COMMUNITY KITCHENS IN WINNIPEG:

PEOPLE COOKING TOGETHER, BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

BY

GEOFF RIPAT

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Faculty of Social Work
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

(c) August, 1998

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-32952-6

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
*****
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION PAGE

COMMUNITY KITCHENS IN WINNIPEG:

PEOPLE COOKING TOGETHER, BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

BY

GEOFF RIPAT

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Geoff Ripat   ©1998

ABSTRACT

Changes in the job market and in government responses to providing social security have resulted in increasing difficulties for Canadians in meeting their day-to-day needs. High among these needs is food security. The study examines local community kitchens, a community development response to meeting this need which has benefits beyond just feeding hungry people.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology, and gathered information by conducting twelve open-ended interviews with people who work in and around community kitchens as participants, facilitators, and organizers. The study examined the origins, structure, and goals of the groups, as well as the needs that members felt that they were meeting. The study also examined the differences in structure and potential between community kitchens and food banks as places for enhancing food security, self esteem, and personal and community empowerment.

The interviewees generally felt that community kitchens were successful in meeting the goals that they aimed to accomplish. These goals and successes came in the areas of skill building around cooking, budgeting and nutrition, with many of the skills being transferred laterally within the group as members learn from one another. Community kitchens were also identified as places in which members received tangible, emotional, and informational supports, and linked participants to both formal and informal helping networks within the community. They were also identified as vehicles through which individual and community empowerment was built.

While there are difficulties that were identified both in the day-to-day operations of the kitchen groups as well as with the model itself, community kitchens provide many benefits to their members, sponsoring organizations, and host communities. They are stepping stones in the process of building individual capacity and community development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Problem

Successive cuts to the Canadian welfare state, and changes in the job market, coupled with a lack of government commitment to equitable employment policies, have resulted in increasing difficulties for Canadians in meeting their day-to-day needs. High among these needs is food security. The difficulties individuals and families are having in meeting this need are reflected in the recent proliferation in food banks in this country (Winnipeg Harvest, 1996). This has coincided with a similar proliferation of community development responses to the same problem. These responses have the potential of doing more than just feeding hungry people.

This study describes the operations of several local attempts to meet the food security needs of low-income residents of the inner city. The groups in question have defined themselves as community kitchens, which attempt to build capacity for participants in providing food security for themselves and their families, while simultaneously building skills, self-confidence, and expanded community contacts in their membership. The theoretical model through which they operate, and the process through which they effect change, is known as community development.

Community development seeks to empower groups through certain methodologies of operation, including widespread community participation, internally democratic operations, and group problem-identification as a base for further collective

1

action. Community development seeks to empower communities through developing projects that improve people's lives while strengthening and developing their community organizations. It seeks to link people more closely to a community through their involvement in defining problems and identifying and implementing solutions to them.

The widespread growth of community kitchens in Canada in recent years has led to a proliferation of "how-to" manuals on starting a kitchen. A substantial number of articles on the kitchens' increasing popularity have been written, but to the author's knowledge there has been little analysis of what needs community kitchens are really meeting for their members and in their communities. Participants and organizers are busy in the day to day realities of running the kitchens, and have little opportunity to critically reflect on what they are doing. The community development ideals which are the theoretical foundations of the kitchens are assumed to be in operation, and community kitchens are assumed to be increasing the ability of their members to meet the food security needs of themselves and their families. This study explores the needs that community kitchens are really meeting for their members and host communities according to those who work in and around them.

The study gathered information directly from those involved in organizing, sustaining, and cooking in the kitchens, with the goal of gaining a fuller understanding of the perceived role and potential of community kitchens. It is the intention of the researcher to begin to build theory in the area of community kitchens. It is hoped that the process of engaging in analysis of the context in which community kitchens operate through participation in the study has helped the organizers and participants to gain a

fuller perspective on the potentials of the kitchens as tools for community development. By exploring this increasingly widespread example of a community response to meeting food insecurity, the study will be of use to those interested in or involved in actual community kitchen groups. It will also be of interest to those involved in the process of community development, group work, social work, and social welfare in general.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory which provides the framework for this study is community development. Community development, as described by Rubin & Rubin (1992) ." . . helps people achieve their potential by improving their daily lives and expanding their sense of efficacy" (p.13). The model has specific ideas on how a group can best achieve this increased capacity. To begin with, one of the central ideals of the model is to encourage widespread participation of community residents in improving local conditions. Diversity is viewed as a positive attribute leading to greater strength through the incorporation of many ideas and talents into the collective. Community development aims to achieve a wider distribution of power in society, giving people greater control over their affairs. Nozick (1992) characterizes the difference between this ideal and that of "traditional" bureaucratically organized groups:

> Community power is different from the hierarchical powers which run our society. Where the pyramid structures of bureaucracy are designed to take power away from the many and give it to the few, community power gains its strength by power sharing among as many community members as possible (p.31).

Community development seeks to achieve both process goals and task goals. Certainly, its goal is the empowerment and capacity building of the individuals in the group, as well as that of the collective and community itself. The way that community development attempts to achieve this, however, is putting into practice the ideals which it seeks as its results. In this way, the ideal is actually being carried out, rather than just sought. It can be said that the process "practices what it preaches." Included in the

process and goals is the democratic operation of the group. Community development espouses the need to begin "where the people are" (Minkler, 1990) as a base for organizing (in this case issues of food security), and moving on from there towards greater community involvement and capacity building for both the individual and the community. This process is often a slow and painful one, with many growing pains experienced along the way at all levels: those of the community, the particular group itself, and in the lives of the individual community members and participants. Community development theorists and practitioners are often divided over the purpose or desired end results of the process. Some, such as Alinsky (1972), focused on achieving specific concrete end results, for instance the completion of a particular project in the community. Others such as Freire (1970) and Friedmann (1992) view community development as part of a larger goal of including dis-empowered sectors of society in political and economic processes, thereby altering the balance of power that exists in the state (Leaman & Harrison, 1996). This particular study assesses both the concrete and the more process - oriented ends of the community development process. The author believes that to build a strong community its members and organizations must become linked and interconnected, and become engaged with each other in order for positive change to occur.   ..

The study seeks to discover if the participants' involvement in community kitchens has led to any other linking to the community and its resources. It looks at whether or not participants have made any supportive friendships in the kitchens that extend outside of the group. It also looks into whether they have become involved in other programs run by the community kitchen's sponsoring agency, or any other community organizations, as a result of their participation in the kitchen. The study seeks

to ascertain if members and organizers perceive that membership in community kitchens has resulted in any other collective action, seeking further changes to the societal conditions that the participants are facing. It attempts to gain an understanding of the goals, functions, strengths, weaknesses and potentials of community kitchens as perceived by participants, facilitators, and organizers. It seeks to assess needs which have been met, and the changes which have occurred in participants' lives due to membership in community kitchens. The study seeks to assess the effects upon the community organizations which house the community kitchens, their new links to other organizations, and new programs of their own that have developed as a result of housing community kitchens, and on the various "host" communities' capacities for effecting change and becoming healthier and stronger. By examining the experiences of those who work in and around the kitchens, it also explored other areas that were identified as important by the subjects of the study. The author had noticed through initial contacts with organizers, and while attending two conferences on community kitchens, that many groups stressed that community kitchens are an alternative to food banks, and that they help participants to meet the food security needs of themselves and their families. This question was explored in the study through an examination of what organizers and participants perceived are the benefits, strengths, weaknesses, and potentials of community kitchen groups as compared to food banks. Before beginning the study the author envisioned that some of the possible themes that might arise over its course included: the role of community kitchens as vehicles through which to attain increased food security; as stepping stones in the process of community development; as places in which to meet new people and acquire new skills.

benefits, strengths, weaknesses, and potentials that could not be predicted would arise over the course of the study, adding to the knowledge base around this fast growing phenomenon.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Concepts of Food Security and Insecurity

Food security is a term applicable to individuals, families, groups, communities,

and entire nations. It has been defined by Campbell (1991a) as:

> . . . access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy
> life, and at a minimum includes the following: 1) the ready availability of
> nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and: 2) the assured ability to acquire
> personally acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way . . . (p.407-408).

Conversely, food insecurity exists when there is limited or non-existent access to

the food that people need to thrive, or where access is possible only through socially

unacceptable ways including charity, scavenging, or stealing (Campbell, 1991b). As

Tarasuk and Maclean (1990, p.77) point out, North Americans are often used to hearing

about food insecurity through the mainstream press where it is often referred to as

"hunger." However, this conceptualization of the phenomenon leads one to believe that it

is an acute, immediate shortage which can be satisfied in the short term by immediate

access to food. In fact, the problem is much more complicated. Therefore, the terms

"food security" and "food insecurity" are a more accurate reflection of the situation.

Phillips and Taylor (1990) list three types of food insecurity:

> **Temporary food insecurity** exists when a household lacks an adequate
> diet at some time during the year because of random factors. The common
> characteristic is that the food shortage is unforeseen and unpredictable.
> **Cyclical food insecurity** exists when a household repeatedly lacks an
> adequate diet at specific times during the year. Cyclical or seasonal food
> insecurity arises because of re-occurring factors. The common

characteristic is that the shortage of food is repetitive, foreseen and predictable. **Chronic food insecurity** is a state of persistent shortage of food, and exists because the household can neither purchase nor produce enough food to meet its needs. (p. 64-65).

In the Canadian context, the most prevalent form of food insecurity lies somewhere between the last two classifications due to inadequate wages, and inadequate government transfer payments. This will be examined later in more detail. Kalina (1993a) cites five potential reasons for food insecurity.

"People do not have food security when access to food is limited or uncertain because 1) food is not affordable, 2) income is low, 3) transport is lacking, 4) food distribution is inadequate, 5) choice is inadequate" (p.6).

2.1 The Context of Food Security

The fact that a large number of the earth's population experiences hunger has permeated the collective consciousness of humanity. In North America we are bombarded with images of poverty and hunger in the Third World through television news reports of droughts and famine in Africa and squalid village conditions in Latin America. Many development and relief agencies carry out fundraising activities through the production of commercials showing people in a state of starvation, children covered in flies, and other images meant to raise feelings of pity and guilt in the viewing audience. Hunger (or, more accurately, food insecurity) is thought of as a problem particular to developing countries. An examination of the facts, however, shows that food insecurity exists in industrialized countries as well, and the levels are increasing.

2.2 The Decline of the Canadian Welfare State

There has been a significant change in income distribution in Canada, with the middle and low income populations losing ground, while those already making the most money are further increasing their share. The Forum Directors Group (1993) point out that:

> A study of changes in total income shares over the course of the 1981-91 period shows that the 20% slice of middle-income Canadians . . . saw their income drop from 18.3% to 17.6%, which made them collectively poorer by $2.7 billion in 1991. The bottom 20% . . . experienced a decrease from 6.5% to 6.4%, a loss of about $0.4 billion. However, in sharp contrast, the top 20% of Canadian families . . . increased their share of the total income pie considerably, from 38.3% to 40. 0%, which left them with $6.6 billion more of Canada's total family income in 1991. (p.8)

Most people suffering from food insecurity in Canada do so because of inadequate income. This is caused by a number of factors, such as continuing high unemployment (and few coherent sets of measures taken by any level of government to promote employment), and increased costs and prices of consumer goods, rents, etc. The federal government has tightened eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance and decreased benefits. There has been an increase in minimum wage jobs with no corresponding increase in the minimum wage, as well as an increase in temporary or part time jobs, which are replacing permanent, full time jobs (National Council of Welfare, 1996). There are increased numbers of female headed households (which are generally poorer due to continuing gender inequality in income and lack of affordable high quality day care for children), and social assistance benefits are well below low income cutoffs (Kalina, 1993a, p.13).

11

Canada's food insecurity has increased with the breakdown of the social consensus developed in this country after the end of the Second World War. With the passing into legislation of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) in 1966, the Federal government made a commitment to address the needs of low-income Canadians, and in theory to prevent the existence of extreme poverty. Social Assistance benefits were intended to be made available to all citizens in need, regardless of the cause of need (Riches, 1986). The Federal government entered into a 50-50 cost sharing agreement with the provinces for social services and Social Assistance payments. The drawback for low income Canadians under the terms of the agreement was that the level of benefits was dictated by the provinces. The only guidelines imposed by the Federal government were regarding accessibility of the benefits, and the right to appeal. The preamble to the CAP legislation recognizes "the provision of *adequate* assistance to and in respect of persons in need and the prevention and removal of the causes of poverty and dependence on public assistance are the concerns of all Canadians . . ." (Canada Assistance Plan, 1966-67 c.45, s.1, cited in Riches, 1986, p.94, this author's emphasis). Nowhere in the legislation is the term "adequate" operationally defined. Provinces developed their own measures of need, and tend to offer minimal levels of assistance which cannot cover the cost of meeting all basic human needs. Here lies a great gulf between policy and practice. To make matters worse, the Federal government has done away with the CAP and its 50-50 funding agreement as of April 1, 1996. The Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) which has replaced CAP is a lump sum payment to the provinces to divide amongst their Health, Education, and Family Services departments as they see fit, with reduced levels of funding and reduced federally imposed guidelines on how the money

should be used (National Council of Welfare, 1995). What this means for those living on social assistance benefits or even low wages is that their level of government support is likely to be further eroded due to decreased payments to the provinces, and competition for the money amongst the three provincial departments.

The levels of Social Assistance currently provided are seen by the provinces as meeting their own definitions of "adequacy." Ross, Shillington, & Lochhead (1994) claim "The basic provincial social assistance rates are implicit poverty lines . . . one can look on social assistance as the definition of minimum income that has received the sanction of provincial governments." (p.22). These amounts fall below most recognized definitions of what constitutes "living in poverty" (ibid.).

Social Assistance benefits in Winnipeg for a couple with two young children are less than 43% of the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cutoffs (Winnipeg Social Services Department, 1996, and National Council of Welfare, 1996), which is the closest measure that Canada has to an official poverty line. Compared to a conservative measure of poverty defined by the Montreal Diet Dispensary, the Winnipeg rate still provided less than 56% (ibid.).

Post World War II social planning in Canada saw the introduction of minimum wage legislation and the Unemployment Insurance program, both meant to ensure that the workforce and its dependents would be able to earn and maintain an income sufficient to thrive. However, the levels of both are also inadequate. More than half (56%) of low-income families in Canada are the working poor (National Council of Welfare 1988, cited in Kalina, 1993a). In many cases, where a family's lone source of income is one of its

member's low wage earnings, the family would receive more income if receiving Social Assistance. Unemployment Insurance levels provided for 66% of wage replacement in 1971 (Guest, 1985, p.166), but in 1997 E.I. paid a maximum of 60% to low income claimants with dependents, and in most other cases only 55% (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

The social programs that comprised what was known as the Canadian social safety net have been cut or diminished. Teeple (1995) notes the changes to the Canadian system of social welfare:

> The current trends . . . present a revivification of the concept of the "deserving" vs. "undeserving" poor, and of the principles of means testing, familial liability and responsibility, qualifying moral conduct, temporary benefits, deterrent eligibility criteria, targeting the "needy", and the workhouse ("workfare"). (p.106).

In addition to the cuts in benefits and security implemented by the various levels of government, the job market has become less reliable as a means of providing security for individuals, families, and communities. "Downsizing", the popular euphemism for cutting jobs, has resulted in a major loss of jobs in both the public and private sectors. Unemployment has been on the rise for decades. In the years 1946-50, the Canadian unemployment rate was 2.7%. It has grown steadily throughout the subsequent decades, from 4.2% between 1950-60, to 5.0% between 1960-70, 6.7% between 1970-80, 9.3% between 1980-90, and reached 10.3% in the years 1990-93. (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). Locally, the situation is much worse for some groups. In inner city Winnipeg, the rate of unemployment for single parents is 18%, and the rate of

unemployment for inner city Aboriginal single parents is 35% (Winnipeg Harvest, 1998).

The combination of decreased assistance from the state and massive unemployment has

left an increasing proportion of Canadians in a state of decreased social security. This is

likely a cause of an increased state of food insecurity. Canadian communities have been

forced to come up with their own solutions for feeding people living in a state of

decreased food security. As Riches (1997) points out, in essence, the Canadian

government has to a large extent "privatized welfare by increasing dependence on

voluntary activity and, in the case of hunger, on charitable food banks" (p.54). In

response, these community-based initiatives have been markedly different from the

approach taken in the past by the Canadian government:

> Whereas government-run programs within the traditional welfare state
> attempted to alleviate poverty through the provision of financial supports,
> community-based initiatives typically offer in-kind assistance and promote
> strategies to enhance one's ability to cope with poverty (Tarasuk & Davis,
> 1996, p.72).

The following section describes one widespread response to providing in-kind assistance

to Canadians; namely the phenomenon of food banks.

2.3 The Proliferation of Food Banks in Canada

An outcome of the rising levels of food insecurity is the rise and proliferation of food banks in Canada since the early 1980's. Riches (1985) defined food banks as

> . . . centralized warehouses, or clearinghouses, registered as non-profit organizations for the purpose of collecting, storing and distributing surplus food (i.e. donated and shared), free of charge, to front-line agencies which provide supplementary food and meals to the hungry (p.2).

This definition characterizes the function of food banks only as centralized distribution warehouses that provide food to the front line agencies. The term in its more popular usage, however, refers also to the locations where individuals can pick up food. The growth of food banks in Canada has been exponential. They have now become familiar fixtures in most communities, not only in urban settings, but in towns and smaller communities as well.

> In 1980 there was one food bank in Canada. By August of 1992 there were over 342 food banks in Canada . . . The number of Canadians who used a food bank at least once a year was 1.4 million in 1989, 1.8 million in 1990, 2.1 million in 1991 and 2.4 million in 1994 (Winnipeg Harvest, 1996).

Winnipeg Harvest, the centralized clearinghouse for Manitoba food banks, has grown exponentially since its opening in 1985. In its first year of operations, 835,451 pounds of food were distributed to 3,624 people that needed food assistance. In 1998, Harvest is supplying food to over 33,000 people *each month* and in 1997 distributed over 4.4 million pounds of food (Winnipeg Harvest, 1998).

The World Food Day Association (1992) publicized a telling fact: "There are twice as many food bank outlets in Canada as there are McDonald's franchises" (in Kalina, 1993a). The proliferation of food banks is popularly attributed to the rising need for food and growing economic insecurity among low-income people in Canada. While this may be an influence in their spread, the rise of food banks does not necessarily correlate directly to the level of need. Their popularity may be attributable in part to factors such as increased benevolence on the part of donors (be it for reasons of guilt or otherwise), the widespread acceptance of food banks as a solution to hunger and food insecurity, or their highly visible profile in the community. These factors must all be considered when examining the phenomenon of food banks.

2.4 The Inadequacy of Food Banks in Providing Food Security and Client Satisfaction

Food banks are not a solution to hunger. At best, obtaining food from a food bank is a short term, emergency measure used to alleviate immediate hunger. There is no implicit entitlement to the food received, nor any guarantee that there will be enough food to provide for everyone until their next time of need. There is no control at the recipient level over the choice or amount of food received. Receiving food from a food bank is widely perceived as taking charity, a stigmatizing and humiliating experience. Finally, it is also an isolating experience: recipients' participation in the process is limited to standing in line, waiting for their handout. Susan Swatek, Public Education Coordinator at Winnipeg Harvest, explained some of the limitations and rationing that the food bank must impose due to insufficient supply of food to meet the demand:

> "When Harvest's supplies are plentiful, families are given what is called four days worth of food assistance, consisting of nine non-perishable items, bread, and some produce. The same amount is given out regardless of actual family size, to each family, due to the massive administrative hassles it would cause to ration out food according to actual size of each family. When Harvest's supplies are low due to lack of donations or demand is especially high, rations are cut back to six non-perishable items, plus whatever amount of bread and produce is available. Individuals and families are allowed up to two visits to the food bank each month" (S. Swatek, personal communication, October 3, 1996).

The proliferation of food banks highlights not only the inadequacy of the Canadian welfare state and the levels of assistance, but the phenomenon leads to a dependence by the Federal and Provincial governments on the food banks to provide the necessary assistance to people to help make ends meet. In fact, the more efficient the

18

food banks become at serving their client group the less pressure there is on the state to provide benefit levels that allow people to exist without reliance on the food banks. Riches (1986) discusses the dangers of food banks becoming recognized as legitimate extensions of the public safety net:

> As this happens, the food banks, and the voluntarism they symbolize, will gradually undermine the concept of a publicly supported and financed safety net by treating assistance as a privilege, and not a right. This will occur as food banks tighten their rationing criteria, introduce more stringent eligibility assessments and make increasing distinctions between the deserving and non-deserving. Again, there is already evidence that this is happening in certain food banks as they contend with limited food supplies and public criticism that people are simply freeloading on the food bank system (p.124).

As stated by the Public Education Coordinator of Winnipeg Harvest, this rationing and tightened eligibility is indeed happening in Manitoba. A different form of providing food security which provides more consumer participation and choice, allows participants to feel more empowered, and promotes the gaining of new skills and social connections has been identified for the purposes of this study. It is called a community or collective kitchen. "The basic concept of community kitchens is that people get together and cook for themselves and their families, sharing the cost, and then take the food home to be eaten" (Kalina, 1993a, p.23). Having identified this separate response to food security, it must be noted that it is not an entirely disconnected entity from the food bank system. Many local community kitchens receive a substantial amount of the staple groceries they use from food banks. However, the model itself is entirely different.

2.5 Community Development and Self-Help Approach

The approach used by community kitchens is a form of community development and community self-help. In these approaches to development, the emphasis is on the community members identifying their problems and then working together to solve them. It is believed that the solutions arrived at by the community members will have a more lasting and beneficial effect for the community than those imposed from the outside. Withorn (1980) describes self-help as

> . . . the effort of people to come together in groups in order to resolve mutual individual needs. . . The major reasons for defining an activity as self-help are that it involves group activity and meetings of the people with the problem, not outside experts or professionals, and that the main means by which difficulties are addressed are mutual sharing, support, advice giving, and the pooling of group resources and information (p.20).

Rubin and Rubin (1992) define community development in a similar way:

> Community development involves local empowerment through organized groups of people acting collectively to control decisions, projects, programs, and policies that affect them as a community (p.43).

Minkler (1990) outlines concepts in the practice of community organization or development: empowerment, community competence, the principles of participation and "starting where the people are", creating critical consciousness and issue selection. The concepts of community development and self-help are closely related in theory. Community kitchens attempt to challenge the status quo of disconnectedness and hopelessness at both the individual and community levels, and draw from the principles of self-help and community development. They aim to transform and change the

20

relationships, and surroundings of a group and the individuals who comprise it. They stress the benefits of identifying and solving problems using the insight, potential, and power of the group. Beyond the material accomplishments of the community, group, and individuals are the internal feelings of self-worth and accomplishment that accrue from such an undertaking, and the potential for further action. The personal beneficial effects of membership in such a group are explored by Riessman (1976) who termed one of the internal mechanisms at work when engaging in the group process as the helper-therapy principle. ." . . the helper-therapy principle states in simplest form that those who help are helped the most" (p. 41).

As the state is withdrawing from its obligations to ensure that the Canadian population is adequately provided for, self-help groups such as community kitchens have sprung up to fill the unmet needs of the people. The reaction of communities to the abdication of the state's responsibilities has been the creation of many local institutions, with many positive benefits. As will be explored later, there are also many drawbacks to creating this sort of grass roots, "parallel" system to providing food security. First, however, an examination of the history of community kitchens, and their current structures, goals, and benefits will be undertaken.

2.6 History of Community Kitchens

The history of community kitchens dates back to traditional forms of organization used to overcome hardships in rural Peru. Andreas (1989) describes their beginnings:

> The Peoples Kitchens in Lima have their roots in the *olla común* [common pot], prepared during fiestas and community work projects in native communities in the countryside. The *olla común* is also traditionally prepared in support of striking workers in mines and factories, especially when families accompany workers on *marchas de sacrificio*, in which workers walk for days or even weeks to confront government officials with their demands. In recent decades, strikes by fishermen, miners, schoolteachers, and other public servants have also given rise to the *olla común*. During the teachers' strikes of 1977 and 1978, *barriada* [neighbourhood: Author's translation] mothers lived in school buildings for months at a time, and their own families came to eat there because there was no one cooking at home. Many women did not even sleep at home. The same thing occurred when electronics assemblers and garment workers occupied workplaces for extended periods. (p. 14).

Community kitchens are born of necessity in difficult times. Kalina (1993a) concurs that modern day community kitchens have roots in Latin America: "In Brazil, Chile, and Peru, organized kitchens have been in operation for 15 years." (p. 24). It appears that they have become an essential survival tool of some communities in these countries. Van Isschot (1996) claims that ten percent of the 8 million habitants of Lima, Peru are fed every day at cooperative kitchens. There is documentation of 13 "popular kitchens," involving 1,834 people, operating in a single suburb of Santiago, Chile (Flandez, 1988, p.78).

Community kitchens' "First World" history is also extensive, and there is a traditional linkage between community kitchens and social work. Community kitchens were a tool used for network building and cheap, nutritious meals for immigrant

communities by the early "social workers" in North America. As Kalina (1993a) states:

"Community kitchens have a long history dating back to the settlement houses of the late

1800's." Kalina also relates a vignette of the formation of the first "modern" community

kitchens in Canada:

> . . . the first kitchen in Canada was inspired in 1986, when Jacynthe Ouellette of Montreal, a single parent on social assistance, and her sister-in-law began cooking with neighbors to save time and money. Word of mouth spread and by 1990 community kitchens were sprouting up across Canada. In 1988 community kitchens won a prize in Quebec for the best community initiative (ibid.).

There are now some 300 community kitchens in operation in Quebec alone, more

than 100 in British Columbia, and dozens more starting up around the country (Van

Isschot, 1996).

2.7 Definition and Concepts of Community Kitchens

A useful definition of community kitchens, as given earlier is as follows: "The basic concept of community kitchens is that people get together and cook for themselves and their families, sharing the cost, and then take the food home to be eaten" (Kalina, 1993a, p. 23). The cooking groups often consist of 4-5 people. If more are interested in joining, a new group is usually formed. Community kitchens operate out of a variety of settings. Kalina (1993b) notes that in many communities, kitchens are sponsored by service clubs, community groups, churches, and government agencies.. These sponsoring groups often provide space which the groups operate out of, as well as in some instances some funding or staff support. For the purposes of this report, these sponsors will be referred to as the community kitchen's "sponsoring organizations." Most groups have a facilitator who helps to focus and direct the group's planning and cooking sessions. The person is often a member of the community kitchen, and shares in all aspects of cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc. Some facilitators receive a small stipend from the sponsoring organization, others are actually salaried employees of the organization in which the community kitchen operates. Members pay a few dollars to cook in each session. The frequency of these varies from group to group. Community kitchens offer many benefits to their members. The most obvious one is the cheap meals. Community kitchen groups buy and cook in bulk, which saves money. As this report's research will show, cost-efficient recipes are prepared in the kitchens, to be portioned out and taken home to be enjoyed by the participants and their families. This is a method of stretching scarce dollars for people living on a restricted budget. The fact that the community kitchen groups buy and cook in bulk saves money and time. Participants also share and learn recipes,

24

nutritional tips, and cooking skills. Community kitchen groups require their members to pay part or all (depending on the group) of the costs of the food that they prepare. Therefore, the food is not considered a charitable gift or donation, with all of the attached negative stigma. However, some of the food used in some groups is donated by food banks. (Winnipeg Free Press, 1996, p.A3). In practice most of the food is bought, and then prepared by the labour of the group's members. Many of the participants in the groups are single mothers, who are isolated due to their circumstances and benefit greatly from the companionship that participation in the kitchens provides. Withorn (1980) describes the benefits of membership in self-help groups in general:

> Such groups may provide release and support that come from sharing and camaraderie. These results cannot be disregarded, especially for people who felt desperately alone before the experience (p.23).

The attraction of membership in a community kitchen as a social group is that it does not focus on personal deficits of the group or its members. The main focus of the group is on cooking. Spending time with community members can be very therapeutic for participants. In the course of the time spent in the kitchen, group members may "open up" and share their problems with the group, which may then serve as a forum for sharing and mutual aid. The central point is that community kitchens offer a resource to their members that is non-bureaucratic, non-judgmental and non-threatening (Finch, 1996). They act as a welcome alternative to the perceived attributes of many social service agencies and their programs which are often deficit-based rather than asset-based. Glasser & Suroviak (1988), while discussing programs offered by a soup kitchen, address the issue:

> The concept of both the classes and food clubs does not imply that anybody has a "problem" that needs "treatment." Rather, they embody the spirit of self-help by beginning with the assumption that guests have the ability to share and learn important information and help each other. . . (p.107).

Furthermore, membership in community kitchens is not limited to those struggling to survive - anyone can join, and that is part of their strength. There is no stigma attached to belonging as membership does not reflect on one's income level (Globe and Mail, 1996, p. A8).

The type of help given by members to each other may take many forms. A study by Shaefer, Coyne, and Lazarus (cited in Glasser, 1988) identified three types of social support prevalent in self-help groups: emotional, tangible, and informational:

> *Emotional* support includes intimacy and attachment, reassurance, and being able to confide in and rely on one another - all of which contribute to the feeling that one is loved and cared about, or even that one is a member of a group, not a stranger. *Tangible* support involves direct aid or services and can include loans, gifts of money or goods, and the provision of services such as taking care of needy persons or doing a chore for them. *Informational* support includes giving information and advice which could help a person solve a problem. . . .Tangible and informational support may also serve an emotional support function, as when they signal caring and are not viewed as resulting from obligation. (Shaefer, Coyne, and Lazarus 1981, p.385, cited in Glasser, 1988, p.101, 103).

Membership in a community kitchen may result in improved self-esteem and belief in collective solutions to common problems of the members of the group (B.C. Health Research Foundation, 1993). Andreas (1989) describes the transformation of some of the *socios* (members) of the People's Kitchens in Peru:

While in most cases leaders of the People's Kitchens bring to these organizations years of neighborhood organizing experience and a certain amount of political sophistication, many of the *socios* are extremely shy at first about speaking at meetings or taking initiative or responsibility. Over the years, such women have been personally transformed by their participation in the People's Kitchens. Not only have they come to be outspoken and self-confident, they are critical of those who used the Kitchens for personal profit and of those who attempted to manipulate the community's neediness to promote outside interests. (p.16).

As the groups are participant managed, they provide a forum for learning organizational management and group work skills. Kalina (1993a) also lists the accomplishments of some members of community kitchens:

> The positive support and increased self-esteem that come with belonging to a kitchen have empowered some participants to form advocacy groups for poor people, lobby for affordable housing, and compose a listing of affordable recreational activities. Some participants have become leaders of new kitchens; while others have earned gainful employment in a food-related business (p.26).

There is a sense of community that is fostered by preparing and sharing food together. This sense is the root of developing more collective solutions to problems common to the community. Davis (1992) addresses the potential for food as a starting point for community development:

> There is a role for food in fostering group participation. The production, preparation, and sharing of food provides a natural basis for communication, companionship, and group formation - activities that can help support personal and collective action (p.10).

Community kitchens can be places where members become used to working together in accomplishing a task, a situation mirrored in the workforce. In this way they

also provide a job training component. Kitchens can and have been adapted to the needs of their members. The National Film Board production on community kitchens entitled Stir it Up (1993) mentions an existing group in Cambridge, Ontario where new immigrants to Canada cook together in groups with long time community members, gaining informal English language lessons in the process. Kalina (1993b) refers to groups where elderly women cook in groups with young single mothers, sharing cooking skills as well as life experience. A group of immigrant women of various ethnic backgrounds have formed a community economic development business in Toronto named Global Pantry, which aims to become completely economically self-sufficient and serve as an income generating activity for its members through offering a catering service. The possibilities and permutations of the groups are numerous.

2.8 Limitations of Community Kitchens and Self-Help in General

The short and long term benefits of membership in community kitchens have been emphasized, as well as their benefits to families and communities. But this phenomenon cannot be studied without regard for its influence and effects at the macro levels of society. As was already mentioned, the proliferation and success of community kitchens carries with it the danger of lowering the expectations of the populace for the state to provide for people in need. Community kitchens must be part of a broad strategy to improve food security at the community level. They are not a substitute for adequate levels of Social Assistance benefits, Employment Insurance, an increased minimum wage rate, or a commitment by the government to a strategy of attaining full employment. These would permit people to feed themselves and their families without belonging to a community kitchen group. Self-help groups in general run the risk of lowering public expectations of the state. Withorn (1980) describes the problem in the American context:

> The work ethic, the Horatio Alger ideology, and the lack of a broad-based socialist or labor party meant that the very success of worker and Black self-help efforts was used to deny the necessity of broader public responsibility for major social needs. Self-help became a conservative term, an end in itself, which was invoked to keep workers and minority groups from demanding social assistance. The price of democratic self support became limited material rewards, which were seen as noble and a part of the American tradition of individual effort (p.21).

The success of community kitchens is in large part attributable to the efforts of their members. The benefits that the members obtain are often due to their control, management, and participation in the groups. Community kitchens are not a cure-all for their participants. Neither are they necessarily appropriate for all people - there are some

29

whose cultures or religions may pose barriers. Some people may not work well in groups and could be harmful to group cohesion (a necessity in the continuance of a group's members, as they must work together for long periods of time to achieve shared goals). Other people may prefer preparing food on their own. Community kitchens, however, while neither an effective tool for all people nor a sufficient substitute for adequate jobs or assistance from the state, are an integral part of a continuum of supports needed to provide food security for individuals, families, and communities. They can be part of a broad strategy for community development. They also provide the many additional benefits of belonging to a self-help group to their members, and an opportunity to gain valuable skills.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Why Qualitative Methods?

This study attempts to gain an understanding of the context within which community kitchens exist, the dynamics between the community kitchen organizers, facilitators, participants, and the environment in which they operate, as well as these individuals' perceptions of the functions, strengths, weaknesses, and potential of community kitchens. At this point it is useful to draw a distinction between two approaches to research, quantitative and qualitative methods. Cook and Reichardt (1979) explain the difference between the two types:

> By quantitative methods, researchers have come to mean the techniques of randomized experiments, quasi-experiments, paper and pencil "objective" tests, multivariate statistical analysis, sample surveys, and the like. In contrast, qualitative methods include ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews, and participant observation (p.7).

For the purposes of this study, a mainly qualitative approach was used. As previously mentioned, research on organizers', facilitators', and members' perceptions of community kitchens is sparse, and this study does not build on much documented knowledge in the area. The study explores the behavior and social experiences of groups of people. These are concepts not easily measured in quantitative form that can be verified. Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong (1994) state:

> When knowledge is sketchy or when there is little theoretical understanding of a phenomenon, it may be impossible to develop precise hypotheses or

operational definitions. In such cases, researchers often turn to qualitative research because it can be more exploratory in nature. The research can be very descriptive, possibly resulting in the formulation of hypotheses rather than the verification of them (p.82).

Qualitative methodology is based on a phenomenological approach rather than the logical-positivist approach of quantitative methodologies. Phenomenology is concerned with arriving at an understanding rather than confirming the truth (Bogdan & Taylor, 1976). This particular study seeks to begin to explore and understand the motivations, perceptions, and hopes of community kitchen organizers, facilitators, and participants regarding their own community kitchen group, and of the community kitchen "movement" in general. It hopes to elicit information that can be used as a base for beginning to develop theory on the phenomenon. Qualitative research methods are useful to this end according to Knafl and Howard (1984):

> As the raw material of theory, qualitative data are important as a means to an end. The raw data are translated into concepts and, in turn, used to illustrate the concept . . . the investigator uses the raw data primarily as a catalyst for conceptualization. (p.18)

Patton (1980) identifies further differences between the two typologies of data collection and analysis, and the challenges inherent in analyzing qualitative data as compared to quantitative data:

> Quantitative measures are succinct, parsimonious, and easily aggregated for analysis; quantitative data are systematic, standardized, and easily presented in a short space. By contrast, the qualitative measures are longer, more detailed, and variable in content; analysis is difficult because responses are neither systematic nor standardized (p.28).

32

This study uses case studies as its strategy for research as opposed to other research methods such as experiments, surveys, or examination of archival data. Yin (1994) claims:

> In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (p. 1).

The research looked at several local groups, and included interviews with some of the organizers, facilitators, and participants from each. For this reason it is actually a multiple case study design. This design allows for a comparison of the various models in operation, and examination of the views of members of various groups. It is hoped that this method provides a fuller, richer view of the local community kitchens than the examination of a single case. Information collected from the individual organizers, facilitators, and participants is amalgamated and used in a cross-case analysis for a deeper understanding of the operations of the overall local network of community kitchens. This process allows the study to determine how and why members and organizers are involved in the kitchens, and what they see as the kitchens' benefits, strengths, weaknesses, and potentialities.

3.2 The Research Process

The data gathered for the purpose of the study was collected from the individuals by way of interviews which were conducted between August and December of 1997. Targeted organizers had been sent an introductory letter briefly explaining the study and requesting their participation. These people were asked to post and/or pass around a poster in their organization's community kitchen group that requested facilitators or participant volunteers to be interviewed for the study. The study originally sought to interview between 6-8 organizers who have been involved in setting up and coordinating local community kitchens. The researcher also planned to interview between 6-8 facilitators and/or participants, to gain the perspective of people actually involved in day-to-day operations of the groups. However, these numbers were just predictions made before any data collection or interviewing had been done. Decisions regarding the sample size were made on an ongoing basis, according to the length and content of the interviews. Achterberg (1988) states: "sample size is considered sufficient when an increase in the sample size yields no new data" (p. 245).

The interviews were based around open-ended questions. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences, feelings, and viewpoints of community kitchen members and organizers. It was felt that closed-ended evaluation instruments may have forced program participants to fit their knowledge, experience, and feelings into the evaluator's categories (Patton, 1980). Rigidly adhering to a pre-set list of questions that had been prepared by the researcher could have missed or glossed over issues that were important to the respondents. For these reasons, the interviews were informal and utilized

a format of semi-structured questions. Semi-structured interviews allowed for community kitchen organizers, facilitators, and participants to tell their stories in their own words, and emphasize or hold back whatever information they wished. At the same time, the method allowed the interviewer to ask questions on the subjects not raised spontaneously by the respondents. Unlike a structured interview, specific questions were not formulated about each issue. In semi-structured interviews, questions can be asked and points touched .on that suit the flow of the interview, and probing can be used to elicit information that closed questions and structured interviews would miss (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). The approach recognizes that people have the capacity to understand their reality, and to convey it to the interviewer as they see fit. For this reason, it gives power to the subjects. This coincides with the ideals of the community development approach which provide the theoretical framework for the study.

3.4 Data Management

With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were tape recorded. Following completion of interviews, the tapes were transcribed. Both during and following transcription, the data was looked over to begin what is termed "first level coding"- "a combination of identifying meaning units, fitting them into categories, and assigning codes to the categories" (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell (1996, p.100). At this point, under the instruction of my advisor, I then mentally divided the data into the following eleven categories that appeared to be predominant in the raw data: Origins, Funding, Goals, Skill Building, Support, Linking, Collective Decision Making/Empowerment, Community Kitchens as Alternatives to Food Banks, Change Over Time, Plans for the Future, and Drawbacks and Difficulties With Community Kitchens. I then assigned a colour to each category, and, going through the transcriptions again with felt markers, coloured each quote that fit a category with its corresponding colour. In this way the data became familiar and I began to understand it at a deeper level. Moving on to "second level coding" entailed beginning to interpret what the first level categories meant, and led to the development of themes or theories about the data (ibid.). The study's examination of multiple subjects in multiple groups allowed for an individual's interview data to be corroborated with information from other interviewees. This method of design, known as triangulation (Pretty et al., 1995, p.59), helped to form a more complete overview of the local community kitchens by exploring the range of people's experiences and outlooks on the phenomenon. This process was facilitated in my research by another idea that was recommended to me by my advisor. It involved cutting out the coloured quotes, organizing them into their various categories, and pasting them

onto sheets of poster board. In this way, the entire range of quotes from the study's interviewees on a particular subject could be examined easily. This allowed for the further development of the additional categories and sub-categories to emerge that appear in the Findings section of this thesis. The themes or theories that were developed were written up with accompanying examples of the transcripts from the interviews that support them. Wolcott (1994) emphasizes the importance of striking an appropriate balance between data description, analysis, and interpretation in a final written document based on qualitative research. This researcher endeavored to achieve a mix of the three that was suitable for the purposes of this study.

3.4 Research Sample

I had mailed out introductory letters to nineteen people whom I knew to be either directly or peripherally involved with the running of community kitchens in Winnipeg. Included in the letter was a poster for them to put up or pass around in their community kitchen group which advertised the study to facilitators and participant groups and solicited their agreement to be interviewed. I was contacted by nine of the people I had mailed letters to within a month of sending them. I pre-screened these people for suitability, based on if they were or had ever been organizers or facilitators in local community kitchens during the course of our telephone conversations. Some of them referred me to other people who would be appropriate to interview, and I began arranging interview appointments. I had no response from either facilitators or participants from the posters, but ended up interviewing some of them because of personal connections or after being introduced to them by organizers. In one instance, I conducted an interview with two participants after having spent a half hour talking and doing dishes with them at the end of one of their cooking sessions.

In all, I conducted twelve interviews over the course of the study. The people interviewed were involved in six local community kitchens in many different capacities, and included an ex-program coordinator of a family centre that has a community kitchen, a community nutritionist who also coordinates and facilitates community kitchens, several organizers and community development workers who coordinate community kitchens, and occasionally cook with them, several facilitators of groups who are also involved in cooking with them, and the aforementioned two participants. Twelve of the thirteen respondents were female. This is a reflection of the disproportionate number of women as

compared to men who are involved with community kitchen groups.

Interviews were conducted over the course of five months. They took place at various places including some of the agencies where the community kitchens are housed, the home of a facilitator, two schools, and my own house. Interviews lasted from fifteen minutes to one hour, with the average length being around forty minutes. I noticed that without exception the professional people who were interviewed spoke both much longer and with more detail about the community kitchens they were involved in than either the facilitators or participants who were community members.

I offered to supply interviewees with a summary of the research once it has been compiled and sorted through. It is hoped that through participating in the interviews and reflecting on the problems, triumphs, and possibilities of community kitchens, the study's participants and their community kitchen groups, can become stronger and more focused. This, in turn, will lead to stronger and healthier communities.

CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

4.0 Origins of Local Community Kitchens

Community kitchens in Winnipeg have been started by a number of professional social service providers from a variety of disciplines. Information from the interviews conducted for this study shows that these people include community development workers, the program coordinators of various community agencies, social workers in the school system, and community nutritionists.

Three of the interviewees who helped to organize kitchens in Winnipeg mentioned that they had first learned of the community kitchens model by reading articles or hearing about community kitchens that were operating in Toronto. The first local kitchen appears to have started in May, 1995. The ex-program coordinator of this kitchen's sponsoring organization explains that the model was in keeping with the philosophy of the sponsoring organization. Both were being built simultaneously:

> One of the things I needed to look at for the community when we were setting up the [family resource centre][1] was looking at some ways to address and meet food security issues. Philosophically I don't think food banks, in their traditional sense, are the way to help people help themselves. So I started to do some research to find out what other ways can we use food bank food but teach people to become more independent when it comes to feeding their families. Because I think people are becoming less dependent on themselves and more dependent on the

---

[1]Due to the small sample size of local community kitchens and the small number of people involved in and around them, the researcher has chosen to keep the identities of both individuals and organizations confidential. For purposes of confidentiality, the names of individuals that were interviewed or are mentioned in the text of interviews which follow will be referred to by the first letter of their name. For example, the name "Jane" would be referred to as "J . . . ". Names of local community organizations are deleted entirely. Text appearing in brackets inside of the interview text is a clarification by the researcher.

systems to feed them, you know, to stretch that food dollar. So community kitchens fit the philosophy of the [family resource centre] because they do a number of things . . . How to get the most balanced meal for the lowest dollar. Also, there is all those sort of related issues - nutrition, cooking from scratch, using Harvest food in a way that is more supportive of what people are trying to do for themselves, rather than enabling them to sort of continue on the same treadmill . . . The other issue was traditionally - you know, every program that was set up at the [family resource centre], I thought: two hundred years ago, how would this have been dealt with? How would this issue be dealt with? A common theme was bees, you know: sewing bees, tanning bees, were done in groups. Big jobs were done in groups. And that's where women shared information with other women and that's where men shared information with other men Including older women with young women. And we thought, let's not make this a teaching style thing, let's make this that you know, while you are peeling potatoes, someone says did you know, or you know I had this experience, and those experiences would be shared. So it was a way to share information.

Many of the local community kitchens appear to have been started by the organizers as a response to their conceptualization of the needs of the residents in communities in which they work, especially their perception of a need for increased food security. The many other "spin off" benefits of the community kitchens, to be discussed later, appear to have been discovered at a later point. One organizer explains the origins of their organization's community kitchen:

I'm not sure it was a community kitchen model per se, that attracted us. But it just seemed a natural development to what we were doing here already. A number of things that we have developed here in the school, they do fit into "models" of things, but that's not how we set out. We didn't look around for what models there were and what we should do in this school, we started out from what are the needs of the community. And food has always been an issue. B . . . , working with the pre-school children and their parents saw all that. They just flocked in when there was a cookery session, and she knew from the parents that food was an issue, to be able to cook nutritionally, and to be able to have sufficient food was an issue for them. So the idea of being able to cook more nutritional food, and have some things laid by, so that they can be more planful, and she thought that was a natural progression. And so that's where we started. I was the one who talked to C . . . about the idea, then she really said "Well that's a

community kitchen! This is what to do . . . " And so she got us the video and got us books on community kitchens. So, other than that, I mean we knew about the idea of community kitchens, but we hadn't sort of investigated that and thought well let's start a community kitchen. We thought these parents need this, and so how can we do it . . . and then it just sort of came together.

One local kitchen, however seems to have been initiated by the community residents, rather than the organizers, at a strategic planning session held during the conceptualization of a local family centre:

> And we started off with that P.A.T.H. [Planning Alternative Tomorrows With Hope, a strategic planning tool], and out of the P.A.T.H. came the programs of community kitchen, parenting programs, things like that. So they opened up the community kitchen . . .

Another group evolved from its original form as a cooking class into a community kitchen:

> We applied for funding to hire a nutritionist to conduct some of our cooking classes. From there we evolved from the cooking classes into a community kitchen. So right now, we've been doing I'd say like a full blown community kitchen for two years now.

Three existing local groups claim to have shown the video Stir It Up, a National Film Board production on community kitchens, to groups of community residents while in the planning stages to get them interested and involved.

4.1 Funding

The six different community kitchens interviewed got their funding from a number of different sources, and all had different expenses. All were housed in donated space in the community, such as church basements, schools, a friendship centre, or space set aside within their sponsoring organization. Therefore, they did not pay rent. Three groups had a community member as a group facilitator, and paid them a monthly honorarium. Two kitchens were facilitated by a professional nutritionist and a community worker employed by their sponsoring agencies, and one was facilitated by a volunteer. The cost of the group facilitator was the main expense of the community kitchen groups. The other main expenses incurred by the group were for food costs. Food costs for five of the six groups were partially subsidized by food donations from the local food bank, Winnipeg Harvest. These groups were allowed to obtain a "basic shelf" of ingredients such as spices, flour, cooking oil, and such from the Harvest warehouse. In addition, these groups would usually place an order directly with Harvest of a "wish list" of ingredients that they needed for their next cooking session, which Harvest would attempt to fill. The ingredients not available from the food bank would then be bought by the group.

One of the group was self sufficient in that the members paid for all of the food they used in their cooking sessions. Two of the groups received partial operating funds through grants obtained from the local Area Councils of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Two others were partially funded through programming budgets of their sponsoring organizations. One received partial funding from Share Our Strength, a U.S-.based non-profit hunger relief agency. One group solicited funds from local businesses

43

which enabled them to purchase a freezer.

One group is subsidized in part through money earned by a second hand clothing store in the community resource centre in which it is housed. It is also financially supported in part by the group selling some of the food it cooks to people at the centre:

> Whenever they cook now, they cook an extra batch, and sell it, and we sell it to the staff. Last week was our first week of doing this. A volunteer bought a half a dozen muffins, we sold them for a quarter each so it was a dollar fifty there. One of our staff members bought another half a dozen, so that's another dollar fifty. And then we sold a few muffins individually, so we made four dollars. . . So they're going to start making an extra recipe and kind of make it as a lunch, so what they'll do is they'll cut a square, maybe put a square of the zucchini loaf, they'll cut a square of this lasagna, and they might put a bun with it, maybe sell it for a dollar and a quarter. And then hopefully the staff will buy, like I'm buying lunch here today, and I think some of my other co-workers are, and maybe eventually we'll raise the price once people are used to coming, and you know, eating here on Thursday, and maybe we'll raise the price and that will be our fund raiser.

The groups are also funded by the members themselves. All of the groups interviewed charge a fee for members to take part in cooking sessions, ranging from two dollars per member, to a share in the full cost of the ingredients used in one group that is not subsidized by Winnipeg Harvest. One organizer reported that the group she was affiliated with did not charge members when the group was first starting up because their goal was to get people in to see what it was about. Within the groups, the average price paid per group member was five dollars per cooking session. This contribution provides each member with enough food to take home to feed, on average, five people with one meal and a dessert. Often group members are also able to take home extra food that came in the Harvest order.

4.2 Goals

Each person interviewed had a different list of what they perceived the goals of their community kitchen group to be, and each placed importance of one or more of the goals they identified. The goals varied widely, and ranged from benefits to individuals, to benefits for community agencies in which community kitchens were housed (encouraging more community participation in their programs), to the building of community support networks, to building an active community in a broader sense. The following quote best sums up the variety of goals identified:

> Well, a broad goal is to improve access to safe, personally acceptable food for people who are generally what we call "at risk." I mean, on one level people would say everyone could benefit from community kitchens, but the reality of it is that they are generally a food security measure that are used by low income people, to help them meet their food needs. . . they can meet social needs, certainly. So the social needs around people who might be isolated. Single mothers who don't get out much, elderly people, single men who maybe don't have great cooking skills. So there can be social needs. There can be life skills, I just mentioned about the widowers, I haven't worked with them, but I've heard they've benefited from community kitchens. So life skills, social needs, and, in some cases, financial needs, in that people are taking home a significant amount of food from a community kitchen that they have cost shared in purchasing in bulk with the other members, they can get a financial benefit out of it. And there actually can, theoretically, be a benefit of more social action, you know, get a critical mass of people together around a common issue, and you might get that channeling into some kind of larger capacity building within a community so they can actually advocate for changes. . .

Most other interviewees identified fewer goals, and placed more emphasis on specific ones. One organizer identified the main goal of the community kitchen group as nearly synonymous with that of a nutrition class:

> Well, I think it's nutrition. That would be the number one goal. You know some families, they don't have, I guess their eating style is really different than eating, you know, from the four food groups, sitting down with their

families and eating. You know some households where everybody just goes to the fridge and eats whatever, or you know, eat out of cans or that kind of thing. So I think, you know, nutrition and getting a sense of meal preparation and, you know I think that's the biggest goal.

They also identified the goal of wanting to teach people how to cook using foods that were not familiar to them but were available at the local food bank:

> And what would happen is on the day of the food bank, people would come, get their food bag, and then they would, often at the bottom of the stairs we'd find things like beets, or avocados, or kind of lentil stuff . . . And then it was, you know, it was a bit upsetting to see this food that was just kind of left there. But, I think what was happening, and the more I got to seeing this food, and at times it wasn't any and it other times it was one, maybe one thing of beets or whatever, it wasn't like there was tons every week, but I started to see a pattern. It tended more to be the stuff that people, it wasn't really more the typical stuff. So my impression was maybe people didn't know what to do with it.

In the following quote the emphasis is on budgeting, and the possibilities of stretching one's money further through cooking as a group:

> Well, basically it's to help them stretch their food dollar, primarily so they can become smarter shoppers when they're buying food. So they learn how to buy in bulk, and they learn how to share. You know, if they know each other in a group and they want to buy spices and share the cost of buying, you know how it's much cheaper to pool your money, instead of spending on your own. And again it's the educational component, where they learn about healthy eating, healthy diet.

These identified goals of nutrition, cooking skills, and budgeting stress the conservative side of community kitchens. In this view they are primarily vehicles for teaching people practical skills that it is felt they don't have, but need to know in order to be able to live healthier lives, and work more "wisely" within their restricted budgets. However, most people saw these goals as a mere part of the possibilities for community

kitchens. In contrast, some interviewees felt that community kitchens had the potential for being a catalyst in the raising of community consciousness to effect change:

> I thought if you truly want to build community people can't be isolated and think they are the only one that doesn't know how to budget their food money, that doesn't know how to cook, 'cause its not that. You know, again that's individualizing poverty. . . The way I look at the goals is, oddly enough, food is a secondary thing to me. I look at the goals of it as: number one: building community, getting people out working cooperatively together on something, and hopefully that will broaden their horizons that oh, maybe I'll try this other project and work with these people, you know? And another goal to me was to get people talking about their circumstances in life, and coming up with a united collective solution.

A participant in a community kitchen group saw it as a place for relationships to develop, and expand one's social network in the community:

> It tries to get a lot more people bound together. More friends. Because usually, if people weren't in it, then they wouldn't normally be talking to one another. They would just keep on walking by. At least now you can say: "Oh hi! How are you doing? Glad to see you again. Hope to see you soon." Because now they know you.

Some organizers saw community kitchens as being tools for outreach into the community. In one case an interviewee described the kitchen being used as a method of reaching families "targeted" by the local school and the agency that they worked for, albeit fairly unsuccessfully:

> We were looking at trying to target, one of the initial goals was to target the kids who specifically were coming to school hungry. And that was one of the primary targets or reasons, purposes. And there was from a child welfare involvement and school related, there was at least ten families that we identified, and I guess it was our hope that there would be some way of connecting these families who are pretty dysfunctional in some ways with a community support resource that would be helpful to them. And as it turned out, there was essentially one family that, of I believe there was ten names that initially were identified. That both the school and the agency sort of said yeah, these are families that really need it, in our, I guess

perhaps our perspective of things. And there was only one family that actually sort of became involved. Now part of that has to do not only with the stigmatization but also with the, I guess the community dynamics that happen . . .

Many organizers who worked for agencies which offered a wide variety of services and programs had the goal of using the community kitchen as a link between local families and residents and the other programs. One facilitator felt that the community kitchen program was a non-threatening, "soft" link into other programs, the sponsoring resource centre, and the local child welfare agency as a whole:

> Some of the people who come . . . are Agency clients who have been really not wanting to come to programs at the Resource Centre because they see the tie to the Agency as just too, you know, this is where they come because they have parenting issues or whatever. But they are quite willing to come to the community kitchen and they don't think, it's very non threatening to them. You know, food is a good thing, you know? And maybe it will get them coming to some of the parenting support programs eventually or . . . It'll show them that [child welfare agency] isn't just those people that come in the middle of the night and rip your kids out of the house. I think it's positive that way with our clients. And I think the smell of the food cooking makes the Centre so homey, and you know?

Another organizer hoped that the community kitchen in which they were involved would serve as a forum for disseminating information:

> . . . let's make this that. you know, while you are peeling potatoes, someone says: "did you know", or "you know I had this experience", and those experiences would be shared. So it was a way to share information.

According to professionals who facilitated groups a common goal of the groups was to hand over the responsibilities for running the group as soon as possible to the group members or other identified leaders in the community. Having looked at the views

of the organizers, facilitators, and participants of community kitchens regarding their origins, funding, and goals, it becomes possible to begin to understand the reasoning that brought them into being, and the hopes that people had for them at their inception. The following sections will explore the perceptions of organizers, facilitators, and participants on how effective the kitchens were at meeting these identified expectations. Whenever possible the interviewer tried to obtain specific vignettes of success and failure in meeting the goals of skill building, the building of friendships and community support networks, increased access to information, programs, and jobs, and the building of self esteem and personal and community empowerment.

4.3 Skill Building

Interviewees reported on a number of skills that participants in community kitchens acquired as a result of their involvement. In general they discussed the fairly obvious skills that people pick up as a result of purchasing, talking about, cooking with, and working around food in a group. Most kitchens seem to adhere to the philosophy that learning in the group setting takes place laterally, that participants in the group are learning from and sharing skills with other participants through the informal operation of the group. However, there seemed to be more of a focus on teaching in some of the groups that are organized or facilitated by professionals in the nutrition fields, or those who initially identified the goals of the group as being mostly based around educating participants in the areas such as nutrition, budgeting, and meal preparation. Participants claimed to have learned cooking skills and added variety to their repertoire of recipes. One organizer reported:

> And also, you know, just kind of the cooking skills. And I think just changing people's perspectives on you know, kind of alternative cooking like lentils and that kind of stuff that a lot of people aren't used to cooking with, and normally would either discard or just keep storing at home without knowing what to do with and that's some of the feedback that I've got.

Another told of increased food preparation skills, and the cost saving benefits of knowing some of these skills:

> But some of the, yeah the young teenagers and whatnot, I think a real benefit is some of the life skills stuff. . . just basic things around learning how to use measuring tools, learning how to follow a recipe, learning that you don't have to buy Uncle Ben's prepackaged rice and sauce, you know, that they actually can use basic rice and add herbs and things to it, which is, you know, a tenth of the price, and you know, not just add the cup of water that the box tells you to.

One organizer of a kitchen who employs a nutritionist as a facilitator was particularly

focused on the teaching of good nutrition to the participants:

> Yeah, because the point is we're basically supposed to provide a strong
> educational component, where we're teaching them about you know, what
> is a good diet, what is a healthy diet. . . To get help for people who want
> to modify their diets, you know, if they have fat concerns, or they're
> diabetic, and so on. So there's a strong educational component here. It's
> not just, people don't just come and cook and leave, you know they come
> here to learn a specific thing.

Another discussed some of the barriers to participation that she found in the group

around math skills:

> I've worked with women who've had such rudimentary math skills that
> they couldn't use the measuring utensils in recipes. Like that blew me
> away. I mean, you don't know how to use a measuring cup? Actually the
> case was where I think we had to have one and a half cups of flour to make
> a pizza dough, and we didn't have a half cup measure, we had a quarter
> cup measure. And a one cup measure. So you use one cup and two of the
> quarters, right? Well, these women didn't know how to do that. So, like
> it's like whoa! Let's go way back down to basic skills here. And also, was
> it the same group of women? A different time, they could not follow a
> three ingredient recipe. Which just told me that they've never used a recipe
> before. They buy packaged food. So if you can work with women, or men,
> or whoever, the assumptions that I had going into the community kitchen
> work were really shaken by some of the instances that came up.

The informal nature community kitchens appears to offer the opportunity for adult

learners to learn skills in a more experiential non-threatening environment than a

classroom. There is the possibility that people would be intimidated in entering a forum

where they may be required to use weak academic skills to the point where they will not

attend. This example regarding literacy skills illustrates this, as told by an organizer :

> In the beginning it really was more that people would go through and look

at recipe books, and pick out recipes, and we would make up grocery lists together, it really was a cooperative effort. What I found was that when I did that that people with low literacy skills stopped coming. And I realized, OK, this is not good, we are excluding an important segment of the community. What I did then, instead of, because the rule was if you weren't at the planning meeting you couldn't cook, because it was important to be part of the planning. And when I realized that people were dropping out because of literacy issues, what I would do instead was that I would lay out the cookbooks, but there wasn't the expectation that everyone would contribute. People would call out stuff, and there were lots of cookbooks with pictures in them, and you could start to see who has literacy issues and who doesn't. When someone would say "This looks good, let's cook this", without even looking at the recipe or knowing what it was. So we made sure there were lots of recipe books with lots of pictures and no one was excluded. Because initially the cookbooks I had used were just sort of all text. And they weren't selected that way, it was just what was there. And then the expectation that everyone contribute. You know, either in sharing and writing out a recipe, and then the teacher in me, the naive teacher in me, saying this is a recipe that serves four, and we want to serve twenty five, let's figure this out! And then I realized "Whoa! What am I doing?" I think I realized that the first or second session. "This is really stupid!" [Laughs]. This is really stupid of me. So I would do that behind the scenes.

This same organizer also saw some benefits in using the group as a forum for the teaching

of specific skills around cooking and food safety, and saw this as more as a peer learning

process:

So making things from scratch, and baking, and things like that. Women never had a chance to do that before, but were doing it now, and in fact were making, replicating, their favourite recipes at home, which was to me a good sign, a good benchmark for the program when I heard someone say "Remember that dish we made?" Like Shepherd's Pie and Scalloped Potatoes were big hits in community kitchen. "My kids loved that so much that I made it for supper, from scratch, myself." And that was a good lesson. And just general cooking skills. And storing food safely. It really surprised me that people weren't aware of just basic, you know, food safety issues. And food hygiene, sort of, you know, chicken and salmonella, and once you open a jar, storing it in the fridge. Those sort of basic things, especially people with low literacy skills. That stuff they didn't know. So they were able to talk about that. And about hygiene when you're cooking . . . You know, those sort of, when you're leaving a

cooking area, coming back in, washing your hands, and smoking and cooking, and all that sort of stuff. So those sort of things they learned.

Other interviewees spoke of other sorts of experiential learning benefits gained from participating in the groups. One facilitator who encourages the group to do the shopping themselves tells of the budgeting skills they pick up which allow them to stretch their food dollars:

> To help them with their shopping skills, now I let the people go and do the shopping. Showing them the things we need and that. I test them in ways like that, where I give them the money to go and do the shopping, and say "Well, this is what we have to work with, and this is what we need." A lot of times it's an experience for them, because they've never had the opportunity where they've had to get a whole bunch of things for say forty dollars. And they say, going into the store, well this looks like it might work, and this is so much cheaper than this one, and things like that. And it helps them with their budgets at home . . . How to stretch a meal. Like I find that a big benefit with me and that, like there's only three in my family, and some people have five, six. The meals that we do cook are in big portions, so it always makes a difference to me when a person comes back to me and says: "Well, I have enough for supper again!" So, learning to stretch the meals. So that makes a big difference for them.

Many organizers mentioned that one of the skills that participants learn as a result of participating in a community kitchen group is the ability to work together in a group, a skill that is transferable to many other areas of life, both in the family setting and in the workplace. One organizer outlined the difficulties that working together as a group in a community kitchen presents:

> You're up on your feet for hours, you know, at least two, two and a half hours cooking and working, and you know everybody knows that some people are really bossy in the kitchen and some are really laid back and so getting all those personalities and all those food likes and dislikes, and all those nutritional needs and all those things met in a group of people is an extremely complicated task, and so that, that whole knowledge of learning to work together in a group of people is transferable everywhere and

probably one of the most important things about it I think.

.

4.4 Friendship and Support

When organizing and categorizing my data after transcribing the interviews I found that organizers, facilitators, and participants had talked at length about the friendships, relationships, and various types of supports that they had made and received as a result of their involvement in community kitchens. This category contained so much evidence of different forms of personal supports that it required further breakdown. I have used the distinctions of tangible, emotional, and informational support as outlined by Shaefer, Coyne, and Lazarus (cited in Glasser, 1988).

4.4.0 Tangible Support

Many interviewees identified that cooking in community kitchen enabled them to save money, a most definite tangible support for those living on a restricted budget. A facilitator tells it this way:

> So they opened up the community kitchen, one of the participants was a friend of mine, and we got into talking. I decided I was going to join the community kitchen because being on Social Assistance and that, it's hard to budget money to last the whole month. And I thought, what a good way! You get two meals for five dollars, it's only ten dollars a week. So like forty dollars per month, I seen it that way. And I really enjoyed it. And I've participated right from day one, up to today, now.

An organizer saw this benefit as well:

> I think it can meet the food security needs of some people. Especially if they're getting food through a community kitchen that's got a sponsor that is actually providing some of the food or some of the cost sharing. I mean right there that's kind of obvious, because it frees up money in their pocket for something else, kid's clothes, or whatever.

Another tangible benefit to participants included having pre-prepared food to use immediately or to store for a later use:

> That makes a big difference for them. I've had a couple of ladies come back who have said to me "Well I froze that, and I'm going to have that next week." They know that they always have this food that they can fall back on now.

In addition, there were tangible benefits to participants as a result of getting to know others in the group. For instance, one group member made use of her contacts to obtain food for others:

> I know that three of the families are pretty tight, they do sharing of information. And whenever this woman goes out to the Mennonite colony [sic], you know she buys for not just for other members in her family, or

extended family members, but she lets the others know. And that's just being sort of part of that neighborhood informal helper or resource person. And people know that she is a good contact out there. As far as informal social supports, which was certainly an important consideration in terms of our objectives, we're delighted with that, within the members of the group.

One organizer told of an instance where one group member gave her portion of the food

they had cooked together to another participant:

> I remember an instance where a woman had used up her food, and another woman gave her her allotment . . . she had unexpected guests and she didn't have enough and then someone said "You know, I'm OK, take this lasagna that we made, you can have my share." You know, sort of that sharing of resources.

4.4.1 Emotional Support

A participant indicated that coming to the community kitchen was a social outing both for herself and her children:

> It's fun to get out once in a while, and talk to other mothers with kids about, you know, like there's other things we'll discuss besides cooking . . . and the kids meet other kids and they have fun, and the daycare leader is really nice. She loves the kids.

Another identified the kitchen as a place to meet others, and cooking as an enjoyable time in her week:

> Well, you meet more people. Usually, well most people try to be themselves and have a fantastic time. Everybody gets a lot of stuff, we have quite a few laughs. And we all come back home happy and ready for the next session.

An organizer also identified the friendships and the informal support network that was being created as a result of the community kitchen group:

> There were friendships and informal supports being built from within the group - the women would get together afterwards. So they were sort of building these supports, which in some cases I think is more important than the food. Because these women were becoming friends, they started to interact socially afterwards, and turn to each other in times of need.

The same organizer also talked about the laughter and good times the group shared. This vignette is an example:

> In the early group, they didn't like hair nets, so one woman went and she sewed babushkas, and we all had them on. We all looked funny, wearing those babushkas! And it was a riot, we had so much fun! I'll have to dig, there might be some pictures. [Laughs].

A facilitator told of lasting friendships she had formed with people in the community as a

result of cooking together:

> I had a couple of ladies that cooked with me over the summer that are now best friends. And like, myself, I have a lot of friends because of the community kitchen . . . I have some people coming over to visit me and that, when I've just recently met them. So I find that a big difference.

This facilitator told a story about a yearly Christmas gathering held for all people who had

participated in that particular year at the house of an organizer:

> Well, we involve ourselves in a Christmas dinner. All the workers that have been involved in the community kitchen throughout the year meet at, well in fact, B. . .'s house, and we exchange Christmas gifts and share a meal . . . B. . . cooks it! All we do is go there and sit around and exchange gifts and talk for the afternoon. All the people that have been involved in community kitchen. We always say: "We don't have to cook it!" [Laughs].

4.4.2 Informational Support

As previously mentioned, community kitchens were identified by the interviewees as forums in which participants share information with one another. The community kitchen group was identified as a comfortable medium for this sort of information sharing by an organizer:

> I guess just the exchange of information that happens between them, I talk about women because I have only worked with women, and what happens in the kitchen when you're around food, it's a medium that allows people to let down their guard and have a social exchange that doesn't happen when you are doing other kinds of programming with people. Like if you were having a nutrition education session, you know, no matter how good of a facilitator you are, or how participatory you make it, it doesn't have that same quality that preparing food does. So it's hard to describe in words, but when you see the interaction that happens between women . . .

The range of information sharing and mentoring reported included simple things such as sharing basic cooking skills:

> I've seen some mentoring going on, when we have, the odd time there's been an older woman in the group who has good cooking skills, and she's been able to work with some of the others, and to show them different techniques and things like that. Like how to roll out dough.

Information also included the more complex issues of advocacy such as client's rights, housing, and parenting:

> . . . A lot of just dealing with the system. "Tell your worker this, my worker said this." That sort of information that I thought was really valuable. Because I mean, you know, what one worker does with the people they are working with is very different from what another is willing to do. And someone would say "Well no, my worker did this, so you should ask." So they are sharing that sort of information. Housing. Housing was a big issue. "I'm moving from my house, can I move into your house?" You know, that sort of, like "That landlord is no good, don't go there." Sort of troubleshooting the issues of parenting. Big time. Talking about parenting issues: "My kid is doing this." "Oh I know, my

60

kids do that." And there was a wide age range, and a wide range of cultures too. In the beginning we had two women from Jamaica. Very traditional, very strict parents. Very, very strict parents. And they'd say, well when they were raised, these were the expectations, and encourage the other women to do this. And there would be all this bickering about what was appropriate parenting. It was good healthy stuff.

4.5 Linking

Many respondents identified community kitchens as places which enabled linkages to be formed between their members and other programs, institutions, and professionals in their community. These linkages fell into four categories:

1. Linkages between participants and programs offered by the community kitchen's sponsoring agency and other networks and formal groups in the community.

2. Linkages between the participants and the professionals attached to the community kitchen group.

3. Linkages between sponsoring agencies and their employees and other agencies.

4. Linkages between the participants and employment.

4.5.0 Linking to Programs

Interviewees identified community kitchens as places where participants first became involved in their community. One facilitator illustrates their growing involvement in various community activities as a result of membership in the community kitchen group:

> The board heard about me and the community kitchen, and they wanted me on the board of the parent council at [an elementary school]. And now I'm the treasurer of that board. . . A lot of people know me from community kitchen, and they're glad to see me at the school now. Like even the parent group at the school, they also want me to teach crafts there again this year. Because last year they got me to teach a class, and now they want me to teach another. .

One organizer describes the community kitchen at the family centre at which she worked as the first program started at the centre. This was a catalyst for both the involvement of community kitchen participants in other programs and activities, and the growth of the centre:

> Without exception, everybody that became involved in the community kitchen in the beginning . . . was involved in something else eventually - whether it was parenting class, whether it was volunteering at the school, whether it was volunteering in the child care, like, something else. They came in for the community kitchen, and they became involved with something else. I remember en masse they decided to go to parenting class. [Laughs]. It was just sort of, I said "We're going to start up a parenting class." "Oh, I'm signing up, I'm signing up" and then we ended up seeing some of these women five days a week, in some different program or another. And these were women who didn't do something before. You know, every one that started in the beginning, they weren't involved in anything else. You know, it was just, they heard about the community kitchen, because we publicized that heavily, you know, get food to bring people in, you know. People came to hear what it was about, and then started getting involved in other things. Community Kitchen was the first program . . . It was the very first program, and it brought people in. And then as we started other programs, the community kitchen people started attending them and bringing their friends, and the word of mouth started

getting out there . . .

Another identified the community kitchen as a program which led to people linking with other programs in the sponsoring agency and the wider community, as well as volunteering their time towards other agency and community projects:

> Because they can come, I said earlier, you don't have to come and say "I need help, I need training, I need money, I need parenting skills" you don't need to do that, but maybe once you have come and cooked a meal and met some people who have the same problems and same issues that you do in terms of struggling with poverty and lack of education and lack of resources you'll maybe ask to talk to somebody about what other resources are available like the parenting courses, like the pre-natal courses, like all of those other educational programs and resources that we have. Plus, we, other people, a couple of people from community kitchen have gone on to go through Taking Charge entrepreneurship programs . . . People have identified themselves as wanting more training through other agencies and programs because of their work within the community kitchen. And they've also contributed to the Centre in lots of other ways - making cooking for special events and other agencies as a way of giving back, too, and I think that that's really helpful.

The stress at the beginning of the previous quote on the non-threatening and non-stigmatizing nature of the community kitchen program was repeated in many of the interviews. Many organizers felt that the community kitchen program created a positive, non-threatening introduction to their sponsoring organization's other programs as well as other resources in the community. One facilitator spoke of the benefits of the community kitchen group in bringing clients into contact with the formal "helping system", as well as in boosting the beleaguered image of the local child welfare agency in the eyes of the community. The community kitchen that is located in one of its neighborhood resource centres:

> Some of the people who come are Agency clients who have been really not

wanting to come to programs at the Resource Centre because they see the tie to the Agency as just too, you know, this is where they come because they have parenting issues or whatever. But they are quite willing to come to the community kitchen and they don't think, it's very non threatening to them. You know, food is a good thing, you know? And maybe it will get them coming to some of the parenting support programs eventually or. . . It'll show them that [child welfare agency] isn't just those people that come in the middle of the night and rip you kids out of the house. I think it's positive that way with our clients. And I think the smell of the food cooking makes the Centre so homey, and you know?

4.5.1 Linking Between Participants and Professionals

Besides identifying community kitchens as a non-threatening introduction to the resource centres and programs in which they work, many organizers also stated that they felt that their involvement in community kitchen groups built a connection between them and the participants by "de-professionalizing" their image in the eyes of the participants. Once this barrier was broken, they felt that positive working relationships could be built between them and the participants. An organizer explains it this way:

> They're a place to build relationships, friendships. They are a place that can knock down barriers, depending on how important you think a little alphabet soup after your name is, if you don't take yourself too seriously with your little letters at the end of your name, and just have fun with people they're a place that knocks down stereotypes of how people should be because they are this kind of professional, or whatever. So I think that they're wonderful in that way. I think that it sends a good example of if you work together things can be better . . . So, it's been beneficial to me to just go, and sit and laugh with people, and just have a nice time with them. And then, you know, then later on they find out I'm a social worker and that, and then it's not so threatening to them. Then we can start sharing stuff . . . You know what got a bit out of hand, though, is that I was always at community kitchen, and I got this deal that if you really had to talk during break you could come outside. And then it just got that their problem, like it couldn't be dealt with in ten minutes. So I said "well, maybe outside of community kitchen you come see me because you can't deal with this during our break!"

Another organizer felt that by sharing in the experience of cooking as an equal partner she was able to become part of the participant's support network:

> I mean I was in there cooking too, and I was taking food home too, because I paid my fifteen dollars. There was some concern about the fact that there was Harvest food in there, but as far as I'm concerned, if I'm going to be there, I'm there as an equal partner. And I would say to them, you know, "I don't like anchovies!" because I'm there as someone who is working along with you. And I think, again, it turned it from a client - service provider relationship into "this is a community support network."

Another organizer who has facilitated community kitchen cooking sessions stated:

> And also, for me as a facilitator, it brings me down to the same level as everyone else. I'm no longer necessarily seen as "The Nutritionist." We're all in there, we're all cooking.

4.5.2 Linking Between Sponsoring Agencies and Their Employees and Other Agencies

Interviewees identified instances where community kitchens provided a means through which they and their sponsoring agencies shared resources and information with other agencies and professionals. One organizer spoke of other agencies using her agency as a place in which to try out the community kitchen idea and method with their clients:

> In the last little while we've had outside requests from other agencies - they'd like to bring six or eight people down for a couple of days and cook, and so I think people are starting to, because of our community kitchen and because of other community kitchens people are starting to catch on to the idea of it.

The same organizer identified the linkages with the City of Winnipeg Health Department that have been formed, and that a community kitchens conference which was held in Winnipeg in October of 1996 was a place where a lot of information sharing and networking happened between people and agencies:

> Another linkage is the City of Winnipeg has been amazing in providing safe food handler's courses to the facilitator and to women in the program who want to go on to catering, who have been volunteering, or participating in community kitchen for nothing. And then the [family resource centre], that conference that was organized by J . . . at the [family resource centre] was great because we ended up meeting a whole-bunch of other people through other agencies who are doing a bunch of work aside from community kitchen, which was great.

Another organizer stated that the informal city-wide network of community kitchens has been a source of information to them:

> Certainly the much larger city sort of informal group in some ways has been a valuable resource. Knowing that there is other community kitchens in the city, and the various types of models that are being used has been helpful.

4.5.3 Linking to Employment

Some of the interviewees identified that employment and employment opportunities have resulted from participation in community kitchen programs. Besides linking with various training initiatives and programs that they found out about while attending community kitchen planning and cooking sessions, some people have moved directly into paid employment, often in the cooking profession, either in restaurants or in catering businesses. One organizer remembers past participants who are now employed as cooks:

> We have one that's cooking on the weekends in our hostel. We hired him to cook. . . he was on Social Assistance and he came to the food bank at [a church] and he expressed an interest in doing the kitchen, and he also had a background in cooking up north, and then it just worked out that he was very committed. He did a wonderful job, and we had an opening for a cook to do breakfasts on weekends, and he applied for the job. We interviewed him, and we hired him. . . There was another lady that came to our kitchen. She was a regular attender of the classes plus the community kitchen, and her husband lives up north. . . when she told them about our cooking the band hired her to work up north. So we have had, I'd probably say, about five or six people actually getting employed and getting off Social Assistance, from the kitchen. And it was all working, it was working up north, cooking, and there was one woman that was hired out in Gimli to work at a restaurant there over the summer. So I mean it hasn't been a lot, but there have been some that have found, I guess, a certain confidence through the kitchen.

A local community kitchen group was hired in the winter of 1997 by the Christmas L.I.T.E. Campaign, a local fundraising campaign which takes place over the Christmas season that seeks to employ inner-city residents in the preparation of food for hampers that are distributed to low-income individuals and families. Four group members were employed to bake two hundred Christmas Cakes for inclusion in the hampers, and through this were able to earn some money to spend on themselves and

their families during the holiday season. The skills and experience they gained through this may provide them with similar opportunities in the future. One local community kitchen's sponsoring agency has developed a catering cooperative which started as a direct result of the success of the community kitchen in doing small, isolated catering jobs. The agency's past program coordinator explains:

> Yeah, it's sort of an accidental outgrowth. Yeah, definitely an accident. Someone said "Could your community kitchen make some stew for us?" And we kind of went "Oh, OK!" And then we thought "Well, how much should we charge? Well, I don't know, how much should we charge?" You know, like that sort of thing. So yeah, we started off with stew and bannock, and then people started to ask for more and it sort of grew, and then the [family resource centre] said "Can you make sandwiches?" And that's basically when we thought OK, we've got a business now. And it sort of grew from there. It was just an accidental spin off, providing stew and bannock for a meeting, and then sort of taking off from there. It was good for the women because then it was a real sense of "This is something that we've created, this is our job, something that we've succeeded in." So it was quite good. And when it began it was the community kitchen people that did it. It wasn't sort of a separate catering business or anything like that. It was "We have a chance here, ladies, to make twenty bucks each, if we make stew and bannock for these people. Do you want to come in tomorrow?" . . . So it was a real collective type of, a nice way of doing it. Rather than having hourly wages and things like that. People got a real feeling of accomplishment. And people would come in with recipes and say "You know, next time someone asks, we should try this!" And stuff like that.

The resulting catering co-op now provides one and a half full time jobs to women in the community, and employs others as needed for various contracts. This sort of community economic development enterprise seems a natural outgrowth of community kitchen groups.

4.6 Collective Decision Making Within Community Kitchen Groups

The community kitchen model stresses active participation by the group in the planning and delivery of the program, and that decision making should be done on a collective basis (Kalina, 1993a). This ideal was found to exist in most of the groups that were interviewed regarding menu planning, program structure, and other decision making. It was mainly organizers and facilitators who spoke at length on this subject, and they are the ones with, at least in name, increased power within the groups. The actual way in which decisions were made may not have been as democratic, or consensus-based as they claimed. Nonetheless, all of the groups paid at least lip service to the ideal, including those that were facilitated by professionals. Some of the organizers' and facilitators' comments regarding the subject were as follows:

> I just sat down with all of them, and we talked about health wise what's expected for us, from the Health Department, and we just all sat down together and said OK, what do you guys want the rules to be? You know, how do you want the person preparing your food? How do you, do you want them to have gloves on, if they go to the washroom they have to wash their hands. So everyone just came up with how they wanted people to dress when they came here, like with aprons and nets and that, and they came up with the money, because the money was an issue, people saying they're coming, and they don't show up, you know? So they came up with their own rules, and everything was their rules, so nothing was imposed on the people.

> By group consensus. And sometimes when it comes to choosing a recipe we'll sort of negotiate because one really wants this, and half of them really want this, and half of them really want that, so we plan two sessions, and flip a coin to see which recipe we make first. You know? Because we've had where someone really wanted to make banana muffins for our dessert, because we always make a meal and a dessert. And somebody wanted to make peanut butter squares. So we flipped a coin and we made the peanut butter squares two weeks later, and the muffins a week later.

So I basically go with what the recipe asks for. If we're going to add, we all have to agree. If one person doesn't agree, then we don't add. Because they're paying, it's their choice . . . I say we've got a whole box of recipe books here, we're going to go through them, if everybody agrees on a recipe, fine, if not then we'll sit here longer. Sometimes the meetings are two and a half hours, for two recipes! [Laughs]. But everybody has to agree.

4.6.0 The Building of Self Esteem and Self Empowerment

Many of the study's interviewees identified perceptions of increased self-esteem and personal empowerment that have occurred in community kitchen participants as a result of involvement with the groups. Examples varied from their own perceptions to outward manifestations of improved personal functioning such as increased participation in groups, education and training programs, or on community boards. An organizer explains the way in which people begin to relax and gain confidence within the group:

> Just people growing, watching them grow. Like at first so shy, and being afraid to make a mistake, till they were reassured so many times, who cares, we'll correct it. If something happens, it happens. So to me that's the most important part. And then the cooking just comes after that, because once you're relaxed, you know you're not going to be judged or put down because something didn't turn out. Then you're free to experiment, and not be afraid, you know?

A facilitator also tells of how people "open up" in the process of cooking together:

> Feeling good about themselves. Knowing that they cooked this today for their family, and they spent a couple of hours with other people and weren't nervous about it. Like, a lot of people when they first come into the kitchen are very tense and that, but after half an hour, like with all the joking around and that . . .

Other interviewees also stressed the point that preparing special foods for their families gave participants an increased self esteem, at least in the short term:

> I think that based on what I've seen I think it's really positive, and I think it's moving towards an increase in self esteem, I don't know how it wouldn't. And you know, just the excitement that I see from people and getting excited. I thought "Hey, they've made whatever this dessert is for their child who loves this particular thing, whether it be Rice Crispie Squares or whatever." And just seeing people talking about it, and how excited they are, they're going to take it over to their mom's and have dinner with their parents, or whatever.

And then a confidence builder, people felt . . . I mean at 3:30, because that is when we were generally finished, right, and the kids would come over from [school], the kids of the parents who were cooking. And you know what it was like? It was like Christmas. "Oh, look what we've got!" And the kids were all helping to carry it home, big ice cream pails full of soup, and stew. And people felt good, as tired as they were. People felt good leaving with this food that mom made, that mom made from scratch.

People did the Christmas baking, and I can't say for sure, but I don't think these women had ever done Christmas baking before. And they all took home what they baked, and I remember one woman phoning her partner from the kitchen, telling him what she had done. Like this was just so amazing for her to have done this. So is that food security? I don't know, I mean it sure enhanced her quality of life I would say.

Organizers also identified that community kitchen participants had experienced other activities that had increased their self esteem and built confidence in their abilities, as well as involving them in education and training programs and community activities and groups:

They are tools, right, but they are tools for growth. I don't think that anyone stays at one level, after entering a community kitchen. If they are, then the community kitchen is just a cooking class. You know, exactly what that one group thought, then it's just a cooking class. And even then there are some benefits. But no, anybody I've seen involved in community kitchens, there has been growth in a number of ways. They become involved. Look at M . . . She was a participant in community kitchen right at the very beginning, and she's now involved, I mean now she runs the community kitchen and she's involved in the community council, or the executive. Look at S . . . She's back at school, and she's involved in the parent council here. So no, it's a catalyst for growth. It can't be anything but.

This increased involvement and self esteem in participants leads to positive benefits to the wider community. A facilitator explains:

They feel better about themselves. People who feel better about themselves feel better about their surroundings, you know. And they don't do things like wreck buildings. People who feel good about themselves take care of themselves and their surroundings. And that benefits the community.

:

4.6.1 Community Empowerment and Development

The fact that community kitchens provide a forum through which community members can plan, implement, and control their own program differentiates them from many other programs that are provided through social service agencies. This community ownership of service planning and delivery of programs, by and for the community, is what true community development is based upon. An organizer explains this process versus the "traditional" methods, which are based upon the perception of community members as clients:

> People were sort of thought of as clients for whom people in community development sort of provided services to. "We'll make this better for you, we'll make this better for you." It's that whole thing that I talked about earlier about participation. They're not a client if they are participating in the planning or the delivery. They are a client if they are on the receiving end entirely. And they'll stay clients, we'll keep them as clients, as long as you are sort of delivering things one way. You know? That's, I mean it's wonderful for those in the fields where they need clients, you know, they'll be in a job forever, but as soon as you have people start to participate in service delivery it changes the dynamics entirely. Suddenly we are equal partners in this.

The same organizer explained how the process of community empowerment and change unfolds:

> You start with the isolated mom. Someone who is home with young children, home alone. And whatever problems they are facing, they're facing alone. And they certainly don't know if anybody else is facing these problems, or what possible solutions are. You get two of those isolated moms together and they find out they have some common issues. Then they can help each other solve them. You get four of these women together and they realize there is common issues. Then they start looking outside of themselves for what these issues are all about. And that's when community change starts to happen, when they say: "Well, wait a minute, if I'm having this problem, and you're all having this problem, maybe we all can do something about the problem, rather than trying to fix it in our heads. That's what happens, that's when you cut isolation, that's when community

change starts to happen. When people realize it's not just them who is enduring the issue. Social Assistance is wonderful for isolating people. And that's why one worker can get away with something that another worker can't. This is a way for people to communicate within that system, and how to sometimes work outside of that system as well to get what they need. I think also too, I mean when you're stuck at home your world becomes very narrow, and to think that there is anything else that you can do beyond that world is very difficult. And this can go for even a professional at home, you know. Someone quite capable at home. Your focus becomes very narrow, and you just focus on parenting, and sort of just forget about yourself. This sort of expands your horizons, it also expands your possibilities - if you see someone else doing something besides being at home, then you are more willing to take that risk as well. And then you get involved.

Other organizers spoke of the potential for community development and change that lies

within small groups such as community kitchen groups:

I think they help to create a real sense of community. It's the opportunity for people to meet together and actually achieve something together. And I think people have the potential to grow in confidence in their abilities to organize things and to take on issues, and to move, you know move beyond just the community kitchen stage and maybe looking at some other things that are issues within the community. It's always easier if you've got a core established group, like minded people who feel comfortable working together, it's easier I think for the next thing to fit into place. As we do here, you know, it's not a big issue to start something, because we've established so many different things. And we don't think "Oh, we have to have a facilitator", or we have to get this amount of money, or we have to do this. I mean we just start it, and things just seem to work out. But you couldn't do that unless there was that sort of like minded thinking and that feeling that it's important to establish things within the community. And so I think people who come to the community kitchen will eventually feel that way themselves, and be able to do some things.

I think that it sends a good example of if you work together things can be better. You know, it's not on like a mass scale but you got to start somewhere. So if you see you can provide your family with good nutritious food then maybe you know, you could start working on helping the community get decent housing. Or you know, helping the community to be safe from gangs and violence and drugs, and whatever else. So I think community kitchens, I suppose food should be their priority role but to me

food is the secondary, and it's more important people learning their limits, people learning to push their limits, people willing to learn new skills, people willing to take a chance, people empowering themselves and feeling good that they learned something new and they did something, you know? And that's what's important to me. And that's how I think that they benefit the community.

4.7 Community Kitchens as Alternatives to Food Banks

Most of the study's respondents had a lot to say about the differences between community kitchen groups and food banks. It must be noted that the two are related in a number of ways. First, both are methods of providing food to individuals and families who lack food security (although in the case of community kitchens this is not exclusive). Both are run through agencies operating in the not-for-profit sector. The two are also linked in a literal sense in Winnipeg where five of the six community kitchen groups interviewed for this study were partially subsidized by food donations from Winnipeg Harvest.

The differences between the two, however, are also enormous: in practice, in ideology, and in benefits to the client. From a practical standpoint, food banks are available on a rationed basis. They are run in communities on a limited basis, often just twice a month. Beyond that, there are problems with food availability and quality. Some study participants spoke of the problems with the quality of food received at food banks, and how community kitchens offered a much better alternative:

> Well I think the best thing is that you have quality control in a community kitchen, you know what you're getting. You're touching the food, you're handling the food, you're smelling it, you're seeing it, and you can choose not to use an ingredient that isn't fresh, or isn't useable, and when you pick up a hamper you're just given a bag. And you get home and its something that. . . you wouldn't want to eat. And I think that's very demoralizing for people. I think that people feel that it's bad enough that you have to go and beg for a bag of food, but when you get home and it's moldy bread, how do you feed your kids on moldy bread? You know. I think its really hard for people. . .

> A food bank gives you whatever it has at the time, but it may not, I mean for example, our kitchen, they'll make Shepherd's Pie, or ribs, or they'll make Sweet and Sour Meatballs, you know, they'll make a chicken soup,

you know make some yeast based buns. You know this is all very healthy. So it's a much better deal . . . I think it just makes people feel better about themselves. And then also there's the socializing that you don't have, well maybe you do have in a food bank because they meet every Tuesday or whatever, but you know, if you can form a network, and you can socialize with other people and build friendships, that's very important too. You know, it's a place to go and have fun and meet people.

One organizer stressed the aspect that community kitchens require work from participants and charge them money to cook. These were important measures towards regaining self-reliance and self esteem in a community that has become dependent on handouts from food banks and other institutions such as social service agencies and various levels of government:

> The whole goal of telling people they need to work together to get something is shot down by so many other agencies, because you go, there's sort of a something for nothing attitude with other people - because these people are lazy, and these people are poor, and these people don't know what they are doing and so, and they're told that by so many other agencies, and given handouts, and made to feel badly for taking them . . . I think that lots of social service agencies do that to people, whether it's money, whether it's services, whether it's, you know, diapers, whether it's whatever, people are trained to sort of believe that they have to go and grovel for things, and so they almost don't know how to work for things. We've sort of trained people to take, as opposed to that they can participate and do something on their own. And why would they? Why would you come and cook for three hours when you could go and get a hamper? Why would you? And pay five bucks to do that? You know, I think that's a middle class belief that there's so much pride. You know, you can only have your pride shot down so many times before you don't have any, and that's a common problem with lots of the people that come to the Centre. I mean, that gets beyond community kitchens, but I think that that's sort of the whole goal. That we're not there yet, but maybe we're chipping away at it.

The following quote sums up many of the common themes of the discussions around community kitchens as related to food banks. It outlines the humiliating experience that

food bank users are subjected to by participating in them, and how the model fails in creating enhanced individual and neighborhood capacity to deal with the ongoing problems of food insecurity, low self esteem, isolation, and lack of skills. It stresses that participation in community kitchens is a positive step in alleviating these conditions:

> My first experience with food banks was here at [school]. And on food bank days there was a long line of very unhappy looking people. It looked *humiliating*. Kids would walk past. . . and they would look and say "There's your mom!" And the other kids would laugh and then they would see their moms. You know, like it was just horrible. And I just hated the food bank. I thought: this is horrible, they just get their food, and they walk out the side. And it's not good quality. It was such a sad thing to see. I thought: what were people getting out of this, except some food, rather than being embarrassed, being reminded that they can't make it on Social Assistance. And you have to sign in, to prove you're poor now. Like it wasn't that way before, now you have to register that you are poor. And I just saw it as such a . . . And the people serving the food sort of got hardened to it. Their hearts were in the right place, but they got hardened to it. It was meeting a need and putting food in people's homes. But it did nothing for people. It did absolutely nothing for people. It didn't change any circumstances. It meant that they could eat for the next couple of days, they had some staples in the house, but they were right back there the next time, you know? With no feeling of accomplishment . . . in fact I would think that it would make you feel like "Here I am again. Nothing's any better this week than it was last time." That sort of feeling. So there's no sense of accomplishment, no sense that something is changing. This is something that happens to you rather than something you participate in. Community kitchens are definitely something that you can participate in. And something that you can disguise, either to your self, for your own self-esteem, or to others. "It's a cooking class, I'm learning to cook . . . And guess what, I get to take home the food that I cook." You know. It protects people's self esteem, but it also builds their self esteem. "I'm accomplishing something. I'm doing something proactive about the fact that my food bill doesn't go as far as I need it to." The other issue is, and I'm not sure about other community kitchens, but you have to pay to participate. Now, it's a small fee. But it's not a fee, it's to pay for the food. You're buying some of the basic ingredients. So there is the feeling again of using your money wisely. "My food budget can't stretch, I go to community kitchen. You should try it. You know, fifteen bucks will buy some meat. Everybody buys some stuff, we put it all together, and we come home with five meals." Like that certain sense. You are contributing financially. And something is not charity once you start contributing to it.

You start participating. And with food banks, that's a handout. People don't like handouts. They accept them, because they need them, but people don't really want them. I mean, I'm sure you can ask anybody in a food bank line "Do you want to be here?" No! And you know, that's not the issue. And then the social aspect. Stand in a food bank line, walk by a food bank line. They're not talking to each other. They may have come with a friend, and they're talking with their friend, but there's no social interaction going on. They may see the same faces over and over again, but people are embarrassed to be there, so there is no social interaction, there is no support network developing, or anything like that. So with community kitchens, there is that opportunity, you know, that opportunity to do it . . . And I think, you know, those are the issues. I mean, food banks meet a need, but I'll tell you, it's this big [gestures with thumb and forefinger, indicating a very small size]. The issue is this big [makes a large gesture with hands]. And Harvest knows that. But I wish they would push community kitchens . . .

The thought at the end of the quote that Winnipeg Harvest knows the issues are larger than they can address through their structure and promotion of food banks was echoed by a number of interviewees. Some joined the previous organizer in wanting Winnipeg Harvest to take a more active role in the promotion of community kitchens as a positive method in the continuum of measures towards achieving food security. Harvest is perceived as having ready access to the local media. One organizer, however, felt that as Harvest was funded by non-governmental sources it was able to criticize government policy towards low income people. She believed that the food bank's view towards community kitchens is that they sanction government being relieved of its responsibilities to provide people with an adequate income, and that food banks are suspicious of the fact that community kitchens are being funded indirectly by government through money allotted to social service agencies:

Food banks, my impression is that their philosophy is that governments should be taking care of people's basic needs, and we shouldn't have food banks. Food banks traditionally don't get funding from government sources

because of that philosophical point. I mean you do not want to get in bed with politicians, saying that, you know, this is a government funded program that is doling out food to people. And I actually really understand that philosophical viewpoint. Community kitchens are a lot softer. I mean, someone like myself, I get funded, I mean my salary is funded by the provincial government, and I'll help set up and facilitate community kitchens. And sometimes the food bank doesn't like that. They see that as being complicit in this whole sanctioning of government for, I mean if government was doing what government should do we shouldn't have community kitchens and we shouldn't have food banks. Right? Food banks have kept themselves typically away from government funding, whereas people that work with community kitchens necessarily haven't. So there is a bit of a philosophical difference there.

Many interviewees, however, felt that community kitchens were the roots of organizations that could change the failing of the broader system. Food banks stood in the way of this process:

I think two things: one, Winnipeg Harvest does very good work. I still think it's the charity model though. I think it's very demeaning, it's very individualized. It's like poverty is an individual thing. And I think it's demeaning, people have to stand there for stale bread and expired whatever else, so my liking of the community kitchen was in response to that. And also I thought if you truly want to build community people can't be isolated and think they are the only one that doesn't know how to budget their food money, that doesn't know how to cook, because it's not that. You know, again that's individualizing poverty. So I thought if women got together and, you know I believe everyone has got different gifts, so they can share their gifts collectively, and be a time for people just to talk about issues that are bothering them, just a time to let them know that it's not you, you know it's not, you're not the problem, the problem is the distribution of wealth in this country, that's the problem, you know. It's not that you don't know how to do something, that you're a horrible cook and you don't know how to buy food or anything like that.

4.8 Changes Over Time

The study also briefly touched upon what changes had been made to existing community kitchen programs since their inception. Surprising there were few changes identified in these particular programs. Those identified are as follows. One organization began cooking in a small "household" type kitchen within a family resource centre, and then moved to a larger commercial kitchen. This was built for the agency's catering cooperative which was an outgrowth of the community kitchen group. The difficulties with this move will be discussed in the following section. Other groups mentioned changes in cooking and planning times, frequency of meetings and cooking sessions, limits placed on the number of participants that could cook together at once, and adaptations in fundraising strategies. It was felt that the changes came about as improvements in the groups, and that change was most often due to identification of problems by group members, and solutions that they arrived at through discussion. One problem that was identified and changed by an organizer was related to the low literacy levels of some of the group's members:

> In the beginning it really was more that people would go through and look at recipe books, and pick out recipes, and we would make up grocery lists together, it really was a cooperative effort. What I found was that when I did that that people with low literacy skills stopped coming. And I realized, OK, this is not good, we are excluding an important segment of the community. What I did then, instead of, because the rule was if you weren't at the planning meeting you couldn't cook, because it was important to be part of the planning. And when I realized that people were dropping out because of literacy issues, what I would do instead was that I would lay out the cookbooks, but there wasn't the expectation that everyone would contribute. People would call out stuff, and there were lots of cookbooks with pictures in them, and you could start to see who has literacy issues and who doesn't. When someone would say "This looks good, lets cook this," without even looking at the recipe or knowing what it was. So we made sure there were lots of recipe books with lots of pictures and no one was excluded. Because initially the cookbooks I had

used were just sort of all text. And they weren't selected that way, it was just what was there. And then the expectation that everyone contribute. You know, either in sharing and writing out a recipe, and then the teacher in me, the naive teacher in me, saying this is a recipe that serves four, and we want to serve twenty five, let's figure this out! And then I realized "Whoa! What am I doing?" I think I realized that the first or second session. "This is really stupid!" [Laughs]. "This is really stupid of me." So I would do that behind the scenes. So when I started doing that behind the scenes a lot of that planning stuff sort of got shifted away. People were more interested in the cooking than in the sitting and planning. So it was a battle to get people to come and cook. Or it was a battle to get people to come to the planning session, because the rule was that if you didn't come to the planning session then you couldn't cook. And we were starting to lose some people because of that. And then eventually we got to the point where we said, well let's just post a menu. And whoever comes, wonderful. And let's post a menu, saying this is what we are cooking on so and so days, sign up. You didn't have to come to the planning meeting anymore. Because we were scaring people. Particularly with people with low literacy skills, anytime there is a *chance* that they might be asked to read something, they are not going to take that risk, it's just not worth it. So we were just saying to people, and people I knew had literacy issues "You know what, on Tuesday we are cooking this, this, and this. Do you want to join? Yeah? OK, well this is the sign in, just sign here." You know? And that's how we got around that.

This method of dealing with the problem has since been abandoned and this organization's group once again engages in collective planning sessions.

Generally the more established the group, the more changes they reported. The fact that the community kitchen movement in Winnipeg is a relatively new phenomenon may be a large part of the reason that many groups could not identify major changes to the programs. It may be that in time each group will go through its own growing pains and changes.

4.8.0 Plans For the Future

Interviewees identified a wide range of plans for the future of their community kitchen groups, from immediate practical changes (such as ways to make their own group more effective, or their kitchen a better place to work in), to long range planning and envisioning of community kitchens to be only one part of an integrated neighborhood food security strategy.

Several organizers and facilitators mentioned that their groups were in need of money so that they could buy more kitchen equipment, or cook with meat more often, and planned to pursue additional or more secure funding sources. Others mentioned plans to promote the existence of their kitchen more effectively to ensure that their groups would be more well attended on a regular basis. One organizer spoke of plans for their organization's particular group to become involved in providing food for children at the school in which the group was located:

> I guess one of the things that this group now was doing, starting to look at is how they can be more helpful within the broader confines of the community and within the school. And there was some talk of helping out in terms of providing extra food, breakfasts, light snacks, that sort of thing. Now whether or not that will materialize remains to be seen. That's something that we're sort of looking at . . . We're looking at baking muffins for kids who perhaps may be hungry, or don't have, you know, adequate lunches, that sort of thing.

Another spoke of the possibility of opening up a community restaurant in the family resource centre in which they worked as a natural outgrowth of their community kitchen program:

> Like if we think of something like another catering kind of idea, if people get involved in more entrepreneur training and want to start, we've talked about opening up a restaurant in the basement and having people cook at lunch hours for the restaurant at lunch for the teachers and people in the

community. Whether that will all come to fruition or whether we're just bandying about ideas about what would be neat, you know, we don't have a real concrete plan.

Three other organizers spoke of plans for starting up community gardens in which the ingredients for their community kitchen's cooking sessions could be grown. The idea of a community garden is very complementary to the ideals of the community kitchen model, with participants being involved in the planning and implementation of all stages of a collective community response to meeting food security needs. Participants would benefit from all of the potential skill and capacity building that can take place along the way. One organizer tells of their unfulfilled plans for a community based food strategy:

> A community garden . . . I really thought that this was part and partner. That we would take the empty lots in the community, and plant vegetable gardens. That we would can tomatoes to be used in community kitchen. That there would be that sort of thing, develop a community larder, in effect, of canned vegetables, not frozen, necessarily, but we could freeze them. Just jars and jars of vegetables and fruits and whatever that we grew from our garden, and then using those as the staples in our community kitchen. You know, making big jars of tomato sauce and ketchup, and finding ways to make our own mustard. And just going nuts, and really taking an inner city community and bringing them back to the earth, like farming communities. And really becoming self-sustaining in a sense. I mean, we wouldn't be raising cattle in our backyard, but do you know what I mean? Just expanding it truly to become self sufficient, and then· encouraging people to then have a community garden - people would be planting gardens in their own back yard. And it just never happened. And I mean, to me, the community kitchen, that was a start, and we were going to have a community garden come spring, and we would be canning by the fall . . .

Many respondents spoke of the need for the community kitchen movement to expand. They saw the model of community kitchen groups as effective tools in strengthening communities and preparing them for greater participation in defining their

own destinies. Some organizers who were involved with groups that were facilitated by professionals mentioned the desire to give the position of facilitator to an emerging leader in the group once one was identified, and also to expand the movement:

> I would like to see the community kitchen work without a facilitator, like with one of the participants facilitating, or with them rotating that piece. And we are hoping to recruit more volunteers to work as community kitchen facilitators. And that way we could have the kitchen running more than one day a week, and maybe possibly move this community kitchen out to one of the local churches. This group, group number one. And at a satellite kitchen. They would still be from us and still pick their food up here, unless the church was willing to offer support that way. But they would cook at another location and we would bring another group down. And maybe after six months or a year move them out to another location. You know? And we're looking at doing this over a long period of time, like we're not looking at moving this group before six months to a year.

> I think the reality is that it will probably be a year before we get it to where we want it to be. Until we have a cohesive group, or somebody who kind of emerges as a leader, and have them take on the group, and maybe move out into the community.

An organizer and facilitator of community kitchens who is also involved in planning and delivering pre-natal programs saw that there was a natural link between the two programs, and envisioned pre-natal initiatives expanding to include community kitchen components:

> I look at what's going on with the [pre-natal program] . . . We get together once every two weeks to have an informal pre-natal drop in for low income mothers to be who often don't have partners and often have *big* food security issues, which are of course magnified because they're pregnant. And we give out food, you know, we give out twelve litres of milk every two weeks, and usually canned beans or peanut butter. And we also do a snack each session. Well the snack, at most of the sites, has developed into a meal, and it's also evolved to the point where the women want to come and help prepare the snack. They want to learn how to cook whatever it is that we are doing, they're saying they want to learn how to do that. The logical next step would be to actually have a community kitchen evolve out of that. The problem we face is, of course, resources,

physical space, because we often have up to eighteen women at a site. And a true community kitchen, as opposed to a congregate meal program, where women are actually, or whoever, I keep talking about women, are actually taking food home with them. As you know, that's a pretty big project, and the [pre-natal program], I mean we are barely holding ourselves together with what we've got. But the need and the desire of the participants is really there, and that would be a really logical step. And also, a lot of teaching around pre-natal happens in those food preparation sessions, it's a real medium for getting whatever nutrition messages we want to get out.

It is interesting to note that most of the interviewees who discussed the need for an expansion of community kitchen programs saw this expansion in the context of retaining links to either established community agencies, schools, or churches. The two who did not see it confined to existing institutions saw benefits in the movement's expansion being organized in a grassroots fashion, with people within neighborhoods adopting the model for use within their own homes, with groups that they themselves had organized. One of these organizers felt that any further development of community kitchens within organizations should take care to retain the size and conditions of the kitchens, and the recipes chosen, to be able to be replicated by groups of people in their homes in their neighborhoods. They felt that both the Social Assistance program and the Winnipeg Harvest food bank should support any grassroots community kitchen initiatives started by people in their neighborhoods:

> I do think that Social Assistance needs to be more supportive of community kitchens, encouraging people to use community kitchens, and providing some sort of incentive. I don't know what that incentive could be, but if a woman says "Me and five of my friends want to start cooking together on a regular basis", then somehow they support that, or Harvest support that, and understand that, and say "Yes, just five women are doing that in their kitchen, yes, we'll help you." And encouraging those sort of things. I don't think we should let it stay with organizations. I think we need to move it away from organizations, and make this sort of a grassroots thing, people doing it in their home. And doing informal

community kitchens of three or four women . . . I mean, community development starts with some sort of catalyst, but it needs to go right back into the homes, you can't just continue to be at the [family resource centre], it has to happen back in people's homes. So we need to see that happen. So like I said, if a group of three women say they want to cook together one day a week, then Harvest should be saying "I'm there for you. We'll drop off this food at your house to help you do that." You know? So that's the next step . . . Because we need to encourage it, Harvest needs to encourage it. This is a survival skill. This is something we should be helping people to do. This is going to strengthen communities, and women. And you know, like, and families.

I agree that the future of community kitchens, if they are to be a truly widespread tool of community development and change, cannot be tied to organizations and the bureaucracy and control that they exert. Kitchens must begin in the homes of people within the context of their neighbourhoods and bring people together to work, bond, and become stronger to engage in the many challenges that they face as a community. In this way, the future of community kitchens lies in their origins, in the times when neighborhoods come together in the face of adversity to cook, plan, and work cooperatively.

4.9 Drawbacks and Difficulties With Community Kitchens

The interviewees, while mainly focusing on the goals, benefits, and possibilities of community kitchen groups, also identified a number of problems in both the theory and practice of the community kitchen model. These drawbacks and difficulties included problems around recruitment and formation of a cohesive group. Problems were identified in turning control of the group over to the group's members. Difficulties regarding group facilitation were raised, as were difficulties with community kitchen groups being based in social service agencies.

Some of the organizers had expected community kitchens to be a kind of magical link between what they have identified as "dysfunctional" families or individuals in the community and the "helping networks" of the community, both formal and informal. This expectation was often disappointed:

> . . . There was at least ten families that we identified, and I guess it was our hope that there would be some way of connecting these families who are pretty dysfunctional in some ways with a community support resource that would be helpful to them. And as it turned out, there was essentially one family that . . . actually sort of became involved. Now part of that has to do not only with the stigmatization but also with the, I guess the community dynamics that happen . . . What we found out is the people who we thought might really benefit and should be there, they were hard to connect. And they didn't want to be stigmatized, so as it turned out they weren't really prepared to buy into it.

> . . . Working with some people, too, that could really benefit, but don't want to come out. One of the groups that we have the hardest time convincing, like in the food bank, is you know, you get young single moms, teenagers, and they live off Coca-Cola. And I mean they just don't want to learn. Or they don't see the value in it. So you cannot force people to go and do that. You just hold out the option. And we thought that the idea of saying well, you are going to get some food to take home . . . And we thought that would be an enticement. But, no. So I mean you can't just go out and say "Look, we've got this wonderful idea!" [Laughs]. You know, come on! And sometimes the people that you think will *never* show up,

show up, so it's a really sort of a lesson in trying to understand human nature as well.

One organizer identified a problem that arose over the course of their group's existence. They were cooking too much food in one day and everyone involved was getting tired of the pace. However, they still wanted to prepare the equivalent amount of food each week. The group decided to start meeting twice a week for cooking sessions rather than fitting all of the cooking into one day. The organizer felt that this had a negative impact on the cohesion of the group:

> Splitting it up did two things: it reduced the workload. It also made the groups less cohesive because then they cooked two times during the week. "I can come Tuesday, but I can't come Thursday." So it was really tough to build a cohort to carry on, and I think that's why it was difficult to keep groups growing and staying together as a group. Because when you had new people coming in, the group dynamics would constantly adjust and that was really difficult to deal with. And the successful models were where people had something in common *before*, and got together and decided that, you know they were friends, and they said "Well, let's cook together", and then they stayed together, and that was the most successful. And that is what I was trying to strive for. And it just wasn't possible . . . it still meets the food security needs, but it started to erode that support network, you know, building that support network within the community, sharing of information, those sort of things are not as easy as if you can get a core group and have them stick together, find some way to do that. And that's how you build those other supports. So in the beginning we had that, and when we split up into two sessions people were initially coming to two sessions. But it is a lot to ask of people, two days a week of commitment, that's a lot. So it eroded some of the really important parts of the program. I think, looking back, I think what we should have done is to have found a way to still cook on one day. Now whether you got a small group to pre-cook some stuff, or whether . . . There is probably another way to look at the problem than how we did. We could have kept cohort groups, and just, this is the Tuesday cooking group. I think it would have been happier. But it just wasn't possible.

The importance of group cohesion was identified by other interviewees as well. Many felt

that the success or failure of groups forming and bonding depended on the mix of personalities of their members. Many groups were composed of a particular group of people who established themselves as "regulars." However, there was fluctuating membership as well as uneven attendance within the groups. The fact that the groups were sponsored by community social service agencies means that they are open to all community members, and new people are in theory welcome. In practice, however, it can be hard for a new individual to blend into an established group, and this may be exacerbated by issues of race and culture. As one organizer explains:

> It was always sort of "Who are the other people?", you know? . . . So chemistry is really a crucial thing. We've tried to bring in new people, where they've come out on several occasions, either to a planning meeting or just to a cooking meeting, and sometimes that's very, very difficult. Most of the members who are involved with this group, they've lived in the community for years. . . Some of the newer members who have been either native or new immigrant families, the integration has been difficult . . . it's more the sense of, you know, "do I belong?" . . . And for any new family, well for a lot of individuals who have just moved into the community, it's hard to get connected unless they really make an effort. . . So that's been a struggle, I think.

Another organizer noted that due to the social nature of the cooking groups, and people's feelings of both shyness and isolation, they often declined the chance to participate. Community kitchen programs must work against people's perception that it is "easier" to go to a food bank than cook together as a group:

> I guess the problem is, people just aren't used to working together anymore, like everyone's just used to individual . . . and let's face it, it's easier for you to go and stand in line and get a bag of groceries than to actually have to show up, and stay somewhere for two hours, and work cooperatively with people you don't really know for what you get . . . So I think that has been one of the big, big problems, is getting people to realize yeah, it may take more work to have to show up for two hours and cooperate with people, but in the long run it's beneficial. So I think in that

aspect its been really, really quite a struggle . . .

Another explained that the personal situations of people living in poverty often prohibits any sort of regular attendance in the groups. While there are many benefits to people participating in community kitchens, the concept does not always work well in practice:

> I think it's basically up to the will of the individuals, like when you go to workshops and you hear people talk about kitchens, it sounds so wonderful, but when you actually try to do one it's totally different. You know, the difference between theory and practice. And food is not always high on people's agendas. You know, there are other things that get in the way. We do cooking classes at the [family resource centre]. And we can't get the women to come out to actually do a kitchen. I mean the idea of saying "OK, we're giving you the option of actually spending a day together, or part of a day to cook a bunch of meals and freeze [them]." And they like the idea, and they would like to do it. But I mean they've got courses they have to attend, or they've got things to attend with their children, and you know all kinds of personal problems that may come up. So while they may like the idea, and want to participate, they just don't have the time to go and do that . . . But the thing is it's basically people's willingness and people's time. And it is my understanding that a lot of kitchens don't survive very long. They have to get new blood, they have to be re-invented and re-thought. It depends on the mix, and it depends on the economic situation. You know, I mean if people really are in need then they'll be more inclined to go and do this. Others aren't. So that's what I guess I would say is a major obstacle. Because you would think "Gee, people would love the concept of a kitchen!" You know. It's a great way to save money. But there aren't that many people that are actually involved in the cooking of the kitchen.

Besides the problems in involving members of the communities in community kitchens, organizers also spoke at length of the difficulties behind trying to turn the leadership of the groups completely over to facilitators from the community and to group members.

> . . . We thought if we'd have a group that was fairly cohesive, and worked together well, that we could eventually get them to work on their own, and that they could take turns handling the different functions of planning, and

shopping, and so on. And we found that that didn't work. And that's what we hoped would happen. You know, that there would be leaders that would emerge from the group, so we wouldn't have to be in that role, and they would just do it themselves. And that has been our biggest disappointment, because that has never happened. They just don't like taking orders from each other. They don't mind if the instructor comes out, and she says "Oh, you need this, you need that." That's fine. But as soon as they're left to themselves, even though we designate one person in charge that time, and then change it, for the next month, they don't like it. I've never really, you know, really assessed that, or really done a study as to why, they just don't . . . But then maybe I wasn't being realistic, when I was thinking of that. But we always hope, because we're working within the community, we always hope that we can identify leaders, you know we're always looking for that. But so far none have been forthcoming. But you know maybe it will still happen, I don't know.

Others spoke of the difficulties of facilitating a group of this sort, and of the level of and

sorts of skills demanded:

> Sometimes it was difficult, because of the group dynamics. We had some horrible kitchens because of the dynamics. And teaching leaders how to lead in ways that were sensitive to the followers . . . you'd have very strong insecure women who would voice their opinion when people, and it was tough to reach a consensus with them, because their way was the right way. So, I mean, particularly with something as personal as family preferences when cooking, it is really difficult to reach a consensus . . . And just keeping in mind that people often won't speak up if they don't like something, just as much as people won't speak up if they do like something. So it was those communication skills and those mediation . . . sometimes it was very frustrating.

> . . . The main problem with community kitchens always is that the people stuff is so hard, and it requires an immense amount of skill to be able to facilitate out all of the different needs and wants and likes and dislikes and personality traits, and that you lose a lot of people before you get a mix of people that, that are OK together, and should people have to be OK together to get, to you know, to pay five bucks and cook their food? I don't think so, and there needs to be, we weren't proactive enough in terms of training. Like, you almost need the person who facilitates the community kitchen to have - ridiculous amounts of training - in terms of problem solving skills, and mediation skills, and conflict resolution skills, and all those things, and yet to pay them . . . I mean they're not paid a great amount of money, they're not working a great amount of hours,

necessarily, and it's a huge investment in a position that unfortunately isn't like an administrative position, right, all those courses cost so much money, so that there is that kind of weird dichotomy around it, because I think the personality stuff is the hardest, and is the weakness, I think, for lots of groups, is that they don't quite know how to deal with all the personality stuff . . .

I think you need someone who knows what they are doing in that facilitator role. So I think it's important to have good supports in the community for training people. And like anything, if it doesn't work well, it gives whatever the initiative is a bad name. So if people had a bad experience at it, they're going to go and tell everybody that community kitchens suck, right? . . . When I say facilitator, that's of course different than having, you know, the controlling person that says "We're going to do it my way." That's a style of leadership that doesn't work with community kitchens. But also you can't just say "Oh yeah, you five women or men or whoever go off into the kitchen and do your community kitchen thing, you can have Tuesday afternoons." Because that tends to fall apart as well. So you need really strong leadership and facilitation of it.

Interviewees spoke of both the need for and the difficulties involved in community members facilitating the community kitchen groups. One organizer identified the reason why they felt that these difficulties arose in working with this particular population:

The other thing that was a big learning experience in community kitchen that I thought was really important is learning to work with others. Women tend to be isolated, you know people in the community are isolated from each other. Where do you learn those skills? In work, school. I mean we get socialized into working with groups. But if you are not in those environments where would you learn those skills? So there was a lot of fights. A lot of times you'd need mediation between women. Try to teach them to work together.

The same organizer spoke of difficulties encountered with overseeing a group facilitator that had emerged as a leader from the group:

S. . . was a good example. Came into the kitchen a strong woman, who needed encouragement. And when she got encouragement it was sort of like a bull in a china shop was how she ran things. She started out as a participant in community kitchen. And it took a great deal of a time and

effort and constant reminders to say "You know what? This is a group of people cooking together. Your opinion counts, but so does hers." Sometimes it involved me directing more than I wanted to. One thing is that community kitchen never became as independent as I had hoped it would. The group seemed to need that sort of constant monitoring, making sure that people aren't sort of taking over a group and preventing . . . and a lot of it just comes as you feel good about yourself you take more control. So in a sense it was good. But there were people who were not at that stage yet, who were getting sort of bowled over, and pushed aside in a sense who just stopped coming.

One organizer was philosophical about their experience in working with community members in trying to develop leadership skills and moving into positions of power:

I guess also a lesson learned is, working with people in the community, sometimes in your leadership building you could see in them that they have the ability, but sometimes they're not ready yet, to be where you see they could be. And sometimes in the enthusiasm you could encourage people to take on responsibility that they're not ready for. So I think that's something that people really have to be careful about, is who they encourage to take leadership roles. You don't want to set people up to fail or feel bad about themselves because it didn't work out, you know? So that's been a real good lesson learned, is not trying to push people beyond where they're at. You know, just respect where they're at and however long, like, you may see they have the abilities but it may take them two or three years to actually realize it. So it's just being patient, 'til you get to where you see they could be. So that's been a real lesson learned.

.

As previously discussed, there was a community kitchen group that moved to a new large commercial kitchen that had been built for it. In hindsight, the organizer involved spoke of the drawbacks. She felt that this experience prevented the model from being identified as something transferable to people's homes:

If you could see right at the beginning, what the ideal was, and even though we modified it and changed it, what the ideal was, and then by the time that I left I didn't feel that it was operating quite the same way, but it's just out of survival and necessity. I think in a way the commercial kitchen took away from some of that . . . Before we were cooking in somebody's home, in a sense, you know? It was, here we are, using stuff that you could find in

anybody's home, and figuring out how we were going to get these things in the oven. It was more likely that someone may say "Me and my friend can do this." You know what I mean? And that happened to some degree. Where someone would say "You know what? Me and so and so got together and we baked a whole bunch of pies." That's exactly what community kitchen is about, you're sharing resources. When we moved down to the commercial kitchen it was *wonderful* in terms of space, and ovens, and we were cooking giant things of stew on one element and that sort of thing. So it was wonderful in that respect. But it took away, I think, the possibilities. The idea of transferring this to someone's home . . . It institutionalized it. But it was necessary, for health reasons, for convenience. I mean, we had some pretty frustrating times trying to cook on a regular kitchen stove. But yeah, it really institutionalized it. And how do people transfer that to their homes? We've got giant gas ovens, and mega pots, and all this latest equipment. How do you transfer that back to home? You don't. And I think there needs to be a balance. I mean, if I'm going to set up any more community kitchens somewhere I'm going to say OK, we're going to do community kitchen but we're going to have five stoves, five household stoves, instead of one big commercial stove. And when I say five, I'm exaggerating, I'm just picking a number out of a hat, but use household stuff. We're not going to use a giant restaurant sized cauldron . . . Because we took away an element that this is a group of women getting together, cooking together sort of thing.

One organizer mentioned the dangers of the community kitchens movement becoming seen by governments as a solution to the problems of poverty. She worried that this perspective would allow the various levels of government to abandon their responsibilities to ensure that citizens of this country receive an adequate income, food, and other social services:

The only danger, and it's a double-edged sword, I'm sure you have heard this, and you would articulate this as well, is you don't want community kitchens to become like these motherhood wonderful answers to social problems that should be taken care of by government.

As previously mentioned, however, most interviewees expressed the view that community kitchens, rather than being an excuse for various levels of government to abdicate their

responsibilities, were the roots of community based organizations that will work to change the system.

:

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.0 Summary

The amount of information contained in the interviews done for this study is enormous and summarizing the findings concisely is difficult. Some of the more dominant themes that appeared throughout the course of the study were:

1) Community kitchens operate *as programs within existing social service or other public organizations* such as neighbourhood resource centres, schools, and churches. Their operation is *funded mainly through a combination of participant fees, grants from their sponsoring organizations, food donations from the Winnipeg Harvest food bank, and some individual fundraising efforts* on the part of the kitchens.

2) The study's respondents identified the *goals of community kitchens* to be wide-ranging, including *teaching nutrition and safe food handling practices, budgeting, cooking and group work skills, linking community members to "helping networks", and building capacity within the membership for participation in community development and social action.*

3) *Skill building* takes place in community kitchens in areas such as cooking, budgeting, nutrition, food safety, and group work. Much of the *learning and transfer of skills* happens laterally within the group. Members learn from one another, and in some cases *mentoring takes place between older and younger participants.*

4) Through membership in a community kitchen group people are able to *access different forms of supports*. These include *tangible forms of support* such as food to take home to their families and savings on food bills, *emotional support* from friendships formed within the group, and *informational support* when knowledge is shared amongst group members around issues ranging from food to parenting to client's rights and advocacy.

5) Community kitchens are places through which *linkages are formed between participants and formal "helping networks," between participants and individual professionals involved with the kitchen groups, between the kitchen's sponsoring agency and other organizations, and between participants and employment.*

6) Interviewees felt that community kitchens for the most part *operated democratically*, and that rules, decisions, and task delegation happened as a result of *collective decision making within the group.*

7) Community kitchens are vehicles through which the *individual self esteem and empowerment of participants* is built. They are also vehicles through which *capacity is built for community development and empowerment.*

8) Community kitchens are *different from food banks* in that they are *not seen as demeaning*, and they *offer the participants choice and control* in food selection and quality, frequency of attendance, and management of the program. They also were

identified as *tools for the development of both the individual participant and their community*.

9) As they mature, *community kitchens change to better suit the needs of their members*. These changes have included changing meeting times, frequency of meetings, locations, and fundraising strategies.

10)*Plans for the future of community kitchen groups include practical changes to make the groups more effective*. They will be feeding people other than members and their families (either as an income generator or a philanthropic gesture), developing and linking with community gardens, and expanding the community kitchen movement in general, especially to independent groups in people's homes.

11)*Drawbacks and difficulties with community kitchen groups* include problems around recruitment and retention of group members, problems in facilitating groups and turning control of the groups over to members, and philosophical problems around continuing to link with and house groups in social service agencies.

The study found that participants' involvement in community kitchens has led to their linking with the community and its formal and informal support networks. In the community kitchen groups, participants have developed skills and self esteem, and built supportive friendships that extend outside of the group. They have also become involved in other programs run by the community kitchen's sponsoring agency, and by other

community organizations. Community kitchens have been identified as places where people first begin working together in the community, with members often going on to become involved in additional neighbourhood organizations. In these ways, community kitchens strengthen both individuals and the community as a whole.

5.1 Limitations of the Research

The findings of this study describe the experiences of thirteen people working in and with community kitchen groups. The findings cannot be widely generalized to the larger population, but may be applied to similar populations engaged in similar activities in other communities. One of the major limitations of the study is that there is an unequal representation in the findings of the perspectives of participants in community kitchen programs, and of community kitchen organizers. The study planned to interview an equal number of participants or facilitators, and organizers. Some of the organizers that were interviewed also facilitated community kitchen groups, at least occasionally. Only five of the thirteen people interviewed, however, were not organizers. The sample is therefore weighted towards the opinions of professionals. This happened for a number of reasons. To begin with, I contacted the organizers first in soliciting volunteers for the study. This was done through letters of introduction, as their names were available through the informal community kitchens network in the city, and personal contacts. Many organizers responded shortly after this and agreed to be interviewed. Included in the letter was a flier for them to post or pass around in their community kitchen group that solicited facilitators and participants to be interviewed. This request was reiterated in conversation. Although I took these initial steps, I had no response from either facilitators or participants. I realized that involving this group would not be as easy as I had imagined. With the help of personal contacts, I was able to interview three facilitators, and due to time spent with a community kitchen group helping them clean up at the end of one of their cooking sessions I was able to do a joint interview with two

participants. Accessing this population was probably more difficult because of its lower profile in the "community kitchen network" than the organizers. The fact that I had fewer personal contacts with them than with organizers, the probability that taking the initiative to contact some person doing a study was intimidating, and the possibility that this population is busy with their own day-to-day struggles meant that they may not see an inherent value in coming forth for an interview about an activity that they participate in their personal lives. It is possible that participants feel that there is a negative stigma attached to being a member of a community kitchen group, as this identifies one as a "poor person."

I found that the interviews that I conducted with the "non-professionals" were of a much shorter duration, and contained far fewer "quotable" passages than the interviews with the professionals. While I had a general set of topics to cover in the interviews, their content and length was very much determined by the interviewees. The professionals generally spoke at length, and in depth. This likely had to do with the fact that professionals were more comfortable in a situation where an interview is being conducted, are more used to having their opinions solicited, and have a broader understanding of the philosophical issues and potentials of community kitchens than those who are involved at the participant level.

For these reasons, the study is more representative of the experiences and views of organizers regarding community kitchens than it is a balanced mix of the two groups viewpoints. However, the inclusion of these people's views is useful as it could give other professionals (social workers included) useful perspectives in working in low income inner–city neighbourhoods. The data that comes from the professionals who

have generally been linked to the community kitchens over the life course of the groups, represents somewhat of a continuity over time, providing information about the ebb and flow of community kitchens, and all of the challenges, opportunities, and rewards that have occurred over time. Therefore, the views and experiences of the professionals are valuable even though the information coming from them about the members of the community kitchen groups has to be cautiously interpreted as it is second hand.

Due to the limited representation of participants in the sample, a comparison between the viewpoints of the organizers, facilitators, and participants was not attempted. Such an analysis could prove interesting if there was a more evenly balanced sample.

Finally, another limitation of the research is that twelve of the thirteen interviews were with women. This unequal representation between the sexes mirrors the composition of the larger population that is involved with community kitchen groups, and therefore is more appropriate to the study than an attempt to achieve gender parity.

5.2 Areas For Further Study

Some questions were raised over the course of the study, but due to the goals, design, and limitations of this particular research could not be answered. These may be areas for further research:

1) What are the barriers to community kitchen participants being able to run their own groups successfully, independent of paid professional workers? (Is the perception of the ineffective functioning of these groups merely that of the professionals?)

2) Are the people involved with community kitchen groups people who are already very resourceful and experienced when it comes to budgeting, cooking, linking with resources, and joining groups? How does this group compare in these skill areas to people not involved in community kitchen groups?

3) What are the barriers to people participating in community kitchens? What groups of people does the community kitchen not involve or attract?

4) Are community kitchens in fact providing participants with a reasonable measure of food security? Outcome measurements need to be developed.

5) Do community kitchens in fact instill in participants a belief in collective solutions to problems faced in their neighbourhoods and larger systemic problems?

5.3 Conclusion

The study examined the origins, structure, and goals of local community kitchens. It identified the needs that the groups are meeting for their members and host communities according to people who work in and around them. It examined the difficulties and drawbacks of community kitchen operations and philosophy, and looked at their potential for community building and transformation.

In particular, it explored the role that community kitchens played in linking participants to each other and to other informal and formal resources in the community in which they operate. It also explored the building and linking functions that community kitchen groups play within and between sponsoring organizations and other neighbourhood organizations. The study also examined community kitchens as alternatives to food banks, and the differences between the two models. A brief synopsis of the findings can be found in the "Summary" section of the study.

In beginning the study, the author had a preconceived notion that community kitchens' major function was that they were vehicles through which to increase families' food security. This had developed as a result of the community kitchen model being touted as an alternative to the food bank model The linking of the two models occurred in discussions with people at conferences on community kitchens, in manuals describing how to start community kitchens, and in a preliminary literature review of articles on the subject.

This preconceived notion did not correspond with the data collected for the purposes of this study. The nature of the study's design, with its open ended question

interviews and non directive interviewing approach, helped to reveal that increased food security was not one of the major benefits of community kitchens, according to the organizers, facilitators, and participants interviewed.

That community kitchens as they generally operate could provide significantly increased food security to individuals, families, or the community as a whole is unlikely. However, groups that cook together often (for example, twice a week) move closer to helping to achieve food security.

While recognizing that community kitchens play a role in helping to provide people with cheap food, nutritional information, and skills in cooking and budgeting, the study focussed on exploring the linkages that community kitchens facilitated that promote personal and community empowerment. It was discovered that these links included the forming of relationships between participants and both formal and informal helping networks that exist within the communities in which the community kitchens operate. These included the forming of supportive relationships between participants and between participants and people and programs from the sponsoring organizations in which the kitchens are housed. They were also found to be a stepping stone in linking participants to paid employment, either indirectly through contacts and experience gained by cooking in the groups, or directly through as in one case a permanent catering cooperative, and in another, through cooking for a local community economic development initiative. According to interviewees, participation in the community kitchen groups promotes both personal and community empowerment.

An unexpected and interesting finding was that community kitchen organizers identified community kitchens as a tool through which to bring targeted individuals and

families into contact with formal and informal support networks. The non threatening and non stigmatizing nature of the groups was seen as a "soft link" into other contacts and services which could support and assist people. However, it was noted that the people who are seen as being most in need of these supports by the organizers were also the least likely to participate.

Also interesting was the fact that many organizers who are employed by social service agencies felt that community kitchens provided a place in which to form relationships with participants that were different from the usual "professional" and "client" relationships that they often formed with community members. They felt that being involved in an activity such as cooking enabled participants to see them in a way beyond their usual role as a "professional", and they were able to form a more informal and mutually beneficial type of relationship.

The non threatening atmosphere of the groups provided an optimal teaching and learning environment for participants. Such learning often took place laterally between group members through both discussions and example, and ranged from simple math skills used in recipes, nutritional, budgeting and cooking information, to discussions around parenting issues and advice in navigating though and around the child welfare, legal, and social assistance systems. The potential of this environment has not yet been fully appreciated or utilized by community kitchen organizers, facilitators, and participants.

The most common drawbacks of the community kitchen groups identified by the interviewees included maintaining attendance and group cohesion, the inter-personal disagreements which often arise within the groups, and the difficulties in facilitation and

handing over power to the group. The researcher feels that some of these difficulties stem from the existence of the kitchen groups within sponsoring organizations. In these forums, the group's membership must remain open to all. This prevents the formation of cohesive groups as internal cliques invariably develop and impair group functioning. Groups would perhaps function more effectively in community members' homes, where such cliques and closed membership may help in retaining group cohesion. If a truly widespread and effective community kitchen movement is to develop, it must do so outside of the confines of the social service organizations. By having kitchens exclusively linked to them, the growth of the movement is limited due to artificial constraints imposed (although unwittingly) by the sponsoring organizations such as access to space, funding, the control of the groups by organizers and facilitators (however benevolent!), and the sense that in order to operate a community kitchen one needs a sponsoring organization. It must be noted, however, that both the researcher and interviewees are aware of the many benefits that do come to participants through contacts and linkages formed with people, programs, and employment as a result of community kitchens operating within various neighbourhood organizations. One possible permutation of the existing model may be for the social service organizations to act as a resource and support for the development of a network of home-based community kitchens, helping to start up, promote, sustain, and link a grassroots community kitchen movement.

In closing, community kitchens are not a substitute for good social policy by governments. They cannot replace cuts made to Social Assistance or Employment Insurance rates and eligibility criteria, a raising of the minimum wage, or a government strategy of working towards full employment. It should be recognized that the strengths

of community kitchens lie in creating a process of personal and community empowerment. They should not be viewed as an end in themselves. Their role in this process has its limitations, as is discussed in the study. However. community kitchens are a small but valuable tool in building and strengthening communities, and should be promoted as such.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achterberg, C. (1988). "Qualitative Methods in Nutrition Education Evaluation Research." Journal of Nutrition Education, 20 (5), 244-250.

Alinsky, S. (1972). Rules For Radicals. Random House, New York, NY., U.S.A.

Andreas, C. (1989). "People's Kitchen's and Radical Organizing in Lima, Peru." Monthly Review, 41 (6), 12-21.

B.C. Health Research Foundation (1993). Community Kitchens: A Health Program to Improve the Food Security of Low - income Families - Final Evaluation Report. Kamloops Foodshare, Kamloops, B.C., Canada.

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. (1976). Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY., U.S.A.

Campbell, C. (1991a). "Food Insecurity: A Nutritional Outcome or a Predictor Variable?" Journal of Nutrition, 121 (3), 408-15.

Campbell, C. (1991b). "Food Insecurity From the Consumer's Perspective: An Agenda for the 1990's." Journal of the Canadian Dietetic Association, 52 (2), 83-88.

Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. (1995). Building Collective Kitchens in New Brunswick: A User's Guide. Health Canada, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Cook, T., & Reichart, C. (1979). Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA., U.S.A.

Crawford, S., & Kalina, L. (1997). "Building Health Security Through Health Promotion: Community Kitchens." Journal of the Canadian Dietetic Association, 58 (4), 197-201.

Davis, B. (1992). The Power of Food. Communique, 16, (1), p.10.

Finch, J. (1996). Andrews Street Family Centre Community Kitchen Manual, Unpublished booklet, Winnipeg, MB., Canada.

Flandez, O. (1988). Women's Income Generating Co-Operatives in Chile and Their Role in Building Consciousness and Political Participation. Faculty of Social Work, Master of Social Work Thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB., Canada.

Food Network of Inter Agency Group (1988). The Report of the November, 1988 Hunger Survey. Winnipeg, MB., Canada.

Forum Directors Group. (1993). "Keynote Paper" in The National Forum on Family Insecurity (eds.) Family Security in Insecure Times, The National Forum on Family Security, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Continuum Publishers, New York, NY., U.S.A.

Friedmann, J. (1992). Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development. Blackwell, Cambridge, MA., U.S.A.

Gadd, J. (1996, November 13). "Sharing Food Helps People Overcome Their Isolation", Globe and Mail, pp.A1, A8.

Guest, D. (1985). The Emergence of Social Security in Canada. UBC Press, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

Glasser, I. (1988). More Than Bread: Ethnography of a Soup Kitchen. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, AL., U.S.A.

Glasser, I., & Suroviak, J. (1988). "Social Group Work in a Soup Kitchen: Mobilizing the Strengths of Guests.", Social Work With Groups, 11 (4), p.95-109.

Human Resource Development Canada (1994). Agenda: Jobs and Growth: Improving Social Security in Canada. Ministry of Supply and Services, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Human Resources Development Canada (1997). World Wide Web Page [On-line]. Available: www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrdc/ei/insuran/in2006_e.html.

Kalina, L. (1993a). Building Food Security in Canada: A Community Guide for Action on Hunger. Kamloops Foodshare. Kamloops, B.C., Canada.

Kalina, L. (1993b). "Food For Thought: Community Kitchens." Perception, 17 (2), p.12-13.

Knafl, K., & Howard, M. (1984). "Interpreting and Reporting Qualitative Research." Research in Nursing and Health, 7, p. 17-24.

Leaman, M., & Harrison, K. (1996). "Community Development: An Historical Perspective for Dietitians and Community Nutritionists." Journal of the Canadian Dietetic Association, 57 (4), p.133-136.

Minkler, M. (1990). "Improving Health Through Community Organization." In Glanz, K., Lewis, F., & Rimer, B., (eds.), Health Behaviour and Health Education: Theory, Research, and Practice, Jossey - Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA., U.S.A.

Monette, D., Sullivan, T., & DeJong, C. (1994). Applied Social Research: Tool For the Human Services. Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Fort Worth, TX., U.S.A.

Muller, J. (1987). "The Soup Kitchen: A Critique of Self-Help." Community Development Journal, 22 (1), 36-45.

National Council of Welfare (1993). Incentives and Disincentives to Work: A Report by the National Council of Welfare. Ministry of Supply and Services, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

National Council of Welfare (1995). The 1995 Budget and Block Funding: A Report by the National Council of Welfare. Ministry of Supply and Services, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

National Council of Welfare (1996). Poverty Profile 1994: A Report by the National Council of Welfare. Ministry of Supply and Services, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

National Film Board of Canada (1993). Stir It Up. (Videotape). Produced by Theresa Wynnyk, directed by Lorna Thomas. Available from the National Film Board of Canada.

Nozick, M. (1992). No Place Like Home: Building Sustainable Communities. Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Patton, M. (1980). Qualitative Evaluation Methods. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA., U.S.A.

Phillips, T. & Taylor D. (1990). "Food Insecurity: Dynamics and Alleviation" in Bakker, H. The World Food Crisis: Food Security in Comparative Perspective, Canadian Scholars' Press, Toronto, ON., Canada.

Pretty, J., Gujit, I., Thompson, J., & Scoones, I. (1995). Participatory Learning and Action. International Institute for Environment and Development, London, U.K.

Ram, E., & Holkar,V. (1978). "A Community Kitchen in the Kamanves slum, India." Assignment Children, 43, 47-56.   :

Riessman, F. (1976). "How Does Self-Help Work?", Social Policy, 7 (2), 41-45.

Riches, G. (1985). "Feeding Canada's Poor: The Rise of the Food Banks and the Collapse of the Public Safety Net." A paper presented at the 2nd Conference on Provincial Social Welfare Policy, University of Calgary, May 1, 1985.

Riches, G. (1986). Food Banks and the Welfare Crisis. Love Printing Services Ltd., Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Riches, G. (1997). "Hunger in Canada: Abandoning the Right to Food" in Riches, G. First World Hunger: Food Security and Welfare Politics, St. Martin's Press, Inc., New York, NY., U.S.A.

Ross, D., Shillington, R., & Lochhead, C. (1994). The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty. Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, ON., Canada.

Rubin H., & Rubin, I. (1992). Community Organizing and Development. (Second Edition)., Maxwell MacMillan Canada, Toronto, ON., Canada.

Statistics Canada. (1997). World Wide Web Page. [On-line]. Available: www.statcan.ca:80/english/econoind/lfsadj.htm.

Tarasuk, V., & Maclean, H. (1990). "The Food Problems of Low-Income Single Mothers: An Ethnographic Study." Canadian Home Economics Journal, 40 (2), 76-82.

Tarasuk, V. & Davis, B. (1996). "Responses to Food Insecurity in the Changing Canadian Welfare State." Journal of Nutritional Education, 28 (2), 71-75.

Teeple, G. (1995). Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform. Garamond Press, Toronto, ON., Canada.

Tutty, L., Rothery, M., & Grinnell, R. (1996). Qualitative Research for Social Workers. Allyn and Bacon, Toronto, ON., Canada.

Van Isschot, L. (1996). "An Opening to the World: Community Solutions to the Global Food Distribution Crisis." Americas Update, March/April 1996, p.8-10.

Wild, S. (1996, October 11). "Poor Team Up to Stretch Food Dollars." Winnipeg Free Press. pp. A1, A3

Withorn, A. (1980). "Helping Ourselves: The Limits and Potential of Self-Help." Social

Policy, 11 (3), 20-27.

Winnipeg Harvest (1996). "Winnipeg Harvest - A Ten Year Snapshot." Unpublished fact sheet, Winnipeg, MB., Canada.

Winnipeg Harvest (1998). World Wide Web Page [On-line]. Available: www.xpressnet.com/harvest

Winnipeg Social Services Department. (1996). Information Booklet. Winnipeg, MB., Canada.

Wolcott, H. (1994). Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA., U.S.A.

Yin, R. (1994). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (2nd Edition). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA., U.S.A.

:

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

Faculty of Social Work
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba.

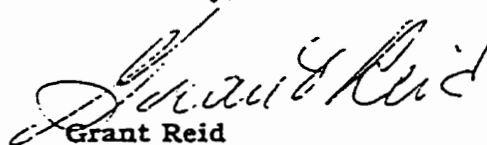To: G. RIPAT.   FEBRUARY 20, 1997.

YOUR PROJECT ENTITLED *COMMUNITY KITCHENS IN WINNIPEG* HAS BEEN APPROVED
BY THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE.

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO THE CERTIFICATE:

1. You may be asked at intervals for a progress report.
2. Any significant changes of the protocol should be reported to the Chairperson of this
   Committee so that the changes can be reviewed prior to their implementation.
3. The consent form shall include the phrase, "Because of the small sample size it is
   possible that others involved in the community kitchens may know that you have
   participated in the research."

Yours truly,

Grant Reid

Grant Reid

Chair

Research Ethics Committee.

(204) (474-8455).

APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction to Organizers

Organizer,
123 Any Street
Winnipeg, MB
Postal Code

Date

Dear _____,

Hi! I am a social work student at the University of Manitoba working on my thesis. I am doing a study of local community kitchen groups and their role in building stronger communities. I would like to interview a few people who have been involved with starting up and /or overseeing the running of local community kitchen groups. I hope that the information gathered will be of use to both existing groups and those in the planning stage.

Please contact me at 284-1858 if you are willing to participate. I will be beginning the interviews in August, and will need around an hour of your time if you agree to be involved. I would come to meet you at a time and place convenient to you. I will be taping the interview, or taking notes if you prefer. Participants' comments will be confidential. I will be preparing a summary of the study's findings if you or your group would like one. My advisor is Tuula Heinonen at the Faculty of Social Work, and her phone number there is 474-9543.

I would also like to interview some community kitchen group members to get their perspective. Please pass around or post the enclosed notice in your organization's community kitchen, and please spread the word (and my number!) to other kitchen organizers or participants you know who may be interested.

Thanks a lot!

Geoff Ripat
ph. 284-1858

A COMMUNITY KITCHENS STUDY PROJECT NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Hi! I am a social work student doing a research project on community kitchens and their role in building stronger communities. I would like to interview a few people involved in cooking in community kitchen groups. I hope that the information gathered will be useful to both existing groups and those in the planning stage.

Interviews will take about an hour and I can meet you at a time and place that is convenient for you. I will be taping the interviews, or can take notes if you prefer. I plan to begin doing the interviews in August so please contact me as soon as possible if you want to be involved. Participants' comments will be confidential. I will be preparing a summary of the findings if you or your group would like one.

Contact Geoff Ripat at 284-1858 if you are interested, and if you know anyone else who may want to take part please get them to give me a call as well.

THANKS!

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

<u>Thesis: Community Kitchens in Winnipeg</u>.

Researcher: Geoff Ripat
                phone # 284-1858

       The study seeks to expand research on community kitchens and their role in building stronger communities. Participants in the study are asked to participate in an interview with the researcher that will last around one hour. It is asked that participants allow the researcher to tape their interview, which will make analyzing the material collected a lot easier. However, they may also choose not to be recorded. Participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time, and are free to choose not to answer any of the questions at any time during the interview. Because of the small sample size it is possible that others involved in other local community kitchens may know that you have participated in the research. However, the identities of interviewees will be kept confidential after the interview is completed: both in the interviewer's discussions with other interviewees, and in the final document. A summary of the study's findings will be prepared if you or your group would like one.

I consent to be a participant in this study

                      _____ signature

                      _____ date

I wish to obtain a summary of the results of this study: if yes, please provide:

                      _____ signature

                      _____ Address and phone # of
                                          place to send the summary

                      _____

                      _____

APPENDIX E

Potential Questions For Organizers

Info. On Group

1. How and when did your organization's community kitchen start?
2. How is it funded?
3. How many members do you currently have? Men? Is there child care provided?
4. When do you plan? Cook? How often?
5. How much do you cook? To feed how many? Splitting up food?

Motivations

1. What was it about the model that attracted you to it?

Structure

1. When does the group meet? Do you have planning meetings too? When?
2. Are there rules? How are decisions made in your group?
3. How much does it cost to participate? How do you deal with payments? Do you run tabs? What if people pay and then don't show up?

Goals

1. What are the goals of your community kitchen group?
2. Based on your response to (1), how effective is the group in meeting these goals?

Strengths/Weaknesses

1. What do you see as the most important benefits of the community kitchen group?
2. What has changed about the program over time? What would you like to change about the program?

Community Development

1. Tell me about any new resources, programs, or groups that you have become involved with as a result of the community kitchen group. Met anyone new? Talked to anyone as a result?
2. Tell me about any new resources, programs, or groups that group participants have become involved with as a result of your community kitchen group. Support between members? How does this happen? Any skills they've picked up as a result of membership in the group?
3. What is your kitchen group thinking about getting involved with in terms of programs

and activities, any plans for the future?

4. Differences in ideology between food banks, community kitchens. . .

5. How do kitchens benefit the community? Do you think that anything has gotten better as a result of community kitchens?

Final Thoughts/Comments

1. Any additional comments/ suggestions?

2. Can I contact you for any further comments or clarifications if necessary?

APPENDIX F

Potential Questions for Facilitators and Participants

Info. On Group/Person

1. How many members do you have in your group? Men? Is there child care provided?
2. How long have you been coming to this community kitchen group?
3. How many people do you usually feed with the food that you bring home from community kitchen cooking sessions?

Motivations

1. How did you come to be a part of this community kitchen group?

Goals

1. What are the goals of your community kitchen group?
2. Based on your response to (1), how effective is the group in meeting these goals?

Structure

1. When does the group meet? Do you have planning meetings too? When?
2. Are there rules? How are decisions made in your group?

Strengths/Weaknesses

1. What are the most important benefit of the community kitchen group for you?
2. What has changed about the program over time? What would you like to change about the program?

Community Development

1. Tell me about any new resources, programs, or groups that you have become involved with as a result of you community kitchen group. Met anyone new? Is there support inside/outside program between you and other members? How does this happen?
2. Tell me about any new resources, programs, or groups that other group participants have become involved with as a result of your community kitchen group. Is there support inside/outside program between other members? How does this happen?
3. What is your kitchen group thinking about getting involved with in terms of programs and activities, any plans for the future?
4. How do kitchens benefit the community? Do you think anything has gotten better as a result of community kitchens?

Final Thoughts/Comments

1. Any additional comments/ suggestions?
2. Can I contact you for any further comments or clarifications if necessary?

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

150mm

6"
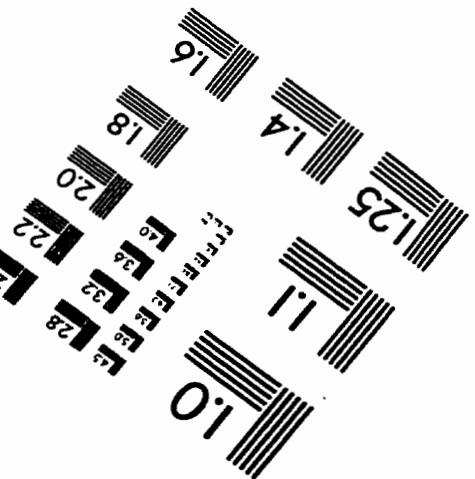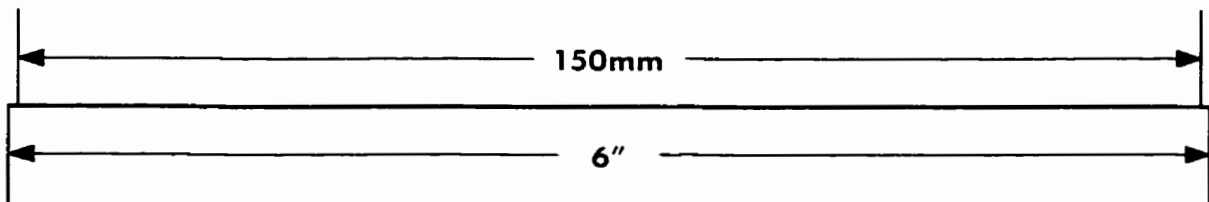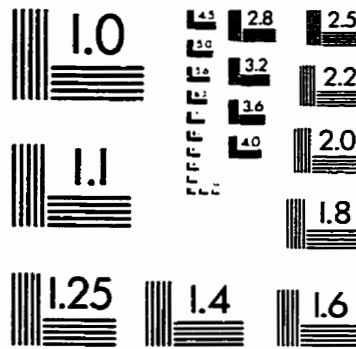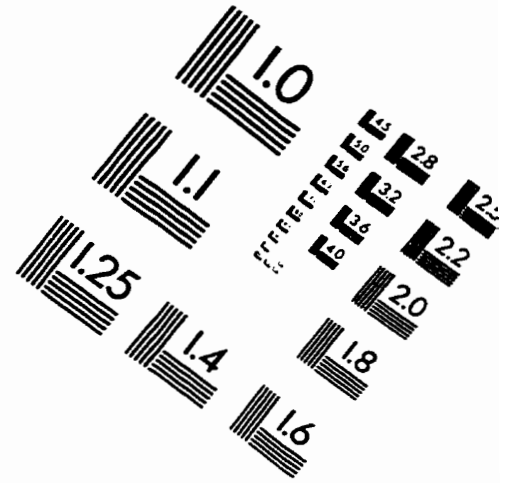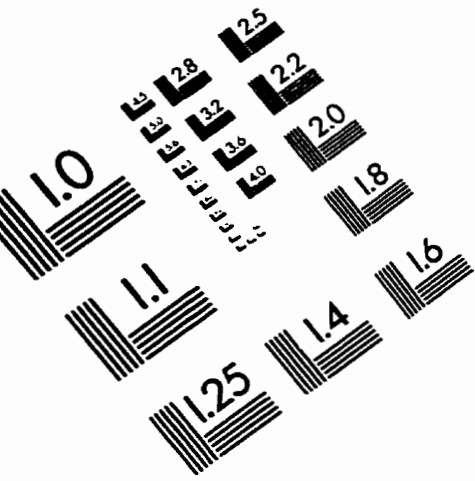
APPLIED ◢ IMAGE . Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989