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Value dilemmas in striving for social justice: A case study of the Working Centre (Ontario)

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Value Dilemmas in Striving for Social Justice: A Case Study of The Working Centre

By

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Thesis

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Abstract

This study examines the Working Centre, a self-help resource centre for the unemployed in Kitchener, and how it has responded to the changing nature of work. It explores the growth of global capitalism and the impact of new technologies on the workplace. The study also examines how economic restructuring leads to high levels of unemployment and part-time work. The thesis reviews the Working Centre's mission, goals and objectives, and how these have been translated into action in the Centre's early years and today. Finally, this study discusses the Centre's efforts to pursue a social justice agenda in a rapidly changing socio-economic context. The emphasis of the study is on the value dilemmas faced by the Working Centre in this regard.

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Introduction

Community psychology concerns itself with the health and well being of all members of a community. It is fundamentally guided by a set of values or principles which define its work. Caring and compassion, health, self-determination, and human diversity are its guideposts for working with oppressed communities. According to Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997), these values have served as a solid foundation for the discipline, but without the inclusion of a social justice agenda they fail to be effective in the effort to rebuild institutions on a more egalitarian basis. Without a social justice agenda we remain ineffective to prevent or change the underlying causes of oppression. Social justice can be defined as the "fair and equitable allocation of bargaining power, resources, and burdens in society" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997, p. 177). The thesis will explore to what extent an alternative social agency, the Working Centre of Kitchener, upholds the value of social justice. I will discuss factors inhibiting or facilitating the pursuit of a social justice agenda. The information obtained would indicate that, like many other alternative organizations, this agency acknowledges the lack of social justice in society, but its efforts to eliminate social injustice are limited. Like Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997) have pointed out, "proponents of sense of community, prevention, empowerment, and human diversity typically invoke social justice as a prerequisite for the fulfillment of other values, but we somehow stop at that" (p. 177). The data gathered for this thesis indicate that the Working Centre excels at fostering a sense of community among its staff, board, and users. This sense of community extends beyond the walls of the Centre to other

groups in the region. The Centre has managed to establish very good working relationships among a wide circle of supporters in the region. The thesis tries to show the difficult dilemmas alternative agencies face in trying to enact a social justice agenda.

A social justice agenda is particularly relevant in our rapidly changing socio-economic climate. The failure of community psychology to include a social justice agenda speaks to the pervasiveness of global capitalism. The values which guide multinational corporations are characterised by an ideology which views everything as a market. Capitalist values are so disabling that those institutions and people which are intended to provide solutions to oppressed communities are in fact destroying those same communities. According to McKnight (1989) the prevailing ideology is one which converts citizens to patients and communities to deficient individuals. Corporations are the most dominant governance in the world, exceeding most countries in size and power. Once regulated by governments through the use of tariffs and subsidies and restricted by borders, corporations have successfully promoted a free trade agenda creating a world market free of regulations and trade barriers. Global competition and labour saving technologies have led to increased profits and 800 million unemployed and underemployed people in the world (Rifkin, 1996). Clearly, without regulation technology will continue to displace workers and destroy the health and well being of families and communities. Left to its own devices the market ideology of "survival of the fittest" will never provide a balance between profits and public interest. Corporatism is not about public interest; it is about the rights of the powerful to maintain their position without any accountability (Korten, 1995).

A social justice agenda embraces a connection between the personal and the political, a connection among citizens who are involved in and affected by social change and a connection among the micro, meso, and macro levels (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). By connecting these components we begin the process of raising our awareness which takes us on the journey towards personal empowerment and social change. Freire (1992) refers to this process as "conscientization" the development of a critical awareness of the interactions between the social, political, and economic factors, and the link between this learning process and concrete action to change the debilitating conditions.

The Working Centre, a self-help resource centre for the unemployed and underemployed, serves as a vehicle of conscientization and strives to promote a social justice agenda. While providing a place for unemployed people to meet the Centre is also engaged in linking the social, political and economic environment to the lived experiences of people at the community level. Clearly, the values which guide the Working Centre are diametrically opposed to the self-serving values of multinational corporations. Guided by a set of values which afford all people respect and dignity, affect social change for the purpose of developing community, and build mutual acceptance through informal structures, the Working Centre is in my opinion a model for living and working.

The present research is a qualitative study of the Working Centre, an alternative community setting which challenges the "dog eat dog" world of contemporary society. Having worked in alternative organizations for over 10 years I was intrigued the first time I walked into the Working Centre. My main previous experience with an alternative organization was with the John Howard Society, an agency which works for effective, just

and humane responses to crime and its causes. Being interested in history I have had the opportunity to study the historical context of our prison system and its evolution. From my perspective we are no closer now than we were 150 years ago to addressing crime or its causes. In fact , I would argue, we may be losing ground. My experience has been that we blame offenders for crime and fail to take any responsibility for the social or environmental factors which are related to criminal activity. Working with the John Howard Society we were often overwhelmed by the injustice of the prison system; in our attempts to help those caught up in the system we seldom if ever had the luxury to ponder changing it. Besides, the criminal justice system appeared to be an insurmountable giant against which one felt powerless. I certainly hadn't been taught how to effect change in the institutions around me.

When I first walked into the Working Centre I was impressed with how responsive the environment was to those who came in to use it. Even before the recent changes which make the Centre even more receptive to those who use it, the Working Centre was like no other agency I had been in. It was teeming with people involved in various activities, whether that was going through the newspaper, using the telephone, or photocopying their resume. Having worked in two employment centres I immediately noticed that there wasn't the traditional reception area where people sat and waited for a counsellor to come and get them. You could of course see one at the Centre but what was amazing to me was that people were doing things for themselves. Allowing people to help themselves, I thought, showed a great deal of respect. The first time I was at the Centre (1987) the term "client empowerment" had pervaded most community social

service agencies. Perhaps somewhat cynically, and certainly not knowing much about empowerment models, I wondered how that would create jobs. When I spoke with staff at the Centre I was struck by their critical awareness of unemployment and its structural causes. I was impressed with their energy to do more than employment counselling, to search for larger answers with the hopes of finding solutions. When I walked out of the Working Centre I left with a sense of hope. I still have this feeling today when I am at the Centre.

In this study I explore the values of community psychology, the values of the global economy, the transformation in the nature of work, and the values of the Working Centre. I examine how the Working Centre has become a vehicle for social change at the community level at a time when global capitalism has become all pervasive.

Literature Review

The Environment and Health and Well-Being

Community psychology has long advocated a move away from a predominant intra-psychic model of mental health to one which encompasses both personal and environmental variables (Rappaport, 1977). This shift has led to an examination of forces in our environment which play a pathogenic role in the incidence of behavioural and physical disorders. One environmental factor which has been the focus of serious interest for decades is the economy. Durkheim (1951) suggested a link between economic cycles and suicide. Unemployment and the subsequent social disintegration, he argues, lead to increased stress and a higher suicide rate. Brenner (1973) found an inverse correlation between the economy and hospitalization rates: when the economy prospered

hospitalization rates decreased; during an economic downturn hospitalization rates increased. Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger, and Wandersman (1984) note a similar pattern with regard to admissions, readmissions and emergency admissions for the criminally insane. Dooley and Catalano (1980) conclude that changes in the economy, whether upturns or downturns, are associated with increased pathology. Similarly, Eyer (1977) argues that the cyclical nature of the economy is associated with cyclical variation in suicide and homicide rates. He contends that the primary factors affecting suicide rates are social disruption and alienation, not merely unemployment. Eyer also states that our current economic system encourages overwork and high mobility, leading to a disruption of social bonds. Cahill (1983) links at least five structural characteristics of the macro-economy to environmental stressors: mental health and the business cycle, unemployment and health, income distribution and health, capital mobility and community disruption, and work fragmentation and health. Argyle (1994) argues that there are significant class differences in physical health, mental health, happiness and self-esteem.

Community psychologists recognize that behaviour is best understood as an interaction between persons and their environment (Heller et al., 1984). Environmental processes including social, economic, cultural, and psychological factors determine behaviour (Gil, 1996). In the broader culture, however, the current thinking which guides most of our formal structures (educational, economic, religious, political, justice etc.) is person-centred. Person-centred approaches are concerned with punishment, control, and modifying the behaviour of individuals. Societal conditions which inhibit the development of people's needs and potential tend to be expressed destructively (Gil, 1996). Given the

evidence of the link between the economy and pathology we should ask more structural questions about the economy, and consider social interventions to change the pathogenic practices inherent in our economic institutions (Bennett, 1992; Cahill, 1983).

The Global Economy

The current economy is dominated by large corporations. Multinational corporations control 70% of world trade (Ellwood 1993). However, the profit-driven multinational corporate ideology has been somewhat restricted by borders, subsidies, tariffs, and regulations. In an unrelenting effort to maximize profits, corporations have led an attack against tariffs and trade regulations and the promotion of a free-trade agenda. According to Ellwood (1993) it is the compulsive drive for goods and power within the corporate world that has pushed the free trade agenda. Trans-national corporations view trade barriers, subsidies, and regulations as barriers which restrict the flow of capital and operation of the market. Agreements such as NAFTA and GATT create a world market free of such regulations and trade barriers.

Lockhart (1987) identified land, labour, and capital as three basic factors which underlie conventional economic theory. Capital, according to conventional economic theory, must be free to move in order to maximize profits. The implication of this theory is that as resources in a community are depleted, business and capital are free to move to areas with greater resources, leading to greater profits. Unlike business and capital, labour is restricted through regulations such as work visas and social needs which are met in existing communities. Finally, conventional economic theory views land and natural resources as a means to higher profits. Once these have been depleted, business and

capital leave.

Globalization of the market place has led to plant closures and downsizing throughout most of the western world as multinational corporations are moving to underdeveloped countries where they pay significantly lower wages, have fewer environmental regulations and are not restricted by organized labour. While top corporate managers, investment bankers, and financial speculators receive multi-million dollar incomes, approximately one billion of the world's people struggle to live on less than $1 a day (Korten, 1995). Global corporations are not grounded in any specific community nor are they accountable to any given place. They exact power over people and places. According to Rifkin (1996), they are agile, flexible and control the commercial agenda of every country in the world. Corporations have emerged as the dominant governance institutions in the world and they exceed most governments in size and power (Korten, 1995). Corporations' decisions to relocate are based on economic, not human welfare, considerations (Cox 1993). Cox points out that multinational corporations are moving to Central America, lured by wages which are as low as three dollars a day. Corporations are playing off one plant against another, one community against another, and one country against another to determine which one offers the best package (Saul, 1995).

Within Canada, too, there is daily evidence of corporations shopping for the best package including tax break incentives, lower wages and/or grants. New Brunswick, led by Premier Frank McKenna, courted United Parcel Service to re-locate there through tax incentives. New Brunswick let it be known that it would sell itself to any company in an effort to attract jobs (Swift, 1994). During a recent trade mission to Asia McKenna was

accused by other Premiers of trying to lure Canadian companies, who were part of the trade mission, to New Brunswick (Kingston Whig Standard, January 12, 1997). As economic borders are torn down, plants across Canada and the United States are closing with devastating effects on communities. At the height of the current economic recession (1989-1993) 460,000 jobs disappeared in Canada. In Windsor, Ontario alone over 50 plants closed during this same period (Swift, 1994). Clearly, the corporate obsession for maximizing profits exists at the expense of people and communities (Ellwood, 1993).

The east coast fishery has also fallen prey to the trans-national corporate "survival of the fittest" ideology. The corporate agenda led to an increase from 585,000 fishing boats in 1970 to 3.5 million boats in 1995. The actual fish caught increased by five times between 1950 and 1985 (Saul, 1995). The subsequent collapse of the cod stocks displaced 30,000 fishworkers in Newfoundland alone. Global competition and labour saving technologies have led to increased profits world wide; at the same time there are 800 million unemployed and underemployed people in the world (Rifkin, 1996).

Within the formal economy there is an emphasis on individuals in competition with each other. The formal economy, according to Ross and Usher (1986), has reduced human relationships to that of "cash and carry". Price is the only information the system needs to know in order to operate. People are reduced to a measurable value, like a machine or a piece of property (Saul, 1995). Friendship and community exist in spite of the formal economy, certainly not because of it. According to Goldenberg (1978) the socio-economic system revolves around the values of attaining goods and power. The individual's ability to obtain these goods and services is synonymous with the individual's

self-worth. The system

> such as it is and by virtue of the assumptions it makes about goods and power, is one which inspires oppression, a system in which exploitation and competition emerge as among the most "reasonable" ways of dealing with the world and other human beings. (Goldenberg, 1978)

Wachtel (1989) contends that current values around obtaining goods and power are synonymous with growth and progress. Wanting more is a constant, he argues, regardless of what we have. We live our lives, according to Saul (1995), as if we are in a desperate rush to live life before it leaves us behind. The growth mentality is based upon human desires being inexhaustible. Our expectations are conceptualized as "enough being just over the horizon, and like the horizon it recedes as we approach it" (Wachtel, 1989).

Traditionally, unemployment rates fluctuate with variations in the economy. This pattern has changed, however. Currently unemployment levels remain high despite economic cycles. During the early 1980's unemployment rates were the highest in 40 years. The recession of the 1990's witnessed an unemployment rate of nearly 12%. Canada's 1996 unemployment rate averaged 9.7%. Newfoundland's unemployment rate is up to 19.8% and has averaged above 18% for the last 10 years. Economists "optimistically" forecast that an 8% unemployment rate may well be in sight by the end of 1998 (Kingston Whig Standard, January 16,1997).

Without system-centred approaches to combatting the corporate agenda manufacturing plants will continue to close and remain closed across Canada. In addition the ecological destruction inherent in the corporate ideology will continue the socio-economic displacement of people and communities.

The Old and New Nature of Work

It could be argued that people in North America have never been as well off materially as they are now, nor have we been so lacking in basic virtues and community building concepts as we appear today (McKnight, 1977). There has never been as much money or disposable income in circulation as there is today. Despite the amount of money available there is no money for the public good (Saul, 1995). The world is increasingly divided between those who live in opulence and those who live in dehumanizing poverty. What is becoming more familiar to many members in our community is the loss of opportunity to make basic decisions concerning their lives. Illich (1973) contends that as the power of machines increases, the role of persons decreases to that of consumer. The advance of technology has led to a specialization of functions, institutionalization of values and centralization of power. It has turned people into accessories of bureaucracies (Illich 1973). As consumers, people lose their autonomy and their connections with each other and their environment. According to McKnight (1995) communities have been invaded by professionals and "human service systems" which have destroyed communities' ability to solve their own problems.

Labour unions across Canada, the United States and Europe are under constant assault by multinational corporations. The trade unions which voiced working class concerns and played a very active role in communities after the Second World War are now losing their power. After years of fighting free trade and corporate driven workplace initiatives unions have recognized that workplace and global restructuring will be imposed unilaterally if they don't become involved (Schachter, 1995). According to Noble (1995),

people are being replaced by machines. Technology, he argues, is being used against people. Unions are losing membership through displacement, while the use of technologies such as surveillance mechanisms afford management much more control over labour and production. As Noble illustrates, technology makes it easier for owners and managers to control the fate of workers. Without regulations and controls technology will continue to displace workers and in so doing destroy people's livelihoods, families and communities. Mounting statistics reveal a workforce, forced to compete with automation, in retreat in virtually every economic sector (Rifkin, 1996). The market, unless properly regulated, will never provide balance or encourage democracy (Saul, 1995). Corporatism is not about public interest, it is about institutionalizing the right of the economically powerful to do whatever serves their immediate needs without any public accountability (Korten, 1995).

Along with the use of technology, the corporate world has developed what Swift (1994) refers to as an attitude adjustment technique aimed at workers. Promoted by management as "team training" or "high commitment training" workers are called upon to provide ideas to reduce costs and eliminate waste. According to Swift, workers in many production plants adopted the team training concept so well that co-workers were displaced, jobs made highly competitive and workers made to compete against each other. Workers are pitted against each other within plants, between companies and between nations. Swift argues that when management instructs workers to improve quality and speed of production or risk losing their jobs, workers take that threat seriously. After all, workers in Ontario have seen many plants close and friends and family lose their

livelihoods. The "survival of the fittest" corporate ideology has placed the importance of work ahead of community. The daily work ritual has been expanded to citizens around the world, exhorting all to work harder so that everyone can be globally competitive.

As workers today we look to experts for solutions, but by relying on experts we give up our control. This loss of control leaves us feeling powerless to change the system upon which we depend. Illich (1977) argues that this sense of powerlessness has created a crisis - a crisis which has evolved to a point where doctors, bankers, psychologists and economists take over and personal liberties are threatened. People become patients and "experts" rally to fix the problem. The world has become a market for the multinational economic machine. Today the economic culture degrades anything that isn't included in the world's gross national product. On the way, innumerable sets of infrastructures in which people have played, made friends, and loved have been destroyed (Illich, 1977). The economic tools of today's expert, whether they belong to the engineer, stock broker, doctor or psychologist have been developed to expropriate those environmental conditions which fostered community autonomy. Bureaucratized programs and responses to pre-conceived social problems disempower the same people that the programs were designed to serve. The sum of these disabling characteristics is an ideology that converts citizens to clients, communities to deficient individuals and politics to a self-serving debate by professionals over which service system should have a larger share of the gross national product (McKnight, 1989). Clients and communities are defined as markets and technocrats, according to McKnight (1996), develop new techniques to market services. According to Sarason (1974), as long as mental health problems are defined in such a way

as to require professional personnel for solutions, the situation may be hopeless.

Corporations are playing an increasing role in our lives. The variety, volume and complexity of goods produced are replacing simpler and fewer goods and services of older economies. Older economies relied on such relations as family and community to get things done. In traditional communities food, shelter, clothing and community support were routinely provided. Economics was an integral part of family and community. Goods and services were often exchanged without transactions involving money (Ross & Usher 1986). According to Ross and Usher (1986), families and communities are becoming obsolete as economic institutions and now play only a social role. These "social economies" as Korten (1995) refers to them, were energized more by love than by money. At one time, he states, they engaged more than half the working hours of the adult population in meeting the basic needs of families and carrying out neighbourly functions essential to a healthy and caring community. Now, the family has become reliant on consuming the goods and services produced by large corporations.

The control and choice offered in the household or informal economy provides one alternative to the formal economy. Such alternative economies have proliferated over the last few years due to the failure of the formal economy to meet the needs of particular communities. Blakely (1989) provides an excellent review of community based initiatives including community development corporations, community cooperatives, local enterprise agencies, employee/worker ownerships, and community employment and training boards. These initiatives, Blakely points out, have strong social objectives rooted as much in meeting needs of groups, individuals and communities as they have in promoting

economic activity.

Rationale for Thesis

As the global economy changes, fundamental questions arise about structural elements which impact on the mental and physical health of individuals and communities. Unemployment, declining wages, the increase in part time and contract work, and community isolation are some of the negative effects of the new nature of work. According to Swift (1994), the new nature of work is increasing the inequality of earnings in Canada. Full time workers are working longer hours. At the same time, companies are replacing many full time positions with increasing numbers of part-time or contract workers. While the unemployment rate has fluctuated over the last 20 years, the new nature of work has been characterized by more low wage and part-time job growth, creating an expanding segment of marginalized workers. According to Canada's Guide to Tomorrow's Work (HRDC, 1996) most new jobs will be low paying and many will be part-time: retail sales, cleaners, food and beverage servers, child care and home support workers, kitchen workers, and clerks. These same workers are relying more on public forms of income assistance (Yalnizyan, Ide, & Cordell, 1995). Rifkin (1996) argues that millions of workers around the world will find themselves increasingly marginalized and by the mid decades of the coming century the blue collar worker will have disappeared.

The increased debt load of federal and provincial governments has led to a down loading of responsibilities to local governments which further threatens Canada's social programs and leaves many individuals, agencies and communities feeling powerless to implement change. McQuaig (1996) argues that Canada's debt load is an over

exaggeration orchestrated by the elite to cut back on what many of the elite believe to be an overly generous social welfare system. Despite the fact that most Canadians are primarily concerned about jobs, she argues, the elite are concerned about the deficit. Similarly, John Kenneth Galbraith, refers to deficit reduction by governments as the war against the poor. Galbraith argues for a progressive taxation to redistribute income from the wealthy to the poor; government spending to protect the disadvantaged; and deficit financing to stimulate the economy (Kingston Whig Standard, January 11, 1997). The clash between the have and have nots, between corporatism and communities plays itself out in the day to day lives of people in our communities.

While the Working Centre does not align itself with community psychology or any other academic discipline, it can be seen as an example of community psychology values in action. Community psychology concerns itself with the health and well-being of all members of a community. Stories of suffering, violence, and powerlessness have guided the discipline in its efforts to promote the well-being of marginalized groups. This work involves a comprehensive analysis of socio-economic conditions, and multi-faceted interventions to complex problems. Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997) argue that while community psychology's fundamental values of caring and compassion, health, self-determination, and human diversity are guiding concepts behind the advancement of oppressed communities, the persistent focus on them has prevented the inclusion of a social justice agenda. An emphasis on social justice, they argue, is critical in rebuilding institutions on a more egalitarian basis. By failing to include a social justice agenda we remain ineffective in our efforts to prevent and change the underlying causes of

oppression.

A social justice agenda includes three components: a connection between the personal and the political, a connection among constituents who are involved in and affected by social change, and a connection among the micro, meso, and macro levels (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). By connecting these components we begin the consciousness raising which fuels a process of personal empowerment and social change. The development of a critical awareness of the interactions between social, political, and economic factors, is part of a process leading to concrete action to change or shape these socio-economic conditions. As we will see, the Working Centre tries very hard to serve as a vehicle for what Freire (1992) refers to as "conscientization." Furthermore, it strives to promote a social justice agenda by making the kinds of connections referred to by Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997). The experiences of the Working Centre demonstrate that a social justice agenda must be viewed as a continuum in process. Even when referring to the definition of social justice above, there is much room for discussion on the translation between theory and practice; this is not a definitive process. Whereas an agency like the Working Centre may have achieved a measure of justice internal to the agency, it may have difficulties pursuing social justice outside of the agency. Many alternative agencies strive to create egalitarian structures within them, but encounter roadblocks in promoting them in the outside world. A continuum of social justice agendas may be drawn from the micro-level to the macro-level. The micro-level may be the agency itself and the relationships among staff, consumers and the community , and the macro-level may be conceptualized as the social justice impact of economic structures and social policies. An

agency may be very adept at promoting social justice within its boundaries, but may not be equipped to deal with social justice issues at a macro-level. As this thesis will point out, this seems to be the case with the Working Centre.

The Working Centre not only challenges the socio-economic status quo, in my view, but provides direction and leadership for others in a time of economic structural change. Through an examination of the values, activities and history of the Working Centre this project explored its efforts to provide socially just alternatives to the dominant economic order. By understanding the efforts of the Working Centre it is hoped that others will find ways and means to cope with the rapid transformation of our socio-economic conditions.

Research Objectives

According to Vincent and Trickett (1983) community research is committed to understanding and action. Priority within this research project will be given to understanding how the Working Centre responds to the clash in values between the Centre and corporatism. In order to achieve this goal, the objectives of the research were:

1 - to explore the original philosophy, mission, values, program activities and outcomes of the Working Centre,
2 - to explore the current philosophies, mission, vision, programming activities and outcomes,
3 - to explore future scenarios for the Working Centre in a rapidly changing world, and

Table 1 includes questions asked of the participants in regard to the Working Centre's purpose, philosophy, values, and program activities over three time dimensions.

Table 1

Research Objectives/Questions

	Mission (purpose)	**Philosophy & Values**	**Program Activities**
Past	Why was the Working Centre started? What was its purpose?	What was the philosophy of the Working Centre when it started? What values were important at the time?	What programs/ services did the Working Centre provide in the beginning? Did these change over time? If so, how?
Present	What is the current mission/ purpose of the Working Centre? How has this evolved over time?	What are the current values/ philosophies? How have these evolved over time?	What programs supports/ services does the Working Centre currently offer?
Future	Where do you see the Working Centre going in the future?	Do you see these changing in the future.	What do you hope to be doing?

The Working Centre

Kitchener-Waterloo was hard hit by the recession of the early 1980's. By January 1983 the unemployment rate was 14.7% (Economic Justice Newsletter, 1992). Over 20,000 people were registered for unemployment assistance. The recession brought together a group of church, labour and community people to develop community

responses to high unemployment. In March of 1982 The Working Centre was established as a self-help unemployment resource centre. The Working Centre developed two goals. The first was to establish a broad programme base that looked at unemployment from both a service provision and community development perspective. Programme areas included employment counselling and job search support, retraining, establishing a local soup kitchen, developing a resource library, publishing and staff support for a local Community Development Advisory Council. The second goal was to develop a self-help approach around issues of unemployment. Self-help as a principle was seen as a way of perceiving and acting which respected the dignity of people and supported full participation of individuals.

The Working Centre's approach to unemployment was at that time and still is based on an understanding of the often drastic personal and social consequences of unemployment. Unemployed people are frequently isolated; traditional sources of support (family and friends) are often not available. The unemployed may be reluctant to discuss their problems with friends for fear of alienation. Counsellors at the Working Centre provide an opportunity for the unemployed to express their feelings and to overcome the sense of powerlessness in directing their lives. Services include, but are not limited to, employment counselling, providing resumes, use of computers, telephones, workshops and a resource library. Drop-in services also provide opportunities for people in similar situations to meet, and offer practical assistance and support.

When it began the Working Centre was funded through government grants more typical of social service agencies. As we shall see, the Centre moved away from this to

some extent, to reduce its dependency on public funding. Today it raises half of its revenues through fundraising and donations. In order to reduce its reliance on government monies the Centre has had to reflect very clearly on its values and priorities; experience has taught them to value their stated goals and agenda first, rather than to get caught up in expansionism.

The Working Centre provides the community with a resource library which has over 2,500 books, journals and articles dealing with job search, unemployment, work issues, poverty, community economic development and job sharing. The Working Centre has published self-help booklets, such as Positive responses to unemployment, Looking for work, and How to live cheaply. The Economic Justice Newsletter which is published four times a year has a circulation of over 6000. The Working Centre has also developed an employer and employee guide to job sharing of interest to those trying to create alternative working arrangements. The St. John's Kitchen Report provides updates on the kitchen and explores the realities of poverty in Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Centre strives to provide education on the connection between work issues, unemployment and community economic development. It brings local politicians, social services, government, business, churches and individuals together to explore, listen and respond to unemployment issues in the community. Part of this effort has been the establishment of a Community Economic Development Council made up of 12 community representatives. The Council assesses local development and economic issues and is currently seeking funding to hire an economic development officer and to establish a Community Venture Capital Fund. The long term goal of this project is to channel local

investment into community enterprises such as cooperatives and to provide technical and financial assistance to local people who have few resources.

The Working Centre has developed a range of practical and effective services which are part of its long term goal of involving the community in responding to unemployment. First and foremost the Working Centre is "an organization dedicated to understanding the changing nature of work and the growth of unemployment and poverty." The Working centre does not emphasize "services"; rather it strives to:

1. accord people the dignity and respect they deserve,
2. help people take charge of their own lives,
3. enable people to escape the doldrums of consumerism, and
4. find a way to the joy of producing for (oneself) ourselves (Economic Justice Newsletter).

The Working Centre envisions a community where people can work less at formal jobs, and help each other to look after the basics such as child care, transportation and housing. Strategies for doing this include sharing cars or bicycles, sharing homes, and bartering.

The Working Centre envisions neighbourhoods as places where people can engage in projects, meet each other, and exchange the things they need. Through people cooperating together communities can be built, and unemployment and environmental concerns can be relieved (information on the Working Centre provided through the Economic Justice Newsletter).

Methodology

This project is based on the case study method (Yin, 1989). The case study method allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individuals' life cycles, organizational and managerial processes and neighbourhood change (Yin, 1989). A case study of the Working Centre allows for insight into why and how the Working Centre functions. The case study's strength is its ability to deal with a variety of evidence such as archival material, interviews, and observation. This method was well suited to an examination of the Working Centre, as it allowed for a holistic approach to investigation; although interview questions were somewhat structured, the case study method allowed for the inclusion of information and feedback that may not have been anticipated by the researcher. The case study method also involves gathering information from a broad spectrum of sources, such as board minutes, interviews, participant observation and newsletters.

A traditional concern expressed in regard to case study research is that case study investigators may allow biased information to influence the directions of findings or conclusions. The use of multiple sources of data (interviews, focus groups, archival material) and having participants read the study for accuracy are ways of assuring the process and context do not reflect only the researcher's biases, but convey a fair documentation of the setting studied (Nelson, 1994). A second concern about case studies is the limits of generalizing from a single case study to the broader population. Case studies do not represent samples from the population but are used to expand a body of information (Yin, 1989). Case studies on a practical level are more manageable,

generate concrete recommendations, advice to management, and training plans (Patton, 1980).

Archival material from the Working Centre (board minutes, publications, newsletters, etc.), and individual interviews provided the means for gathering information about the setting. Individual interviews were conducted with board members, staff and consumers. A qualitative interview format was employed to elicit the various perspectives of those individuals interviewed. Qualitative interviewing provides the framework for respondents to express their own understandings in their own words (Patton, 1987). The questions were devised to solicit both detail and depth of understanding, as well as to provide a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view. Participants were encouraged to express their experiences, beliefs, and thoughts. In doing so it was hoped that the participants' stories about their experiences would provide a rich understanding of the Working Centre. The interview schedule was arranged according to the research objectives. The questions invited participants to comment about the Working Centre's philosophy and values, principles, practices, and outcomes. The focus was on individual experiences with the Centre.

With support of staff at the Centre participants for the study were identified and approached either by phone or in person. The interviews were arranged and carried out in settings which were mutually convenient. Eight were held at the Working Centre, one over the phone and two were held in coffee shops. The interviews were conducted in private. Following introductions, I explained the purpose of the study and consent for participation (consent appendices A, B, C). My attempts to explain the purpose of the

research, obtain consent or discuss risks and benefits were viewed by most of the participants as unnecessary. What was evident to me when I discussed consent, voluntary participation and the participants' right to refuse to answer any question or end the interview at any time was that I was representing a value system inconsistent with that of The Working Centre.

For a complete copy of the interview questions see Appendices D, E and F. Archival material supplied by the Working Centre was reviewed and provided valuable material in formulating questions for the interviews. These questions provided a framework and checklist of the areas to be covered. The actual wording of the questions varied in the interviews. For example, question 4: "What are the current values or philosophies of the Centre?" often became "Can you describe the current values of the Centre?" If a participant answered more than one question in a response I skipped the appropriate question. Probes were used in an attempt to get additional information or to clarify certain questions.

Participants

I introduced the research project prior to the individual interviews. Eleven individual interviews were conducted. Of those interviewed three were from the board of directors, three from staff, one was a volunteer staff person and four were current or past consumers of the Working Centre. Interview schedules were devised for the board, staff, and consumers (appendices D, E, F). The interview schedules attempt to elicit participants' perspectives, insights, and experiences. Because participants (consumers, staff, and board members) experience the Working Centre from different perspectives the

interview questions were developed with a sensitivity to those differences.

In order to gather information about the Working Centre's original and present philosophy, mission, program activities and outcomes I used archival material and structured interviews. The questions were devised to solicit responses for all of the research objectives. Interviews were conducted with: (a) members of the board, (b) staff, and (c) consumers.

Analysis of Data

The audio tapes were transcribed and later erased. The analysis involved examining each interview and locating specific questions and answers. Participants' answers to questions which focused on the research objectives were separated and categorized according to underlying themes and patterns. According to Patton (1987) content analysis involves identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns in the data. I coded and categorized themes and then examined them in an attempt to get an overall picture of the participant's experiences. This research project also incorporated an inductive analysis component. Inductive analysis looks for patterns, themes, and categories which come from the data and are not constrained by predetermined categories (Patton, 1987).

Risks and Benefits

Risks

The primary risk in doing this study was a breach of confidentiality and anonymity. Procedures to protect confidentiality were devised to address this concern (see procedure below). A second risk involved the researcher being perceived as an outside member

interested in furthering his own agenda to the detriment of the Centre. Ongoing consultation with the Working Centre was important. Decisions were endorsed by the Working Centre prior to implementation to ensure the study did not become intrusive.

Benefits

The recent economic downturn and global economic restructuring has left individuals and communities feeling a sense of powerlessness in their attempts to facilitate change. Due to the stresses of funding cuts combined with increased consumer needs many agencies feel they can do little except react to these changes. The information compiled in this study about how the Working Centre attempts to cope with these perceived insurmountable changes will hopefully provide the foundation for others to gain a sense of direction in their work. By documenting the Working Centre's attempts to cope with the changing nature of work such as helping people escape consumerism, producing for ourselves, and shifting unemployment from an individual perspective to a structural one I believe we can share with the Working Centre in celebrating their success. Hopefully in the process we can contribute to further efforts to document ways to cope with the changing nature of work.

Procedure to Insure Confidentiality

The individual interviews were kept confidential. I explained to participants that the sessions were confidential. Permission from the participants was obtained in order that interviews could be taped and later analysed. Any use of personal quotes in the study which may have identified a participant required permission from the particular participant. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary,

and that they need not answer questions with which they were not comfortable. Participants were also given the option of ending the interview at any time.

Nature of Feedback to Participants

Participants will be informed when the study is complete and have access to a copy of the results.

Findings and Discussion

Over its 14 year history the Working Centre has undergone a number of transformations. Since its inception in 1982 it has struggled to find a balance between the values to which it aspires and the daily realities of trying to live up to those values. However, despite its struggles it has remained faithful to a clear set of values and guiding principles. My first experience of the Working Centre was almost 10 years ago. I can still recall the openness, warmth, and acceptance with which I was received when I walked into the Centre. Ten years later, that sense of warmth and acceptance remains. This is perhaps not surprising because three core staff (Joe, Stephanie, and Arlene) who best characterise the values of the Centre still work there. In conversations with Joe and Stephanie it was clear that their personal and working lives are focussed on simplicity, rejecting consumerism, working collectively, building self reliance and respecting the environment. For instance, they chose to use public transportation, bicycle or walk rather than become reliant on a car. They garden and preserve which ensures that their food is healthy and increases their self reliance. Joe and Stephanie have chosen to home-school their children at the Working Centre which allows them to spend more time together as a family and gives them more control over their children's education.

Joe and Stephanie helped to develop the original grant application which provided funding to start the Working Centre. The grant of $6000 came from five churches who were working together to promote grass-roots projects which redistributed power, knowledge and resources. The continued high levels of unemployment over the next several years and subsequent federal government initiatives aimed at reducing this trend allowed the Working Centre to remain open. In 1986 the Working Centre was one of 15 Unemployed Help Centres across Ontario to receive core funding from the Provincial Ministry of Training and Adjustment. This funding of approximately $80,000 provided some stable security to the Centre (Westhues, 1995). The Centre continues to receive this funding today; other funding sources are community donations, grants from the Kitchener-Waterloo United Way, the Region of Waterloo and the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

When you enter the Working Centre you walk into a large open area with a bulletin board and table on the right side, a number of chairs just as you walk in on the left, a telephone set off to the left, the reception desk and copier set farther back on the right side. The area is set up this way to get away from the traditional social service agency model with a receptionist who acts as a gate keeper. For those people who want to use the message service, newspaper or telephone they can do so without having to go through the reception area or check in with the receptionist. The bulletin board is full of information on community services, and upcoming activities in the area. The reception area is staffed by people who use the Centre. Towards the back on the left side behind a divider is a working table and the resource centre where people can read from one of the

2500 books, articles or journals dealing with such issues as the economy and unemployment. Farther back you will find six or eight computer stations where people are busy putting their resumes together or working on upgrading their computer skills. Many of the people who use the Centre for their job search come back to help others.

The Centre is located in the heart of downtown Kitchener. The bus station is nearby providing easy access to the Centre. Many of Kitchener's more marginalized and vulnerable citizens live in the downtown core and make their way into the Working Centre daily. As you wander through the Working Centre you see smaller offices tucked in here and there. These offices afford privacy and the opportunity to speak to someone alone. In the basement of the Centre is a large work space which is used for everything from crafts to a classroom. The building is some 70 years old, built during the time when most of the downtown area was erected. Inside, small nooks, crannies and offices seem to pop up around every corner or through every door. The second and third floors serve as offices and meeting areas for staff. They also double as sleeping, play and learning areas for children. The fourth floor is rented as an apartment. Throughout the Working Centre there is a constant flurry of activity. What binds it all together is a culture which accepts people for whom they are and tries to create a place for everyone. The ability of the Working Centre's leadership to create a culture where people are accepted and welcomed is, in my opinion, a key to the Centre's success. Part of this culture, I believe, is a place where staff and Board have an enormous commitment to the work they do and a place where everyone has something to contribute.

Of particular importance to me 10 years ago and at present were discussions with staff which linked the work they were doing to a critical analysis of social conditions. While providing a place for unemployed people to meet, they were also engaged in understanding and linking the social, political and economic climate to the lived experience of people at the community level. What is evident over the course of the Centre's history is that its basic values have remained consistent: the first and most fundamental value afforded all people is respect and dignity. The second value to which the Centre has been committed is effecting social change for the purpose of developing community. The Centre's approach is designed to create a future rather than predict one. Finally, throughout the Centre's evolution there has been a conscientious effort to minimize bureaucracy and hierarchial organizational structures; to keep life simple, celebrate creativity and build mutual acceptance through informal structures. From the interviews it would appear that the Centre has kept its original mission and values throughout its history. Although they encountered problems that forced them to reconsider the viability of certain values in the outside world, board and staff have remained committed to the original mission and values. In response to what the future may look like for the Working Centre, participants suggested that they are content to stay the course. Given that their values have remained stable, and that they do not foresee any changes in them, the findings and discussion section does not make a distinction between past, present, and future values. The values to be discussed help in the implementation of the Centre's philosophy throughout its history.

Basic Values of The Working Centre

In this section I describe the values to which the Centre aspires. Without exception, all of those interviewed talked about the centrality of respect and dignity towards people in the Working Centre's approach. Those at the Centre share a belief in the worth and dignity of every individual. Every individual has a gift to offer this world and the Working Centre attempts to provide an opportunity for people to share their gifts. The board members described it this way:

> *There is a consistent thread that goes all the way through from the start of the Working Centre. That is a deep respect for individuals and her/his gifts, the preservation of their dignity and the desire to help build esteem.*

> *The Working Centre has survived by a commitment that is rooted in faith in people and in some way by God in that faith.*

The Working Centre values community as a place where people can share ownership of the structures, processes and decisions which affect them. The alienation and isolation that many unemployed individuals feel from the community is often never more real than when they enter social service agencies and are greeted by the receptionist and an unwelcoming professional office. The Working Centre has physically structured its office space to ensure that as much as possible the space belongs to those who use it. When you walk into the Centre the reception area, which is managed by those who use the Centre, is at the back of room. Volunteers run a Tuesday afternoon craft workshop for those interested in learning and refining the art of craft making. Wednesday evenings the Centre is open for an informal drop-in which provides a chance to meet others in similar situations. Computer tutorials which are offered Thursday evenings are facilitated by

volunteers. People who have unique talents in areas such as crafts, writing, or computer repairs are encouraged to share those with others either in groups or individually. One particular person I met was enormously grateful at being allowed to fix the computers when they were not working. He was able to give something back to the Centre and at the same time develop a useful skill which may help in finding employment.

> *I have put a lot of hours in this place. There are no conditions attached. How many people are going to let you take their computers apart? It has been an even trade.*

The Working Centre continually seeks feedback from those who use the Centre through a formal suggestion or feedback questionnaire as well as informally listening to individuals who use the Centre. The development of community within the Centre is illustrated when unemployed people gather to share and discuss their experiences. At a time when communities are becoming obsolete as economic institutions (Ross & Usher, 1986), and the "survival of the fittest" corporate ideology is destroying communities (Korten, 1995; Noble, 1986), the Working Centre advances the importance of community building through such activities as craft afternoons, computer tutorials, and drop in services. This community building lies at the heart of the Centre's efforts to create social change. By connecting the personal and the political within a global context the Centre tries to bring "home" the concept of social justice. The sharing of ownership and decision making within the Centre illustrates how the Centre manages to retain its values. Staff described the process this way:

> *At the Centre we try to re-learn what it is to know each other and be in community instead of being in our boxes.*
>
> *What is going on here on a day-to-day basis is a new way of being together which*

is at the core of all the talk about useful unemployment or learning to live for ourselves, make things for ourselves, re-claiming our strength as people instead of everything being done for us.

Creating an environment where people feel comfortable in offering whatever skills they have, making it possible for everyone to be part of the operation, inviting their participation, everyone has something to offer creating an environment where that is recognized.

Decision making within the Centre can best be described as democratic or participatory. In its ideal form democracy is probably not attainable (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979) and in this regard the decision making structure of the Working Centre is something of a hybrid. While legally the Board of Directors assumes liability for the operations of the Centre, decisions are made through a process of consensus. Formal decision making processes such as motions, amendments, voting, and rules of order which are characteristic of most community based non-profit agencies are noticeably missing at the Working Centre. Instead there is a consensual process in which all members participate in decision making. A consensus model of decision making corresponds more closely with the values to which the Centre aspires (respect and dignity, developing community, and mutual acceptance). The values associated with traditional professional bureaucratic organizations lend themselves to more of a hierarchical organization while the Working Centre leans more to a horizontal structure. Westhues (1995) noted the difficulty in distinguishing between board and staff domains because of the absence of power or rank in regard to decision making. The degree to which the Working Centre is able to attain consensus in decision making is a reflection of its ability to realize its values (refer to table 2). According to Rothschild-Whitt (1979) the more the group shares similar values and

views the more it is able to achieve consensus. It is my belief that because Joe, Stephanie, and Arlene and most of the board members have been part of the Working Centre for many years they have come to share and shape the Centres' values. The board is also a small group (five to seven members) which simplifies the decision making process. A board member described meetings where staff and board attend this way.

> *The board of the Working Centre simply functions differently mainly because the mentality of hierarchy is remarkably absent, people argue but hierarchy isn't there, that is a wonderful strength.*

Linking the personal and the political challenges our actions as well as our thinking. The Centre has tried to build a place where people can gather and feel part of a community. It concentrates on breaking down the hierarchy and bureaucracy which are inherent in formal structures. The Centre's reliance on informal structures promotes participation and a sense of ownership on the part of the people who use the Centre. Because the relationship between oppressed groups and those in power is critical, the Centre appreciates that non-professional people can often be as effective or more effective than highly trained clinicians. Community psychologists have also advocated the effectiveness of non-professional helpers (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). By celebrating the unique gifts which people bring into the Centre, whether they be an individual's ability to fix a computer, teach Word Perfect, do crafts or paint, it promotes participation.

There is a clear understanding at the Centre that unemployment is not due to individual deficits. This awareness is realized in its efforts to combine support offered to those looking for work, with promotion of alternatives to the market system such as growing one's own food, sharing homes, bartering, and riding a bicycle instead of owning

a car. Thus the Centre quietly challenges the status quo through building community among the disenfranchised and linking the personal with the political.

Consistent with the consciousness raising emphasis within the Centre is the careful use of egalitarian language. The language traditionally used within our institutions supports bureaucracy and hierarchical structures. The Working Centre challenges that language and its assumptions. Words like "client" which denote a power imbalance are not used; instead, the term most used is "people who come into the Centre". Guided by its values the Working Centre has moved away from a model of professionalism, which encompasses a client-expert relationship, to an equalization of roles. The client-expert relationship, according to McKnight (1989, 1995), disempowers the same people it is designed to "fix." As long as mental health problems are defined in such a way as to require professional helpers the situation may be hopeless (Sarason, 1974). Instead, the Working Centre relies on informal structures or networks to build connections between people. Experience at the Centre has shown that reducing hierarchy and bureaucracy creates opportunities for things to grow and hands people back a sense of control which is often lost when we rely on experts for solutions. Staff listen to the ideas of people who walk in the door and explore ways to make those ideas reality. There is an inherent belief by staff that everyone has a gift or a skill to offer. The challenge is to create those opportunities. The Working Centre is a bee-hive of activity with everything from university courses, crafts, and employment workshops to a writers' circle. Staff describe what happens at the Centre this away:

> *Informal things aren't structures. It's kind of like a roller coaster ride. It's listening to people's ideas and asking how we might make it happen.*

Lots of people meet informally and make things happen. There is a craft afternoon, a writers' circle, different speakers Friday mornings. We build on these things, we keep it connected.

The best way to capture the vision is living simply with minimal bureaucracy, seeing the Centre as an instrument of self help community development.

When working within the community the Centre essentially promotes the same set of values to which it aspires internally: affording respect and dignity to all people, building community and developing mutual acceptance (refer to table 2). Staff and board members describe the connection to the community and the importance of building community in this way:

Our goal is to build community. We have good ties to churches, politicians, social justice, labour, and business. The newsletter is positive and it brings that out in people. The golf tournament is largely supported by labour.

I am not a great believer in confrontation, rather than attacking or taking an adversarial position with government and how they are doing things we go ahead and live what we believe in. Reconciliation between people is very important.

These values are often more difficult to realize in the context of the broader community than within the Centre itself. The difficulty stems from the need to work with a variety of groups and infrastructures which operate from different and sometimes conflicting value systems.

One experience which illustrates this conflict particularly well was an attempt by the Centre to start a community economic development project in 1988. Tri-Tech recycling was an initiative which was intended to be profitable, create jobs and be

ecologically sound. Recycling of waste materials was considered an ideal venture for the Working Centre. At the peak of its success Tri-Tech employed 10 people, diverted approximately 5000 tons of material from the landfills sites and sold them for $1.2 million (Westhues, 1995). To the Working Centre Tri-Tech represented the culmination of a vision of sustainable economic development. Tri-Tech was five years in the planning stage and was viewed as that critical step from awareness to action. Despite its success at creating jobs and recycling waste materials, it failed because it was not profitable enough in an economic environment that valued profit above all else. Due to the increase in competition, labour saving technologies which displaced workers, and the collapse of the market for waste paper and corrugated cardboard, Tri-Tech was unable to compete and went out of business. Its failure suggested to people at the Working Centre that if one wanted to succeed in global capitalism the pursuit of profit had to be paramount. Being concerned about creating employment or promoting ecologically sound practices such as recycling was a luxury which would and in this case did put one out of business.

Clearly the experience with Tri-Tech was a sobering one. The Working Centre devoted an extraordinary amount of staff time and energy as well as financial resources to the project. Most of the staff and board described Tri-Tech this way:

> *At first there was a belief that there could still be answers within the market with Tri-Tech and the community development projects.*
>
> *If you want to make it in global capitalism you pursue profit as your number one sole objective. You can't worry about creating jobs or re-cycling. This economy is not going to bend to the public will so let's try and work around it, hence community gardens, living more simply.*

At the time Tri-Tech collapsed the Kitchener-Waterloo Region was experiencing

significant job losses as businesses once regarded as part of the fabric of the Kitchener-Waterloo community disappeared. The Uniroyal Goodrich plant closed sending 1000 people home without jobs to return to. Seagrams Distillery and Labatts also moved production away from the area. The Working Centre applied for and received contracts to provide employment related counselling to the many newly unemployed workers. In 1992 the Working Centre's budget peaked at $680,000. After 1992 government contracts became harder to secure; they were also becoming increasingly bureaucratized. Staff at the Centre grew more critical of government contracts which offered job search techniques especially as more and more jobs were disappearing and fewer jobs were being created (Westhues, 1995). The dilemma between providing services to help people search for jobs which weren't available versus promoting alternatives to the market economy led the Centre to redefine its path. One board member describes the dilemma this way.

> *When Tri-Tech closed all kinds of things came to a head. The closing of Tri-Tech, involvement in contract work, hiring lots of staff represented a point where you said, is this organization going to become more bureaucratic and grow or is it going to become more grass roots, more along the line of living simple lives.*

Today, the Working Centre has maintained its traditional forms of assistance such as preparing resumes, covering letters, job finding strategies and offering a place where people can gather to provide support to one another. At the same time, the Centre is striving to help people take more control of their lives by escaping consumerism, producing ones' own food in individual or community gardens, or exchanging goods or services through less formal systems like bartering. Clearly, the Tri-Tech experience and the lack of available jobs has helped crystallise the issue of the Centre's commitment to its values. Today, decisions about funding and projects are informed by this experience;

expansion of the Centre is never seen as a priority above working within its value system.

In redefining its path the Centre has encountered another dilemma which it struggles to balance. Many of the people who come into the Working Centre are looking for jobs which will enable them to become part of the mainstream economy. They want to be a part of the consumer society which the Centre's leadership rejects. In this culture success and an individual's self worth revolves around one's ability to obtain goods and services (Goldenberg, 1978); many of the people who use the Centre are strongly influenced by this thinking. Some of these people question the notion of embracing alternative economies. One person describes the philosophy behind alternative economies this way.

> *If you accept that the philosophy of work as we know it is not going to be there, that we have to get along on a reduced lifestyle that's fine, some people can do it. A lot of people who preach this stuff have an income. If it is by choice then its okay, if you don't have any coin then there is no choice.*

This quote speaks to the need for economic justice. People at the Centre uphold respect and dignity, mutual acceptance, and developing community but these values must be accompanied by economic justice. In the absence of a redistribution of resources, people cannot meet their basic needs. Social justice requires more than acceptance and compassion. Distributive justice is derived from a fair and equitable allocation of resources in society. This value requires major efforts at changing societal structures that maintain an unfair allocation of goods and services. The Working Centre clearly opposes injustice, but at present its efforts to appose it are more micro than macro focussed. This is a major stumbling block for many grass-roots and alternative organizations. The

injustice inherent in globalization in the current capitalist system is so pervasive and so ominous that small groups have a difficult time creating a viable social justice agenda.

There seems to be a tension between the Working Centre's desire to promote social justice at a social level and its ability to do so. It would seem that the Centre is successful in fostering a climate of caring and compassion among its users, but this is different than trying to change structures of inequality. Society lacks role models for social justice work. Our cultural heroes are people who promote injustice, not justice. Our cultural role models are people and institutions that promote competition, selfishness, and accumulation of wealth. The Working Centre opposes this ideology, but like many other groups in society, has not found a way of addressing the problem at the macro-social level.

Staff at the Centre look for individuals' strengths, not deficiencies. People are made to feel that they have something to contribute. This is a great achievement, considering that many people come to the Centre feeling devalued by mainstream society. The feeling of acceptance is very empowering, but does not necessarily lead to social justice. There is a risk in creating organizations that retreat from mainstream society in order to tend to society's victims. The perils of retreatism are such that the larger agenda of promoting social justice at a macro-level can be forgotten. A similar argument was made by Prilleltensky (1994) regarding Humanistic Psychology. Humanistic psychologists tried to help people one at a time, but they forgot to look after the social causes of the problems. While I do not believe that the Working Centre has forgotten the importance of macro-level distributive justice, this is an issue which must remain front and centre to

provide a broader context for their work.

Facilitative Factors Which Enable the Centre to Enact its Values

In this section I describe the factors which facilitate the Centre's ability to enact its basic values. These factors are linked to the Centre's ability to create opportunities for people to volunteer, share their experiences, and become part of the Centre. Staff at the Centre encourage the development of an atmosphere where opportunities for many of those who walk into the Centre can come to life. The atmosphere of acceptance and creativity has become part of the Centre and has a life of its own. As people change so do ideas and innovations.

> *The opportunity presented itself here, I have put a lot of hours in this place. It has been an even trade, no conditions attached.*
>
> *The Working Centre has been very accepting of myself, my needs, my involvement. They asked me to help out at the front desk doing receptionist. To be considered for that was great.*
>
> *Things that I feel are most important are things around respect in people for who they are, recognizing people 's gifts, that everybody comes with gifts and baggage and trying to find ways to work together despite all of that.*

A key factor which facilitates the enactment of core values within the Centre has been its positive attitude towards change. Whether this change stems from learning experiences such as Tri-Tech or government contracts, or whether it involves reorganizing the Centre's physical space, this openness to change encourages creativity and involvement. Planned change within the Centre has from its beginning been based upon the "pastoral circle." Staff described the process of change as follows: step one involves getting in touch with the experiences of the people in their community; step two involves

an analysis of those experiences put into the context of larger social structures; step three is reflecting upon this analysis and step four is developing a new action which leads to a new experience. Staff and board describe how the spiral proceeds to new levels of understanding:

> *you don't get stuck in the same circle going around and around, our experience has been an always changing level.*
>
> *People come in to help change it (Centre) and it is people that make it change so we grow and change with those people.*

A deep passion for and faith in people, combined with a clear set of principles, I believe, has become the basis for the Working Centre's culture. This culture has had a significant impact on the community it serves. The Centre continues to gain credibility and respect within the community by promoting its community strengthening agenda. Despite the ongoing incongruence between the Centre's values and those of the broader society, the Working Centre has managed to root itself financially and culturally in the local community. By making community connections a priority, the Centre has built strong ties to the Kitchener-Waterloo community. The Annual Mayor's Dinner, the annual golf tournament and The Good Work News, a publication which promotes the Centre's values, are examples of the level of community support it enjoys and the Centre's ability to promote its values in the larger community. Staff and board view their community initiatives as follows:

> *The Mayor's dinner while raising money is one objective, by picking someone from the community who best reflects the values of the Working Centre, then the attendance, publicity, television all that serves as an instrument by which those values can be placed before the public.*

The Good Work News has a subscription base of 6000. This is a means of public education. The Working Centre offers a counterpoint to big bureaucracy.

The broad base of support from business, politicians, schools and unions is a clear indication of the Working Centre's support. By presenting the values of respect and dignity, community development and mutual acceptance to the community they represent an alternative to the values of the broader community.

Factors Which Inhibit the Centre from Enacting its Basic Values

In this section I expand on the literature with regard to the changing nature of work and relate this to the day-to-day issues faced by the Working Centre. The ability of the Working Centre to be true to its values over time is remarkable, I think, given the backdrop of global capitalism. The market economy with its myth of the American dream is deeply embedded in the public consciousness. The pervasiveness of global capitalism is inherent in the title of Korten's book, When Corporations Rule the World (Korten, 1995). Similarly, Saul (1995) argues that the corporate thrust to take over is so far-reaching that we are left "unconscious" and are unable to muster any resistance.

As I stated earlier, community psychology recognizes that behaviour is best understood as an interaction between people and their environment. Given that the values of the market place are associated with increased pathology it is understandable that the values of the Working Centre come into direct conflict with those of the broader society. Wachtel (1989) contends that the ideology of growth and progress, goods and power, and survival of the fittest, is diametrically opposed to the values of respect and dignity, developing community, and building informal structures promoted by the Working Centre.

The Working Centre aspires to create a community where people can get to know each other, increase their communal self sufficiency, and re-claim the strength associated with being in community and sharing each other's gifts.

While the Working Centre strives to promote economic self sufficiency and communal interdependence, it discovered through Tri-Tech how easily these values are consumed by the dominant corporate agenda. The market economy promises endless growth and opportunity for all (Wachtel, 1989). Compromise is replaced by oppression, exploitation and competition (Goldenberg, 1978). Global competition and technology, according to Finlayson (1996) is not only changing how we work but has paralysed us with fear to the point that we are not asking the necessary questions about the motivations of those behind the changes in the workplace. For the most part the people who use the Working Centre are victims of this system . The Centre chooses not to perpetuate this oppression. Although the Centre tries not to be part of the oppressive system, following Prilleltensky's and Nelson's (1997) terminology, the Centre's efforts are more ameliorative than transformative. In other words, the Centre helps people to cope with the system, but does not in a major engage way in its transformation. However, this conclusion is dependent on a particular definition of social justice. The Working Centre could certainly argue that its work in developing alternative economies (e.g. bartering systems) and its public education efforts play a part in creating macro-social change from the "bottom up" as apposed to the "top down."

The values of global capitalism (i.e., competition, consumerism, individualism) are a day to day reality; nowhere is this more evident than when the Centre tries to meet the

demands of the market place or fulfil government contracts. The Centre's experience with Tri-Tech clearly suggests that the values of global capitalism directly undermine the building of community. The corporate obsession for maximizing profits exists at the expense of people and communities (Ellwood, 1993; Korten, 1995). Thus the principles upon which the Centre is based are constantly being tested by the broader society.

As consumers, people lose their autonomy and the connection they have to other people and the community (Illich, 1973; Korten, 1995). Bureaucracy, hierarchy and competition are linked to the highly systematized, efficient economy to which people are losing access. The demands of the economy require high tech skills, people who are mobile, in perfect health and who can devote everything to their job. A recent study found that 56% of the new jobs created in the economy went to professionals while they suffered only 7% of the job losses. By contrast semi-skilled workers who have sustained 60% of the job losses received 11% of the new jobs (Kingston Whig Standard, January 16, 1997). Many people are unable to engage in this type of economy or are choosing not to. As technology continues to displace workers and in so doing destroys people's livelihoods, families and communities, the response to these disabling characteristics is an ideology which converts people to clients and communities to deficient individuals which experts rally to fix (McKnight, 1989, 1995). The bureaucratized programs and responses designed to "fix the problem" are those that the Working Centre identifies as being directly associated with the problems they were designed to fix.

Another factor which inhibits the Centre's acting out its values is its dependence on funds which come with value-based requirements attached. Government programs for

the most part require a bureaucratic assortment of statistics, measurements, outcomes and marketing strategies. People and communities become clients, participants or markets; human service providers or technocrats search for new markets for their goods and services. According to Westhues (1995) the Working Centre "rejected from the start (and over time more pointedly) any model that would define them as expert service-providers and the unemployed as clients. Their stated objective has been to facilitate the on-site pooling of experience and analysis in order to arrive at effective and democratic solutions" (p.18). Although there may at times be some room for groups such as the Working Centre to negotiate the parameters of government funding I believe this is becoming increasingly unlikely in today's political climate. The dilemma of finding a balance between conflicting value systems has been a struggle for staff at the Working Centre.

> *With more government funding we moved to a model of professional service where you had to have one on one conversations in a private office, counsellors became employment counsellors, people became clients.*
>
> *In the early days there were barriers between people who were served and those serving. We were more of a service organization than a community. It required more staff, diffusion of duties. We have slowly worked to move away from that.*
>
> *Organizationally we have paid the price for that level of professionalism that comes with the funding, but we are getting back more strongly to our roots. The closer we get to our roots the greater it is to stretch to the bureaucracy.*
>
> *As soon as you play certain games it affects you, the cost is case notes, statistics and because you have to maintain those things to meet the requirements of funders, it makes us think like we should be acting more professionally.*

The values of the market place which come into direct conflict with those of the Working Centre are large scale versus small scale, individualism versus community, hierarchy versus partnership, complex versus simple, corporate versus community. As

evidenced by the Tri-Tech experience, the culturally dominant corporate agenda frustrates attempts to develop community while generating profit and employment. By making the connection between the market and how it affects people the Working Centre has developed a critical awareness and promoted a different agenda. Staff talked about their mistrust in the system this way.

> *Increasingly we have become more cynical about the market in the sense that we see the traps and see how a lot of positive efforts are maligned to the system, it's the same traps that happen when people like me try and make this place understandable to bureaucrats.*

Comparison With Other Alternative Organizations

Although the Working Centre's values and organizational culture are often starkly contrasted with the dominant society, it is certainly not the only organization with an alternative agenda. The 1970's and 80's witnessed the emergence of a wide array of organizations that consciously rejected the values of hierarchy, bureaucracy, and expertise. Often referred to as "alternative settings" their mission is similar: to realize a wholly different set of values from those of the broader society. According to Chrysler (1995) "empowering agencies" recognize, understand and oppose oppressive systems; listen to consumers' needs; recognize and support the importance of natural support systems; and incorporate empowering principles. The values of empowerment as defined by Prilleltensky (1994) are self determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation. Self determination refers to the control one has over one's life and the ability to pursue goals without excessive restrictions and limitations. Collaboration and democratic participation suggests that people should have a voice and

legitimate input into decisions which affect their lives. Distributive justice is the notion of fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for people. Like the Working Centre, other grassroots organizations and small agencies strive to pursue these aims.

The objectives of alternative settings are to enhance the political, social and economic viability of oppressed groups. As we have seen, the Working Centre was established to develop a community response to high unemployment. Similarly, the shelter movement in Canada grew out of the women's movement's goal of liberating women from many forms of oppression, including the abuse they were experiencing in their own homes. Women's consciousness raising groups and drop-in centres brought women together to talk about their day-to-day experiences (Gadbois, 1996). Morrison (1992) examined a grassroots organization, Mothers and Others Making Change (MOMC), whose members wanted to change public opinion about people who live in poverty. Like the Working Centre and the shelter movement, MOMC was driven by an agenda of social change. Similarly, Community Economic Development (CED) initiatives were established as alternative organizations designed to allow communities to accept a degree of control over their economic development. As alternative settings CED organizations work toward the social and economic revitalization of communities. They aim to enhance the environment, attain ecological sustainability and promote links between local food growers and consumers. They view the current corporate takeover of agribusiness as destroying communities, weakening democracy and diminishing the role of the individual to that of consumer. According to Papineau (1994), successful CED initiatives include the

most marginalized community members. Community Shared Agriculture, an example of a CED initiative, rejects the values of mainstream economic thought. It emphasizes simplicity rather than technology and consumption. By extending agriculture into the community the community develops a sense of responsibility over what it is growing. Community Shared Agriculture favours maintenance, sustainability and long-term survival initiatives over growth and short term profits (Ashiabi, 1995).

The Working Centre encourages informal structures, sharing of ownership and decision making within the Centre. Informal structures promote participation, challenge hierarchy and acknowledge that non-professional helpers can be as effective or more effective than professionals. Gadbois (1996) identifies the importance of informal supports within the shelter movement and argues that ex-residents preferred them to formal supports. The formal supports tended to take away any sense of control and did not acknowledge the wealth of experience, creativity, expertise and insight that women have regarding the shelter experience. Successful grassroots organizations are those which have little formal structure, promote equality of the members, collaboration, consensus building, non professional involvement and resist hierarchy. Professionals serve as resource people and are not responsible for direct service (Morrison, 1992).

Like all of the alternative settings mentioned here, CED initiatives use participatory approaches to promote community responsibility both within the community and within the organization (Papineau, 1994). Community Shared Agriculture, for example, brings the gardener and share member together to participate in decisions which affect the organization of the garden. The development of community through the

building of this relationship reduces the sense of alienation and isolation often created by formal structures. According to McKnight (1995) strong communities mobilize the skills, capacities and talents of their residents. They focus on strengths, rather than deficiencies, which creates citizens rather than "clients". The tendency to pathologize oppressed groups has occurred in concert with professionalization. This process is harmful not only to the oppressed but also shifts the focus away from the situations they encounter daily: unemployment, poverty, racism, hatred and minimal opportunities for building community. Alternative organizations, in contrast, serve to strengthen the sense of community among marginalized groups by emphasizing structural realities and people's lived experiences.

The Working Centre encourages participation by creating an atmosphere of acceptance and creativity that allows people to feel part of the Centre. By identifying unemployment as a structural issue those who come into the Centre are not blamed for being unemployed. Similarly, Morrison (1992) noted that MOMC focused on changing the structural situations of poverty as opposed to changing individuals.

The long-term survival of alternative organizations depends among other things, on a broad based network of supporters. In order to develop this, the mandate of the group or organization must be relevant to a constituency that is broader than its immediate staff, board or consumers. In keeping with this need, the Working Centre continues to build strong ties to the Kitchener-Waterloo region. They have developed a broad base of support from business, politicians, schools, and unions. Successful CED organizations seek input from community and search for involvement from marginalized members. Through the use of self-help groups, community kitchens and food buying groups they

promote skill development and improve the health of people (Papineau, 1994). As we have seen, the Working Centre has been able to root itself in the community through similar initiatives.

The Working Centre's experience with Tri-Tech and government funding taught them how easily their values can be co-opted by the dominant culture. The dominant culture promises opportunity for all yet we experience enormous disparity between the have and have nots. The notion of fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities has been replaced with oppression, exploitation and competition. The Working Centre has chosen not to be part of this oppression; the cost of this choice has been to forgo potential government contracts. The shelter movement, on the other hand, actively lobbied for local, provincial and federal money to support their cause. According to Gadbois (1996), the increase in government funding to shelters resulted in a more secure funding base in exchange for official control and an influx of professional staff and board members. Women's shelters became conventional social service agencies. Similarly, Chrysler (1996) states that government funding comes with constraints. As well, government funding priorities are greatly influenced by public pressure and may shift radically over time. In her study of MOMC, Morrison (1992) identified the need for funding with minimal strings and looked to initiatives outside of government funding which would sustain them.

Like the Working Centre, other alternative settings have pursued a political, social and economic agenda to change the structural inequalities present in the dominant culture. The success of these settings is rooted in their ability to develop a strong community,

promote the capacities of oppressed people and remain true to a clear set of principles. Although the focus of their work may vary, all of these groups and organizations share a commitment to social justice, emphasize self-determination and promote participatory approaches to organizational development.

Summary of Values

In my view the Working Centre excels at creating a climate where people can live with integrity. There is a very high level of congruence between the basic values to which the Centre aspires and its ability to enact them within the Centre. Volunteers speak of the Centre as a place where they are accepted for who they are; they refer to the Centre as theirs. The Centre has become a community where people make a difference in concrete ways. Informal structures promote creativity and opportunities for shared leadership. The Centre staff spoke of their satisfaction at being able to work and live in a meaningful way, where their working lives and their personal lives were not artificially separated.

> *Aside from being a mother this is clearly the most satisfying job of my life. Being able to integrate my work with my life. Not having to separate my ideals from work.*
>
> *What I like about here is that living and working connect for me, I bring my kids here, I take my work home. It's a real mix; it has to be integrated or I couldn't sustain it.*
>
> *What goes on here is what life is all about. Sharing my family with this place. It is hard to be this intimately connected with so many people's lives, it's painful, real, sad, happy.*

While the Centre promotes the same set of values in the broader community as it does internally, it faces greater struggles when pursuing its agenda outside the Centre. While maintaining a high level of integrity the Centre is faced with the dilemma of finding

ways to integrate its intentions with those of funders and the market place. Making the connection between a market economy which values profit above all and the resultant destruction of communities is part of the consciousness raising that fuels a process of personal empowerment and social change. The importance of linking the personal and the political is discussed by Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997). Politics cannot be separated from the everyday experiences of real people. The lived experience of those who connect with the Working Centre is incorporated into the Centre's analysis of the structural inequities of capitalism.

As I've indicated before, there is a discrepancy between the Centre's understanding of global and local inequality and its ability to mobilize critical action. The Centre understands inequality but does not engage in efforts to change economic structures that would impact a large section of the population. Rather, it looks after the emotional and human needs of people who are victims of the system. Although the Centre may see itself as promoting social justice, I think that it could further this agenda, perhaps through building partnerships with other groups and organizations whose efforts are more focussed on a macro level. Understandably, a small agency with limited resources such as the Working centre has to carefully consider its involvement to avoid spreading itself too thinly.

Fourteen years ago no one would have predicted the Working Centre would have lasted as long as it has. The Centre started as an informal coalition of church, labour and community people with no formal source of funding. Today the rapidly changing nature of work makes the Centre's efforts increasingly relevant. The unrelenting push by

corporations to maximize profits has created a climate where the fittest survive at the expense of those less fortunate. Individuals are forced to compete with each other to the detriment of relationships and community. Unemployment, lower wages, and an increase in part time and contract work are part of the new nature of work (Swift, 1994). Guided by its experiences and a vision rooted in its principles the Working Centre seems content to stay the course. Those involved with the Centre dream of a life without any government funding, where more of the Centre's activities are run by people who come into the Centre. The Centre is touched and shaped by the people who are introduced to it. They bring new ideas and with that new life to the Centre. For those who work at the Centre it has been a place where the future can be shaped, not simply allowed to happen. Ultimately it will be the people who use the Centre who determine its fate.

The ability of the Centre to retain values is, I believe, directly linked to its leadership. The current staff is comprised of three long-term employees; these staff, together with board members share the values of the Centre and provide direction and continuity to the Centre's work. The commitment of these members to live the values and ensure that the Centre is directed by principles is linked to the continuing relationship of the staff and board. The challenge for the Centre will be to maintain a principle based Centre when staff and board change. The experiences of the current Working Centre staff and board have provided direction in the development of the Centre. Future staff and board can learn from these experiences; they will, however, also be directed by their own. Creating a work place which strives to live up to its values is a day by day experience. Unlike many social justice agencies which struggle to be consistent, the Working Centre

has not, in my view, compromised its values for money or rationalized its positions. While the Centre's future is unknown, its roots in the community are likely to remain strong. At a time in history when people and community matter less and less, its efforts and mandate become increasingly important.

Limitations of this Research and Suggestions for Further Research.

There are a number of limitations to this research and further inquiry is required to provide additional information. In this study I focused on how the Working Centre responds to the changing nature of work. I limited my questions to those that dealt specifically with the Working Centre's philosophy and values. Further exploration around the availability and effectiveness of programs or services for unemployed people would provide a broader context for understanding the results of this study. While staff and board had a high representation in the study, the sample of people who come into the Centre represents a fraction of those who use the Centre's resources. Because of this, the results are clearly not generalizable to all of the people who have entered the Working Centre. There is also the possibility that participants may have misrepresented their experiences and feelings. They may have to a certain extent disclosed what information they felt I wanted to hear, for instance. Further research could examine the extent to which the Working Centre is supported by the broader community. Identifying how the community views the Working Centre would enable the Centre to develop strategies to maintain or increase its support base. Additional research also needs to be done to determine the level of understanding within the community in regard to the changing nature of work.

Summary and Conclusions

My exploration of the Working Centre leads me to conclude that the Working Centre's core values of affording respect and dignity to all, developing community and promoting mutual acceptance through informal structures have remained surprisingly consistent since the Centre's inception. The strength of the Centre's extended community is the best reflection of its success. At the Working Centre, shared ownership and decision making are much more than abstract concepts: those involved with the Centre excel at integrating diverse views and ideas. Much of the Centre's effectiveness stems from its flexibility, responsiveness and continuous process of reflection connected to action.

At a time of rapid structural and economic change, many are left feeling alienated and afraid of the future. As freer international trade facilitates the movement of capital anywhere in the world with few limitations, and technology is rapidly replacing human labour, previously secure jobs and entire job occupations are lost to cities, provinces and countries that provide the best "package" to business: low wages, few restrictions on health and safety, environment, or labour practices. Women, older workers, youth, the disabled, new immigrants and other marginalized groups continue to be hit the hardest by these changes, but no job is safe. In this atmosphere of vulnerability and mistrust, competition flourishes.

Clearly the link between the economy and the psychological well-being of individuals and communities has never been more pertinent. The new nature of work will no doubt increase both physical and psychological health problems and place an enormous

strain on our health care system. At a time when there is greater demand for support programmes such as employment insurance, social assistance, family benefits, old age pensions, and social services, all three levels of government are cutting them back. Community psychologists and others face the monumental challenge of developing strategies to strengthen communities and promote well-being in this context. As I see it, the Working Centre can be seen as a microcosm for social change, and can provide others with inspiration and guidance in these efforts. Their quiet resilience and long standing commitment to caring and compassion provide a model for others which is ultimately hopeful in challenging times. Perhaps the Working Centre will consider pursuing a more vigorous social justice agenda as its next challenge. If the Working Centre is striving for social justice looking for means and ways to redistribute burdens and resources in society may very well be its next step.

Table 2 provides a summary of the basic values of the Working Centre and factors which facilitate or inhibit the Centre from attaining congruency. As we can see from this table, the value of social justice does not appear as one of the Centre's main values. It is, however, consistent with its philosophy of creating a more humane and caring society.

Table 2

Value Dilemmas in Striving for Social Justice:

A Case Study of The Working Centre

Living with Integrity

Basic Values within the Organization:	**Facilitative Factors**	**Inhibiting Factors**
Respect and Dignity, Community, Mutual Acceptance, Caring and Compassion	Volunteers, People's Gifts, Accommodating, Sharing, Spontaneity, Responsiveness, Creativity, Dialogue	Financial Constraints, Competition, Profits, Consumerism
Basic Values Pursued Outside the Organization: Participation, Reducing Bureaucracy and Hierarchy, Self help, Less Competition, Less Complexity, Less Professionalism	Mayor's Dinner Newsletter, Golf Tournament, Public Education, Bartering Systems	Profits, Bureaucracy, Measurements, Outcomes Competition, Hierarchy, Experts

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Appendix A

Introductory Letter and Consent Form for Staff

Appendix A: Staff: Introduction and consent letter.

Dear Participant:

My name is Steve Orr and I am a graduate student in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. My thesis advisor is Isaac Prilleltensky, Department of Psychology.

I am currently working on a research project about the changing nature of work. This project will explore the Working Centre's ability not only to cope but to provide direction and leadership in a time of economic structural change.

In order to gather information about the Working Centre I will be organizing a focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to share your experiences, thoughts, opinions, and ideas. I can be contacted at 519-742-5836. My advisor can be contacted at 519-884-1970, ext.3989.

The interview involves:

1. Questions regarding the Working Centre's philosophy, mission and program activities.

2. The interview will be audio recorded.

3. The audio tapes are the possession of the researcher and will be analysed and erased.

4. Transcripts will not contain any personal identifying information and all material provided will remain confidential.

5. Consent forms will be kept by the researcher.

6. Participants are free to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the interview at any time.

7. Participants are entitled to a report on the results of this project. The results should be available approximately 1 month after completion of the research.

I understand the information presented above and agree to participate in the interview.

Name: Date:

Signature:

Researcher

Name: Steve Orr Date:

Signature:

Please include your mailing address and/or phone number to receive feedback of research results.

Appendix B

Staff: Interview Questions and Prompts

Appendix B: Staff interview questions and prompts.

Introduction

First of all, let me thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. As was previously mentioned I am interested in understanding how the Working Centre responds to the changing nature of work. All of the information you provide will be recorded in an anonymous fashion, and will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and if there are any questions you would rather not answer, just let me know and we'll move on to the next question. If at any point you would like to end the interview, just let me know and we will terminate the interview. Do you have any questions? If not then we can begin.

1. Can you share with me why the Working Centre was started? What was its purpose?

2. What is the current mission/purpose of the Working Centre? How has this changed over time?
Have the changes in the economy (unemployment, lower wages, part time work) had an impact on the mission/purpose?

3. What was the philosophy of the Working Centre when it first started? (What was important?)
What values were important (collaboration, self-help)?

4. What are the current values/philosophies ? How have these evolved over time?

5. What programs/services/supports did the Working Centre provide in the beginning?
Did these change over time? If so how?
Have these changes been connected to changes in the work force?

6. What programs/supports/services does the Working Centre currently offer?

7. Where do you see the Working Centre going in the future as the nature of work changes (ie. part-time, fewer benefits, service sector, lower wages)?

Conclusion of Interview

Well, that's pretty well all I had to ask you. How did you feel about the interview? Is there anything you would have liked to have said that you didn't get the chance to say?

Thank you for talking with me. I really appreciate your help. Would you like to see the project once it's complete?

Appendix C

Introductory Letter and Consent Form for Individual Board Interviews

Appendix C: Board: Introduction and consent letter.

Dear Participant:

My name is Steve Orr and I am a graduate student in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. My thesis advisor is Isaac Prilleltensky, Department of Psychology.

I am currently working on a research project about the changing nature of work. This project will explore the Working Centre's ability not only to cope but to provide direction and leadership in a time of economic structural change.

In order to gather information about the Working Centre I will be organizing several individual interviews. The purpose of this informal interview is to share your experiences, thoughts, opinions, and ideas. I can be contacted at 519-742-5836. My advisor can be contacted at 519-884-1970, ext.3989.

The interview involves:

1. Questions regarding the Working Centre's philosophy, mission and program activities.

2. The interview will be audio recorded.

3. The audio tapes are the possession of the researcher and will be analysed and erased.

4. Transcripts will not contain any personal identifying information and all material provided will remain confidential.

5. Consent forms will be kept by the researcher.

6. Participants are free to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the interview at any time.

7. Participants are entitled to a report on the results of this project. The results should be available approximately 1 month after completion of the research.

I understand the information presented above and agree to participate in the interview.

Name: Date:

Signature:

Researcher

Name: Steve Orr Date:

Signature:

Please include your mailing address and/or phone number to receive feedback of research results.

Appendix D

Interview Schedule for Board

Appendix D: Board: Interview questions and prompts.

Introduction

First of all, let me thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. As was previously mentioned I am interested in understanding how the Working Centre responds to the changing nature of work. All of the information you provide will be recorded in an anonymous fashion, and will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and if there are any questions you would rather not answer, just let me know and we'll move on to the next question. If at any point you would like to end the interview, just let me know and we will terminate the interview. Do you have any questions? If not we can begin.

1. Can you share with me why the Working Centre was started? What was its purpose?

2. What is the current mission/purpose of the Working Centre? How has this changed over time?
Have the changes in the economy (unemployment, lower wages, part time work) had an impact on the mission/purpose?

3. What was the philosophy of the Working Centre when it first started? (What was important?)
What values were important (collaboration, self-help)?

4. What are the current values/philosophies ?
How have these evolved over time?

5. What programs/services/supports did the Working Centre provide in the beginning?
Did these change over time? If so how?
Have these changes been connected to changes in the work force?

6. What programs/supports/services does the Working Centre currently offer?

7. Where do you see the Working Centre going in the future as the nature of work changes (ie. part-time, fewer benefits, lower wages)?

Conclusion of Interview

Well, that's pretty well all I had to ask you. How did you feel about the interview? Is there anything you would have liked to have said that you didn't get the chance to say?

Thank you for talking with me. I really appreciate your help. Would you like to see the project once it's complete?

Appendix E

Consumers: Introduction and Consent Letter

Appendix E: Consumers: Introduction and consent letter.

Dear Participant:

My name is Steve Orr and I am a graduate student in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. My thesis advisor is Isaac Prilleltensky, Department of Psychology.

I am currently working on a research project about the changing nature of work. This project will explore the Working Centre's ability not only to cope but to provide direction and leadership in a time of economic structural change.

In order to gather information about the Working Centre I will be organizing several individual interviews. The purpose of this informal interview is to share your experiences, thoughts, opinions, and ideas. I can be contacted at 519-742-5836. My advisor can be contacted at 519-884-1970, ext.3989.

The interview involves:

1. Questions regarding the Working Centre's philosophy, mission and program activities.

2. The interview will be audio recorded.

3. The audio tapes are the possession of the researcher and will be analysed and erased.

4. Transcripts will not contain any personal identifying information and all material provided will remain confidential.

5. Consent forms will be kept by the researcher.

6. Participants are free to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the interview at any time.

7. Participants are entitled to a report on the results of this project. The results should be available approximately 1 month after completion of the research.

I understand the information presented above and agree to participate in the interview.

Name: Date:

Signature:

Researcher

Name: Steve Orr Date:

Signature:

Please include your mailing address and/or phone number to receive feedback of research results.

Appendix F

Individual Interview Schedules for Consumers

Appendix F: Individual interview questions and prompts.

Introduction

First of all, let me thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. As was previously mentioned I am interested in understanding how the Working Centre responds to the changing nature of work. All of the information you provide will be recorded in an anonymous fashion, and will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and if there are any questions you would rather not answer, just let me know and we'll move on to the next question. If at any point you would like to end the interview, just let me know and we will terminate the interview. Do you have any questions? If not we can begin.

1. What is your perception of the purpose (philosophy) of the Working Centre?

2. In your dealings with the Working Centre what values are usually expressed (i.e. collaboration, self help).

3. What services did you participate in or use at the Working Centre?

4. What programs/supports/services does the Working Centre offer?

5. Where do you see the Working Centre going in the future?

Conclusion of Interview

Well, that's pretty well all I have to ask you. How did you feel about the interview? Is there anything you would have liked to have said that you didn't get the chance to say?

Thank you for talking with me. I really appreciate your help. Would you like to see the project once it's complete?