperation, gaining entry may be largely a matter of establishing trust and rapport (p.251)."

8) Designing the evaluation in a manner consistent to the program's philosophy may reduce conflict. Patton (1990) suggests that it is "appropriate and desirable to include among the criteria for making methods decisions, the value orientations of the intended users of the data...the evaluator's responsibility is to interact with decision makers about the strengths, weaknesses, and relative merits of various methods so that mutually agreed, informed methods decisions can be made (p. 126).

9) Developing clear contracts may reduce conflict between the evaluators and the program. It may be helpful to include the following topics: evaluation methods; supervision; the roles of the evaluator and staff; clearly stated plans for the evaluation process; a pre-arranged agreement about additional work not covered in the contract; a consent form; statement as to how the data are to be handled following completion of the evaluation; the duration of the evaluation; a predetermined conflict resolution process; and a schedule of payment.

Changes/Adjustments

10) Hiring an outside consultant to work with participants and help them to express themselves and to gain skills in participating in meetings may increase their comfort at meetings.

11) Developing a means to ensure that referral supports are available to program participants may become increasingly important as fiscal restraints reduce the amount of money spent on programs; thereby reducing the referral sources available to help program participants meet their goals. It may be important to discuss how to ensure the ongoing maintenance of this support structure.

12) Examining the quality of life as well as employment outcomes may help the program ensure that the intervention is making a significant difference in people's lives. A focus group could be organized to examine the economic realities and explore alternative ways to address unemployment. Throughout the meetings the statement "but there are no jobs" kept being repeated but never really addressed. Perhaps organizing focus groups around this topic may generate solutions to this problem.

13) Community economic development strategies may be one means of addressing both the lack of jobs and lack of quality jobs.

14) Within the legal agreement it was suggested that partnerships between business and labour would be developed. During the time I was involved these partnerships had not been developed. The project may want to dedicate some time to this objective as these partnerships may be useful in addressing larger employment issues like the quality of working life and alternative training options.

15) As the program develops and participants become more empowered the issue of redistributing resources and financial spending may become more important to examine. While the program increased individuals resources somewhat there was some concern that these efforts were falling short of true empowerment.

16) The program may want to examine whether it works differently for those on General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits Assistance and attempt to address this and monitor changes as social assistance reform is implemented.

17) The program may want to conduct research on agency empowerment in order to gain more control over the way they deliver services.

DISCUSSION

Empowerment

"The pervasive belief that experts should solve all of our problems in living has created a social and cultural iatrogenesis which extends the sense of alienation and loss of ability to control life even to one's own body" (Rappaport, 1986; p. 156). In involving participants in planning, implementation, and monitoring of OP, the program has given us an excellent example of a means of addressing the above mentioned concerns surrounding professionalism and the disabling of citizens.

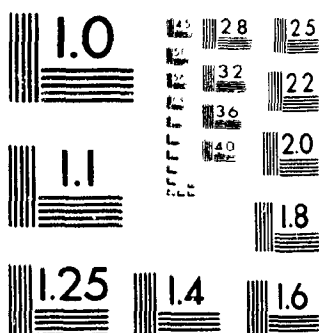
The program attended to many of the variables which are positively correlated with the process of empowerment. As a result of addressing these variables the program was generally successful in facilitating a process whereby participants could gain more control over their lives. The program was successful in reducing social isolation, promoting collaborative working relationships, helping individuals acknowledge systemic barriers, promoting values of self-determination and competency, helping to facilitate community and agency service delivery changes, increasing participants' knowledge of resources, bringing together many community leaders, and increasing linkages. Some of the barriers to empowerment were the structural parameters and systemic barriers.

Social Isolation

The program attempted to reduce social isolation by providing opportunities for program participants to become involved with

2 of/de 2

PM-1 3 1/2"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



others. Lord and Hutchison (1991) suggest that social isolation is a barrier to empowerment. Interventions which provide opportunities to reduce social isolation through small groups are providing a means of empowerment (Maton, 1993). Groups were provided at a service delivery level and individuals could participate on the participant, partners, and coordinating teams. This opportunity to meet others may help empower some. One individual stated, "I get to meet more people. It helps to see that I'm not the only one."

Collaborative Relationships

Paternalism is defined as the principle or practice of governing a country or running an organization, in a way that suggests a father's authoritative deciding of what is in the best interests, of his children (The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, 1988). Empowering agencies use collaborative relationships rather than paternalism (Prilleltensky, 1994; Rappaport, 1986). Individuals receiving service were questioned about the relationships they had with the community organizers, and all those questioned said that the relationships were collaborative. This process suggests a move away from paternalistic relationships at a service delivery level.

Acknowledging Systemic Barriers

The project helped program participants to acknowledge systemic barriers. One individual made the following comment, "I used to think it was more my fault now it's kinda like the economy

and the way it is, not me. It's kinda a little bit of everything."

Values

The values of the program were empowering in that they were similar to those suggested by various researchers as important to the empowerment process. The following values were congruent with other researchers: goals were self-determined at a service delivery level (Prilleltensky, 1994; Rappaport, 1986); the program increased participants' knowledge and access to resources somewhat (Lord & Hutchison, 1992); and the program attempted to recognize individuals' strengths and competencies (Kieffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993). They listened to citizens' needs (Lord & Hutchison, 1993 & Rappaport, 1986), and were examining the empowerment process through research (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993). The actions and interventions of the program allowed and supported individuals to become agents of change (Prilleltensky, 1994) and involved participants in various aspects of the program including employment positions (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993).

Outcomes

In terms of outcomes, the results were very favourable. The participants reported personal gains similar to those suggested by Kieffer (1984) and Lord and Hutchison (1993) as the outcomes of empowerment. Some individuals reported: increased self-esteem; new found pride in themselves and in their accomplishments; feeling that their opinions were valued; improved relationships; increased skill; improved access to resources; and influence in decision making.

The participants also had power. They were particularly influential at an organizational and community level. Some community agencies reported changing their programs as a result of participant involvement and influence. They took on more of an advocacy role and their programs became more holistic.

Biegel (1984) has suggested that empowerment and participation are methods of prevention. "What could be more fundamentally preventive - or political - than individuals capabilities for conscious and effective involvement in moulding the myriad systems and dynamics which define their daily lives?" (p.30). Heller (1984) suggested that "there are gaps in the prevention literature [and] the most glaring is the neglect of environmental - level intervention programs" (p.218). He goes on to suggest that tools like citizen participation are a means for creating organizational and community change. It is clear from the service providers' comments that the participants and program were successful in making change at this level thereby increasing participants' control over their lives. Influencing program change was an important accomplishment, as it illustrates the potential of participant involvement to facilitate change thereby preventing social and cultural iatrogenesis created by one-sided development of programs. Rappaport (1986) has suggested that our views of the poor determine how we will intervene. If we view people as competent "and if those in power believe it they are likely to develop programs, plans, and structures that will help [them] believe it" (p.151).

Hiring Social Assistance Recipients

The program was empowering in that it attempted to hire individuals who had experienced the social assistance system to work as community organizers. More time and resources devoted to the planning stage by organizations and the ministry may be helpful in addressing concerns raised in the results section in regard to hiring and training.

Level of Participation

The program was very successful in bringing together several different community groups, agencies, advocates, and social assistance recipients in a process which increased community coordination of services and increased participants resources. It is suggested by Biegel (1984) and Maton (1993) that leaders of empowering community agencies would possess the ability to bring diverse groups of people together.

The Process

Researchers have commented that empowerment is a process (Kieffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993). Results from this project seem to confirm the progressive nature of empowerment. Individuals suggested they were at various levels of empowerment, some feeling the program helped them to gain more control, others feeling that they were in process, and some feeling the program had not yet or could not help them feel more empowered. Within this last group one individual suggested that the program itself was powerless and did not have the ability to increase their control.

Parameters

I will now discuss some of the barriers to empowerment that were highlighted in the research (refer to Figure 3). Some felt that parameters made relationships less collaborative at an implementation and monitoring level. The Board of Directors had authority in terms of staffing, policy, financial and legal matters. Conflict arose when the Board of Directors overruled one of the participant team's decisions regarding representation from the participant team on the coordinating team.

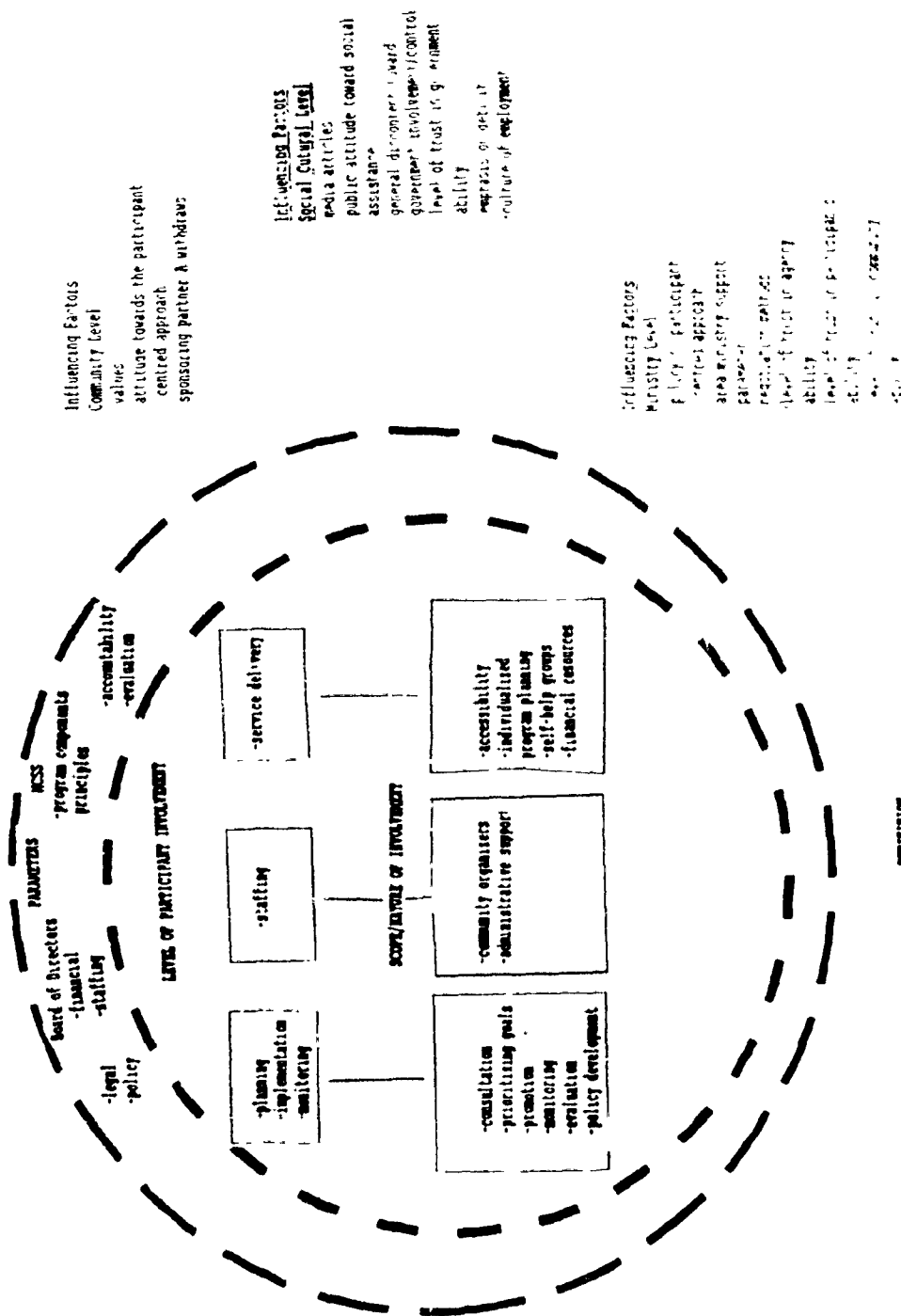
The MCSS had authority in terms of accountability, program components, evaluation and principles. Conflict arose with the MCSS evaluation. In order to understand the multiple level factors influencing the evaluation I will discuss the evaluation in terms of the framework (p.45). Examining the participant-centred framework, developed from these data, we can see how the MCSS evaluation influenced and was influenced by various levels.

The MCSS is influenced by the social cultural environment. At this level there are media articles and public reaction which suggest negative attitudes towards paying taxes for social assistance and a general discontent towards government control and involvement. The level of trust in government involvement is low. Mishra (1984) suggested that "the welfare state is faced with a crisis of legitimacy" (p.25). There is an emphasis on reducing the deficit. Unemployment is also high, thereby increasing the numbers on social assistance. At a MCSS level, there is pressure from the events just described. The Ministry are accountable to the

taxpayer and must justify their existence and continued intervention in social assistance programs. They require outcomes and models of successful programs. Probably because of the pressure they were facing they appeared to be less flexible towards the program and the evaluation.

At a community level sponsoring partner A withdrew from the project because they did not agree with the values underlying the evaluation. Within the program there were pressures from the participants and staff some of whom disagreed with the evaluation. It was suggested that the way the staff presented the evaluation and consent form may have influenced the program participants. The organization tried several times to negotiate this matter with the ministry. They were able to make minor changes to the consent form and the collection of information. The funding comes with constraints. At the planning, implementation and monitoring level, participants strongly expressed their concerns about the evaluation (much time is taken up during the meetings). At the staff level some staff were able to get all consent forms filled out while other staff did not get any signed. A staff person (working at sponsoring partner A's site) quit the project because of value differences. At an individual or service delivery level program participants may interpret the evaluation differently. They may have agreed to sign the consent form or not, dependent on their feelings about the evaluation. Program participants who did not agree to sign consent forms were not be able to receive services.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE NCSS EVALUATION



NOTATION

1 process whereby the participants' needs and decisions are being incorporated into the program.

Examining the program from a multi-level perspective enabled me to see the complexity of issues affecting the program. Within the above mentioned example, many value questions emerged. Armitage (1991) has suggested that "the high ideals of the welfare state remain beyond the grasp of the welfare institutions that have been developed, and this can lead to defensiveness rather than re-examination" (p.14).

Serrano-Garcia (1994) suggested that we need to consult participants.

The possibility of fostering the development of empowering interventions is limited if we maintain professional/client relationships based on inequality and unfairness. This questioning could in turn generate the prerequisites for a new power relationship between ourselves in our professional role and the organizations that generate and enforce our standards of professional morality. ... If we foster collaboration and participation as the usual means to empowerment in power relationships between our clients and others, should we not also seek their collaboration and participation in redefining our professional morality? (p.16-17).

Participation is something we can also examine using the multiple-level analysis framework. When I interpreted these data it seemed like the above mentioned pressures on government have also resulted in their making participant involvement in program development, implementation, and monitoring an important criteria for funding. Past studies vary in their opinions on what level of participation is needed for individuals to feel empowered (Hawker, 1989; Johnston, 1982; Sheng, 1989). The findings of this study indicated that participants were involved in planning, implementation, monitoring, staffing, and receiving services. This form of involvement was quite high and has been suggested by some

as among the highest form of participation (Hawker, 1989; Johnston, 1982; Sheng, 1989). It is believed that participation at these levels can help participants increase control over their lives. Sheng (1989) and Hawker (1989) have suggested that empowerment is possible even with parameters. Johnston (1982), however, suggests that a higher level of participation exists in which there are no parameters.

Systemic Barriers

When structural issues came up like the lack of jobs, or insufficient funding for day care or transportation sometimes changes were made and resources available to program participants increased. However, these changes were not always sufficient to remove barriers to employment. The MCSS suggested that child care and transportation would be provided through OP.

Opportunities Planning, in our view, is a process and an attitude. It is an attitude that says the system will support and advocate on behalf of social assistance recipients to ensure that they have access to the opportunities they need. It is a process that provides the kinds of supports that people require to be able to take a training course or hold down a job - supports like child care, transportation subsidies, or a start-up grant to buy books for school or boots for work. (MCSS, 1992; p. 73)

Pursuing ethical questions and working towards redistribution of resources are required activities for empowering agencies (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Prilleltensky, in press; & Rappaport, 1986).

Distribution of Funds

Lord and Hutchison (1993) suggested that citizens should have direct access to funding which goes to organizations. This recommendation is in line with what some of the participants were

suggesting. The way we approach the issue of redistribution may be responsible for the continued and ongoing disparity.

In so far as socialist ideas have been formulated, they have never seriously demanded that there be a collective levelling of the distribution of goods. Rather they simply demand that the state give active support to those beginning the race for success with more limited chances and that true equality of opportunity be actively created (Munch, 1991; p.163).

Attempts to Address Systemic Barriers

Advocacy

Service providers commented on how the participant-centred approach made them more aware of their need to play an advocacy role. Some researchers have suggested that empowering agencies find a means to challenge oppressive structures (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Rappaport, 1986). The above-mentioned obstacles (systemic barriers and distribution of funds) could possibly be addressed through an advocacy role in relation to policy changes.

Self-Start Business

The program is also attempting to address structural employment barriers by encouraging self-start business. Creating a business is one way for program participants to gain more control over their employment.

Community Economic Development

Community economic development approaches could be utilized to address some of the systemic barriers mentioned.

Community-based economic development is a long-term strategy for local communities to mobilize their resources in order to sustain and enhance their economic and social well-being and achieve political efficacy. It is a process by which community-based groups, the local government, and the private sector enter into new

contractual arrangements to retain and to create jobs and to stimulate economic and cultural development activities in a well defined economic area (Bennett, 1992; p.13-14).

The project is already using a community development approach and it may be a natural transition to move towards community economic development.

Home Economics

Another way the program attempted to address structural employment problems was through the involvement of sponsoring partner A. This agency was promoting a return to traditional values of self-reliance as a means of coping with structural barriers to work. They spoke at one partners' meeting about this topic suggesting alternatives like home gardening. However, sponsoring partner A withdrew from the project because they disagreed with the ministry's evaluation requirements.

Most traditional means of existence have been lost with modern thought, consumerism, industrialization, and the expansion of the state. We have become dependent on government and commodities (Almanzor, 1992; Illich, 1978). Illich (1978) suggests that "professions could not have become dominant and disabling unless people had been ready to experience as a lack that which the expert imputed to them as a need" (p.29).

Some theorists have suggested that what we need is social reconstruction. "Social reconstruction begins with a doubt raised among citizens" (Illich, 1978; p.17). This form of analysis may begin with a crisis. "Crisis need not... imply a headlong rush for the escalation of management. Instead, it can mean the instant of

choice, that marvellous moment when people suddenly become aware of their self-imposed cages and of the possibility of a different life" (Illich, 1978; p.4). Illich (1978) suggests that socialist approaches to unemployment would involve enforced 20 hour work weeks and increased training; The result of which may be distributing less consumer goods. Several authors suggest that what we need is self-reliance and control over our appetites (Foucault, 1984; Illich, 1978; Mollison, 1990; Walsh, 1984). "Being free means not being slave to one's self and to one's appetites, which supposes that one establishes over one's self a certain relation of domination, of mastery" (Foucault, 1984). Our role may be to help individuals to critique their situation.

where we could criticize politics - beginning for example with the effects of the state of domination of this undue politics - but we could only do this by playing a certain game of truth, showing what were the effects, showing that there were other rational possibilities, teaching people what they ignore about their own situation, or their conditions of work, or their exploitation (Foucault, 1984; p. 15).

Mollison (1990) suggested that governments can not create the needed change but people can and that self-reliance is the softest form of revolution.

Summary

In summary, this evaluation illustrates the program's favourable achievements and the challenges they faced. In particular it contributes to our understanding of: the parameters imposed by external funding; the participant-centred process; the challenges of this approach; the empowerment and prevention

possibilities provided by this approach; and the importance of addressing systemic barriers.

The evaluation also contributes to the existing literature by providing a thorough examination of a participant-centred approach to planning, implementation, management, service delivery, and staffing from an integrated social system perspective, thereby enabling us to develop an understanding of the macro, intermediate, and micro level processes which influence the program. These interactions influence the program's outcomes and are important to note when evaluating.

A process evaluation was used to describe the program and suggest ways to improve it. This evaluation clearly describes the participant-centred framework utilized by the program. Individuals involved in the planning of this evaluation suggested the importance of achieving some clarity and definition of the participant-centred approach and that information gained could be used for future program planning. Many key stakeholders who were interviewed mentioned that lack of clarity was problematic. An evaluation report will be turned over to the project providing them with clarity and the information they requested.

It seems that participants were more likely to have influence at a community or program level. Parameters at these levels became blurred and participants were involved in decisions and had access to information previously suggested as the programs' responsibility. Perhaps they were more influential at this level because they were more actively involved and had more personal

contact at the program level compared to the ministry level. Another possibility is that the ministry had more external pressure on them than the program and felt less able to make changes.

Within the program we can also see the challenges in trying to incorporate two models of intervention. The program was trying to a) provide the support needed for program participants to adapt to the changing culture of work and at the same time they were b) trying to help participants critique their situation. Ander-Egg (1980; in Serrano-Garcia) suggested there are "four levels of consciousness: submissive, precritical, critical-integrative, and liberating ... at the liberating level, people demand social transformation because they construct their asymmetrical situations as oppressive" (p. 10-11). It seems likely that any program attempting to raise individuals level of consciousness and help them to critique their situation is likely to meet with some resistance to interventions. It is however, this resistance or influence which can lead to the prevention of iatrogenesis caused by interventions created without citizen involvement. The participant-centred approach therefore not only has the potential to empower individuals but to prevent iatrogenic effects.

In conclusion, living on social assistance can be disempowering. Attempts by the ministry and project to give citizens more control over their lives by examining the current social welfare system and suggesting and implementing alternative programs like opportunities planning can lead individuals to hope for significant changes in their abilities to gain control over

their lives. This evaluation has illustrated the complex nature of unemployment and interventions. It highlights the importance of addressing systemic barriers and redistribution of resources as a means of empowering individuals to make meaningful and significant changes in their lives. Evaluating the implementation of a participant-centred process to planning, implementation, and monitoring highlighted how participants were able to alter the services they received at a community level. Continued evaluation, success, and advocacy of participant involvement may lead to participants' ability to make significant changes at the ministry level. As one individual commented;

By listening to them, it gives me an appreciation of how bad the system really is. When you hear from a personal level, it has significant impact. It has really strengthened my conviction that [participants] can have a useful role in planning. It also brings to the forefront the issue of service quality. It's a humanistic, personal approach. You can't ignore someone sitting across the table talking from the heart.

References

- Almanzor, A. (1992). Poverty, social welfare and the university in New Reality of Poverty and Struggle for Social Transformation. International Association of Schools of Social Work. 34-47.
- Biegel, D. (1984). Help Seeking and Receiving in Urban Ethnic Neighbourhoods: Strategies for Empowerment. Prevention in Human Services 3(2/3). 119-143
- Bennett, E. (1992). Community-based economic development: A strategy for primary prevention. Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health 11(2). 11-33.
- Canadian Labour Congress. (1990). Report of the CLMPC Task Forces on the Labour Force Development Strategy. Canadian Labour Congress. Ottawa Canada.
- Checkoway, B & Zimmerman, M. A. (1992). Correlates of participation in neighbourhood organizations. Organizational Change and Development 16(3-4) 45-64.
- Cotton, A. & Skinner, R. (1989). Barriers to resident participation in slum improvement: The maintenance question. Community Development Journal 35(1). 37 -41.
- Farley, B. (1993). Stop the World I Want to Get On; The Role of Life Skills in Community Development. Making Waves 4(1). 8-10.
- Foucault, M. (1988). In The Final Foucault. In J. Bernauer, & D. Rasmussen. MIT Press. Cambridge.
- Frank, F. (1993). The human resource planning and training framework. Making Waves 4(1). 4-7.
- Freeman, H. & Beck, R. (1981). Program Implementation: The Organizational Context. Sage. Beverly Hills.
- Gowdy, E., Rapp, C., & Poertner, J. (1993). Management is performance: Strategies for client-centred practice in social service organizations. Administration in Social Work 17(1).
- Gray, D., & Braddy, B. (1988). Experimental Social Innovation and Client-Centred Job Seeking Programs. American Journal of Community Psychology 16(3) 325-343.
- Greene, J. (1987). Stakeholder participation in evaluation design: Is it worth the effort? Evaluation and Program Planning 10 379-394.

- Hawker, M. (1989). Community participation as community development: Action in an ambiguous context. Community Development Journal 24(4) 282-292.
- Heller, K., Price, R., Reinharz, S., Riger, S., & Wandersman, A. (1984). Psychology and Community Change: Challenges of the Future. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. California.
- Illich, I. (1978). Toward a History of Needs. Heyday Books. Berkeley. 3-53.
- Johnston, M. (1982). The labyrinth of community participation: Experience in Indonesia. Community Development Journal 17(3) 202-207.
- Judd, C. M., Smith, E. R., & Kidder, L. H. (1991). Research Methods in Social Relations. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Toronto.
- Kieffer, C. (1984). Citizen Empowerment: A Developmental Perspective. Prevention in Human Services 3(2/3) 9-36.
- Kitchener-Waterloo Record (1994). College apprenticeship programs reeling: System 'brutalized' by lack of jobs, Conestoga head says. (Tuesday, May 31).
- Krahn, H. & Lowe, G. (1993). Work, Industry, and Canadian Society. Nelson Canada. University of Alberta.
- Lewis, M. (1993). Human resource development in CED planning. Making Waves 4(1). 1-3.
- Lord, L. (1991) Lives in transition: The process of personal empowerment.
- Macarov, D. (1978). The Design of Social Welfare. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York.
- Maton, K. (1993). The Biennial Conference: A foundation of empowerment? The Community Psychologist 27(1) 29-31.
- Mishra, R. (1984). The Welfare State in Crisis: Social Thought and Social Change. Harvester Wheatsheaf. New York.
- Mollison, B.C. (1990). Permaculture: A Practical Guide for a Sustainable Future. Island Press. Washington. D.C.
- Munch, R. (1991). Social change in the United States: The system of equality and inequality in Social Change and Modernity. University of California.
- New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language. (1988). Belair Publishing Company

- Nientied, P. Mhenni, S. & De Wit, J. (1986). Community Participation in Low-income Housing Policies: Potential or Paradox. Community Development Journal 25(1) 42-55.
- Ogborne, A. & Smart, R.G. (1982). Reactions to research: The case of the evaluation of Ontario's Detoxication Centres. British Journal of Addictions 77 275-282.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1992). Time for Action: Principal Report of the Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1993). Turning Point: New Support Programs for People with Low Incomes. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1988). Transitions: Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee Toronto, Ontario: Queen's Printer.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1991). Back on Track. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1992). Request for proposals.
- Pancer, M.S. (1985). Program vs. Evaluation: Reconciling the needs of service providers and program managers. Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health 93-92.
- Patton, M, Q. (1985). Utilization-Focused Evaluation. Sage Publishing Inc. Beverly Hills.
- Patton, M, Q. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Sage Publishing Inc. Beverly Hills.
- Piven, F. & Cloward, R. (1971). Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare. Vintage Books. New York.
- Porter, E. (1991). The long-term effects of three employment programs for social assistance recipients. Ministry of Community & Social Services. Toronto.
- Prilleltensky, I. (1994). Empowerment in mainstream psychology: Legitimacy, obstacles, and possibilities. Canadian Psychology. 35(4) 358-374.
- Rappaport, J. (1986). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. In E. Seidman & J. Rappaport

- (Eds.). Redefining Social Problems. (pp.141-164). New York: Plenum Press.
- Rappaport, J. (1984). Empowerment in a religious setting: A multivariate investigation. Prevention in Human Services 3(2-3) 37-72.
- Routledge, R. (1993). Grass tip consumer policy input. Community Development Journal 28(2).
- Seidman, E. & Rappaport, J. (1986). Redefining Social Problems. Plenum Press. New York
- Serrano-Garcia, I. (1994). The ethics of the powerful and the power of ethics. American Journal of Community Psychology 22(1) 1-20.
- Sheng, Y. (1986). Community participation in low-income housing projects: Problems and prospects. Community Development Journal 25(1) 56-64
- Stein, A. (1989). Critical issues in community participation in self-help housing programmes. The experience of FUNDASAL. Community Development Journal 25(1) 20-30.
- Summers, S. (1990). Evaluation of Community Development Initiatives (CDI) Project. Northwest Enterprise Centre. Thunder Bay. Ontario.
- Vandervelde, M. (1979). The semantics of participation. Administration in Social Work 3(1) , 65-77
- Waterloo Region District Health Council. (1992). Mental Health Implementation Project.
- Waterloo Region Social Services. (1993). Intake statistics.

Appendix A

Definition of Terms

project/program/pilot project - The names used to describe the program being evaluated.

implementation team - The name used in the proposal to describe the team responsible for implementation of the project. Participants, agencies, neighbourhood associations, and the planning agency executive director were represented on this team.

management team - The name of the team which replaced the implementation team once service delivery began.

coordination team - The name chosen to replace management team.

sponsoring partners - All agencies receiving money for their involvement in the project. These agencies have a community organizer working at their agency to deliver services.

planning agency - The agency legally responsible for the project.

executive director of the planning agency - The person most involved in the organization and planning of the project.

partners - All those involved in the project, this would include individuals on the staff team, coordinating team, sponsoring partners team, the key stakeholder team and the participants team.

participants - Individuals who were selected to participate in the planning stage. These individuals were receiving social assistance.

program participants - Individuals who are receiving social assistance and involved in the service delivery as a recipient of services.

key stakeholder - Representatives from agencies working with social assistance recipients.

ministry area representative - The area program supervisor from the ministry who oversees the program at a regional area level.

ministry evaluation team - The evaluation team selected by the ministry sponsoring the project. Their role is to oversee the evaluation of the pilot projects.

student evaluator - I am a M. A. Psychology student originally on placement with the area ministry and then hired by the planning agency in a partnership arrangement between the university and the planning agency. I conducted an evaluation of the pilot project as my thesis.

sites - Agencies where the community organizers are placed to deliver services.

host sites - Agencies where the community organizer spends the majority of their work week.

team leader - A staff person who oversees the development of the project.

acting team leader - Originally a community educator however, due to maternity leave acting as the team leader.

community educators - Two individuals hired to supervise the community organizers and communication's organizer, liaison with the agencies, and participate in community development work.

community organizers - Front line workers who have the most contact with program participants.

sponsoring partner A - An employment agency who was asked by the planning project to be involved in co-sponsoring the project. This agency renegotiated their involvement in the pilot program twice.

cities A, B, and C - The 3 main cities within the region where the project is delivered.

Appendix B

Questions for Participants

I would like to ask you some general questions about your involvement in OP.

1) General Background

- * How long have you been involved in the OP program?
- * What types of activities have you been involved in while participating in the OP program?
- * What are your goals in the OP program?
- * Can you tell me how your goals were determined?
- * Did the community organizer ask you what you wanted to accomplish?
- * Did the community organizer ask you what you would need to accomplish your goals?
- * Were resources identified to help you accomplish your goals?
- * Were steps identified to help you accomplish your goals?
- * Has OP increased your financial resources in any way? If so, how were they increased?

2) Empowerment

- * Prior to becoming involved in OP how did you feel about social assistance programs?
- * Did your involvement in OP impact on your life? If yes, how?
- * Has your awareness about community issues or resources changed in any way since your involvement in OP? If so, can you explain how?
- * Have your relationships with others changed in any way since your involvement in OP? If yes, could you explain how they have changed?
- * Have your opportunities changed in any way since your involvement in OP? If yes, could you explain how?
- * Has your participation in the community changed in any way since your involvement in OP? If so, how has it changed?
- * Has the way others react to you changed since your involvement in OP? If so, how has it changed?
- * Do you feel any differently about yourself as the result of your involvement in OP?
- * How do you view unemployment?
- * What do you see as the cause of unemployment?
- * Has OP changed the way you view unemployment? If so, can you explain how?
- * How do you feel about your relationship with the community organizer?
- * Is the relationship collaborative?
- * Do you feel that OP is a top-down or bottom-up approach? In other words is it the people, officials or CODA who decide how the program works?
- * Were you involved in program planning?
- * If yes, how were you involved?
- * Some describe empowerment as gaining control over one's life?
- * Do you feel you have control over your life?
- * Has the OP program helped you to feel you have more control

over your life?

- * If yes, could you explain how?
- * If no, could you make any suggestions for ways it could help you to gain control over your life?

3) Suggestions for program changes

- * Do you think the program has any weaknesses? If yes, what are they?
- * Do you think the program has any strengths? If yes, what are they?
- * Should anything be changed?
- * How could the program be improved?
- * What are some of the things that you really liked about the program?
- * What are some of the things you disliked about the program?

4) Open ended

- * What should I know about your involvement in the program?
- * Is there anything you would like to add?
- * How do you feel about this interview?
- * Could I have done anything differently?

**Questions for Sponsoring Partners, the Implementation Team,
Participants Team and the Management Team**

I would like to ask you a few questions about the participant centred approach. These questions are mainly about the service design, implementation and program management.

1) Definition and operation

- * How long have you been involved in OP?
- * Where did the idea for a participant centred approach originate?
- * What is the participant centred approach?
- * Is OP using a participant centred approach?
- * If yes, can you give an example?
- * If no, can you give an example

2) Nature and amount of participation

- * How much participation is there from the participants?
- * Do you think the amount of participation from the participants is adequate?
- * Have there been any changes in participation over the course of the project? If yes, how has it changed?
- * How can the participant centred approach be maintained?
- * Do the participants influence decision making? If yes, how do they influence decision making? Can you give me an example?
- * (For participants) Did you participate in any other community activities before your involvement in OP?
- * Were there any factors present in the community which promoted the participant centred approach? If yes, what were they?
- * Were there any social, political, or government influences which encouraged the participant centred approach?

3) Outcomes of the participant centred approach

- * Do you see any strengths in the program as a result of the participant centred approach?
- * If yes, what are they?
- * Do you see any benefits to yourself (the participants) from your (their) involvement? If yes, what are they?

4) Barriers to participation

- * Do you see any challenges to the program as a result of the participant centred approach?
- * If yes, what are they?
- * Are there any ways the program can remove or reduce these challenges?
- * Do you see any challenges to yourself (the participants) as a result of your (their) involvement?
- * If yes, what are they?
- * Are there any ways the program can remove these challenges?
- * Were there any factors present within the community that interfered with the participant centred approach?
- * Were there any social, political, or government influences which interfered with the participant centred approach?

5) Relationship between CODA and the participants

- * Is there enough support for participants?
- * If no, is there any way this could be changed?
- * Do (you) participants feel comfortable to speak up in meetings?
- * If no, is there any way this could be changed?
- * Could you describe the relationship between CODA and the participants?

6) Decision making

- * How are decisions made?
- * How do you feel about this process?
- * Are there any changes you would suggest to this process?

7) Issues

- * Where there any issues which arose during the implementation or management phase?
- * What were these issues?
- * Were they resolved? How were they resolved?

8) Lessons Learned

- * What lessons have you learned from the participant centred approach?
- * If you had it to do all over again what would you change?

9) Open ended

- * What should I know about the participant centred approach?
- * How do you feel about this interview?
- * Could I have done anything differently?

Questions for Staff

I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences with OP as a staff person. I am particularly interested in examining the participant centred approach

1)Goals and Objectives

- * Are there any problems with the program design?
- * If yes, what are these problems?
- * How would you define the participant centred approach?
- * How does the participant centred approach work?

2)Training

- * Did you receive any training specifically related to the participant centred approach?
- * Is there any type of training you feel would have helped you in relation to the participant centred approach?

3)Supervision

- * How does your supervisor practice or illustrate the participant centred approach?

4)Issues

- * Where there any issues which arose during the implementation or management phase around the participant centred approach?
- * What were these issues?
- * Were they resolved? How do you feel they were resolved?

5)Open ended

- * What should I know about Op in relation to the participant centred approach?
- * How do you feel about this focus group?
- * Could I have done anything differently?

Appendix C
Consent To Participate In Graduate Thesis Research

My name is Barb Chrysler. As partial requirements for a Master's Degree in Community Psychology I am conducting a program evaluation of the Going to Work Opportunity Planning Program.

My thesis advisor is Dr. Edward Bennett, Department of Psychology.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to participate:

- 1) You are free to withdraw your participation at any time.
- 2) You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- 3) Because of the nature of the program it may be difficult to describe the process without identifying some individuals if not by name they may be recognized in the description of the implementation. If you happen to be one of these people you will be consulted in regard to the text prior to report submission.
- 4) Information provided by program participants in relation to service delivery will be treated as confidential.
- 5) You will be invited to comment on the relevance of the findings before the final report is completed. A meeting will be held for all who participated in the evaluation.
- 6) If you agree I will be using a tape-recorder as well as taking notes during the interview. These interviews will be kept confidential. Tapes will be destroyed or erased following completion of this thesis.
- 7) I estimate the interview to be approximately 1 hour in length.
- 8) You are entitled to a report on the results of this research project. These results should be available approximately 1 month after the completion of the research, approximately Jan. 1994.

Any questions may be directed to me
Barb Chrysler
c/o Department of Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario
N2L 3C5

Phone : (519) 884-1970 ext 2371 (Wilfrid Laurier
Department of Psychology (leave a message with secretary)

I _____ consent to participate in the
program evaluation for the research purposes outlined above.

Participant's signature _____
Date _____

Please include your mailing address to receive feedback of research results.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

A PROCESS EVALUATION OF A PARTICIPANT-CENTRED APPROACH TO OPPORTUNITIES PLANNING AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR EMPOWERMENT

by

Barb Chrysler

thesis committee

Ed Bennett
Richard Walsh-Bowers
Isaac Prilleltensky

ABSTRACT

A process evaluation of an "Opportunities Planning" pilot project was conducted. Stakeholder participation was utilized to help determine the evaluation focus. Mainly qualitative methods were used. The evaluation utilized field notes, program documents, focus groups, and structured interviews. Over 40 meetings were attended and recorded, and 27 one-on-one structured interviews were conducted, as well as two focus groups where eight individuals were interviewed. These interviews were conducted with a variety of key stakeholders, including: participants (social assistance recipients), program participants (individuals receiving the service), staff, service providers, and ministry representatives.

The research results are arranged in four parts: a) the definition and framework of the participant-centred approach; b) implementation issues; c) outcomes of the participant-centred approach and d) participants' feelings about service delivery. The results of this evaluation help to: a) clarify the participant-centred approach and understand the parameters under which it operated; b) identify how the operating parameters led to implementation issues regarding power relationships; c) understand how the participant-centred process can lead to empowerment and program changes at a local level; and d) identify some of the systemic barriers program participants are struggling to overcome and their feelings about the program. The discussion section critiques the program's ability to empower social assistance recipients. Several recommendations are made which could be utilized to avoid challenges which seem to result from using a new approach to program planning, implementation, monitoring, and service delivery.

BACKGROUND

- * 1986 - Social Assistance Review Committee established
- * 1988 - Transition Report: of the Social Assistance Review Committee Published.
 - Recommended Opportunities Planning (OP) to help individuals become self-sufficient.
- * 1991 - Back on Track report recommended that \$ 5 million be directed towards funding six OP pilot projects.
- * 1992 - The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) called for proposals for OP pilot projects.
- * 1992 - Time for Action published which discussed the implementation of OP.
- * 1992 - In July 9 OP pilot projects were selected.
- * 1992 - I began a placement at the MCSS in September.
- * 1993 - In May I was hired by the project to conduct an evaluation.

PURPOSE

- 1) Clarify the participant-centred approach
- 2) Determine the implementation issues
- 3) Ascertain the outcomes of the participant-centred approach
- 4) Determine the participants' feelings about service delivery

METHOD

Mainly qualitative methods were used. This means that I used field notes (observations of meetings), program documents, focus groups, and structured interviews.

MAIN FINDINGS

*** 1) Clarifying the Participant-Centred Approach**

Participants were involved in three levels of the program. They were involved in planning, implementation, and monitoring. At this level they were involved in consultation, prioritizing goals, promotion, monitoring, evaluation, policy development.

Participants were also involved as staff. They held positions as community organizers and administrative support.

Participants received service from the program. At this level some individuals felt the program was participant-centred because they felt it was accessible, used individualized planning, encouraged

self-help groups, and provided access to financial resources.

*** 2) Implementation Issues**

Within the program there were parameters (limits) which impacted on the participant-centred process. These parameters were at two levels. The first was the planning agency/board of directors. At this level the program had control over legal, policy, financial, and staffing. At the second level the Ministry of Community and Social Services had control over program components, principles, accountability, and evaluation.

*** 3) Outcomes**

The program was found to be empowering at three levels. At an individual level some of those interviewed felt that their personal development and resources increased. At a service delivery level program managers suggested that their understanding and knowledge of participants' issues increased. They had made program changes as a result of participant involvement. Their programs became more holistic and they took on more of an advocacy role. At a community level there was an increase in community development and agencies resources increased.

*** 4) Barriers**

Barriers to the participant-centred approach were the parameters and systemic issues like the lack of jobs or lack of quality jobs.

CONCLUSION

*** 1) Participant Influence**

In conclusion participants had influence in program development, implementation, and monitoring particularly at a community and organizational level.

*** 2) Participant-Centred Approach**

The project seemed to use two different program models. One was to help individuals to adapt to the changing economic culture. The other was to help them critique their situation and develop alternative means of addressing unemployment and to challenge the system. If the program is successful in helping individuals to critique their situation some conflict between participants and the organization, ministry and system is likely. In that individuals will challenge structures they view as oppressive.

The level of empowerment is affected by multiple level influences. Included is a framework of the participant-centred approach and all the different levels which may be affected by social cultural, ministry, community, organization, and individual influences.

*** 3) Participant-Centred Process A Means to Prevent Iatrogenesis**

"The pervasive belief that experts should solve all of our problems in living has created a social and cultural iatrogenesis [helper caused dis-ease] which extends the sense of alienation and loss of ability to control life even to one's own body" (Rappaport, 1986;

p.156). Resistance or influence by participants can lead to prevention of iatrogenesis caused by one-sided interventions created without citizen involvement.

INTERVIEW QUOTE

By listening to them [participants], it gives me an appreciation of how bad the system really is. When you hear from a personal level, it has significant impact. It has really strengthened my conviction that [participants] can have a useful role in planning. It also brings to the forefront the issue of service quality. It's a humanistic, personal approach. You can't ignore someone sitting across the table talking from the heart.

REFERENCES

- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Service. (1992). Time for Action: Principal Report of the Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1993). Turing Point: New Support Programs for people with Low incomes. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. (1991). Back on Track. Ministry of Community and Social Services. Toronto.
- Patton, M, Q. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Sage Publishing Inc. Beverly Hills.
- Rappaport, J. (1986). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. In E. Seidman & J. Rappaport (Eds.). Redefining Social Problems. (pp.141-164). New York: Plenum Press.