The University of Manitoba

BENEFITS OF PROVIDING SUPPORTS FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

TO

ACCESS AND COMPLETE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

By

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Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology
Faculty of Education

Winnipeg, Manitoba
November, 1999

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Benefits of Providing Supports for Non-Traditional Students to

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

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the benefits of providing supports to non-traditional students in accessing and completing post-secondary education. It focused on one access program, the Winnipeg Education Centre – Social Work Program (WEC-SWP). The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the following questions:

1. What supports at the WEC-SWP assisted non-traditional students in accessing and completing post-secondary education?

2. What benefits did these students acquire by completing a post-secondary degree? Identify personal, professional, economic, community, and society benefits.

In addition, the research explored the barriers non-traditional students faced in accessing and participating in post-secondary education.

These questions were explored in depth by conducting personal interviews with participants who graduated from WEC-SWP between the years 1981 to 1989. Each participant was interviewed on two occasions using a semi structured approach. The first interview was audio taped and transcribed. The second interview clarified and expanded the participants' responses. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed from a qualitative approach and verified with the literature review.

The findings of the study indicated that the research participants faced barriers which prevented them from advancing their education. They required the three supports offered by WEC-SWP: financial, academic, and personal counselling to access and graduate with a degree in Social Work. After graduation, the participants benefited personally by developing self-confidence, self-esteem, respect, pride, and a healthy, holistic lifestyle. Professionally, they have access to careers rather than jobs which

allows freedom, independence, creativity, and satisfaction. A degree provided a full time position and an adequate income to sustain a comfortable lifestyle. These participants are positive role models and change agents within their communities. The participants described benefits to society as being politically active and having the awareness of national and global issues which oppress individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Further research needs to explore if students are unable to access post-secondary education due to financial cutbacks; if students' debt loads increased and the length of time required to complete a degree; if students are experiencing more stress; a cost/benefit analysis of graduating non-traditional students; and tracking graduates at intervals to determine the benefits of access programs.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support I received during its development. I would like to express gratitude to my partner and my sons for their encouragement and support. A much deserved thank-you to my advisor, Deo Poonwassie who provided support and guidance. I would also like to thank my committee members, Brad McKenzie and Paul Madak for their feedback and advice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Higher education is accessible for the 'haves' who can afford the ever increasing costs,

however, the 'have nots' may be excluded as they do not have the resources available to access

higher education. This is not a new phenomenon as the topic has been researched and several

ACCESS programs were established to increase accessibility in Manitoba during the 1970's. The

proposed qualitative study focused on one program implemented to empower Winnipeg residents

from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The program studied is the Winnipeg Education Centre

Social Work Program (WEC-SWP). This chapter will explore issues supporting the accessibility of

higher education for non-traditional students.

GLOBAL VIEW OF EDUCATION

Historically, advancing one's education was not very important for most workers in an

industrialized society. Only a few of the 'haves' continued with their education and the rest of the

population were employed as manual laborers or in agriculture (Anisef, 1985). Today, we are in

the information age, where learning has become as important as obtaining and maintaining

employment. "In order to compete in a global economy where knowledge and technology are

changing rapidly, the Canadian work force requires more education and training than ever before"

(Paju, 1995, p.2). This report and the media are advising Canadians that job seekers will require

sixteen years of education to obtain employment in the nineties. "The high number of graduates

from the class of '90 who pursued or completed additional qualifications seems to support this

class' perception that more than one degree may be required to make a successful transition into

today's labor market" (Paju, 1995, p.5). Unfortunately, the type of learning required in the

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competitive labor market is very expensive and only a few have the privilege of obtaining a post-secondary education. These privileged few are mainly from the upper and middle classes of society. A traditional student completes high school, may or may not work during the summer full time, and enters a post-secondary institution. Some traditional students are from the upper middle class and do not have to work or rely on loans to complete a degree. They may not have to compete for a job after graduation as they or their parents know influential people who would help them find work. This is supported by Grubb (1993) when he stated that "(F)amily background continues to be highly significant even for employees, however, indicating that the effect is due to other influences including connections, personal factors, and perhaps motivation" (p.377). So if the 'haves' do incur debts, they are able to pay them off quicker with a higher paying prestigious job than a student from a lower socioeconomic background.

THE PROBLEM IN ACCESSING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Other students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who want to advance their education have to rely on student bursaries and loans. Most of them need part time or full time jobs to support themselves through their education. Other "students who are lucky enough to win the competition for a summer job - any summer job - cannot hope to put enough money aside to pay their tuition fees, let alone the cost of living for the eight month school year. For the 18% of students (1996) for whom a summer job was not available, the ability to accumulate savings in order to pay the user fees is eradicated" (Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), 1997, p. 34). In addition, students can accumulate student loans up to $25,000.00 over a four-year period. This figure has tripled from the early nineties when a graduate's debt was $7800.00.

This creates two problems for students: (1) the number of years it takes to complete a degree, and (2) the loan payments begin six months after graduation. The first problem stems from

having to work to pay for the ever increasing cost of education while attending college or universities which takes away from class and study time. Students required to work may have to drop courses thus extending their graduation date or quit. "Tuition fees have a major impact on the accessibility of the higher education system. Not only do they deter potential students from applying for full time studies, they are also the reason a greater number of students are studying on a part time basis and are a leading cause of higher attrition rates" (CFS, 1997, p.16).

The problem for the non-traditional student is magnified. The non-traditional student has been out of school for two or more years, may or may not have graduated from high school, is a mature student (a person over 21 years old), may or may not be under-employed, and may or may not have children. These students have to learn how to be a student again, integrate their practical knowledge with theoretical knowledge, and support themselves and their family if they have one. They attend classes, tend to family responsibilities, maintain a home, complete assignments, study for exams, and work for pay within one day. Time restrictions for non-traditional students affect the number of years it takes to obtain their degree and, also, whether they can complete a degree.

The second problem affects both traditional and non-traditional students from lower socioeconomic background in similar ways. Graduates have to obtain a good paying job within six months of graduation in order to make their loan payments. "Some of the reasons cited by students to explain why they had difficulties in repaying loans were: unemployment, for a third of the respondents; insufficient earnings, for approximately half of all respondents; and high debt loads and 'other' for about 25% of the graduates" (CFS, 1997, p.22). A majority of the graduates do not obtain employment within the six months or are under-employed, thus having to declare bankruptcy as they are unable to make the loan payments. Once they declare bankruptcy, they are unable to apply for credit for seven years. This prevents them from making major purchases such

as a car or a house, over the next seven years. A few graduates who obtain employment cannot contribute to the economy by buying a car, or a house, or furniture as the loan payments consume their extra spending money. These problems continue to suppress non-traditional graduates as they struggle as lower socioeconomic professionals.

My particular biases lean toward the importance of post-secondary education being accessible to motivated capable individuals who want to change their situation and become change agents themselves in a class structured society. Ideally, education should be free, available to everyone, any time within one's life. Sweden, Germany, and Ireland have removed a major barrier for all students by providing free post-secondary education. "(T)uition fees are a strong negative force as to whether or not a student enters post-secondary education" (CFS, 1997, p.30).

I do not believe only the rich and powerful should have access to knowledge and information. If education and knowledge are created by power holders and delivered to an elite few then we cannot consider society to be democratic as members are not equally informed. "As long as we believe in the ideal of a democratic society, we must strive to give all Canadians the education required to make sophisticated judgements about the future of our country" (CFS, 1997, p.3). The dominant has oppressed various minority groups and women for generations. Change is very slow; for example, women are achieving higher levels of education but are still underpaid and underemployed. "Female graduates in the workplace, earn even less than their male counterparts" (CFS, 1997, p. 23). Opportunities for advancing one's education should not be based on the student's ability to pay. I strongly support the position that education should be accessible to everyone who is motivated to continue learning thus improving their quality of life. "Access to post-secondary education is defined as the removal of barriers to ensure the right of entry of all students who are able and willing to study, to learn, regardless of socio-economic background..."

(CFS, 1997, p.1). The Inner City Social Work Program was established for these reasons and has its roots in the Winnipeg Centre Project which was based on a community need. Acceptance into the program was based on individual need, experience, and assessed ability to succeed.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF ACCESS PROGRAMS

Twenty-five years ago, key players in the Manitoba Government identified the need for alternative education programs for disadvantaged individuals. Under the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1972, monies were directed to new educational programs: New Careers, Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Project, ACCESS Projects at Brandon General Hospital School of Nursing, Red River Community College, and the Winnipeg Centre Project. This thesis focuses on a program which evolved from the Winnipeg Centre Project (WCP). Later its name changed to Winnipeg Education Centre in 1978 and in 1981 the Inner City Social Work Program became part of Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC). This study examined the Inner City Social Work Program at WEC. A brief history of WCP and WEC will be presented as the Social Work Program followed the same principles and strategies for application.

WINNIPEG CENTRE PROJECT

The intent of the WCP was to alleviate social inequalities by using inner city schools as change agents (Lukinski, 1997). In September 1972, a teacher training program was offered to economically and socially disadvantaged individuals who traditionally would not access a university education. Students received financial, academic, and personal counselling supports so they could better concentrate on their studies rather than their hardships. The funding covered students' living allowance, tuition, books, transportation, and staff salaries.

The following objectives were identified in Les Johnson's proposal in 1972: "to examine and to diffuse types of practices and programs in the Winnipeg Centre that will enhance the

potential of education for each child; to integrate university standards with the experiences, skills, and understanding of inner city residents in a teacher education program; and to combine co-operating teachers' innovative activities with the rich potential of human and physical resources in the community" (Lukinski, 1997, p.179). The Centre was to fulfil three functions, according to Eric MacPherson (1976), the Dean of Education at the University of Manitoba: (1) to provide the opportunity for motivated inner city students to access a university education; (2) to graduate more qualified and better skilled people to work with disadvantaged students; and (3) to have graduates as role models in their communities (Lukinski, 1997).

Initially, Brandon University coordinated WCP as the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba declined to run the program. The program was delivered at the Aberdeen Junior High School in the inner city and the professors traveled from Brandon. After six years of operation and successfully graduating teachers, the program's administration changed to the University of Manitoba.

WINNIPEG EDUCATION CENTRE

WCP's name changed to Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC) when a formal agreement was signed by the University of Manitoba (U of M) and the Manitoba Government in 1978. The U of M, Manitoba Government, and the Winnipeg No. 1 School Division were to cooperate and be equal partners in governing the Centre. Funding was provided by the provincial government to cover the same costs as WCP incurred. The purpose of the program remained the same as WCP along with the following objectives.

The first objective of WEC was to provide access to post-secondary education for socially and economically disadvantaged adult residents in the inner city of Winnipeg. The second objective specified an education program to meet the needs of the inner city. The third objective

proposed additional programs such as nursing, social work, physical education, and recreation.

The third objective was achieved when the Social Work program was delivered through the WEC.

THE INNER CITY SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Pete Hudson, a professor from the School of Social Work, U of M, was the liaison person

responsible for the development of the Inner City Social Work program at WEC (Lukinski, 1997).

The program was to focus on these three issues: affirmative action, the enhancement of retention

and student success, and the adaptation of curriculum and teaching styles. Its sole purpose was "the

recruitment and support of disadvantaged students who would be unable to enter and succeed in a

traditional university environment, due to a lack of prerequisite academic preparation, inadequate

financial resources, or because they come from a minority cultural or language group" (Anderson

& McKenzie, 1982, p.1). To fulfil this purpose, four main objectives were developed:

1. To offer educational opportunities for individuals with the aptitude and commitment to

undertake a four-year university degree, also, who would not meet the university entrance

requirement, did not have the financial resources and/or represented a minority cultural or language

group.

2. To ensure that 50 percent of selected students be Aboriginal.

3. To provide academic, financial, and personal counselling supports for students.

4. To integrate The U of M's institutional structure in accomplishing the above mentioned

objectives (McKenzie, 1986).

In 1981, the four-year Social Work program was initiated as an off-campus extension of the

School of Social Work. This affirmative action program was "based on the model that incorporated

a longer academic year, off-campus instruction, financial support to students, and extensive student

support services" (Anderson & McKenzie, 1982, p.6). The model implemented adult learning

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principles such as smaller classes to encourage open dialogue and the integration of theory and practice (academic study and personal life experiences). Experiential learning took place as WEC students spent 80% more in practicum time than on campus Social Work students. This provided the opportunity for students to integrate theoretical knowledge with the practice methodology (Anderson & McKenzie, 1982). This type of learning supports one of Brookfield's (1986) adult learning principles of continuous reflection and analysis of practical and theoretical learning. Adult learning was enhanced by using a student centered approach by matching teaching methods with the student's learning style; selecting content relevant to students; creating a learning environment and materials suited to students' needs and expecting students to achieve to their fullest potential (Hammond, 1984).

The Tripartite Core Area Agreement between the federal, provincial, and city governments provided the funding which was administered by the Post-Secondary Career Development Branch. Although the program's first year was 1981, funds for five years were not secured until May, 1982 (Anderson & McKenzie, 1982). Funds were always a concern and Brad McKenzie recalls students accompanying him to City Council to lobby and negotiate for future funding. In 1986, funding changed from the Core Area Agreement to the Province of Manitoba. The funding covered staff salaries, administration costs, and allowances for eighteen students to be admitted to the program each year.

Students over the age of 21 were recruited from minority groups: various immigrant groups, women, single parents, status Indians and Métis. Although, it was recognized that the identified target group did not necessarily reside only in the inner city, advertisements were aimed at inner city agencies and service organizations. The selection process started in January and the final selection of eighteen students occurred near the end of May.

Written applications provided information on financial circumstances, life experiences, educational background, and personal situations. The program was fulfilling a need as in a three-year period the applications increased from one hundred and eleven to two hundred and twenty per year. Applications and references were assessed by faculty staff to determine the candidate's financial, social, and academic needs, motivation and experience. Approximately fifty candidates were invited to two - thirty minute interviews. Interview boards included representatives from the faculty, the student body, and community organizations. The interviews revealed the candidate's awareness of social problems, personal qualities, and relevant experience. In 1983, a three-day intensive workshop was added as a component to the selection process. Thirty-five candidates were selected from the interviews and were invited to attend the workshop. Their reading and writing levels were assessed through exercises presented during the workshop. The eighteen potential students were selected by the Director and the Admissions Committee at the School of Social Work (Anderson & McKenzie, 1982).

The first director from 1981 to 1987 was Brad McKenzie who believed that the staff played an important role in aiding students through the program. In the first year, Laura Anderson was hired as counsellor and workshop coordinator on a part time basis. Kim Clare was hired in the second year as a full time instructor and field coordinator. In the third year, Elizabeth Hill and Greg Selinger were hired full time. Some courses were taught by instructors from the U of M School of Social Work. In 1987, Denis Bracken was hired as the second director and Kim Clare succeeded him in 1993. Staff hired were committed to the mission and philosophy of the program, could relate to students with empathy, and would provide academic and personal counselling supports (Lukinski, 1997).

Supports put in place met the three needs of the students. 1.) Financial support provided a living allowance for the students and their families. This was calculated according to the number of dependants, housing costs, day care needs, and transportation. A student with two dependents received approximately eight hundred dollars per month. Other costs such as tuition fees, books, and supplies were paid for. 2.) Academic supports helped students overcome feelings of failure, provided academic upgrading, and allowed extra time to complete the courses. Tutorial service helped students with their academic studies. Classes were scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. to accommodate parents with school aged children. Students attended classes 11 months of the year. 3.) Personal counselling supports helped students with low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. In 1973, Wacyk, a counsellor from WCP, identified issues encountered by WCP students and these issues were prevalent in the eighties. Students encountered insecurities related to the project, emotional problems, erratic attendance, late arrivals, personality conflicts, family problems, and financial difficulties. Peer support was encouraged and staff created a trusting, respectful, warm, and supportive environment along with a sense of loyalty to each other (Lukinski, 1997). The small size of the Centre fostered collegiality between students and staff (Orlikow, 1994).

The location, Sir Sam Steele on the corner of Nairn Avenue and Chestor Street, created a problem for both the Education and Social Work programs as it was not located in the inner city. In 1983, a site committee was formed to find a new location. The committee proposed that a new building be constructed at 433 Logan Avenue which would include classroom space for WEC and an attached co-op housing. The estimated cost was 1.2 million dollars to be funded by the Core Area Initiative who allocated $500,000 and the provincial government who would provide $450,000. In 1988, the Conservatives won the election and Len Derkach, the Education Minister,

requested a study to ensure the new building would meet the needs of the inner city residents and address the concerns of the community.

The media, some schools, and individuals questioned the Centre's credibility and students' capabilities. The students and staff were aware of the stigma attached to the project as some people resisted change in the education system, some felt the university lowered their standards as students did not meet the entrance requirements, and the Centre's students had different values than mainstream schools. The stigma persisted and an evaluation was recommended to assess the students' capabilities and whether or not the Programs should be housed in a new development in the inner city. Even though the evaluation results were positive, the money was not approved for the new location.

Cooper and Lybrand Consulting Group were hired by Len Derkach to do a comprehensive audit on both programs at WEC. The concerns were: quality of graduates, the high attrition rate, graduates not employed in their field of study, and WEC not fulfilling its mandate by reflecting the demographics of the inner city (Isitt, Gunn, and Brennand, 1989). John Carlyle at Manitoba Education and Training received a draft copy of the positive results on November 17, 1989. The following is a summary of the results:

1. WEC graduates were comparable to Fort Garry campus graduates.

2. Inner city schools and agencies wanted to hire WEC graduates.

3. The same educational standards applied to WEC students and Fort Garry campus students.

4. The grading at WEC was more severe than on campus.

5. Attrition rates showed approximately 80% to 90% of Aboriginal students left the Fort Garry campus before graduating as compared to 31% at WEC.

6. Due to the high number of native education graduates at WEC the cost was lower at WEC than the Fort Garry campus.

7. Social service agencies hired graduates and considered the program successful.

8. Eighty-eight percent of social work graduates worked in social service agencies or were enrolled in post graduate education within 18 months of graduation (Lukinski, 1997).

Another review of Access Programs by R.S. Hikel in 1994 reported 70.4% graduated from WEC Social Work program between the years 1985 and 1991. Hikel stressed that a small, supportive environment with intense counselling and the devotion of instructors to their students contributed to the educational success of disadvantaged individuals. The results of these studies indicated that the programs were fulfilling needs so one would conclude that the financial support would continue for these programs but, in fact, there were more cutbacks. I am convinced access programs such as WEC do breakdown the barriers that the 'have nots' face when they want to improve their career possibilities and standard of living.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for this study is the importance of improving and maintaining accessibility to higher education for non-traditional students. This should be a priority for the Canadian government. In the 1960's, universities became more accessible as higher education was identified as a key to increased economic productivity and a means of removing traditional barriers to improve equality (Anisef, 1985). Barriers such as lack of funding, lower socioeconomic background, gender, minority, inadequate academic preparation, and poor self-esteem and/or self-confidence prevented some individuals from achieving their fullest potential. In order to address the barriers, supports for access were put in place for non-traditional students entering post-secondary institutions.

Research discussed in this chapter supports accessibility for higher education for non-traditional students. Very little research examines the benefits and additional opportunities for minorities who participated in higher education. I believe that a post-secondary education contributes to the individual's growth and, also, to the country's growth. Not only, do the individual graduates benefit but so does society as a whole, by having well informed, knowledgeable productive employees, consumers, and taxpayers contributing to the growth of the country. Without accessible post-secondary education, Canada goes back in history to the early 1800's when only the established elite sons were expected to attend school as they were to be the future leaders of Canada (Anisef, 1985). Data needs to be collected from participants who have had the opportunity to access higher education with supports in place.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine whether it is beneficial to provide supports for non-traditional students to access and complete post-secondary education. This study will explore which of the three supports: academic, financial, and personal counselling were used by students and if these supports contributed to the successful completion of a Social Work degree. The study will examine benefits gained after obtaining a degree. Benefits may include personal gains and development, professional opportunities and advancement, increase in economic status, strengthening the community, and contributions to society. Overall, it is a worthwhile investment for the country as a whole to have post-secondary education available to everyone who is capable and motivated.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will examine a program that did provide supports for non-traditional students to obtain a four-year university degree. The research questions are:

1. What supports at the WEC-SWP assisted non-traditional students in accessing and completing post-secondary education?

2. What benefits did these students acquire by completing a post-secondary degree?

These research questions will be further developed in the methodology.

WRITTEN FORMAT OF THE STUDY

Chapter one provides the background information for the study and the research questions. In chapter two, a literature review will examine reports, articles, studies, and proposed policies discussing the issue of accessibility to higher education for non-traditional students and the benefits. Chapter three will develop the methodology. Chapter four will analyze the data. Chapter five will draw conclusions from the study and make recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNIVERSITIES

In the 1500s, universities in Europe were comprised of students who tended to be mature, wealthy men and masters were hired to teach subjects in which they (the students) were interested (Ross, 1976). When history emphasized the positive aspects of the medieval universities, it ignored "the fact that all masters were not great teachers, all students not intelligent and enthusiastic, all meetings of council not placid and statesmanlike, all freedom not accepted by those within the university, all battles with external authorities not won" (Ross, 1976, p.12). "While medieval universities were open to all classes, the number of students from the less advantaged families was probably quite small" (Ross, 1976, p.70).

According to Anisef (1985), Canadian universities were modeled after European institutions with strong religious affiliations and at the time of Confederation, 13 out of 17 universities were church-related and controlled. Universities from 1500 to 1850 were not responsive to the social and intellectual movements of the day so centers of great vitality with imaginative teachers working on the frontiers of knowledge were not created. Instead, the attitude of the university was paternalistic and authoritarian - encapsulated by narrow religious dogma and old-fashioned methods of teachings (Ross, 1976). Between 1850 and 1950, the industrial revolution "created new social classes - a vast new middle class of workers and new elite of scientists and managers - that profoundly affected social structure and social attitudes" (Ross, 1976, p.33). In 1877, the St. Boniface (Roman Catholic), St.John's (Anglican) and Manitoba College (Presbyterian) amalgamated to form the University of Manitoba (Anisef, 1985). During these years, Canadian universities did not have the resources such as well-trained faculty members or finances

so they offered considerably less than an adequate university program to potential university students (Ross, 1976). "The reality of the situation was that only those universities that had government grants or substantial private gifts could survive" (Ross, 1976, p. 39).

Canadian universities changed when the American University evolved from a church oriented institution to a "larger, more diverse institution with stronger graduate and professional programs capable of serving the needs of a developing economy" (Bok, 1982, p.3). Control changed from the clergy to businessmen and financiers. After World War II, the image of the ivory tower grew obsolete. Even though, "critics of a traditional persuasion expressed their sharpest displeasure over the precipitous growth of the multiversity and its formless pursuit of multiple goals" (Bok, 1982, p.65).

Some critics argued for universities to cut back on "social problem-solving and devote more time and effort to teaching and scholarship for their own sake" (Bok, 1982, p.65). After the mid 1960's, however, "colleges and universities were pressed with increasing urgency to respond in some fashion to help minority students gain access to the more desirable, influential careers in society" (Bok, 1982, p.91).

CHANGES IN SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

"In the late 19th century the relevance of education to labor market needs was limited since the majority of Canada's population were engaged in agriculture" (Anisef, 1985, p.2). Industrialization resulted in the demand for technically qualified manpower and pressure was developed to transform the educational system. Change did not come quickly, but as alert minds grasped enthusiastically for new secular insights, the authority of religion and of the church gradually erode. A new attitude-called the "rational-empirical" outlook-prevailed which encouraged independent curiosity, openness to experience, and the appreciation of originality

(Ross, 1976). Education was beginning to be changed by economic, social, political, cultural, and historical forces, both globally and locally and formal education was seen as contributing to all these areas (Ghosh, 1995 & Ross, 1976).

Between 1850 and 1950, universities transformed to respond to the following factors: (1) industrialization created a growth in the economy and technology thus requiring trained manpower; (2) the shift from authoritarian to empirical thought; and (3) dissatisfaction with the religious-oriented colleges (Ross, 1976). In addition, economically, there was a growth of cities and commerce which created a new social class of men with increased wealth and leisure. After World War II, there was a demand for scientific research and highly trained administrators, lawyers, physicians, and other personnel (Ross, 1976 & Anisef, 1985). Starting in 1951, the federal government provided financial support to higher education on a regular basis for without this support universities could not survive (Anisef, 1985).

Another transformation between 1950 and 1975 was the recognition in United States of the discriminatory practices of universities' admission standards and scholarship aid in respect of the poor, blacks, and women (Ross, 1976 & Varpalotai, 1995). In the sixties, Canadian universities faced student demonstrations and uprisings. Students wanted equal opportunities for minorities to access a university education and reap the benefits (Anisef, 1985). Levin and Unruh (1990) discussed a change in attitude by the minorities when they rejected the dominant view that only the rich succeed. The rich had to stop blaming the victim for not succeeding in a capitalist society. Bok (1982) supported these changes as minority students can make important changes to society by challenging education and enhancing racial understanding and increasing the sensitivity of people in power to concerns of disadvantaged groups.

The traditionalist feared these changes would gradually erode the status, the loyalty, and the dedication of professors and scholars who still devoted themselves to traditional academic pursuits and where education was to maintain class structure by preserving opportunities and educational levels for the privileged class (Bok, 1982). Bercuson, Bothwell, and Granatstein (1984) criticized these changes as this was the downfall of the universities when the middle and working classes were allowed access to the ladders of upward mobility.

Ghosh (1995) identified four theories the emerged during this transition. In the 50's the theory of modernization emphasized the importance of education and the process of socialization in developing modern values. The human capital theorists in the 60's saw education as a productive investment and an educated labor force would bring about social change and a prosperous society. Conflict theorists of the 70's followed Marx's and Weber's ideas that social change was responding to conflict underlying social conditions. In the 80's, John Dewey, John Childs, and Paulo Freire supported critical pedagogy which focused on literacy and an education that raised consciousness. Ghosh (1995) & Varpalotai (1995) viewed education as the key to social change and a classless society.

Ghosh (1995) identified changes in the last decade in Canada as the economic recession, the technological and information revolutions, and the changing family structure which required more participation in education. "In the world of learning, more Canadians need opportunities for training and education throughout their lives - because continuous learning is key to good jobs and security. In the last three years alone, jobs for university graduates jumped 17 per cent. Our challenge is to build a learning system that will make Canadian workers the best trained, best educated in the world" (Agenda, 1994, p.8). Ross (1976) cautioned institutions which continue "to live on its past successes and practices without regard to the changing social situation of which it is

a part will probably find itself without a relevant purpose, without vitality, and without usefulness to any but it most devoted members" (p. 3). Poonwassie (1993) challenged universities in Manitoba "to find ways to entrench the principles of equity, social equality, social justice, and equality of results in the policies of these institutions" (p.424).

PURPOSE OF UNIVERSITIES

In medieval society, the purpose of the university was: "to advance sophisticated learning, free of external censure, meeting the interests of individual scholars, yet serving the needs of medieval society" (Ross, 1976, p.13). The purpose today "is to contribute to the cultural, social, and economic development of Manitoba, Canada and the world by the creation, preservation and communication, as well as the application of knowledge" (Roblin, Richardson, Kavanagh, & Gordon, 1993, p.11). Between medieval times and today, the purposes of the universities were reflected by different theorists.

Traditionalists would like to maintain universities as cloistered and removed from the everyday problems of society; that professors should not involve themselves in public issues but pursue academics (Poonwassie, 1993). "Both social and cultural reproduction theorists saw the control of the content of socialization by the dominant culture as hegemonic (i.e. something that functions to exclude certain groups). According to conflict theorists, one purpose of education was to strengthen exploited groups to overcome the injustices in society, whether these be racism, sexism, or class discrimination" (Ghosh, 1995, p.5). The critical pedagogy theorists believed the purpose of education was to empower people. All students need to develop skills in constructing identity, meaning, and value, thereby becoming critically aware of one's environment through continuous learning (Ghosh, 1995 & Poonwassie, 1995). Bok (1982) encouraged universities to be

concerned with education and respond to social issues which would affect the education of their students.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

Levin and Unruh (1990) believed that universities should be responsible for the success of students as well as their entry. They criticized institutions which were reluctant to change and accept responsibility for students' learning process. Institutions perpetuate elitism by "an unwillingness to accept the implications for the operation of the institutions where success of an unprepared clientele, would refute existing stereotypes about natives, immigrants, and other client groups" (Levin & Unruh, 1990, p.260). Orlikow (1994) cautioned universities not to be "reduced to elitist enclaves insulated from the needs and aspirations of ordinary people" (p.5). Poonwassie (1993) challenged universities in Manitoba to recruit, retain, and graduate members of disadvantaged groups so they can participate equally as Canadian citizens.

Evers and Gilbert (1991) recommended that in the future, universities should ensure that their graduates have: "literacy: reading, writing and oral communication skills: numeracy: quantitative or computational skills; sense of historical development/historical consciousness; independence of thought; desire to continue learning: creativity; global understanding of moral and ethical choices; aesthetic maturity: acquaintance with literature and the arts; understanding of forms of inquiry: an appreciation of science and other methods of inquiry and their limitations; and, depth and breadth of understanding: substantive in depth knowledge of a field of study" (p. 62).

Ross (1976) and Bok (1982) viewed higher education as a way of providing sophisticated knowledge and the trained manpower that a rapidly developing society requires. Universities have an obligation to serve society and use their special resources to meet social needs (Bok, 1982). Lessard (1995) questioned the role of education where public elementary schooling is for all, and

secondary and post-secondary education is reserved for the elite. Universities in Manitoba need to design, develop, and perfect a system (Poonwassie, 1993). This system should provide "maximum opportunity for all Canadians without restrictions based on their sex, race, or ethnicity, social class, birth place, citizenship status, or religion (Ghosh, 1995, p.13).

INEQUALITIES IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Canada is a liberal democratic society where citizens should have equal access to "social benefits such as education, health care, old age security, and pension benefits" (Ghosh, 1995, p.7). "Equality of access to formal educational structures and services means that all individuals, regardless of sex, race, regions, or social class, should have equal opportunity of access to education" (Lessard, 1995, p.178). But factors such as class, ethnic, gender, religion, politics, regions, geography, family arrangements, economic background, occupations, and formal education all determine earning power or inequalities in opportunities (Anisef, 1985 & Olson, 1995).

Anisef (1985) and Ross (1976) described Canada as a meritocratic society where educational opportunities are awarded to the most talented and accomplished who have the ability to take advantage of them. Anisef (1985) theorized that members of society struggle to maintain and advance their positions by competing for resources or rewards such as wealth, prestige, and power, thus creating a hierarchical distinction amongst people. "Social stratification consists of inherited and socially constructed hierarchical distinctions that develop among persons in a given society" (Anisef, 1985, p.9).

The hierarchies create social, systemic, and structural inequalities that affect certain groups who are disadvantaged in regard to education, employment, social status and/or quality of life (Varpalotai, 1995). These "inequalities are based on deeply rooted prejudice, bigotry, and adverse

discrimination, irrational fears of difference, and diversity" (Varpalotai, 1995, p.243). Inequalities such as poverty are reflected, replicated, exacerbated, and legitimized in major social institutions - including education - through policies and attitudes (Anisef, 1985, Olson, 1995, Varpalotai, 1995, & Ghosh, 1995). Poverty is socially constructed and tends to be cyclical, structural, and associated with particular groups (Olson, 1995 & Ghosh, 1995).

Ghosh (1995) identified clear links between inadequate education and poverty. Orfield (1992) agreed as "income and family wealth are very strongly related to race, and minority students often attend high schools offering less competitive instruction and college counselling" (p.343). Anisef (1985) verified this when he said "(W)ho gets to university or college in Canada relates to family, economic considerations, government funding, admissions policies, secondary school structures, academic performance, peer groups, self-esteem and so on" (p. 15). There is tendency to "blame-the-victim" when minority groups fail to succeed within the system (Olson, 1995 & Varpalotai, 1995). Ross (1976) recognized the difference between the classes as students from lower-income groups attend colleges and students from professional, upper-class families attend universities. Ahamad (1987), Lessard (1995), and Olson (1995) claimed that students attending university for empowerment are mainly of middle-class to high class origin and/or status.

Matthiasson and Kristjanson (1981) and Ghosh (1995) believed education is one way to decrease the inequality of access to social mobility and economic benefits for Canadians. Thus in the mid 1960's the federal government responded to inequalities by encouraging affirmative action to improve educational and employment opportunities for disadvantaged minority groups (Bok, 1982 & Varpalotai, 1995). Bercuson et al. (1984) expressed concern as luxuries available to the Canadian elite at one time were now available to ordinary citizens and one of these luxuries is a university education.

BARRIERS FACED BY DISADVANTAGED INDIVIDUALS

Orlikow (1994) questioned the assumption that any poor person has the opportunity of breaking the poverty cycle and moving up in society through hard work. Lessard (1995) and Varpalotai (1995) would argue it is not the poor person's lack of motivation or capabilities but an educational system that reflects and reproduces unequal social relations between socioeconomic classes as working-class kids are streamed into an inferior education and fewer job opportunities. "Teachers are aware that the single most powerful predictor of academic performance is a student's socioeconomic background. Thus, signs of poverty are easily read by them as indicators of coming failure" (Webb & Sherman, 1989, p.475). "Poverty can devastate a child's future - leading to poor health, learning problems, and future employment problems" (Agenda, 1994, p.8). Ghosh (1995) agreed that "economic aspects of illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment are severe, the psychological dimensions -stigma and vulnerability- are tremendous" (p.11). Hikel (1994) acknowledged the poor on social assistance are further oppressed and marginalized when they can not collect benefits if they want to advance their education.

Levin and Unruh (1990) discussed endemic barriers faced by students who live in small, isolated communities and receive low quality education. These students experienced a foreign environment, a sense of exclusion, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, financial difficulties, and inadequate academic preparation (Anderson & McKenzie, 1982, Anisef, 1985, Poonwassie, 1993, & Roblin et al., 1993). Other students with family and employment responsibilities may be faced with the similar barriers plus logistical problems in arranging daycare and transportation (Isitt, Gunn, & Brennand, 1989 & Roblin et al., 1993). Bercuson et al. (1984) reinforced the notion of "blame the victim" when they insisted that the late bloomers who bloom too late should not gain

entrance and every young person "must become aware of life's realities and begin to shoulder the responsibility and bear the consequences of his or her own actions" (p.157).

Losty and Kreilick (1982), in their study of inactive students, identified the following as institutional barriers: inappropriate study times, cost of courses, scheduling, time constraints, financial, and institutions not accepting credit for prior experiential learning. They acknowledged dispositional barriers such as an individual's personal attitudes, abilities, motivation, and race may determine whether they are active or inactive students. Roblin et al. (1993) recommended educational bridging and support programs to integrate these students into the post-secondary education system.

Forman (1977) and Santa Cruz, Hepler, and Hepler (1979) questioned whether the educationally disadvantaged or slow learners are products of a traditional learning system that differs radically from their learning style. McKenzie (1988) and McKenzie & Mitchinson (1989) believed the educator's lack of knowledge of various educational theories and evaluating minority students according to middle class norms contributed to withdrawals. Richardson, Simmons, and de los Santos, (1987) agreed that "minority achievement is viewed as a preparation problem rather than a racial problem" (p.22).

Orfield (1992) cautioned that in the last decade in the United States, the costs of post-secondary education have soared and barriers have increased for low-income families. Canadian Federation of Students (1997) identified "(T)he need for standards and the removal of barriers is important for all Canadians, and is especially important for those groups that have historically been under-represented: aboriginal students, students from lower-economic backgrounds, rural students, and others" (p.45). Hikel (1994) summarized the barriers as financial,

academic, personal, social, and cultural which determine who will participate in post-secondary education.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Isitt et al. (1989) and Roblin et al. (1993) acknowledged the need to improve post-secondary opportunities for disadvantaged groups as mainstream universities are not meeting their needs successfully. Levin and Unruh (1990) agreed that institutions do not have the resources to accommodate students with varying needs. "Universities can try to combat these problems by a policy of decentralization that permits smaller units to maintain a clear sense of purpose and to respond more quickly and sensitively to the needs of their members" (Bok, 1982, p.70).

Hikel (1994) identified these needs as academic, social and financial which are experienced by certain minority groups such as northerners of aboriginal background who face specific barriers. To overcome barriers, conditions need to take into account "the diverse learning needs, and varied social economic circumstances of students, and by developing appropriate innovative curriculum, delivery strategies and student academic, financial and personal supports" (Hikel, 1994, p.14). Access students require more coaching, pre-course orientation, remedial, and admission/course standards adjustment. "The key to making employment development services more effective is flexibility-by tailoring programs to individual needs" (Agenda, 1994, p.10). Support services would provide remedial assistance, modify the course curriculum, and provide a rich network of academic counselling and financial support. Manitoba had to develop a "comprehensive range of programs with the objective of achieving equality of results for adult learners who are traditionally denied either access to or success in post-secondary educational endeavour" (McKenzie, 1988, p.5). Poonwassie (1995) felt that the need for continuous adult learning will increase, as a trained workforce is required for a sophisticated technology to fulfil the demands of an industrialized

nation. Especially the demand for teachers and social workers in northern communities (Hikel,

1994). A primary intent of the access "programs is to increase Aboriginal entry to and success in

post-secondary education" (Roblin et al., 1993, p. 48).

WHAT DOES ACCESS MEAN?

Roblin et al. (1993) defined accessibility "as the opportunity for individuals who are

qualified to participate in a post-secondary education program of their choice, irrespective of

circumstance" (p.33). The key objectives of accessibility to higher education are to provide

increased economic productivity and the pursuit of social justice (Anisef, 1985). The target groups

are identified as disadvantaged social and cultural groups (Anisef, 1985) and those facing higher

educational disadvantage (Hikel, 1994). In Manitoba, in 1969, the New Democratic Party provided

funding for disadvantaged groups to access education at all levels (Lukinski, 1997). Porter and

Jasmin (1987) suggested "that efforts over the last two decades to increase accessibility and

participation have produced some tangible results" (p.9).

Prior to 1969, Canada did provide free post-secondary education to certain groups: 1) In

1945 the Veterans Rehabilitation Act provided grants to WWII veterans for tuition fees and living

allowance while advancing their education; 2) National Defense provides university education; 3)

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development provides funds as a treaty right for

tuition, educational and living costs; 4) Convicts within the prison system have had the tuition fees

waived; 5) Most post-secondary institutions had a contractual right to free tuition for children of

faculty and support staff; 6) Newfoundland had free tuition up until the early 1960s; and 7) Under

the previous Unemployment Insurance Act and the present Employment Insurance Act, tuition fees

to college courses were paid for the 're-training' of unemployed people (CFS, 1997, p.50).

Access followed the principle of affirmative action which has played a significant role in

opening up employment opportunities for qualified women and minorities (Jaschik, 1995).

McKenzie & Mitchinson (1989) criticized the principle of affirmative action as it most often "has

been limited to enhancing accessibility; once admitted, these students have been subjected to the

same curriculum and teaching methods as all other students" (p.112). Varpalotai (1995) agreed that

affirmative action is positive discrimination to help the traditionally disadvantaged overcome

societal and systemic barriers but "access alone does not address the deeper issue of inequalities

within the educational system itself (p.248). McKenzie & Mitchinson (1989) considered three

aspects of equity in relation to post-secondary education: "equality of opportunity in relation to

access, equality of opportunity in relation to treatment once admitted, and equality of outcome or

results" (p. 113). Poonwassie (1993), Agenda (1994) , and CFS (1997) stressed the importance of

improving access to higher education with stable funding and fairness.

Some critics argued that open accessibility is a waste of taxpayer's money as incompetent

students are ruining universities and are destroying the system (Bercuson, et al., 1984). Poonwassie

(1993) countered this argument that is not about quality, but rather maintaining a small elite at the

universities who would in turn hold power and control, thus, the status quo. Both Poonwassie

(1993) and Orlikow (1994) cautioned that these attitudes preserve intellectual conservatism and

social stratification - the well-to-do attend universities, the less well-to-do attend colleges and those

on the margin attend short-term upgrading. Government needs to increase accessibility by

providing resources for students from all socioeconomic backgrounds to attend post-secondary

education. "The goal would be to preserve and broaden access to post-secondary education through

a long-term, stable source of funding" (Varpalotai, 1995, p.18). "The Province of Manitoba

currently funds some fourteen Access programs, delivered by two universities and two community colleges" (Roblin et al., 1993, p.48).

DESIGNING ACCESS PROGRAMS

Lessard (1995) believed that educational success or failure of students is attributed to the institution and all students have the potential for success if their learning styles and pace are respected. In designing access programs for disadvantaged students, three issues were considered: affirmative action, student retention and success, and relevant curriculum and teaching styles (McKenzie & Mitchinson, 1989). McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) and Brown (1992) identified critical features such as respect, anadrogogy emphasizing experiential learning - students applying abstract concepts to their experiences, and the provision of space and time. There was a belief that disadvantaged students would be more comfortable establishing intimate relationships with counsellors when services were off-campus (Hikel, 1994). Bok (1982) recommended that the university environment be improved for minority students.

The model needs to implement equality of treatment so that the educational program meets students' needs (Varpalotai, 1995 & Brown, 1992). This model represents the medieval universities where a group of masters and students learned together and universities were a place of adventure where topics, ideas, theories were explored, investigated and discussed (Ross 1976).

Bercuson et al. (1984) criticized this model as the supermarket style of curriculum with classrooms that are arenas for discussions, questions asked and answered, and uninformed, rough, and inexperienced students challenged the opinions of professors. These critics believed that the professor should stand at the podium, not the students, and the professor should teach and the students should learn.

COST OF ONE ACCESS PROGRAM

Hikel (1994) and Isitt et al. (1989) revealed the significant difference in the graduation rate

of students at off-campus programs such as the Winnipeg Education Centre - Social Work Program

where the costs appeared lower than graduates from the Fort Garry Campus. Hikel (1994) averaged

the total expenditures of each program and the number of graduates which reflected the average per

student cost. The cost of social worker graduate at Winnipeg Education Centre is $89,476,

compared to the University's cost per graduate of $142,833, (Hikel, 1994). According to Isitt et al.

(1989), the annual cost of the Social Work Program was "$1,162,280 in the past year of which

$633,680 or 54.5% was incurred providing financial assistance to students" (p.27). The remainder

covered the instructional costs and supports cost that if reduced could result in a decline in

graduation rates. However, Roblin et al. (1993) acknowledged that enrollment in access programs

has remained stable even though funding has decreased.

SUPPORTS PROVIDED BY WINNIPEG EDUCATION CENTRE - SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Levin and Unruh (1990) admitted "that the various areas of need--financial, academic, and

personal--are so interrelated and intertwined in the individual that each affects all, and that success

is a product of strength in all..." (p.262). It was identified that non-traditional students required

financial, academic, and personal counselling supports to complete post-secondary education.

Financial Support - Losty and Kreilick (1982) identified a link between age, ethnic

background, and lack of finances as to the probability of students continuing their education.

Orfield (1992) and CFS (1997) emphasized the direct relationship between money and access as

the higher tuition the less participation, especially for minority, poor students, thus, limiting their

choices. Financial expenses include "out-of pocket expenses, such as textbooks, supplies,

transportation and living accommodations; forgone income; all expenses in relation to family savings and income; as well as the availability of student employment" (CFS, 1997, p.33). "Research conducted in Illinois showed that financially needy students often dropped out, changed from four-year to two-year colleges, or shifted to part-time status" (Orfield, 1992, p.342). A concern of his was that "members of minority groups may also face discrimination and lower pay, even after they graduate" (Orfield, 1992, p.364). Hikel (1994) estimated that the average Canadian graduate could incur approximately a $31,680 debt to complete a four-year program. Not only do students have to repay their debt but the four years of attending university can add "up to $100,000 in lost income and forgone seniority for the purposes of benefits" (CFS, 1997, p.33). The Canadian Federation of Students (1997) agreed that "more students are leaving colleges and universities with arresting liabilities, before they have even begun to look for increasingly-scarce jobs" (p.20). Orfield (1992) contended that financial aid addresses only one dimension of college access as these students are forced to work more, leaving less time to study.

Academic Support - Orfield (1992) stressed that "working your way through college" affects students who arrive on campus poorly prepared and reduces their chances of graduating. Centra (1979) and Anderson and McKenzie (1982) recognized the need for students' writing skills to be improved prior to college and/or remedial work for courses that were too difficult to understand during the first year of college. Poonwassie (1993) did not believe that high schools provide "aboriginal students with adequate entry qualifications so that they can utilize their intelligence and capabilities to the fullest at the university level" (p.412). He recommended additional supports such as academic planning, tutoring, and monitoring for these students to succeed in universities. Hikel (1994) suggested "the need to make sure that program capacity for the special design of curriculum, teaching methods and emotional supports for students must be

preserved and, if possible, strengthened" (p.32). Anderson and McKenzie (1982) and Hikel (1994) identified that some students may drop out due to academic difficulties, but also to personal problems.

Personal Counselling Supports - Losty and Kreilick (1982), Poonwassie (1993), and Hikel (1994) stressed that appropriate counselling, personal supports and open communication with program personnel for students are crucial for completion. Poonwassie (1993) identified the issues students face: "loneliness, adjustment to an urban setting, the discipline required by rigorous programs of study, sexuality, lack of confidence and self-esteem, and dealing with delayed gratification. Family counselling becomes necessary when a spouse (usually male) becomes jealous of the progress of the partner. Sometimes all of these problems are exacerbated by unemployment, and/or alcoholism " (p.418). McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) agreed that "personal and family needs are as important as academic needs, and support services that integrate a concern for both requirements are particularly important to students' success" (p.119). Griffiths (1977) suggested "that without *sufficient* sensitive counselling, no other strengths or supports in a program will achieve either completion of training or practitioner competence" (p.41).

Griffiths (1977) and McKenzie (1988) concluded that support systems for students, the inclusion of relevant content in the curriculum, tutoring supports, small group counselling, and positive relations with faculty members are needed to insure students are given every possible opportunity to satisfactorily complete their education. "The financial assistance and additional personal counselling, as described by both past and current students, are essential components of participation by members of targeted social groups" (Isitt et al., 1989, p.32). Roblin et al. (1993) recommended that "support services to assist students must be further developed" (p.37).

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Losty and Kreilick (1982) and Hikel (1994) agreed that graduating with a degree is an excellent indicator of success. Bok (1982) believed success can be measured by salary or other criteria of accomplishments. He did not see the value of using test score and grades in the operationalization of success as there are other variables such as values, perspectives, and experiences which contribute to the success of a person. Griffiths (1977) and Roblin et al. (1993) believed access programs succeeded in the integration of aboriginal people into post-secondary education.

PROGRAM SUCCESS

Levin and Unruh (1990), Orfield (1992), Poonwassie (1993), and Orlikow (1994) discussed how "special" programs successfully graduate poor minorities, Aboriginal, and/or single parent families on welfare and with inadequate education, thus providing them with an opportunity to contribute to the community as well as changing their own lives. Orfield (1992) stressed these programs "are doing invaluable work, it is essential to develop and implement programs for increasing minority enrollment and retention" (p.364).

In Isitt's et al. (1989) and Hikel's (1994) reviews of programs, they found that the WEC-SWP graduated approximately 74% of students admitted annually and 88% were employed in Social Services or in post-graduate education. McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) reported that "(By) May 1988, three of the graduates from the inner-city program had been admitted for direct entry into the MSW program, and in May 1988, a Winnipeg Education Centre graduate won the gold medal for highest standing in undergraduate social work education at the University of Manitoba" (p.121). The attrition rate is lower at WEC than the Fort Garry campus. Employers found graduates from both off-campus and on-campus to be comparable (Isitt et al., 1989 & Hikel,

1994). The Centre's Social Work Program was described as successful by representatives of social service organizations working in the Inner City (Isitt et al., 1989 & McKenzie & Mitchinson, 1989). McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) revealed that the largest group of graduates have been Aboriginal. Hikel (1994) summarized that the WEC-SWP as one of the most successful programs and it "correlates with educational success for disadvantaged Manitobans" (p.43). Isitt et al. (1989) believed "that the program is meeting the objectives set out in the agreement between the University and the Government" (p.40). Hikel (1994) affirmed that these programs should continue as they are overcoming barriers for Aboriginal and minorities.

Anderson and McKenzie (1982), Richardson et al. (1987), McKenzie (1988), Isitt et al. (1989), McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989), and Hikel (1994) identified critical components which contribute to success as: segregated, small, hospitable environment; geographic location; the provision of a variety of student support services; student involvement; close interaction among students and between students and faculty; the adaptation of curriculum and teaching methods; and special courses with increased classroom time for interactive learning.

Unfortunately, there is limited research on accessibility and educational opportunities (Anisef, 1985). CFS (1997) suggested the establishment of a federal department to co-ordinate all separate components. Ghosh (1995) agreed as "Canada has the distinction of being the only Western country with no federal office of education, no national policy, and neither adequate national data collection on schools nor a national mechanism for dissemination of educational information. At a time when education's role in society is acknowledged to be very important, the Constitution prevents the federal government from participating formally in important policy decisions and reform initiatives" (p.8).

STUDENT SUCCESS

Once again, it was identified by Anisef (1985) that "(A) review of literature in this general

area reveals few published studies by academics" (p.215). Hikel (1994) recommended follow up

studies should take place "(E)ight to ten months after a graduate completes a course, the graduate

will be contacted by the province to determine his/her post-graduation career progress. These data

will become useful both in evaluating the actual performances of specific programs and in the

content of the career planning and interest inventory seminar for new applicants" (p.77). He, also,

recommended that the province conduct annual telephone sample survey of graduates of programs

within a year of graduation, to determine their career development and effectiveness of programs.

These annual surveys would verify job search success and "create data for use in setting

performance standards and for future career orientation and job search seminars" (Hikel, 1994.

p.4).

Evers and Gilbert (1991) in their study of Canadian corporations' perceptions of their

university educated employees, used graduates estimates of their development rather than using a

pre-education and post-education measure. "To date research fails to establish the exact

relationship between all the variables to accurately predict post-secondary education enrolment and

participation rates" (CFS, 1997, p.30).

A study by Britton and Haughey (1986) examined the "relationship between education and

the early employment experience of graduates" (p.i). Their sample had a response rate of 82% from

graduates of Career/Technical programs and Trade/Vocational programs. Ninety-one percent were

employed and 74% required a diploma/certificate for the job. Hikel's (1994) study of graduates

from 1991/92 to 1993/94 revealed that 79% were employed in a declining labor market and 11%

were continuing their education. "Of those surveyed, some 86% found employment directly related to their field of study, while only 4% found employment not related to their field" (Hikel, 1994, p.50). In Paju's (1995) study of 1990 graduates, he found that level of education improves full-time work opportunities and increased earning power.

Losty's and Kreilick's (1982) study of inactive and active students revealed personal satisfaction, job-related and internal forces such as motivation and skills as assets in their pursuit of education. Matthiasson and Kristjanson (1981) and Levin and Unruh (1990) identified personal motivation being crucial for people who had not experienced success in formal education. "A student's belief about the cause of past performance affect that student's expectations about future success, emotional reactions to that performance, and on future task behaviour" (DeDellfeuille & Abrami, 1986, p. 52).

Critics such as Bercuson et al. (1984) contended that open accessibility allows incompetent students to enter university which decreases the quality of education thus ruining the universities. Anisef (1985) challenged these contentions as they are not based on hard evidence and "(w)hether the elite years in Canadian higher education actually produces better students than today's requires empirical research to test this hypothesis" (p. 216).

BENEFITS OF PROVIDING SUPPORTS TO NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Personal

The study conducted by Evers and Gilbert (1991) was to reveal how university courses and experiences contributed to students' personal and skill development. Their data revealed that university courses developed the following: conceptualization, interpersonal, technical, quantitative/mathematical, problem-solving/analytical, personal organization/time management, thinking, reasoning, and learning skills. Students' work experience developed: risk-taking;

leadership/influence; coordinating; problem-solving; creativity/innovation; and oral and written communication skills. Graduates felt that visioning, managing conflict and acting as leaders were the least developed skills. Other skills developed were "self-confidence, motivation, ability to handle stress, ability to deal with conflict, ability to understand others, responsibility, social skills, social and political awareness, concern for others, caring for others, ability to establish relationships" (Evers & Gilbert, 1991, p.60).

Anderson and Munoz (1986) reported in their qualitative study of the WEC program "that students identified significant changes in self-esteem and self-confidence that reflected an integration of personal and professional skills, and that these changes were accompanied by higher expectations of themselves and others" (p.122). Students understood the nature of oppression and that they did not have to be victims but could be empowered agents of change in social work practice (Anderson & Munoz, 1986). McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) found evidence of students' growth and development through the experiences of sharing in a multi cultural mixed group. Poonwassie (1993) recognized education and training as crucial and necessary for building self-esteem, self-reliance and self-determination for Aboriginal people.

Professional

Hikel (1994) hypothesized that university training "widens one's range of choices" (p.31). Anisef (1985) and Paju (1995) proclaimed that higher education provides greater job stability. This is supported by the article "Class of 1995 scored jobs" in the *Brandon Sun* on April 29, 1999. It reported that "StatsCan said the higher the education level, the lower the unemployment rate. Jobless rates among university and college graduates have remained relatively stable over the last decade or so, although rates among trade and vocational grads tend to fluctuate with the labor market" (p.12). Grubb (1993) claimed that a "baccalaureate degree is substantial and significant,

can be ascribed to higher ability, socio-economic status, and greater labor market experience; but even with all variables controlled the advantage of a baccalaureate degree is still substantial" (p.371). These "credentials provide individuals with access to "careers" where they can advance rather than "jobs" where they cannot" (Grubb, 1991, p.377).

Britton and Haughey (1986) studied a Manitoba Education Degree and compared the graduates with similar graduates nationally. Seventy-nine percent of students enrolled in a program wanted to improve their career prospects. Seventy percent wanted to acquire specialized skills and knowledge for their chosen occupation. Ninety-four percent of Manitoba undergraduates and 95% of master graduates rated themselves as satisfied or very satisfied in their jobs. Ninety-one percent of Manitoba graduates were employed. Overall, Manitoba graduates "enjoyed higher levels of employment than their National counterparts..." (Britton, 1986, p. ii). Interestingly, 93% of Manitoba graduates remained in Manitoba, even though salaries were lower in Manitoba when compared nationally (Britton, 1986). This is true for Social Work graduates from WEC as 3 out of 30 left the province (Hikel, 1994). Yet in 1982, Anisef envisioned a grim future for university graduates as he predicted "unemployment and under-employment being the inevitable consequence for successful completion" (p.15). However, in a declining economy, employers will demand higher educational credentials and expect employees to be re-educated several times during their lives thus "learning a living" (Anisef, 1982 & 1985; Ghosh, 1995).

Economic

Anisef (1985), Ahamad (1987), Grubb (1993), Hikel (1994), Orlikow (1994), and Ghosh (1995) declared that life-time earning potential rises with level of education one attains, especially successful completion of a degree. The *Brandon Sun* reported that "University graduates made more money, with median earnings of $33,800 in 1997 dollars, compared with $25,700 for college

grads and $23,400 for those from trade and vocational schools" (April 29,1999, p.12). "It was

motivated by the belief, endorsed by economists, that higher education was a key to economic

productivity and would yield higher rates of economic return for both individuals and society than

other forms of investment" (Anisef, 1985, p.1). The data collected from the National Graduates

Surveys and Follow-up Graduates Surveys showed "a link between higher education and training,

and labor market success--a perception shared by many graduates from the class of '90" (Paju,

1995, p.3).

However, Britton and Haughey (1986) and Grubb (1993) maintained that even with a

baccalaureate degree women earn less than men and education attained by individuals in their late

twenties or early thirties provided no economic advantage. Ahamad (1987) suggested that

"students from high-income families are more likely than those from low-income families to

receive the income benefits associated with university education" (p.4). However, CFS (1997)

insisted that the social and economic benefits of education are also noticeable in communities.

Community

Levin and Unruh (1990) contended that "(E)conomically, small northern communities have

profited by having their own residents moved from dependency on transfer payments to full

employment in secure occupations and to positions of community leadership" (p.259). The increase

of Aboriginal teachers from access programs in Manitoba "have contributed to the stabilization of

the teaching force in native schools and have provided a valuable resource for communities

wishing to move away from education administered,...toward local control of education for their

children. Graduates of the programs now make up a large proportion of the leaders and

spokespersons for native communities" (Levin & Unruh, 1990, p.265). McKenzie (1988) portrayed

the graduates of WEC Social Work as highly valued "employees both within traditional and non-

traditional social service settings, and many are taking leadership roles in empowering their own communities to take increased responsibility for the delivery of social development programs which affect their lives" (p.3). Hikel (1994) agreed that graduates contribute to community resources and development of remote northern communities.

Anisef (1985) found that post-secondary education significantly increases "the economic and social opportunities of disadvantaged Canadians" (p.3). Levin and Unruh (1990) recognized that education gradually breaks "the vicious cycle of under-development, by providing role models which have had a noticeable effect on raising the expectations, and consequently, the commitment of the young" (p.259). McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) identified that students accessing higher education had the "unanticipated result of influencing other family members" (p.122).

Minority students benefit non minority students by sharing their experiences so that non minority students can understand and relate to target groups they serve (Griffiths, 1977). "Such experiences, coupled with research on role modeling, suggest some essential support systems, not only to assure practitioner competence, but to assure students that there are Indian or other minority social workers who are competent enough to practice, to teach, to administer, and to lead in their profession" (Griffiths, 1977, p.41). Archibald (1995) expressed this eloquently when she wrote "to increase cultural power, wealth, and strength, one must give it (culture) away by sharing it with others. Sharing a culture in the First Nations way is a reciprocal process requiring time and the good will to learn, to teach, and learn, and to participate in essential cultural protocol and practice" (p.342). Varpalotai (1995) theorized "that education is the gateway to social mobility" (p.248).

Society

Anisef (1985) indicated that a "highly educated labor force is thought to be more productive and better able to initiate and adapt to technical progress" (p.18). For Canada to remain one of the

world's top economies, it must encourage Canadians to be educated, highly skilled life learners adjusting to the rapid changing technology and competing in a global economy (Agenda, 1994 & Paju, 1995). Post-secondary education is necessary to foster "an informed, knowledgeable, caring community where each member contributes to the fullest of his or her ability" (CFS, 1997, p. 13) and to ensure democracy.

Roblin (1993) and CFS (1997) cautioned that there are no guarantees that education means a job and increased financial wealth but it does decrease the dependency on the social safety net. There is less reliance on the health care, welfare, and unemployment support systems.

Education does increase the participation and understanding of our democratic government (CFS, 1997). It is an important function and an asset of our society. Canadian citizens are an important human resource and when education supports activities of society, it is a public investment into the growth and future of our country (Roblin et al., 1993). In other words, education benefits everyone and should be available to everyone (CFS, 1997). The federal government sums it up nicely in their pamphlet *Straight talk about staying in school* which provides three "Facts": (1) more education means more job choices; (2) more education means more money; and (3) more education means more freedom (Canada, 1991, pp.5-7).

SUMMARY

Ross (1976) commended the university for serving both individual and society needs, thus, surviving and flourishing over the past 800 years. Roblin et al. (1993) recommended that the mission of our post-secondary education system is "to contribute to the cultural, social, and economic development of Manitoba, Canada and the world by the creation, preservation, and communication, as well as the application of knowledge" (p.11). Education does lead to a richer fuller life with significant gains. Not only does it enhance the individual's life but it is also a major

civilizing influence (Roblin et al., 1993). It is the key to increased economic productivity and equal participation by members of society (Anisef, 1985). Bercuson et al. (1984) summed it up in three words - education means wealth.

Throughout the literature, it was identified that certain groups are prevented from accessing and participating in post-secondary education. These groups may not have the financial resources, academic preparation, and personal and/or family stability to access and participate in education. Mainstream education institutions encourage enrollment from non-traditional students but they are unable to meet their specialized needs. Thus access programs have been implemented with supports to help non-traditional students overcome barriers. Evaluations and reviews indicated these programs have been successful in retaining and graduating students. There is very little research that track non-traditional students after graduation to identify the benefits obtained from their post-secondary education. These benefits may be personal development and achievements, professional opportunities and advancements, economic increases and stability, community growth and contributions to society.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The qualitative methodologies and procedures described in this chapter will provide the descriptive data from people's own written or spoken words (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). "Research studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials are frequently referred to as qualitative research" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p.442). This study collected data from the graduates of Winnipeg Education Centre - Social Work Program (WEC-SWP) to answer the following research questions:

1. What supports at the WEC-SWP assisted non-traditional students in accessing and completing post-secondary education?

In order to answer question number one, the focus was on the following sub questions:

(a) What financial supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(b) What academic supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(c) What personal counselling supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(d) What additional supports assisted you in achieving your degree? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

2. What benefits did these students acquire by completing a post-secondary degree?

To answer question number two, the sub question was:

Identify the benefits you acquired in your life after graduating from WEC-SWP (include personal,

professional, economic, community, and society)? In addition, the research explored the barriers

that non-traditional students faced in accessing and participating in post-secondary education.

Cobb & Hagemaster (1987) identified eight characteristics to evaluate qualitative research.

They are:

> 1. there is attention to the social context in which events occur have meaning; 2. there is an emphasis on understanding the social world from the point of view of the participants in it; 3. the approach is primarily inductive; 4. the major data collection techniques include interviewing, participation-observation, examination of personal documents and other printed materials; 5. procedures and tools for data gathering are subject to ongoing revision in the field situation; 6. the concern is primarily with discovery and description, although verification is also possible; 7. hypotheses are usually developed during the research, rather than a priori; and 8. analysis is presented for the most part in narrative rather than numerical form (p.138).

Thus this research proposed to gather data from the graduates of WEC-SWP to gain a better

understanding of their life experiences and their point of view about the barriers they had faced, the

supports that assisted them and the benefits they have acquired. This was achieved through face-to-

face interviews.

CONTEXT

The programs implemented at WEC were guided by a critical paradigm as the initial

purpose was to create social reform by using Inner-City schools of Winnipeg to become change

agents. Organizers agreed with Kincheloe's and McLaren's (1994) view of schools as "capitalist

agencies of social, economic, cultural, and bureaucratic reproduction" and had hoped that schools

"could become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among

teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework" (p.139). Kincheloe and

McLaren (1994) believed "that schools can become institutions where forms of knowledge, values,

and social relations are taught for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment

rather than subjugation" (139). Critical organizers saw that education was delivered from the

white, middle class perspective to students from varying cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Some minority students could not relate to a middle class education, thus not completing their

education. WEC-SWP provided an encouraging and supportive learning environment for adult

students to gain an understanding of barriers in order to become empowered, critical, independent

participants who could enlighten society. "Critical research can be best understood in the context of

the empowerment of individuals" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p.140).

PROCEDURE

This qualitative research followed the steps identified by Fraenkel and Wallen (1996): "1.

Identification of the phenomenon to be studied; 2. Identification of the participants in the study; 3.

Generation of hypotheses; 4. Data collection; 5. Data analysis; 6. Drawing conclusions" (pp. 443-

445).

1. Identifying the phenomenon. This research project was guided by the phenomenological

perspective which is central to the concept of qualitative methodology. "The phenomenologist

views human behaviour--what people say and do--as a product of how people interpret their world"

(Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p.13). I was interested in investigating whether non-traditional students

benefited from a post-secondary education which provided supports in accessing and completing

educational programs. During the investigation, I was interested in hearing how graduates

described their experiences prior to, during, and after graduation. Also, I inquired how they

interpreted their world then and now. "Through empathic understanding and direct experience of

the social world, we gain insight into a given social phenomenon" (Goodman & Adler, 1985, p.4).

2. Identifying the participants. The participants of this study were graduates from the WEC-SWP

from 1985 to 1989. These years were chosen as students received academic, financial, and

personal counselling supports. Since I graduated in 1987, I did not chose any participants from that year thus I did a purposive sample. I used my judgment to select a sample that I believed would provide the data needed to answer the research questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

According to Isitt, Gunn, & Brennand (1989) there were "nine intakes of students to the Program between 1981 and 1989 at an average of 18 students per year. There have also been five graduating classes between 1985 and 1989 with an average of 13.4 graduates per year" (p.25). The total number of graduates is approximately 65. Some of these graduates have left the province or moved to another location. I am guessing that approximately 15 graduates have moved out of the province or to various locations in the province. Due to time and cost restraints, the sample population was limited geographically to Winnipeg and Brandon.

Four participants were chosen from the sample population for the study. I have a WEC telephone directory with the names of people enrolled for the years of 1985 to 1989. The participants to be interviewed were successful as graduates between the years 1985 to 1989 with the exception of the year 1987. I did chose a female immigrant graduate from 1987 to do a pretest of the interview guide. Ideally, the sample population should have represented the other four years, should have had equal male and female representation, and should have represented each target group. Unfortunately, this was not possible as I was unable to locate the graduates through the telephone directory so I had to chose participants I could locate. Thus, I selected the participants deliberately by knowing where they were employed at the time and whether or not they were available. I was fortunate that the first four participants contacted were eager to participate in the study. The sample population consisted of three females and one male and representation from the Aboriginal , Metis, and single parent target groups. Immigrants were not represented in this study. Participants were advised that they could voluntarily withdraw at any time of the study.

3. Generating a hypotheses. The following hypothesis was reformulated as the study progressed. My hypothesis was that non-traditional students required supports to access and complete post-secondary education programs. These students did benefit from participating and successfully completing a degree. Also, there are long term benefits to society as a whole.

4. Data Collection. In qualitative investigation, data collection is a process, a path of discovery (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Data may be collected in several ways. In this qualitative research, the data was collected using two face-to-face interviews. Through this technique, I collected data to examine how the provision of supports for non-traditional students in accessing post-secondary education benefited them after graduation and the larger community.

Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of Manitoba to conduct this proposed research. The participants were sent a letter (Appendix A) explaining the research. Approximately within a week, they received a telephone call from me to schedule a preferred interview date and an agreed upon place for the interview within a pre established time frame. These interviews were conducted within a month. Two in depth interviews were scheduled and two hours were scheduled for the first interview. One half and hours were scheduled for the second interview. This was ample time for both interviews. By using the interview technique, I learned how the graduates perceived their situation (Eisner, 1991). "What the researchers are unable to see for themselves is obtained by interviewing people who did see...(Stake, 1994, p.242).

At the time of the interview, the participants signed the consent form (Appendix B) prior to conducting the interview. The consent form asked the participants' consent to audio taping the interviews. Prior to the interview, I stressed to the participants that I wanted to hear their stories and wanted them to provide the details as if I was unfamiliar with the WEC-SWP. Eisner (1991) suggested that interviewer needs to put the person at ease, "to have some sense of what he or she

wants to know, but not to be either rigid or mechanical in method" (p. 183). The first part of the interview was structured by using the interview guide (appendix C) as the participants were asked demographic questions. The remainder of the interview followed the interview guide informally, using open ended questions and probes, allowing the interviewee to disclose information that was relevant to their experiences. According to Fontana and Frey (1994), "(T)he interviewer must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive, a good listener, and so on" (p. 365). Interviewees were asked to respond to barriers experienced, supports used, and benefits of graduating. "Conducting a good interview is, in some ways, like participating in a good conversation: listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculations, which are less likely to provide genuinely meaningful information" (Eisner, 1991, p. 183).

All the participants consented to have the interviews audio tape for accurate data collection and verification. During the interviews, field notes recorded impressions, feelings, actions, and insights. A field diary contained my reflections, feelings, opinions, perceptions, and experiences throughout this phase of the study. Fontana and Frey (1994) recommended that a researcher needs to "(a) take notes regularly and promptly; (b) write everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time; (c) try to be as inconspicuous as possible in note taking; and (d) analyze one's notes frequently" (p.368). I spent a half hour after the interview reflecting and writing down my impressions and insights. As the data was being collected, the data was analyzed simultaneously.

5. *Data Analysis* - Huberman and Miles (1994) advised the researcher to design a good storage and retrieval system to keep track of data for easy and flexible access. They recommended that raw data must be converted into words. Field notes must be legible. The audio tapes of the interviews were transcribed, read, corrected, and edited. Themes, hunches, ideas and patterns were noted as

the data was being read, recorded, and reread. Data was analyzed in many ways and numerous times. It was important during analysis to keep in mind that "(T)he hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes" (Janesick, 1994, p.217). To prevent overlooking important ideas, time was spent reflecting, allowing my intuitive sense to gain insights.

As concepts were identified, they were noted and listed. Then the concepts were broken down into categories and further reduced into subcategories. The concepts developed were assigned a letter, the categories were highlighted by coloured markers and the subcategories were identified by a symbol (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). They recommended coding the questionnaires, transcripts, and field notes by putting the number, letter, and symbol corresponding to each topic next to the relevant text in the margins of your notes. The original copy was stored on a computer diskette and a copy was used to reorganize the data, by cutting and pasting and copying overlapping ideas that need to be pasted under different concepts. Each concept had a separate file. Text that was not coded was reviewed once again to make sure ideas were not overlooked. When the coding process was completed, the data was read, sorted, and examined for emerging patterns and themes (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Eisner's (1991) principle was kept in mind to "(U)se what you need to use to say what you want to say" (p. 187). When a theme, hypothesis, or pattern was identified inductively, the researcher then moved "into a verification mode, trying to confirm or qualify the finding. This then keys off a new inductive cycle" (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p.431).

6. Drawing Conclusions - Conclusions were drawn and verified by interpreting and drawing meaning from the data collected from the participants (Huberman & Miles, 1994). These interpretations involved the perspectives and voices of the people whom I studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1994 p.274). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) conclusions are formulated throughout the research process.

VERIFICATION AND CREDIBILITY

This qualitative design used the interview technique to obtain the data and the literature review to verify the data. The collection of data from different perspectives, also, contributed to credibility. Eisner (1991) described triangulation or structural corroboration as "confluence of multiple sources of evidences or the recurrence of instances that support a conclusion"(p.55). According to Stake, (1996) "(T)riangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p.241). Also, as the researcher, I was an instrument who had participated in the WEC-SWP during the identified years. "The use of multiple types of data is one way to foster credibility" (Eisner, 1991, p.110). Janesick, (1994) judged if a qualitative study is credible by addressing the following three questions:

> 1. What techniques and methods were used to ensure the integrity, validity, and accuracy of the findings? 2. What does the researcher bring to the study in terms of experience and qualifications? 3. What assumptions undergird the study? Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description. In other words, is the explanation credible (p.216).

The techniques used to collect the data have reflected what the participants were perceiving in their situations. My experiences were helpful in probing for more disclosure without leading them. Throughout the research, my assumptions and biases were clearly stated.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In qualitative design, the researcher is the key research instrument (Eisner, 1991 & Janesick, 1994). It was important for me to "establish trust, rapport, and authentic communications patterns with the participants" (Janesick, 1994, p.211). I established a comfort level so that participants were relaxed and felt safe. During the interviews, I listened intently and observed their body language and their tone of voice. Through my observations, I was cued to probe further or

sensed the participant's fear of disclosure. Oldfather and West (1994) recommended that the researcher ""read" their participants--discovering which questions or issues are important to the insiders of the culture they are hoping to understand, collaborating to shape the direction of the inquiry accordingly"(p.24). Eisner (1991) discussed having "(T)he ability to see what counts is one of the features that differentiates novices from experts" (p. 34). As a researcher, I encouraged the participants to speak openly and honestly and allowed them to reflect and disclose what was important to them.

Janesick (1994) and Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) recommended that the researcher describes their role and clearly state their biases, assumptions, and ideological preference. The participants knew me as a graduate of WEC-SWP in 1987. I explained to the participants that I had to be impartial and they had to provide the information. As a researcher, I was able to identify and empathize with participants in order to understand them from their own frames of reference (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The participants did provide feedback that I was able to accomplish this without projecting my own experiences, feelings, and reflections.

Qualitative research is holistic which views the larger, whole picture and wants to understand the relationships within the whole system (Janesick, 1994). Hodder (1994) suggested that the methods for the study of personal experience should be:

> simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By *inward* we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By *outward* we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment or what E. M. Bruner (1986) calls reality. By *backward* and *forward* we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way (p.417).

Thus in my role as a researcher, I attempted to gain an understanding how the participants perceived their situations and experiences, internally and externally, in the past and as well as today.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study was limited to the extent that:

1. I used a small purposive sample;

2. I was a graduate of WEC-SWP;

3. it focused on one program;

4. the participants were willing to disclose their personal experiences;

5. I interpreted the data accurately.

SUMMARY

This qualitative research explored the benefits of providing supports for non-traditional students to access and complete a post-secondary education. The data was collected from 4 graduates of the WEC-SWP through semi structured interviews using the interview guide (appendix C). This method along with the literature review collected data to answer the research questions and the sub questions. After completion of the data collection, it was analyzed to identify themes or concepts and draw conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings from this study determined whether it was beneficial to provide supports for non-traditional students to access and complete post-secondary education. A brief profile of the research participants' life experiences prior to their enrolment at Winnipeg Education Centre - Social Work Program (WEC-SWP) describes aspects of the non-traditional student. Their experiences included their child, teenage, and adult years, education levels attained, financial situations, and personality characteristics. The research participants discussed some problems they endured and the supports they used during their enrolment at WEC-SWP. They acknowledged how they and others have benefitted from the opportunity and the supports provided by WEC-SWP. Throughout the chapter, the findings will be verified by referring to various authors.

The data was collected by using an interview guide (appendix C) which was divided into three parts. The questions in the guide collected data to answer the following research questions:

1. What supports at the WEC-SWP assisted non-traditional students in accessing and completing post-secondary education?

(a) What financial supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(b) What academic supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(c) What personal counselling supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

(d) What other supports assisted you in achieving your degree? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

2. What benefits did these students acquire by completing a post-secondary degree? The sub-question was: Identify the benefits you acquired in your life after graduating from WEC-SWP (include personal, professional, economic, community, and society)?

In addition, the research explored the barriers that non-traditional students faced in accessing and participating in post-secondary education.

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The four research participants will not be identified by their names in this study. Also, the use of pseudonym may misrepresent someone else by that name. Participants have been assigned letters to distinguish their stories. As identified previously, all the four participants were graduates of the WEC-SWP between the years 1985-1989. SM graduated in 1985, MA and MM graduated in 1986, and SP graduated in 1988. The sample population consisted of three females and one male. The target groups represented were Métis, Aboriginal, and single parents.

Brief Profile of the Participants

At the time of enrollment, SM was 33 years old, a white, male, single parent with two children, ages 9 and 12. He was entering a common-law relationship. "My partner was a student at WEC at the time, in the education program". He was employed full time at Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) as an apprenticing car-man. He grew up in "low income working class" family in St.Vital and the North End of Winnipeg. He attained grade 11.

MA was 37 years old, a female Aboriginal single parent with two children ages, 11 and 17. When she enrolled at WEC-SWP she was in a common-law relationship and worked at Marymound as a Child Care Worker. MA grew up on a reservation north of Winnipeg. She attained

grade 7, completed upgrading and a business skills course at Red River Community College, and a two-year child care training program through New Careers. Her first language was Saulteaux/Ojibway, then she learned English in school. As an adult, she had to learn French when she moved to Quebec with her French speaking husband. No one spoke English so she learned French by taking courses.

MM was a 23 years old Métis woman, married with 3 children ages 3, 6, and 9. She completed grade 7 and upgrading at the "Adult Education Centre on Vaughan". She grew up in the North End of Winnipeg. Her father was an alcoholic and an abuser. Her mother was involved in criminal activities and was incarcerated. As a child, MM was placed in various foster homes through the child welfare system. As a teenager, she spent time roaming the streets and became involved with alcohol, drugs, and sniff. The criminal justice and child welfare systems were part of her childhood years.

SP was 32 years old, a female Caucasian single parent of two adolescents. Prior to her enrollment, she worked for "Children's Aid of Winnipeg". She completed grade 10 and graduated with a two-year diploma from the Thunder Bay Community College in Thunder Bay, Ontario where she grew up.

Three of the four participants' marital status changed within the first year of attending WEC-SWP. MM separated, MA married her common-law partner, and SM entered a common-law relationship. The participants lived in rentals with the exception of MA who lived in her common-law partner's house.

Educational Experiences

All of the participants grew up in communities and families where education was not valued and these beliefs were passed on to their children. SM remembered the mind set from his school

years was: "if you got grade 10, that was good, it was all you needed, if you got grade 12 it was a bonus, but after that you know you worked... I don't think anyone in my family, I have 4 siblings,...nobody graduated from high school". The research participants did not have positive experiences in school. The message from their school years was graduation from high school or attendance at school was not important.

This was evident when MM's parents would not wake her up in the morning to go to school. "I didn't think at the time that my Mom really valued education. You know because there were a lot times they wouldn't even get up in the morning to wake us up". When MM did attend school, the other kids teased her and the teacher punished her for being late or missing school days. She described "I felt very isolated and in feeling that way I ran from school". Research by Olson (1995), Anisef (1985), Varpalotai (1995), and Ghosh (1995) identified that major social institutions such as education reflected, replicated, exacerbated, and legitimized inequalities through their policies and attitudes. This is an example of blaming the victim as she was failing to succeed and fit into a system (Olson, 1995 & Varpalotai, 1995). "When a teacher has difficulty teaching impoverished children, it becomes an easy matter to define them as unteachable..." (Webb & Sherman, 1989, p.473).

Two events impacted on SM's school years which were average until his family moved to an apartment in the North End of Winnipeg and his year and half older brother failed grade 7. Unfortunately, the school did not allow brothers to be in the same classroom so they had to be separated. His older brother was assigned to class B and SM was streamlined into class C which set lower standards for students. His brother teased him about being in "the dummy class". This was recognized by Varpalotai (1995) when he wrote that working-class kids were streamed into an inferior education. This became a self-fulfilling prophecy for SM as he stated "I didn't believe I had

the ability, like I had a lot of trouble with school. Like I said, I did the junior high on an installment plan, it took me 5 years to do 3 years". Merton (1968) described self-fulfilling prophecy as a *"false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come true"* (p.47).

SP dreamed of attending University but was informed by her parents that "if anyone in our family goes to University it will be one of the boys, it certainly won't be you". As a mature student and a single parent, she attended college and graduated with a two-year diploma. She wrote the law entrance exam but did not apply to university as she did not have the financial resources. This was verified in the research by CFS (1997). It was not realistic for her to apply to university as she believed "if I was going to do this I would have to be on my own".

MA who completed grade 7, described her educational experiences as:

> I never attended high school. I had tried University as a mature student and took two courses. I was just overwhelmed with the number of students and not having the opportunity to be able to meet with the Professor. Just straight lecture and you take your notes. So I withdrew rather than fail.

Isitt et al. (1989), Levin and Unruh (1990), and Roblin et al. (1993) agreed that mainstream universities were not meeting students varying needs. MA had positive educational experiences when she had the opportunity to take a course at the college level and a two-year child care program through New Careers. Both of these opportunities were through ACCESS programs.

A common factor for three of the participants SM, MM, and SP was the birth of their first child during their school years. For these participants, this meant quitting school and getting a job to support their family. These family and employment responsibilities prevented them from continuing their education (Isitt, et al., 1989 & Roblin et al., 1993).

Financial Situations

Participants grew up in low working class families or dependent on social assistance. As adults, the participants did not have the financial resources to attend university. Three of the participants were working trying to support their families. MM was not involved in financial decisions.

MM indicated "my husband was the bread winner and I relied on him to support me and the children". When I asked "What would have been your income"? She replied "I don't know, back in those years I was just pretty naive about a lot of things and was raised to respect your husband and you don't ask those questions". She revealed that there never was a problem with money but realized her husband was involved with illegal activities.

SP discussed her financial situation as difficult. "I mean there for awhile, the contract would end, I'd go on UI, and nothing else would be there and I have to go on social assistance. Financially, it was really, really difficult". She remembered her negative experiences with social assistance. "Assistance became increasingly punitive and humiliating. It didn't seem to really work towards helping anybody out, it kept people poor and it kept people feeling desperate, and it kept people feeling ashamed. It wasn't what I wanted for myself" (SP). Even though she did have a college diploma, she could not find secure long term employment to support her children.

SM accepted his status in life. "It was a given that I would work at the railway". His recollection of work was:

> I worked at the railway for 12 years and in the last few years of my time there, I started hating it more everyday. It was a very dead end thing, you know, you punched a clock at 8, you punched out again at four. It didn't provide any stimulation, any challenge, or excitement. It was just mundane same thing day in, day out.

Because of his financial responsibilities, he could not quit his job and pay his way through university as he had child support and alimony payments.

Even though MA was in a common law relationship, she could not attend university as she stressed "I was responsible for my children" from a previous marriage. "I did not want to depend on anyone. I wanted to be independent". In fact, the financial support was the main reason that all participants applied to WEC-SWP. Canadian Federation of Students (1997) consistently identified in their report that finances are a big factor whether or not students apply to a post-secondary institution.

Personality Characteristics

Participants described themselves as having low self-esteem, lack of confidence, inadequate academic preparation, insecure, embarrassed, and shy. They experienced feelings of fear, hopelessness, and helplessness. These feelings and characteristics were identified by Anderson & McKenzie (1982), Anisef (1985), Poonwassie (1993), and Roblin et al. (1993) as barriers faced by students trying to access post-secondary education.

MM remembered "the first year that I entered WEC I was very shy..., I was just extremely lacking any kind of confidence in myself..., and I was always very fearful". After her first year at WEC-SWP, she was able to overcome her shyness with support. MA described herself as "I was very shy..., insecure, lacked confidence, you know, inferior. Because I think all of us Natives come from a shamed base. I couldn't talk on the telephone...". SM didn't apply to regular university because of his negative thoughts and beliefs. "I had no confidence at all at that time. I never believed I had the ability to go to University, I felt that university was for smart people. I had poor study habits" (SM). SP described "the time I applied to the Winnipeg Education Centre I was pretty close to feeling helpless" and "really felt quite hopeless at the time".

Alcohol played a role in each participant's life, either in their childhood years or as adults. The effects of alcohol contributed to the feelings of insecurity, helplessness, low self-esteem, and lack of self-confidence.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Participants heard about the WEC-SWP through friends, supervisors, and the media. Hammond (1984) believed that most applicants heard about the program through the "grapevine". They tended to wait until the last day to apply to the program. Their motivation to apply was to change their lives and help others change their situations. SP decided on a Social Work degree as she had a positive relationship with a social worker: "Who actually saw some potential in me. And really let me know that she thought that I really could do anything that I wanted to do". MM had negative experiences with social workers thus decided to go into social work "to be totally opposite of what those social workers were way back then. You know they had power and control over your life and made decisions that a lot of time you wouldn't like but because you were a little kid you were placed wherever". Participants were very grateful for the opportunity to attend a post-secondary program which provided supports.

ENROLLMENT AT WINNIPEG EDUCATION CENTRE - SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Overcoming Problems

The following problems were identified by participants which they had to overcome during their four years at WEC-SWP. All participants had to deal with some personal issues such as: parenting, loss of money, quitting, anger, trust, authority, and physical problems.

MM experienced anger towards white authority and separated from her husband during the first year at WEC. She feared the advisors.

> They were not native people, they were white. Towards the end of the first year, I knew
> that I had to do something so I had gone and actually poured out my heart to one of the

advisors. I guess I came away from that meeting feeling really good because this person gave me a lot of strength and hope and confidence in me to go forward.

After her separation, she remembered her ex-spouse "showing up in the middle of night and doing nutty things". MM did have difficulty managing her money and had to take out a student loan to make ends meet.

SM had to go to court to have the child support payments and alimony payments reduced as his income dropped.

> I had maintenance payments and alimony payments that had to be made. I tried to get them reduced through the courts and eventually was successful, but it took them till the third year of the program before I got them adjusted to meet my new income level. I almost quit one time, that was a combination of personal things that were going on personally in my life (SM).

SP faced parenting problems when her teenage daughter ran away from home. She disclosed to her advisor: "I'm fried, I haven't slept all week, my daughter ran away from home, she is out on the street, likely hooking. She is very drug involved, you know I am sick. I was worried sick and not sleeping at night".

MA and SP experienced the stigma attached to WEC. MA experienced stigma and discrimination at a field placement from her supervisor. "I couldn't associate with the other Social Workers, she wouldn't allow me". This is MA's recollection of her discussion with a supervisor in a field placement.

> She told me that I was not to go to the other Social Workers, that I'm to go to her. And I said, "I can't go to you, because you know when I want to talk to you, you don't even turn around, you keep writing so how am I going to get any direction". And then she says "so". She said to me "why are you in the Winnipeg Education Centre, I thought it was for the underprivileged". "I filled the criteria", I said. "I go to the other Social Worker because she listens to me, she gives me direction, and tells me what I need to do. You know you never gave me any orientation... and you criticize everything I do. I am losing my self-confidence. When I walk with you, you walk in front of me. I don't feel comfortable at all here". She says to me, "while you are under me you have to come to me, not to the others or else I'll have to fail you".

After this meeting, MA said "I actually got sick. I kept that all in you know. And that is why I was barely walking". Adding to her stress, MA had to take a month off when she was diagnosed with diabetes.

SP experienced stigma when she enrolled in courses at the Fort Garry campus. "I started picking up from some people this attitude...the subtle putdowns, that WEC was not quite an academic degree. It wasn't quite as good as what I was learning on campus". She quickly realized that the caliber of education at WEC-SWP was superior after experiencing courses on campus as taking notes, memorizing, and regurgitating.

These experiences of stigma were reported to Isitt, Gunn, and Brennand (1988) who were hired by the provincial government to do a comprehensive audit on the Winnipeg Education Centre examining issues such as the quality of education and enrollment.

Although, none of the research subjects were immigrants, MA identified English as second language. "My first language is actually Saulteaux/Ojibway". She had a difficult time taking notes during class and felt very frustrated. "When I first started taking notes at WEC, I was getting really frustrated as I was trying to take everything... and I couldn't remember a thing". To overcome this, "I'd used a tape recorder for note and did a lot of pronunciation".

MA, MM, and SM identified poor study habits. Hikel (1994) stressed the need for financial, academic, and personal supports to help access students with varying learning needs and social economic circumstances.

Financial Supports

All the participants stated this was the most significant support for them which was verified by Orfield (1992) and CFS (1997) as there is a direct relationship between money and access. None

of the research participants could afford to go to university on their own. They appreciated and felt very fortunate that they received a living allowance which was enough to live on and met their basic needs. This allowance was enough to get by without worrying about paying rent and bills. The tuition and course texts were paid for. Some students needed help with housing and child care. There was an emergency fund and help with budgeting.

Financial support was important for MM when she separated from her husband as she states "I got a living allowance from them, they paid for all my courses, books, and tuition. They helped me get student housing through Manitoba Housing". Other participants commented on the importance of the financial support.

> I wouldn't have done it without the financial support. Probably a combination of my own confidence and my own abilities to be successful and then to meet my financial responsibilities, I needed to have some income as school was 5 days a week. After that it wouldn't have left a whole lot of time to hold down a part time job and earn enough money to meet my responsibilities(SM).

> It relieved me of having to worry about money. It was adequate to meet my needs, to meet our needs. There was even a small emergency fund. They tried to make it adequate so ...people wouldn't have to work full time. They could concentrate on the academics. It is too difficult to try to study when half your brain is preoccupied with being able to pay the rent this month and if something should go wrong. It relieved that kind of pressure in a really, really significant way. I may or may not have ended up going back on my own. It was really invaluable and really helped at the time. It was probably one of the biggest consideration for me (SP).

This support relieved these participants of financial pressures. As students, they were able to concentrate on academics and not have to worry about getting a part time job to pay the rent. Orfield (1992) agreed that lack of finances pressured students into working part time thus leaving less time for studying. In addition to their studies, they had to take care of children. These participants would not have been able to go to university without the financial support.

Academic Supports

MM decided "this is something I could surely use in terms of the academic support" when she heard about the WEC-SWP. During the first year at WEC-SWP, students enrolled in the study skills class to establish good study habits.

> They (WEC) provided what you'd call classes on study skills which were really, really important for me. Ready access on a daily basis to your Prof. which again was very valuable. I know for me and I can say for most of the students, appreciated that. A library there (WEC) and access to the library on campus, of course, or the University of Winnipeg library (SM).

These academic supports were helpful and important for SM.

Participants found that the study groups were a strong support and an excellent way to learn. MM stated "we use to do a lot of study groups". "Before an exam, we get together and really grill for exams" (MA). SM and SP commented in detail about the study groups.

> We would get together and hold study groups and cram before exams. Some students picked up a concept or an idea quicker than others do. You are sitting down, talking with 4 or 5 people about what you are studying, or how people understood the lecture, or how they interpreted the information, or how to write certain papers. It was really good to bounce those ideas off everybody so that was really good (SM).

> I think it was an atmosphere that I absolutely thrived on. There were people from different backgrounds. I remember I was in one class in a working group. There were five of us doing this project together and no two of us had the same original language. I mean a group of five and all of us had different original languages. It was wonderful. The richness of that experience and the potential of learning from each other were just really, really powerful (SP).

Griffiths (1977) and Archibald (1995) emphasized that the sharing of experiences and cultures were important in the learning process.

All of the research participants acknowledged the availability of tutors if students required extra assistance. Extensions were given if a student was not able to complete an assignment on the due date.

MM, MA, and SM had difficulty with the course Systematic Inquiry. "I really didn't have a whole lot of difficulty academically, except for one course, the dreaded Systematic Inquiry. I had a lot of trouble with that, I had to do a re-write on that final, either that or re-take the course. I decided to re-write and do the best I could..." (SM). The next time the course was offered, it was redesigned and extended from September to July as the majority of students failed the first test.

MM remembered "we got a tutor and they ended up designing that course for us". This was successful as "I ended up coming out with a B+ when for the life of me I could not comprehend what this course was all about".

MA acknowledged the difficulty she had with this course. "When we couldn't understand a professor they brought in a teaching assistant. And then we still didn't understand all of it as most of us failed our first test. They recognized that we were going to have difficulty so they extended the course to summer...September till July". Hikel (1994) recommended that access programs needed to be flexible in curriculum design and teaching methods. The extension of this course allowed students to practice and apply the knowledge.

Systematic Inquiry provided an opportunity for MA along with another student to do an "actual project, an Indian Senior Citizen project". "We were talking about our parents" and decided "we should have a meeting with senior citizens because our Mother's were getting quite elderly".

> We applied for funding to the Core Area Initiative for a feasibility study and were given a grant. We set up a board. The Steering Committee hired a coordinator and we hired fellow students to do the study. Then we did a proposal for funding, we met with the Health Minister of the Province and negotiated for Mount Carmel Clinic because it was moving to a new location. We wanted the old location. So it really gave us a lot of hands on experience that I would have never embarked on if I went to the University of Manitoba on my own (MA).

Today, the Kekinan Centre on 100 Robinson Street in Winnipeg exists for senior citizens. "It was

my first exposure to politics" (MA). These empowered students became proactive, initiating

individuals engaged in a continuous re-creation (Brookfield, 1986).

Other than this course, participants were excited about the courses as they were learning

what they had already experienced. MM realized "after a couple of years at WEC that what I was

learning was what I already knew". "It was probably to know that I do know what I know. That my

life experiences have validity" (SP). MA felt the "emotional impact of learning when I learned the

history of Natives. That is when I found out what enfranchisement meant and through Native

Studies I find out who I am. This was one way to get our Bill C31 done and end the

discrimination".

SP compared the classes at WEC with the classes at the Fort Garry campus and believed the

classes at WEC were better as:

> You wouldn't get 15 minutes into a lecture before there were challenges, questions, and
> dynamic conversations. I mean it was a world of difference and I'm sure a part of that has to
> do with the fact that there we were adult learners. A lot of it was the style of teaching and
> the way that the material was presented and the invitation to challenge, question, and ask. It
> was a much more realistic concept of education (SP).

After comparing the classes delivered at the Fort Garry Campus with the WEC classes she

concluded that "the caliber of education and the skills of the instructors to challenge people to think

were superior at WEC". Brookfield (1986) agreed that students should be encouraged to become

critical thinkers.

As a student, SM felt pressured to achieve high marks so a professor challenged him to

research and write a paper on the correlation between a high grade point average (GPA) and

success after graduation. He concluded "that there was no correlation between GPA and success",

thus relieving him of trying to attain and maintain excellent marks. "It was all in the research I did

for this paper and by the time I finished writing that paper, it really put me at ease for the program" (SM). However, this revelation did not prevent him from doing the best he could as he did graduate with a high GPA. Brookfield (1986) identified this way of learning as praxis, an individual explores a new way of interpreting one's work.

Two of the participants described the four field placements as rewarding, even though MA experienced discrimination, she valued the learning experience. MA expressed "I had four field placements where I made contacts and really developed a resource for myself. So when I started working with families at Mama-Wichi-Itata, I had contacts".

> I had four very rewarding field placements and learned a lot from being in the field... We had 2 to 3 times of actual time in the field more than the campus students did. I remembered talking to people...who were very envious of the time we got to spend in the field. We actually were practicing what we were learning. I enjoyed them all and, you know, one of them led to employment (SM).

These field placements allowed the students to practice what they were learning and to develop contacts to be used as resources in the future.

WEC-SWP students were engaged in a cooperative program where team work was encouraged. "It was the kind of atmosphere that there was a really openness to help and make sure that everybody got through. It wasn't an individualized program, we were all doing this together. We were a year group that came in together, we were going to be graduating together" (SP). SP stated how she helped other students. "I started doing a lot of work with some of the people who had English as a second language". SM mentioned "that competition is a really big problem in universities, in schools, as everywhere, I guess. We didn't have that, it was like let's all do what we can to make sure we all get through it". MA described her experience at WEC "as a family supporting and helping each other through exams and papers". Brookfield (1986) recommended that adult learning should be a cooperative enterprise.

Personal Counselling Supports

The participants felt comfortable approaching either their student advisor or other staff

members when they had a personal crisis, or felt like quitting, or the course material they were

reading started to affect their personal lives. All of the research participants identified the

academic staff and fellow students as supportive and caring. "I guess I see Winnipeg Education as

you could go to anyone, even the secretaries, they were there when you needed them. I see it as

being close knit" (MA). SP described her experiences with the staff and students.

> The staff at Winnipeg Education Centre was really understanding and supportive that was
> just above and beyond what you usually expect of academic staff. It was genuine concern
> and genuine caring. I knew that if I ever needed any help from anybody there in terms of
> going out and hitting the street to look for her (daughter) that it would more from the
> students.

The staff at WEC established a very open relationships with students and at a moment's notice a

student had access to a professor. This availability was during the day or after hours. SM described

his encounters with the staff at WEC as: "a very open type of relationship. You developed more of

a friendship...a peer level with a lot of the people that worked there and taught there as opposed to

the hierarchy of I am the Prof., you're the student. As an adult, I didn't feel intimidated or less than,

so I really valued that". SM and SP described the professors as mentors.

> SM shared when he had to rely on staff to help him through difficult times.

> I remember taking advantage of the social work staff when I was dealing with thoughts
> about the program or my ability to stay in. I almost quit one time and that was a
> combination of personal things that were going on personally in my life and you know just
> reading the course requirements, one affected the other. There's no doubt they affect each
> other.

Even though he did experience difficulties, he listened to the other students' problems. "It wasn't

only from our year group, students in later year groups that came in were supportive...The other

students supported, encouraged, and chipped in to help with academics or with real life crisis with spouses or children". He described what it was like for a female classmate.

> I really considered myself very fortunate when I talked to other students and heard what they were dealing with and the lack of supports they had in their life. I mean I had my difficulties but in comparison to a lot of the women in my class. A woman, I think she had two children and during the four years, it took her 5 years to finish the program, but big deal, she gave birth twice during that time. She was raising 4 kids and had an abusive partner. She was a real incentive.

MM described how she overcame her fear of white authority when she confided in a social work staff about her living situation.

> I mean I felt that I could confide in them and they were always telling me you know don't be so hard on yourself...give yourself a chance...so they helped me to believe in myself. Believe that I could get through with this and then the other part of it was having the other students that you could rely on...I had learned a lot in that whole year and was able to participate in conversations.

During the first year, MM learned to believe in herself through their reassurance and encouragement. She was able to express herself and participate in conversations which she never did before due to her extreme shyness and controlling spouse.

> It was helpful when students shared their life situations with other classmates.

> What I liked about Winnipeg Education Centre was I felt I fit in. Others were in the same category as me. Some of them didn't finish high school and the ones that did well they studied with us. There were 2 Vietnamese there, sure they had the education, but they had language problems. They had a hard time, they were just new in Canada so I really could relate to them. I didn't feel inferior (MA).

MA and SP helped immigrant students who had English as a second language. Immigrant students needed assistance with note taking and at times understanding the material.

> There was support amongst students from all the year groups enrolled in both programs, Education and Social Work at WEC. They shared various courses and worked closely together to

help with personal or academic problems. The non competitive attitude of the students enrolled in

WEC was to make sure that everyone graduated.

Other Supports

The participants interviewed identified family members and friends as supports. SP had a

"circle of friends as her family still lived in Thunder Bay". Two participants had supportive

partners.

> I had a very supportive partner who had been through 4 years in the education program and
> had an understanding what it was like. When I had to hide myself in another room to study
> and write papers, I wasn't made to feel guilty or that I wasn't spending time with family or
> with her. That was very important (SM).

MA's "husband helped a lot. I used to take other students with me and he would tell us how to write

our papers". In addition MA "had a sister going to WEC. She was in the education program".

When SP's daughter ran away from home, she had to access an outside counsellor from an

agency, in addition to the support she received from WEC staff and students. The emergency fund

at WEC-SWP paid the counselling fees for mother and daughter.

BENEFITS ACQUIRED AFTER GRADUATION

Personal

All the participants indicated through their stories that they gained confidence by

overcoming barriers and graduating against all the odds. "Confidence is probably a benefit, to know

that I can and did do it" (SP). This was supported by Anderson and Munoz (1986) in their

qualitative study of WEC students when they identified changes in their self-esteem and self-

confidence. These participants felt empowered and were able to gain control over their situations

by learning the nature of oppression (Anderson & Munoz, 1986). "I no longer feel victimized as I

have taken control over my life" (MM). She accepts responsibility for her mistakes. MA

remembers the time when "I couldn't talk on the telephone and now I am the other way. I am

always on the phone and negotiating".

They have the knowledge base to support their opinions and argue a point thus making

informed decisions. "I've stood my ground on issues that I believed in and have been able to argue

my point and have been able to make some gains" (SP).

> There is a lot more insight into what you are putting forth. The type of opinions or ideas
> that you are presenting. If you are stating an argument about something or belief in
> something. It is not just a gut thing. I think we all have to operate from our guts at a certain
> level but you know we have access to so much more information, like what is really
> happening (SM).

MA learned how to be assertive when a field supervisor threatened to fail her. MA

responded "you can't fail me. I have credibility at Winnipeg Education Centre. I get all my

assignments in, I don't miss classes, and I participate in everything so you can't fail me. I guess this

is the first time I have felt pride in myself..." (MA).

Participants felt pride in themselves for their accomplishments and felt they gained the

respect of others. MM felt very proud of herself when she was interviewed by the Winnipeg Free

Press when they were doing an article on careers for First Nation people. SM was offered

employment from one of his field placements. "I felt I accomplished something and my abilities

were respected". "I know that I am respected and I know that I have earned that respect" (SP). One

of Brookfield's (1986) principles of effective facilitation is the respect amongst participants.

It appeared that participants developed stronger personal relationships with their partners

and as parents with their children and grandchildren.

> My daughters have both had their ups and downs but got through them. We've made that
> transition I think from mother/daughter relationship to adult friends. They both have two
> little boys. I am totally awed by my relationship with them. It's absolutely incredible. My
> relationship with these four little boys is likely the most incredible thing I've ever
> experienced (SP).

MM had separated in the first year of university and had to go for counselling to deal with her anger. "I was able to begin a relationship with my husband that was more of a friendship and also with the children". She still does a lot of self development. MA stated since "my husband died and my boys have grown up, I have become a foster parent. I am a foster parent of teenagers, offenders, suicidal, and very high risk kids from Marymound" (MA).

Research participants were committed to do their best and to continue to develop themselves. SM enhanced his self-esteem by understanding the difference between his ego and self-esteem.

> My self-esteem was greatly enhanced. I've always had a big ego but that was a problem in my life, until I learned that it wasn't my ego I had to stroke, it was my self-esteem. I have grown a lot as an individual. I am a better person today than I was before (SM).

Poonwassie (1993) indicated that developing a healthy self-esteem through education is a benefit.

Sobriety for SM and MM is important. "Looking back over my life, I realized what kind of hold alcohol had over me" (MM). These two are involved in traditional Aboriginal spirituality. "I have looked a little bit more towards our culture. At home, when I get up in the morning I use the smudge with prayer"(MM).

> I attend sweats and ceremonies. Our spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional parts all have to be in balance and when they are not we are not healthy, we are not feeling good about ourselves or what is going on around us. All four areas have to be healthy so we can be healthy people (SM).

SM does not believe that "I would have the health that I enjoy today if I'd stayed at the railway welding in a very, very polluted environment".

There are the benefits of travelling, meeting people, and experiencing various cultures in positive ways. "You meet all kinds of people who become friends, I've had opportunities to travel..., to do study tours across the west, and have opportunities to live with people of various

cultures" (SM). MA envisioned bridges amongst different cultures. McKenzie and Mitchinson (1989) identified there is growth and development when cultures are shared.

SP won the highest award when she graduated and this award provided an opportunity for her to continue her education.

> I graduated with a gold medal and...I was so proud I came from the Winnipeg Education Centre. As far as I know the only criteria is the highest GPA and that was from both graduating classes. It was a pretty important achievement, it felt really good. I applied for the Masters program and was accepted. It was a University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship which meant that I was able to carry on and do graduate work, again having it financially supported. I did my Masters Degree in Policy Administration. It was the one area or the one route I could see to actually affect some change (SP).

MA also continued her education when she enrolled in Management and Administration Courses at the University of Winnipeg during her career. MA credits "WEC and New Careers for who I am today".

Professional

All research participants were employed in permanent full time positions at the time of the interviews. SP is doing prevention through a Child and Family Services (C.F.S.) agency, MM is doing preventive work through Mama-Wichi-Itata, MA is a supervisor at an Aboriginal C.F.S., and SM is an executive director of a John Howard Society agency. At some point in their social work careers, they all worked at a mandated C.F.S agency. In addition to C.F.S., SM worked in criminal justice, addictions, and community education and development. After graduation, MM and SM were offered employment by the agencies where they completed their practicum.

All of participant saw themselves as educators. "I guess I see myself as a teacher as I have staff under me and I teach them what I've learned. I allow staff time to practice what they have learned" (MA).

SP teaches the occasional course through the distance education social work program.

I go back to Winnipeg Education Centre as much as I can and...I still like to participate in the selection process and occasionally as a guest lecturer. I 'm a field instructor so... I always put in a preference for WEC students because I know that they can really hit the ground running. It's the kind of placement that is busy and requires people to be able to think for themselves and be creative... (SP).

From a contentious field placement, MA learned the value of documentation. "Now I teach my workers to take notes on each encounter or get it in writing every time we have a meeting" (MA). Another concept she has implemented in her workplace is teamwork. "I really believe in teamwork because of my Winnipeg Education background" (MA). Currently as a supervisor, she encourages her staff to "all pitch in so I don't have to go outside to the other departments... each one of us in the group knows each others' work".

MM working as a social worker strongly believes that "Aboriginal clients need to be educated as to the effects of the colonization process and residential schools". This deprived them of their self-identity and their parenting skills. Hikel (1994) agreed when he recognized that there are more First Nation professionals working along with others to reverse the negative effects and these professionals are in demand in northern communities.

Participants believed clients can change their situations through informal or formal education. "I never really believe before that change can happen. Through my experience at Winnipeg Education Centre, I believe now change can happen" (MA).

Participants realized there had to be a different way of delivering services.

When I first came to Child and Family Services I was working as a case worker. I did that for about a year and a half and was really, really frustrated. It wasn't getting anybody anywhere in the long run because there was too much happening for me to be really effective. I knew there had to be sort of different ways of doing things. It was a system that was really, really not working. It was certainly not working for the people who are using the system and not working for the people who are working in the system. I got the opportunity to move to a different position in the agency to do more community based work that looked more at prevention and community (SP).

MM was committed to being "totally opposite of those social workers way back then. They had power and control over your life". These were her memories from her childhood experiences when she lived in foster homes. Her first job after graduation was in Child Welfare.

> I went in...not necessarily that I was some kind of super social worker that could solve the problems. It was more just treating these people with the respect and dignity that anybody wants. I think I can honestly say today that I can do the work that I've wanted to do. I run different groups and I am actually doing what I set out to do because working in Child Welfare you don't have the freedom to do preventive kinds of things because of your caseload (MM).

Both MM and SP believed they have a "clear understanding of how to walk the walk, as well as, talk the talk". As WEC-SWP graduates, they work with people at the grass roots level and treat people with dignity and respect. They do thorough assessments which are more accurate because they have lived through parts of that type of lifestyle.

MA describes herself as a liaison for the Aboriginal C.F.S. agencies and mainstream C.F.S. agencies. "They hear our side and I hear their side so we work together and bridge those things. I explain to mainstream this is how it works for us". She explains there are different ways of providing services to C.F.S. clients.

Hikel (1994) identified there are more opportunities for employment. "It is difficult to get any kind of a position that allows any kind of freedom of movement or in terms of a career rather than a job. You can't do that without a degree...having a professional degree is extremely important" (SP). This is verified by Grubb (1991) when he states that credentials allow advancement in careers whereas jobs do not.

All the participants are enjoying their current positions which are very challenging. "I'm in a job that I enjoy. It's a job that is very challenging. I am quite independent in the job. I can be creative" (MA). These positions allowed them to be creative and independent. They have found

fulfillment within their work. Britton and Haughey (1986) identified in their study that graduates were more satisfied in their jobs. "You know it is not about the money, it's the fulfillment" (SM). As professionals, some of the participants have established new resources in the communities, sat on various boards, helped with the WEC selection process, and continued with their professional development.

Economic

One would have to do a cost benefit analysis to actually determine the economic benefits of providing supports to non-traditional students. The research participants were earning between $36,000 to $48,000 per year at the time of the interviews. These salaries for the three female participants, MA, MM, and SP were more than they believed they could earn. This is supported by Anesif (1984), Ahamad (1987), Grubb (1993), Hikel (1994), Orlikow (1994), Ghosh (1995), and Paju (1995) as they acknowledged that earning power increased upon completion of a degree. However, this is not true for SM as he realized he would have been better off financially if he stayed at the railway except this was not important to him.

> I wasn't in it for the money, if it was just for the money I would have just stayed at the railway that is where the security and the money were. The only time I've felt bad since, was a friend of mine that I was working with there, he retired two years ago from the railway. He got a buy-out of $75,000 and three-quarters of his pension until he is 55. Then he gets his full pension and I was thinking, boy, that would have been nice. He's the same age as I am but then I thought no, I've done too much. I've had too many experiences and traveled with my job. You know I wouldn't have had these opportunities that I've had in the last 14 years if I would have stayed at the railway, that's for sure (SM).

Their earning power was not important to them as the fulfillment in their careers and in their lives. However, it was essential for them to be able to support their families and live a comfortable life. Each of them had purchased a house and a vehicle. SM stressed that "success could not be measured in terms of what kind of car you drive or the house you live in". These

participants are not only contributing to the economy as consumers, but also, as taxpayers contributing to health care, education, and the social safety net rather than being dependent on social programs. Roblin et al. (1993) and CFS (1997) agreed that there was less dependency on the social safety net.

Although none of the research participants were on social assistance at the time of enrollment, SP and SM acknowledged that some individuals were on assistance prior to their enrollment.

> People who never would have dreamed that they could have achieved a degree and who have spent most of their lives on social assistance. They are now not on social assistance, they are professional who really putting into the community in a really big way (SP).

> I think of who went into the Centre, the single moms with grade 7,8,9,10 education and who came with a history of welfare and many other abuses they had been experiencing. How they have gone working and their kids and their families are in an environment now where the messages are I can do this, I can go out and work. I can be successful in a certain area I choose to be successful (SM).

Three out of the four research participants, experienced periods of unemployment. SM and SP were unemployed for a few months and MM for 8 months. They did collect benefits from unemployment insurance. Currently, the research participants benefit communities not only economically but also through education, development, and prevention.

Community

According to the participants, WEC students graduate with a sense of community. "I got that from Winnipeg Education Centre. They focused on prevention and...the importance of community" (SP). Their service delivery was a community based model which looked at prevention and community development. "That there is power in numbers" (SP). These graduates benefited the communities through their assessment of what needs to be done.

The benefits to the community are immeasurable. The people I know who are graduating from WEC, the people who have graduated from WEC do genuinely give back to the community. Because I know the folks who are working in the field, they aren't just clocking time, they pick up a sense of what needs done. That goes beyond the 9 - 5 and well beyond the case management style. What can we do in terms of the whole community and what can we do in terms of the whole structure? I think that is a huge, huge investment (SP).

The following are some examples of positive changes that have been initiated by the

research participants. SP felt empowered when she was able to "imagine how you could change a

program, how you could change something in your life and really, really change it and have an

impact on things. There is this incredible amount of power that comes with that".

Change Agents

SP recognized that "most people working in the C.F.S. system do not have a clue what it is

like for the people they are serving". Through her initiative, the community worked with her to

developed a resource centre.

> The focus was a couple of things. It was to allow people in the community a place to come to break the isolation but also from an agency standpoint was to begin looking at different ways of doing business in the community. A number of kitchen table meetings with people in the community who said there is a reality, everybody hates and fears Child and Family Services but we really need Child and Family Services around... Yes, we have lots of problems with Child and Family Services, you show up too quick, you intervene to radically, and you are too quick to remove children from a home or you don't intervene at all. The only relationship that we have with C.F.S. is when we see the night duty van. We know that some ones' kids are being scooped. We need you here but we need things to be happening differently so we set up a resource centre in the community (SP).

Change was evident when two years later a community of 170 living units, which previously were

half boarded up, were now all full.

> Also at that time there was like 70% of families involved with C. F.S. Only one snapshot was taken at one point in time during the summer there were only 2 open cases with Child and Family Services in the community. It was working with the community to bring about changes that they wanted to see, pretty powerful (SP).

Instead, parents trusted coming into the resource centre.

Now it's to the point where people will come in to the resource centre and say things like, "man I slapped my kid last night", knowing full well that there is a Child and Service presence there, but trusting to where there will be an intervention. But, the intervention wouldn't be any kind of you what, I'm reporting you. It's like what's going on? What do you need? Let's talk about this. You know there are different ways you can handle it. You can start an intervention that allows the family to get better, rather than to rip it apart (SP).

Another initiative of SP was to develop community safe homes.

Where children can go and stay, spend the night in a community safe home... These are to target the families in the community that are good enough parents most of the time. But every once in awhile, they may have company come in from out of town and have a drinking party. You know they happen and...our way of intervening in the past was to apprehend the children from the community, possibly returning them the next week. Community safe home are run by people who live in the community, who will take the kids in, give them a safe place to sleep for the night and let them return home the next day. These are programs that were my initiative that I got started, through my initiative working with the community. It was a lot fun, too (SP).

She sensitized the people in power to the concerns of disadvantaged groups which Bok (1982) identified as important changes. Fortunately for SP, the leadership in this agency was determined to start doing things differently, more towards prevention. "At the point right now where we are going through a strategic planning process and one of the really big thrusts of it is to create these community based services" (SP). McKenzie (1988) saw graduates in leadership roles and changing service delivery.

MA works in an Aboriginal C.F.S. agency. She is a representative on the Child Welfare board and acts as a liaison to help mainstream and native agencies work together and complement each other. Bok (1982) surmised that minorities can make important changes by enhancing racial understanding. MA is a strong advocate for open adoption and voluntary placements. She identified this as an example of change.

I'd be called in front of the judge and have to explain how come we were using a voluntary surrender agreement. I would...explain the reason why we don't believe in going through the court system is because most of the families come from a shame base already. The court system is so adverse where you have to bring all of the negatives to win your case. They

(parents) already believe they can't parent so we are working with them. It has been instilled that they are not good parents or they can not provide the necessities or they are second class citizens. If they should terminate the volunteer surrender agreement and if the agency is afraid the child still needs protection, we will go to court then. I want the natural Mother to take those kids to medical appointments, to take part in them, baby sit them. Eventually...Mother will start attaching and start feeling good about herself. The long range plan is for those kids to go back to her (MA).

C.F.S. workers need to be working with the parents to change their parenting style rather than against them. When parents are allowed to be actively involved with children in care, this gives them some power and control to make decisions and to change for the better.

Another way of sharing the power and control is to increase the number of native foster homes. MA has developed a six month course which newly recruited foster parents have to attend once a week for: "They are all required to take training and orientation. It is compulsory. Then they have to take additional training in child development, family violence, alcoholism, and sexuality. We do cross-cultural training" (MA). A goal of this worker is to have this course accredited through Red River Community College.

After experiencing discrimination at a field placement, MA sat on the governing board for a couple of years to recommend that the organization hire Aboriginal people. "I sat on various boards because that is how we could bring about change" (MA).

> I sat on the Aboriginal Court Workers board. The court workers were to advise Aboriginal clients of their rights and identify resources for them. That was not happening, they were being viewed as interpreters. You hire an interpreter privately for the lawyer if the client needs that but they had to follow their job descriptions to a 'T' (MA).

Through a needs assessment, it was decided that their roles needed to be changed and a job description needed to be developed. This changed the role of the Aboriginal Court Workers to be advocates, to promote aboriginal awareness, and to issue pamphlets.

MA is a foster parent for Marymound teenagers who are either offenders, or suicide risks, or very high risk kids. She is involved with the parent council to help these children adjust to the school system.

> I sit in the parent council meetings because they (foster children) just have a difficult time with the school system. The reason for that is our kids are special needs. If I am fostering in St. Vital and I have a 16 year old that is functioning maybe at a grade 2 level. They are not going to fit in...because they have too many personal issues. I have to advocate to the school division in order for that child to go to a different school (MA).

When MA retires, she plans to move back to her home reserve where she is fixing up her home.

MM believes change is happening as "our youth are staying in school or becoming actively involved in promoting the native culture".

> I think that a healing journey needs to start because if you don't you are going to be continually caught up...in the inner turmoil. The ashamed feeling that one carries because of all the these things that have happened. I think that you need to have enough healing that you will have the confidence to be able to branch out to other things. I really believe that our people want to have the best things for their kids (MM).

The goal is for people to break away from their prescribed situation and portray themselves as positive role models to others that they broke the cycle of poverty and victimization. In turn, they are able to help others leave oppressing, destructive situations. Levin and Unruh (1990) agreed that role models do raise expectations and commitment of young people.

Role models

All four of the research participants identified that positive role models help break the cycle of poverty. SM was involved in a study at a Winnipeg School which supports this.

> We did a study when I worked at Aberdeen School. We talked to grade 7 or 8 students and asked them to tell us what they saw for their life as young adults. There were probably 18 male students and 15 female students. Everyone of the 18 males saw themselves going to jail at some point. About eighty per cent of the females saw themselves being pregnant, at least with one or two children by the time they were 18 and on welfare, with very limited opportunities for school. Where did they get that from? That is their realty at that time. That

is what they lived, saw around them. That is very sad statement about the future prospects for kids, scary and sad (SM).

SM identified that people need assistance and opportunities to break the cycle of poverty so they can be successful in life and be role models. Family and friends who have had the opportunity to be successful, living happier lives could be positive role models for these students.

Another way participants have become role models for others is when they are willing to share some of their experiences and successes with colleagues and clients. They have "walked the walk" and have broken the barriers. SM instills the same encouragement and belief in clients that he received during his enrollment at WEC.

> I put into them the same encouragement, the belief in themselves that happened to me when I went to WEC. I think I provided the seed and maybe a little incentive and showed them how they can do a few things a bit different. Then they do the work to help others in our profession and other people in our community. You see tremendous strides when you see their names now or some of them you hear now they have gone to work in social services or they have gone on to become WEC students (SM).

SM calls this the ripple effect when they share their experiences and encourage others. "Most of the people who go there (WEC) have children, and to have their children see their parents... My daughters know that it's not ever too late to begin looking at what you want to do when you grow up" (laughs)(SP).

MM was interviewed by the Winnipeg Free Press for an article on careers of First Nation people. Her message was "If I can do it, anybody can from a chaotic background. In spite, of a crazy life, you can overcome the obstacles and find a way to become what you want to be". This type of publicity helps others who want to enter the field of social work and helps other professionals by broadening their views that people do change if society provides supports and opportunities. Griffiths (1977) recommended that there needs to be more native or other minority

social workers leading in their profession as role models. SP was interviewed by CBC radio as to the changes she implemented in the community where she works.

Society

Publicized success stories of disadvantaged people remove the stereotypes that society has about certain groups who tend to come from poor, abusive, and/or criminal backgrounds. MM, as a teenager, was involved with Child and Family Services and the criminal justice system. Now as a social worker working with those two systems, she has amazed the professionals who were her workers at one time. "I have proven them wrong and shown them that people can change given the opportunity and supports" (MM). She no longer feels victimized by the systems as she understands the colonization process and its effects on Aboriginal people.

SM through reflective analysis gained an understanding of how social stratification created the prejudices and discrimination (Anisef, 1985; Varpalotai, 1995) which he grew up with. "I remember the British, Scottish, and Irish Canadians were prejudiced against the Polish and the Ukrainian". According to him, institutions would not hire these groups unless their surnames were changed to English surnames. Then everyone was prejudice towards Natives and people of colour. "There definitely was a pecking order". Through his experiences, he learned to gain a "real appreciation for the similarities rather than the differences of other cultures".

In addition, he learned cultural sensitivity. For example, he learned that Vietnamese practice a type of healing which leaves bruises on the body. This awareness and sharing of cultures may have prevented a needless apprehension and involvement with the system for a family that didn't need it. Griffiths (1977) affirmed that the sharing of experiences between minority and non minority creates an understanding of target groups they serve.

During her enrollment at WEC, MA attended a Native Women's conference on Bill C31. Through this conference, she became very interested in enfranchisement. "I was instrumental in starting Indigenous Women's Collective" (IWC) which is a "political voice, a political organization for native women. There is a national one and we started small ones in four jurisdictions, southeast region called Nongomikkwe" (MA). She lobbied the government for funding. An outcome of her involvement was to establish a steering committee, the bylaws, and the standards for local regions.

> We really worked at the grass root level. We would have such a hard time with Treaty women from the First Nations communities, because they said "they would come and have our men speak for us" or they would say "my husband said I could come to this meeting but I'm not to take over his role". Those were the kind of things we had to work with. You have a role to bring them the history of Native women. They have a very important role. Now after 10 years I can see the difference. Now most of them are our strong supporters, the elders, and the grass root women. We work along side them (MA).

Through this organization, they brought awareness to the grass roots level by presenting workshops on self government and empowering women on social and economic issues. Canadian Federation of Students (1997) verified that through education, there is increased participation and understandings of our democratic government. SP learned "the gift of being able to think politically and clearly understand where your life fits around the political spectrum and the encouragement to be politically active".

Participants felt they have access to more information, the knowledge and understanding of community issues, and the political and social realities of world affairs. SM believes there are reasons why people are unable to access employment or education. He identified that it was no fault of their own that they were born into certain social situations. SM understands the role that politics and large corporation played in shaping our lives. "No matter how smart you are, you couldn't overcome the barriers. It is not what you know, it is who you know" (SM).

Society tends to blame the victim rather than see the oppression.

It's more than affirmative action, it's specifically targeting Aboriginal people for degrees. Really facing some of the issues head on, challenging the students to look at them and to not take ownership of them in terms of that kind of liberal concept of "My God you are right I am so sorry that my ancestors did this to you". That is not part of the solution you are part of the problem so figuring out ways to work together with people in the Aboriginal community who are working on their own issues and leaving the door open to becoming allies and to really working as allies. There is the kind of energy and a kind of fire that was lit... I mean certainly as you get more and more people who are able to get out of a certain prescribed situation and carry with it not only what I got out of there but now I want to turn around and get some people out, too (SP).

SUMMARY

SP indicated that the benefits from having had the opportunity to attend WEC-SWP were invaluable. She felt the financial support was her biggest consideration of going to university. Even though she did not require academic supports she helped other students who had language barriers. The personal counselling supports and the emergency fund were crucial when she had problems with her teenage daughter. The benefits of such programs and necessity are supported by research conducted by Orfield (1992). After graduation, SP obtained her Masters Degree in Social Work. As a Social Worker her focus is to develop communities and initiate changes within society. She believes that "anything that helps strengthen families helps strengthen communities and in turn helps strengthen society".

In the second interview, MA summarized some benefits she gained through her participation and experiences in ACCESS programs. She would not be in her career which provides enjoyment and quality of life, if she did not have the benefits of WEC-SWP. The positive role model she portrays and the changes she has initiated benefit both mainstream and Aboriginal individuals and communities. These benefits were possible because others believed in her and encouraged her, even though, she had very little formal education. Others saw the potential in her and provided the opportunity for her to access and complete a post-secondary degree. She

continues to be a strong advocate for youth, for First Nation people, and for creating bridges between different cultures. Until everyone can be treated equally and have access to education disadvantaged groups do require additional supports to change their lives and others.

MM required the personal counselling supports to help her overcome her fear of white authority, deal with her anger, and get support when she separated from her husband. The financial support was important as she was a single parent of three children. She appreciated the changes made to the Systematic Inquiry course which helped her to pass the examination. MM participates in traditional ceremonies to heal herself. She believes in educating First Nations people about the imposed injustices before they can start healing themselves. MM enjoys doing prevention work as a Social Worker.

SM appreciates the opportunity of attending WEC-SWP. All the supports were important for him. The financial supports provided an allowance for himself and assisted him to fulfil the financial commitment to his previous spouse and their children. The study groups were important for SM to gain a better understanding of the course content. He relied on the personal counselling supports to help him through difficult times. After graduation, he has worked in various social settings. When he meets previous clients, he feels successful as he was able to help and encourage them to change their situations.

Each participant described success stories of how their interventions helped families lead stronger, healthier lifestyles. Without the opportunity of advancing their education through the WEC-SWP, these participants may not have implemented changes to benefit the individual clients, the communities, and society. "If it was not for Winnipeg Education Centre..., I would not be where I am now" (MA).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study provided significant evidence that there are benefits in providing supports for non-traditional students to access and complete post-secondary education. In addition, the literature review verified the research participants' responses and provided credibility to their experiences. Throughout this study, it was documented that the poor and minority groups are affected by social, systemic, and structural inequalities which excluded them from education and employment opportunities. It was evident that these certain disadvantaged individuals would not have furthered their education unless there were ACCESS programs with supports to help them overcome financial, social, academic, personal, institutional, and cultural barriers that prevented them from continuing their education. Students from certain target groups required supports while they were enrolled in the WEC-SWP. When they graduated they were able to change the way services were delivered, as they had experienced what it was like to be victims of a hierarchical system and knew what people needed to become empowered citizens. This study focused and recruited research participants from one access program - the Winnipeg Education Centre - Social Work Program.

WEC-SWP succeeded in its objectives by creating role models and change agents to develop stronger, healthier communities. This program accomplished what its functions were by implementing Brookfield's (1986) adult learning principles. Participation and enrollment at WEC-SWP were voluntary. The students made the decision on their own to attend. They were capable, motivated, determined, and committed to their learning. The atmosphere at WEC was safe, supportive, trusting, and respectful so that students were comfortable and able to develop their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. The model provided an opportunity for a rich interchange

between cultures. The professors and students were engaged in a cooperative enterprise. Students were encouraged to question and challenge the professor and the content of the material they were learning. Learning was a continual process of activity, reflection, and analysis which taught students to become critical thinkers. Through critical reflection, WEC students were challenged about their own beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours. Students were encouraged to be self-directed, empowered, proactive leaders working towards a better life within their communities and society. The research participants were grateful for having the opportunity to participate in a supportive, encouraging educational program that provided financial, academic, and personal counselling supports to help them complete a four-year degree.

The following summary of the research findings will be guided by the research questions which collected data on the supports used during their enrollment, the benefits acquired after graduation, and barriers faced by students prior to enrollment. In addition, the research participants are concerned about the future of WEC-SWP and made some recommendations.

During their enrollment at WEC-SWP, each one of the participants had to rely on all three supports to help them through four years of study towards a degree. The research participants would not have enrolled in the Social Work Program without the financial support. This provided students with the financial security while they were studying. For the participants, it would have been overwhelming and stressful for them to worry about tuition fees, books, rent, food, and bills. The financial support was assessed according to the students' family size along with additional funding for child care and transportation. There was an emergency fund established to help students who had extraordinary circumstances. The financial support was instrumental for the participants as it allowed them to concentrate on their studies.

The academic support provided by the staff and other students helped to establish functional study habits, to learn effective note taking, to research, to access resources, and to study in groups to gain a better understanding of the course content. The study groups were comprised of members from various cultures who shared their experiences with each other. This was a powerful, rich learning experience for students. A tutor was available for students requiring extra assistance. Students had to successfully complete four field placements where they practiced and applied their newly learned skills and knowledge.

The availability of staff at any time of the day removed the hierarchical structure between staff and students. It appeared that the staff and students were engaged in a cooperative enterprise (Brookfield, 1986). Students were allowed to express themselves through challenging discussions during the classes. The small class size allowed for the development of respect at WEC-SWP which helped students realize their self-worth. The Centre promoted a safe, trusting environment for students to express and to learn about themselves.

As students, the research participants all had to deal with personal issues. These participants had negative experiences from their childhood, teenage, and adult years that left them feeling unworthy and with inadequate coping skills. All the participants were parents when they enrolled at WEC-SWP; this added to their stress and responsibilities. Some of the course content created personal crisis as they were learning how negative factors such as alcohol affected and controlled their lives. It was difficult to learn about injustices and victimization and then try to change the attitudes, beliefs, values, and views that have been internalized for years. These personal counselling supports by WEC staff and their peer groups helped the participants deal with crisis and life transitions. The participants did rely on family and/or friends as supports. These

participants graduated with the belief that they developed personally and were educated as professionals who could change and benefit communities and society.

Research participants benefited personally by developing self-confidence, self-esteem, pride in themselves, and respect from others. They felt empowered and learned to be assertive and creative social workers. In addition, they learned how to use and share power and control effectively and positively. They were able to articulate their opinions, ideas, and views to make informed decision, and to be politically active and socially aware. They acquired communication skills to develop stronger and healthier relationships with their families. Some grew and developed personally by becoming sober and spiritual. Two of the participants have continued with their education. One graduated with a Masters Degree in Social Work and the other completed Management and Administration courses. In addition to personal gains, they acquired cultural awareness and leadership skills to enhance their work as professionals.

At the time of this study, participants were in rewarding, challenging careers which provided stability, security and growth. They realized they would not have had access to a career without a degree. They were employed as social workers and described themselves as educators also. Through their education and experiences, they learned the importance of team work, treating clients with dignity and respect, and working with people at the grass roots level. Each participant discussed their successes while working with clients and their satisfaction in their immediate positions.

Surprisingly, these participants did not think that their salaries were of major importance except that they could afford a comfortable lifestyle which included a home, vehicle, and travel. The three female research participants felt their earning power increased after graduation. The male participant compared himself with a previous worker who retired in his early fifties and accepted a

substantial financial buy out from his employer. However, the research participant felt fortunate for his education and experiences and did not regret his career change. Even though the participants experienced short periods of unemployment, they believed that there were economic benefits for the community and society. Individuals who were once dependent on the social assistance were now contributing to social programs by paying taxes and contributing to the economic growth of the country. Education was identified as a good investment for the development of communities and society.

The research participants described themselves as change agents strengthening communities and as role models educating all levels of society. As change agents, they assessed service deliveries and concluded these services were not meeting the client's needs but perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Instead, they implemented community based service deliveries which were client focused and user friendly. The innovative programs were empowering clients to effect change rather than oppressing them. Empowered people not only want to better their lives but also the community they live in. Community people and resources learned to work together on issues that were important to them with the help of social workers (the research participants). Another way of changing service delivery was to sit on the governing boards of organizations to recommend and develop policies and procedures. Through supportive, proactive systems and role models, clients could learn and change their situations.

As role models, graduates of WEC-SWP have portrayed a different image of the oppressed, marginalized poor. They were from a disadvantaged group but through their determination and motivation, the provision of supports and opportunity, they broke the cycle of poverty and became successful professionals. These positive role models representing minority groups have impacted on the youth as they are staying in school and learning the positive aspects of their cultures and

traditions. Two of the participants have been interviewed by the media, to share their experiences and successes with the public. The sharing of their experiences and successes created a ripple effect for others and others believed they could achieve their dreams of succeeding in society.

The research participants understood how social stratification, stereotypes, racism, discrimination, different cultures and economic backgrounds affect social status, education, employment, and quality of life. A participant learned the value of cultural sensitivity and shared this with his colleagues. Another participant learned the meaning of enfranchisement and its long term effects on Aboriginal people and the changes through Bill C31. She become politically active and developed an organization to empower women. Through education, members of society can become empowered to actively participate to their fullest potential. Participants not only become active in local issues but also had access to more information about the political and social realities, nationally and globally.

A democratic society benefits when citizens are educated and politically aware of national and global issues. Canada needs to invest in human resources through education in order to remain productive, progressive, and competitive as a nation. Since society has inequalities and barriers, specialized access programs need to be available for oppressed, marginalized groups. These supports provided by access programs are crucial as without them the research participants may not be benefiting communities and society today as they had to overcome their own barriers.

The four research participants all faced financial, academic, and personal barriers which prevented them from believing that it was possible to change their prescribed situations. Society, family, and friends ascribed to the belief that if you were poor, you were either lazy or it was your choice. Thus the only way for members of oppressed, marginalized groups to advance and to acquire the luxuries of life was through hard work. These participants did not chose to be born into

low-income families or to live in poverty yet without an education it was difficult to break the cycle.

Education was not encouraged by their families or was not possible because of institutional barriers; the participants interviewed were not encouraged to continue and to succeed in education. These experiences affected the participants' self-confidence and self-esteem. The participants were not able to develop good study habits and felt inferior as they did not succeed in secondary school. They did not believe that they were capable even if they were motivated to further their education due to inadequate preparation and lack of finances.

The research participants were struggling to sustain an existence and there was no extra money to pay for post-secondary education. Some of the participants were parents at a young age thus the responsibility of a family and a job prevented them from continuing with their education. It was not feasible to pay for tuition, books, attend university, and provide for a family's basic needs such as shelter, food, and clothing. All the research participants felt very fortunate to have the opportunity and the provision of all three supports throughout their four years of study to obtain a Social Work degree. They are aware of the cutbacks that the program is faced with and are very concerned about the future of the program.

Unfortunately, at present, the most important support for these research participants has been removed. Today, students enrolled at WEC-SWP do not have the financial support previously provided but have to find other means of supporting themselves. The research participants are concerned that the lack of funding is impacting negatively on potential students in various ways. First, the lack of funding for students may be excluding individuals like these research participants who would not have enrolled if there were no financial supports. Secondly, without the financial supports, are students experiencing more stress by having to work part-time thus leaving less time

for studying and time spent with their families? Thirdly, the time spent working for pay may be adding to the number of years it will take to obtain a degree. A fourth concern, are these students incurring large debts?

These funding concerns not only affect non-traditional students but also affect traditional students in accessing post-secondary education. The cost of post-secondary education has tripled in the nineties thus students from middle and lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be relying on student loans and/or working for pay to continue their education. If they have to work to support themselves and pay for the cost of a post-secondary education, they may have to drop courses and prolong their graduation date. When they do graduate, they have to obtain a good paying job to pay back their student loans. These financial burdens may prevent potential students in these socioeconomic backgrounds from accessing post-secondary education. Thus, these adults become disadvantaged individuals in a competitive labour market force that requires additional qualifications for employment opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. A survey of disadvantage people being excluded from post-secondary education due to lack of funding for education.

2. A current study needs to assess students' debt load and length of time required to complete a degree.

3. A study to identify WEC students' stresses which they are experiencing during the four years of study.

4. A cost/benefit analysis to determine whether providing supports to non-traditional students is a worthwhile investment and a cost-saving measure to social programs.

5. Studies to track the progress of access graduates on yearly, five year, and ten year intervals to determine benefits of the programs.

6. A study to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the different models of delivery at the WEC-SWP and the Fort Garry campus.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

Name of Graduate
Address

Dear Graduate:

I am Stella Lukinski, a 1987 graduate of the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC) - Social Work Program. Currently, I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology at the University of Manitoba conducting research for my Master of Education thesis. Dr. Deo Poonwassie of the Faculty of Education is my advisor.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether it is beneficial to provide supports for non-traditional students to access and complete post-secondary education. I am conducting a research project of the graduates from the WEC-Social Work Program between the years 1985 to 1989. Therefore, I am requesting your participation in this research. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. I would like you to participate in two personal interviews. The first interview will be to discuss your experiences and perceptions before WEC, during your enrolment, and after graduation. This interview should last one to two hours. The second one will allow you to review the transcript from the first interview and clarify your comments. It should last approximately one hour. The times, dates, and place will be confirmed with you by telephone.

All information gathered will be confidential. No names will be identified in any report so that anonymity will be assured. In order to ensure accuracy, I would like your permission to audio tape the interviews. The tapes will be transcribed and you will have the opportunity to clarify points in the second interview. These tapes will be locked in a secure place and erased after my research is completed. A summary of the results of this study will be placed at the Winnipeg Education Library.

If you have further questions, please contact me at 204-727-1754 or my advisor, Dr. Poonwassie at 474-8244. I will be contacting you within a week to confirm your participation. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

Stella C. Lukinski

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, have read your letter and agree to participate in your study under the stated conditions.

I am consenting to have this interview taped. Yes____ No_____

I would like a copy of the summary results sent to me.

Yes_____ No_____

Date_____

Signature_____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I will be asking each part of the following questions. I will reassure the participants about confidentiality, they may refuse to answer any questions, and they may withdraw at any time. These questions are directed at the three areas of the research and may be altered (within ethics guide lines) as data unfolds in this qualitative research study.

Part A. Before your enrollment at WEC-SWP.

1. Sex: Male_____   Female_____

2. Which minority group(s) do you belong to:

Aboriginal Treaty _____ Aboriginal Non Treaty_____

Métis _____   Immigrant_____

Single Parent_____

3. Martial Status: Married_____ Single_____ Common Law _____

            Divorced_____ Separated_____ Widowed_____

4. Housing: Subsidized _____ Rented _____ Owned _____

Please answer the following:

5. How old were you when entered the Program _____

6 a. Number of Children _____

  b. What were their ages_____

7. Education completed prior to WEC-SWP (include grade school, courses, training, college, and university)

8. What were you doing prior to your enrollment to WEC-SWP?

9. Annual Income _____

10. Describe your living situation prior to your attending WEC-SWP?

11. What were your reasons for applying to WEC-SWP?

12. Did you apply to a regular University before you applied to WEC-SWP?

Yes_____ (If yes, complete a and b)

No_____ (If no, complete c)

a. Were you accepted? Yes_____ No_____

b. If yes, what were the reasons for not completing your course requirements?

c. If no, what were the reasons for not applying to regular University?

Part B - During your enrolment at WEC-SWP

13. What were some of the problems you encountered while you were attending WEC-SWP?

14. What academic supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

15. What financial supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

16. What personal counselling supports did the WEC-SWP provide? Describe how these assisted you in achieving your degree.

17. What supports did you rely on outside of the WEC-SWP? Please describe.

18. Identify which supports were crucial in your successful completion of the program?

Part C - After graduation

19. What was your age at graduation? _____

20. a. Did you incur a debt during your studies at WEC-SWP?___

   b. If yes, what were the circumstances for obtaining a loan?

21. Martial Status? _____

22. Number of children? _____

23. How long did it take for you to obtain employment after graduation?

24. Where did you get a job? _____

25. What was your starting salary, annually? _____

26. Identify the benefits you obtained in your life by graduating from WEC-SWP? Discuss personnel, professional, economic, community, and society.

27. Describe your lifestyle today.

28. What is your annual salary today? _____

29. Have you been unemployed since your graduation? Please explain the circumstances.

30. Have you continued with your education? Please explain.

31. Do you wish to add any other comments about your education or the research project?

Thank you for your time and participation.