PERSONAL AGENCY IN EMPLOYMENT GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the utility of viewing employment group programs as processes of enhancing personal agency. Personal causation theory (deCharms, 1976) was used to operationalize the concept of personal agency. Two questions were investigated. First, does personal agency increase in individuals after participating in employment groups? Second, how do the outcomes derived from employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency?

Twenty-seven unemployed or underemployed participants from three different programs were interviewed to elicit anecdotal stories from their experience before and after the program, and to collect helpful and hindering factors using the Critical Incident Technique. The Origin Scoring System was used to rate the stories yielding pre- and post-program scores for each participant. A 2-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures revealed a strong treatment effect ($p<.001$) with no group effect, suggesting a significant increase in personal agency in the three groups represented. A sorting of critical incident outcomes demonstrated that deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency are valid with employment groups but six additional conditions were required to complete the sorting.
Other findings suggested the presence of out-of-program experiences complementing or detracting from the program, the fundamental importance of supportive interactions among group members, the need for the balanced use of both task-oriented and supportive components in a program, and skills identification as the most valued aspect of self-assessment. The findings suggest that personal agency may be a useful organizing principle for guiding theory, research and practice in employment and career counselling.
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Independence? We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth.

George Bernard Shaw

A common misconception about personal agency is that agents work independently and stand alone in their success. The theorists cited in this volume would not agree, pointing out that our actions take place within a social environment. We can accomplish few - if any - of our goals without the support of others.

This is certainly the way I view the completion of this dissertation: I could not have done it without the help of many good people.

The first seeds of the notion of personal agency were planted in classes taken from instructors Dr. Larry Cochran and Robert Dode. Dr. Norm Amundson helped get me started as I sought to apply personal agency to particular career development issues. Later, two others joined him to serve as my supervisory committee. Dr. Ron MacGregor helped refine my methodology. Dr. Bill Borgen eventually became my research supervisor. I have greatly appreciated his commitment, expertise, patience, and especially his accessibility. He is an exceptional supervisor.
There would be no research results to report without people to interview. The 27 participants generously provided me with a rich base of data to study. And the employment agency directors and group facilitators not only permitted me access to their employment groups, but they were very supportive of my work as well.

Those friends who made significant contributions in a wide variety ways include Alan, Arlene, Brady, Ken, Ken and Cheryl, Lucy, Madeleine, Steve, Sharon, Sharon, and Walt. A special note of appreciation is due to Angie Olenyk, who transcribed many hours of taped interviews gratis. And there were many other friends, relatives and acquaintances who offered welcome encouragement along the way.

The one contributor who stands out greatest to me is my father, J. D. Ross. He has been an understanding supporter and patient patron. Without his help I would not have been able to complete this study as I have. There is no way to adequately thank him for what he has done for me.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background

Labour Market Restructuring

The late twentieth century has been a time of great change in the labour market. This transition is not merely the normal shifting of workers as industries prosper and decline. It is a fundamental restructuring of the market that is being compared to the shift experienced in Europe 200 years ago. The industrial revolution brought a relatively sudden restructuring of the market that saw the millennia-old agrarian economy superseded by the new industrial economy. Now, the industrial economy is being superseded by the so-called post-industrial economy.

This new economy is still taking form, but enough has emerged to allow economists (Beck, 1992, 1995; Foot & Stoffman, 1996; Rifkin, 1995), sociologists (Aronowitz & DiFazio, 1994; Reid, 1996; Schor, 1992) and career development professionals (Herr, 1993a; 1993b; Wegmann, Chapman & Johnson, 1989) to provide commentary on it. The literature suggests that two traditional sources of jobs, manufacturing and government, are in decline while the service sector is burgeoning. The latter includes a wide
range of occupations, from professionals to retail to personal service, but the majority of the work in this sector is in low paying, low challenge jobs. With highly skilled technical and information based jobs replacing those vanishing in the manufacturing sector, opportunities abound for the well educated and specially skilled worker but continue to become more demanding for those with low levels of education.

But even the well educated do not necessarily have an easy ride. The labour market has been overwhelmed by a record number of university graduates (particularly in the liberal arts) over the past thirty years, bringing about the phenomenon of underemployment. Another variety of underemployment is caused by the growing proportion of contingent employment, promoted by the need for companies to be able to respond efficiently to market fluctuations. Because of these and other factors, the workplace has become less stable. More job and career change, with periods of retraining and unemployment, are to be expected.

**Impact on Workers**

Economic shifts of this nature have profound affects on people. Major restructuring is driven by technological advances and demographic trends working on a global scale (Wegmann, Chapman & Johnson, 1989). The individual worker
often feels powerless in the face of such forces. He or she may learn to take advantage of opportunities presented by change, but maintaining the status quo is not an option. Many are ill-prepared for the employment changes that are forced upon them. Unable or unwilling to adapt, large numbers are experiencing unemployment or underemployment, heightening their sense of being overwhelmed and helpless. Borgen and Amundson (1987) describe the experience of unemployment as an emotional roller coaster. Real loss is felt and grieved.

Economic restructuring is a critical factor influencing one's career direction but it is not the only one. Individuals possess an assortment of personal characteristics that enhance or limit their opportunities. These personal characteristics include knowledge, skills, habits, and self-esteem. Further, many North Americans look to their careers for a large portion of their personal identity and fulfillment. For many - if not most - these high expectations are unrealistic (Warnath, 1975).

**Employment Groups**

External economic factors combined with internal personal factors have resulted in many displaced and/or disaffected workers. Several attempts have been made to remedy this situation. One is the array of presentations,
books and other publications that offer explanations for what is happening in the workplace and how individuals can effectively respond (Beck, 1992; Farr, 1991; Herr, 1990; Ross, 1992; Wegmann, Chapman & Johnson, 1989). This literature provides valuable information to job-seekers and career practitioners, but usually falls short in helping them transform ideas into beneficial action.

The employment group is another intervention that has been found to be helpful to the unemployed (Amundson & Borgen, 1987). Beginning with the job clubs of the 1970's (Azrin, Flores & Kaplan, 1975), the employment group movement has grown to include a wide and varied family of groups which use information, skill training and group process to improve the participant's ability to find employment in the labour market. Their common elements include formal program activity, skills for tapping the hidden job market, encouraging individual responsibility and enhancing self esteem (Trimmer, 1984).

The positive results of employment groups bring up important questions. Why are these interventions effective? What principles underlie these programs? Is there some conceptual framework which provides an understanding of their success and points the way to furthering their effectiveness? This study explores the possibility of
viewing the progress seen in group employment programs as gains in personal agency on the part of the participants.

**Personal Agency**

Employment groups are one component of the broader field of career development and counselling. A question that has major implications for the structure and function of employment group programs is this: What is the main aim of career counselling? Cochran (1994) has suggested that the overarching purpose of the field is to enhance personal agency.

Personal agency may be defined as intentional action to produce a desired change (deCharms, 1984). DeCharms' personal causation theory (deCharms, 1968; 1976) was developed from his own research and a number of studies undertaken by his associates and students. Its purpose was to understand motivational processes and enhance the personal agency of low achieving students. For deCharms and his colleagues, personal causation has six components: goal setting, instrumental activity, reality perception, personal responsibility, self-confidence and a sense of internal control (deCharms, 1976). A scoring system was developed to assess personal causation based on the presence or absence of these components. Personal causation was thought to be developed by helping individuals understand their motives in
a warm and encouraging learning environment, set realistic goals, develop concrete plans to reach goals and monitor their own progress toward their goals. An extensive program based on these conditions was developed and administered to school-aged children, resulting in improved academic performance.

The notion of linking personal agency to career development was pioneered by Betz and Hackett (1987). They suggested that "the concept of agency could be useful in the facilitation of the career development of adults . . . Agency may have utility as a factor in career advancement and as a response to such negative conditions as job dissatisfaction and unemployment" (p. 307). The current study investigated one of these suggestions, the possible utility of applying personal causation theory to the domain of group employment counselling.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the usefulness of viewing employment group programs as processes of enhancing personal agency. More specifically, it assessed the adequacy and value of using deCharms' personal causation theory with employment groups to understand the
gains experienced by the participants. The powerful impact of deCharms' personal agency training on the motivation of students made its transferability to other situations an attractive possibility. The employment group was one such situation. Unemployed or underemployed people tend to be discouraged or confused, resulting in low levels of personal agency and motivation. Successful programs increase their participants' motivation and appear to do so by using some of the principles outlined by deCharms. It appears that personal causation may be a highly appropriate way to view the progress of individuals in employment programs. To validate this notion, two specific research questions were posed, each tying in to a key aspect of personal causation theory.

**Research Question One**

The first research question was:

Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups?

The first aspect of personal causation theory applied to the employment group situation was the concept of personal causation itself. If a fundamental outcome of employment group programs is the enhancement of personal agency, then one would expect to see the participants'
levels of personal agency greater once they have completed the program than when they started it.

Some means of measuring personal agency was required to verify this proposition. DeCharms (1976) operationalized personal causation into six components: goal setting, instrumental activity, reality perception, personal responsibility, self-confidence and a sense of internal control. The Origin Scoring System was designed to assess these components. Consequently, it was chosen as the means of assessing and comparing the levels of personal agency in each participant before and after the program.

Research Question Two

The second research question was:

How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency?

DeCharms stated that personal agency is developed as learners personally experience it. The conditions that he believed were necessary in the experience of learners included four elements: understanding their motives, setting realistic goals, developing concrete plans to reach goals, and monitoring their own progress toward their goals (deCharms, 1976). The conditions for developing personal
agency was the second aspect of personal causation theory applied to employment groups.

The critical incidents technique (Flanagan, 1954) provided a means of examining the learning experiences of the group members. It is a means for collecting critical (that is, especially important) events or behaviours in a given situation (such as an employment group) and from them, deriving a set of essential requirements for successfully functioning in that situation. Helpful events occurring during the program were elicited - along with their perceived benefits or outcomes - from interviews with the participants, and the types of outcomes were compared against the conditions for developing personal agency.

Need for the Study

This study contributes to the knowledge of the beneficial components of employment groups in three ways. First, by applying personal agency to employment groups, it advances a new perspective for employment interventions. Two major perspectives have dominated career counselling research and practice since its origins at the turn of the century. The first, and still most prevalent in practice, is the congruence model. According to this model,
satisfaction, stability and production are achieved through a good fit between the person and the work environment. Development is the second major perspective. Facilitating personal growth in one's career and life is the focus in this model. Cochran (1994) argues that both congruence and development point to a higher order purpose, enhanced agency, and that this forms the primary aim of career counselling:

The general mission of career counselling might be appropriately summarized as helping people to become agents of their own courses of life. (Cochran & Laub, 1994, p. vii)

This represents a major shift of perspective that carries significant implications for career counselling practice (Proehl, 1995). Programs, such as employment groups, are products of the theoretical positions held by their developers. Behavioural psychology formed the basis of the job clubs, with training in job search behaviours being the emphasis of that movement. Similarly, focussing on enhancing personal agency will have a fundamental impact on the structure and content of employment group programs. A shift in program purpose requires a corresponding shift in program structure and content. The findings of this study may provide a starting point for program design.
A second way it was thought the study might contribute to the knowledge of the employment group dynamics was that it would collect, categorize and present program aspects and events that participants believed were especially helpful to them in their experiences of their programs. This was expected to provide insight into what moves individuals to action and what hinders them, insights that may further inform program development and delivery. Studies of this nature are scarce. Spokane (1991) in his review of career interventions notes that "only a handful of studies attempt analysis of the complex interpersonal processes involved in group treatment" (p. 153).

This information is not only useful but is needed. In a review of the employment group movement, Trimmer (1984) noted that "it is difficult to indicate precisely why GJS [Group Job Search] is such a highly successful approach. This analysis has examined a variety of programs, all of which seem to work quite well" (p. 115). In Canada, employment groups have been growing in importance among the government funded programs (Bailey, 1993). Increasingly, they are being viewed as an effective means to getting unemployed workers back into the labour market. With more economic resources being put into these programs, it is important to know what really works in moving people ahead in their careers.
Finally, the findings of the study may inform the recent convergence movement within vocational psychology. In the past few years, interest in drawing the diverse positions together has intensified. Preliminary work has been done in this regard by leading figures in the field (Osipow, 1990; Savickas & Lent, 1994). As mentioned above, Cochran believes that personal agency is the common standard and primary aim of career counselling. It was believed that information important to the convergence movement could be found by investigating the role of personal agency in employment groups.

Definition of Terms

This section provides the definitions of some key words that are used in this study.

**Career** is all the work one does in his or her lifetime (Sears, 1982).

**Employment group** refers to a group program which focusses on providing help in career planning, job search, or both. **Job** refers to a group of similar, paid positions requiring some similar attributes (Sears, 1982).
Occupation refers to a group of similar jobs that are found across various organizations (Sears, 1982).

Personal Agency is the capacity to direct one's own behaviour (Lent & Hackett, 1994). It is taking action intentionally to produce a desired change: "knowledgeable doing" (DeCharms, 1984). More simply, an agent is one who makes things happen (Cochran & Laub, 1994).

Personal Causation is essentially synonymous with personal agency. DeCharms preferred this term.

Thought Samples are stories, either from the teller's actual experience or from his or her imagination, that reflect the motives of the teller.

Underemployment is to work in jobs that are well below one's levels of education and experience, or to work half time or less and want to work more.

Unemployment is to not be working for remuneration.

Work is conscious effort, other than for the primary purpose of coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself or others (Sears, 1982).

Overview of the Study

This first chapter has introduced the study by explaining its purpose and rationale, and by providing a
summary of important background concepts. The next two chapters provide details of the conceptual foundations and research methodology to be followed. Chapter two summarizes the literature on unemployment and group career counselling, including employment groups, and reviews the two major career development theories. It explains the concept of personal agency and its relation to career development. Chapter three begins with a brief overview of the research design, then provides a thorough account of the methodology. Chapters four and five present the results, addressing research questions one and two, respectively. Finally, chapter six discusses the meaning and limitations of the results and explores their implications for theory, research and practice in group employment counselling and, more globally, career counselling.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature. It begins by describing the phenomenon and experience of unemployment. Employment group programs have been found to be an effective intervention for unemployment. The history of these programs and research done with them is reviewed. In an attempt to determine the aim of employment groups, the major schools of vocational psychology will be surveyed. This investigation leads to the construct of personal agency, recently proposed as the common aim of career counselling. Research linking personal agency to career development is considered. The chapter concludes with a description of deCharms' personal causation theory, which provides a theoretical understanding of personal agency and a means of operationalizing it.

Unemployment

Background

More people are unemployed now at a given point in time than ever before. Trends in American labour rates indicate a consistent, long term increase in unemployment (McDaniels,
1989). In a given year, one in six workers will experience some unemployment (Farr, 1991). As well, people remain unemployed for longer periods of time (Wegmann, Chapman & Johnson, 1989). Clearly, unemployment is a real prospect faced by most workers in the contemporary economy.

The impact of unemployment on individuals and society is great. Shelton (1985) reviews its wide ranging effects. Economically, its costs are in the billions of dollars in lost productivity and in financial assistance. Unemployment has been linked to physical and mental illness, suicide, and criminal behaviour. Family members, especially spouses, are often adversely affected. Psychologically, unemployment is frequently accompanied by depression and diminished self-esteem to the extent that it interferes with the job search, thereby creating a vicious cycle. Of particular interest in this study is the finding that the unemployed tend to perceive themselves as more externally controlled (O'Brien & Kabanoff, 1979). On the other hand, those that feel they have some control in the form of financial protection and future prospects are able to respond positively to unemployment (Shelton, 1985). Apparently, having a greater sense of inner control leads to behaviour which corresponds to personal agency.
The Experience of Unemployment

A model for describing the experience of unemployment has been advanced by Amundson and Borgen (1982). Job loss and job search are combined to form a process described as an "emotional roller coaster." In the job loss period, a grieving process similar to that suggested by Kubler-Ross (1969) was suggested, based on the notion that the loss of a job, like the death of a loved one, represents the loss of a significant life involvement. The stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression constitute a process of deteriorating affect. The final stage, acceptance, represents an emotional turning point, in that, having come to terms with the job loss, the person is ready to face the job search and the future, and is consequently more optimistic.

Amundson and Borgen liken the job search period to the process of "burnout" (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980). Initial enthusiasm brings the person to the high point of the emotional cycle, but the harsh realities of a difficult market often dampen that enthusiasm and lead to stagnation, frustration and, if the job search is prolonged, apathy. At this point, the emotional state becomes quite low and entrenched, making extended unemployment likely. Evidence for these dynamics was found in a longitudinal study of 629 unemployed British men (Warr & Jackson, 1985). The decline
in psychological health over the nine month period of the study was greatest for those who had been unemployed less than three months at the beginning of the study. On the other hand, commitment to employment and job seeking declined significantly only for those who had been unemployed longer than three months at the time the study began.

Support for the roller coaster model is found in a subsequent study (Borgen & Amundson, 1987). The experiences of 56 people unemployed for at least three months were examined. Three distinct patterns of experience emerged. The first pattern represented the experience of half the participants and included all the men, and all the women who were primary wage earners. This group's experience generally fit the roller coaster model. However, the job loss period was relatively short - several weeks to several months - compared to the job search phase. These participants tended to experience the "yo-yo effect," a number of emotional minicycles accompanying each attempt and rejection in the job search. This caused them to feel out of control and each rejection tended to bring a low point lower than the ones preceding it. A notable variation occurred for those in the group who had anticipated their job losses. Having experienced prolonged anxiety while still at work, the actual job loss came as a relief. These
people tended to experience the emotional low of job loss earlier and less severely than those who had been taken by surprise by their job losses. Opportunity to prepare for a job loss is apparently an important factor in one's ability to cope with it.

The second pattern of unemployment experience was found in women who were secondary wage earners in their families or who had sufficient financial resources to cope with a prolonged period of unemployment. Like the first group, their general pattern followed the roller coaster model but differed from the other groups in that the highs and lows were less severe, representing a more gradual process. Their losses were tied to a perceived loss of status, as opposed to the loss of identity and livelihood in the first group.

The third pattern represented the experience of young people (25 years and younger), most of whom were high school graduates with no post-secondary education. This group experienced the expected pattern of loss, but for most the peak associated with initial enthusiasm for the job search was weak or nonexistent. Expecting to find employment easily, they quickly became discouraged when faced with the difficulty of the job search.

A phenomenon common to all three patterns is a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness that sets in in cases of
prolonged unemployment. At this point, all patterns merge into a common continuous low profile. Klein, Amundson and Borgen (1992) provide a picture of the experience of one subset of the chronically unemployed: social assistance recipients.

Most respondents reported an unemployment experience marked by varying degrees of depression. Their experience was characterized by a continual struggle to financially meet survival needs, pessimism regarding being able to gain employment, low self-esteem, and a battery of negative feelings about being on welfare. (p. 91)

Borgen and Amundson (1987) suggest three sources of theoretical support for their emotional roller coaster model of the unemployment experience. First, a wide range of theorists promote the importance of work in defining identity. To be without work deprives one of a large part of his or her identity. Second, a variety of negative emotions result from victimization. Unemployed workers often feel victimized in that their condition was forced upon them. Third, in learned helplessness, individuals attribute negative situations beyond their control to faults in themselves. Workers who are unemployed for a prolonged period of time can experience learned helplessness and
consequently a deterioration in their self-esteem and confidence.

**Underemployment**

Although many well educated workers may not be troubled by unemployment, they have increasingly had to face a related problem, underemployment. Underemployment refers to the situation in which workers occupy positions for which they are overqualified. In 1970, 65 percent of all working age college graduates were employed in professional and technical positions; in 1982, it was only 52 percent (Wegmann et al., 1989).

A particular form of underemployment is career plateauing. A growing number of workers find themselves stuck with no place to progress to in their careers. Corporate restructuring, older workers delaying retirement, and a large number of well educated, middle-aged baby boomers are key factors contributing to underemployment and plateauing (Rantze & Feller, 1985).

Underemployed employees often become dissatisfied and a variety of negative results follow, including declining productivity, health problems and social stresses. These negative attitudes can ripple throughout an organization, with destructive results to the corporate climate (Rantze & Feller, 1985). Examining the experiences of underemployed
men, Borgen, Amundson and Harder (1988) found a great deal of disillusionment with their situations and serious detrimental effects on their personal relationships. Some of the men began to doubt their ability to make good decisions and lacked hope for their future prospects.

**Intervention Strategies**

The above review of unemployment and underemployment indicates that depression, lower self-esteem and a diminished sense of control and hope often accompany these experiences. Ironically, these are some of the characteristics critical to success in the job search. Holmes and Werbel (1992) report that individuals who found work within three months of job loss were more internally controlled, had greater self-efficacy and possessed better problem-solving skills than those who remained unemployed.

Interventions have traditionally tended to emphasize problem solving, whereas recent literature calls for more attention to the psychological needs of unemployed workers (Amundson & Borgen, 1982; Klein et al, 1992; Shelton, 1985; Steinweg, 1990) and to helping them become more self-directed (Rantze & Feller, 1985). In one study, the unemployed themselves were asked what factors led to the high and low points in their unemployment experiences (Amundson & Borgen, 1987). The leading factors contributing
to high points included support from family and friends, positive thinking, career changes, part-time work and, of particular interest to the current study, job search support groups or vocational counselling.

The role of employment groups is noteworthy. Other studies and reviews have highlighted the importance of employment groups (Shelton, 1985; Steinweg, 1990). For example, the most prominent positive factor for a group of social assistance recipients was joining an employment training group (Klein et al., 1992). Entry into an employment group dramatically counters the normal downward emotional slide experienced in prolonged unemployment and the positive effects are sustained long after the group is finished (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Amundson & Borgen, 1988). The support of other unemployed persons in an employment group is significant (Davies, 1996). Rife and Belcher (1993) reported that older unemployed workers perceived the supportive messages from unemployed friends as more positive and helpful than the messages provided by employed or retired family or friends. One conclusion drawn by Amundson and Borgen (1987) addressed the importance and nature of group interventions:

Interventions that use a group format seem most appropriate, given the number of times the support of others was mentioned. The type of group
intervention seems crucial. The evidence from this study suggests that, in addition to teaching skills and giving support for the job search and rejection processes, the group should include client-centered emotional support aspects throughout and specific cognitive and other reframing activities. (p. 105)

Regarding cognitive activities used in groups, Borgen (in press) suggested that three fundamental issues need to be addressed with people experiencing career transitions: challenging the assumptions they make about their situations, challenging their perspective of why they seem unable to move through the process, and examining their expectations of success at the end of the process.

The next section examines the development and work of employment groups.

Employment Groups

The Nature of Employment Groups

Most employment groups are of a type known as the structured group. These groups "provide for the acquisition of both knowledge and skills, and the group structure allows for the sharing of information and the practice of new
behaviors in a supportive environment" (Baruth & Robinson, 1987).

Harkness (1975) notes that "much of what is labeled group counseling is actually group information giving" (p. 70). There has long been a tendency in career counseling groups to emphasize information acquisition using didactic methods. Noting that changing job search behavior should be the primary aim of an employment group, Wegmann and colleagues (1989) recommend a workshop - as opposed to a classroom - approach. Johnson (1982) describes the use and importance of the group process in job search groups:

Discussion, participation and the surfacing of feelings regarding the job search are encouraged. Though the leader has the responsibility of providing information, the experiences of the group are called forth and used as a base. The leader's role is that of facilitator and consultant to a self-help group, and social support of the group is fostered and encouraged. (p. 41)

Development of Employment Groups

Although there are references to group programs for job search dating back to the 1960's (Wegmann et al., 1989), the first widely recognized program was the Job Club (Azrin, Flores & Kaplan, 1975). Azrin drew on behavior therapy techniques to design a structured program for learning the
"complex" set of skills required for successfully finding a job. Active practice and feedback, group support and family support were among the central components of the program.

The results of an initial Job Club study (Azrin et al., 1975) were dramatic. The median time taken by Job Club participants to find jobs was 14 days as compared to 53 days for a control group of untrained job-seekers. After two months, 90% from the Job Club had found jobs versus 55% in the control group. The Job Club participants tended to find better jobs: they found proportionately more professional, skilled and semi-skilled positions, and were paid higher starting salaries. These results were reinforced in a large study of 1000 welfare clients (Azrin, Philip, Thienes-Hontos & Besalel, 1980). After six months, 80% of those in Job Clubs had found jobs versus 48% for the control group. The quality of the positions found by the two groups was about the same, but those in the Job Clubs tended to find positions that were nonsubsidized, more enduring, more satisfying and offered more opportunity for advancement. A more recent study using the Job Club with welfare recipients reported comparable results (Stidham & Remley, 1992).

The Job Club model was adapted by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) for use in Canada Employment Centres and CEIC sponsored agencies (Mills, 1985). The "Job Finding Clubs" proved to be similarly
successful in Canada: "The success rate for these Clubs has ranged from 65% to 93% with members finding a job after 9 days on the average" (Mills, 1985, p. 294).

The Job Factory is a program similar to the Job Club and was developed at about the same time (Trimmer, 1984). It focuses on job search techniques and skills as participants work intensively on their job searches. Supervision and group support are important elements of the program. The importance of positive group dynamics is emphasized, in which support and constructive critique can be offered in group discussions.

The number of group employment programs grew rapidly through the 1980's with contributions coming from both the government and private sectors (Wegmann et al., 1989). In Canada, group employment counselling was occurring in many federal employment centres by the end of the decade (Amundson, Borgen & Westwood, 1990). Helped by the commitment of the federal government to a comprehensive labour force strategy (Success in the Works, 1989) and the growing recognition of the role that group programs can play in achieving this strategy, Amundson and his associates (1990) concluded that "the future of group employment counselling seems very promising" (p. 189).
Research in Group Career Counselling

Numerous studies have shown that career counselling groups are effective. Some of these studies examine the outcomes of specific programs (Mathews, Damron & Yuen, 1985; Remer, O’Niell and Gohs, 1984). Others consider the impact of programs on special populations, such as alcoholics (Dunn, Thomas & Engdahl, 1992), young offenders (Munson, 1994) and inner-city youth (Hamdani, 1977). Still other research advances new program models (Jacobson, 1984; McWhirter, Nichols & Banks, 1984).

While the research addressing the outcomes of career counselling groups is extensive, studies that consider the processes involved are rare (Kivlighan, 1990; Spokane, 1991). In one such study Robbins and Tucker (1986) examined the relation of goal instability (a general instability or absence of orienting goals) to program format. Career workshops presented similar content in two distinct formats: self-directed, focussing on dissemination of information and individualized self-exploration with little group interaction, and interactional, in which group process mechanisms including self-disclosure, empathy and discussion were facilitated through leader modeling. Participants with low goal instability performed equally well in either format on measures of career maturity and career exploration, but those with high goal instability performed significantly
better in the interactional workshops, even to the point of catching up to post-program performance levels of other participants. Regardless of goal instability level, participants preferred the interactional workshops. These results suggest that participants feel they gain the most from workshops emphasizing the group process and that those who lack direction are best served by this type of workshop.

In a study of longer term workshops (Robbins, Chartrand, McFadden & Lee, 1994), middle-aged and older adults were also assigned to one of two different formats, self-directed or leader-led. The content of the workshops was the same. In this case, participants improved across several attitudinal and behavioural measures, regardless of which format they experienced. The apparent discrepancy with the results of the earlier study could be explained as a function of different age groups, or more likely, by the lack of group process in the leader-led workshops. The leader-led format is described as containing discussion and interaction that appears to be very content-focussed with no mention of the supportive group process mechanisms that were highlighted in the interactional groups of the earlier study.

Kivlighan, Johnson and Fretz (1987) sought to identify the therapeutic factors valued by career group participants. A questionnaire was constructed based on Yalom's (1985) 11
therapeutic functions of groups. The groups met four times for two-hour sessions. The participants of nine such groups were given the questionnaires at the end of their programs. The most highly valued therapeutic factor was the expression of feelings. This result is congruent with Clarke and Greenberg's (1986) finding that an affective intervention was more effective than a problem solving one in reducing indecision. Kivlighan et al. noted the disparity of these findings with the "rational problem solving approach that characterizes most of career counselling literature" (p. 41). Other valued therapeutic factors included a feeling that others were having similar struggles (universality), cohesion among group members and taking responsibility for one's decisions. Kivlighan et al. also compared high-change and low-change participants and found that high-change participants valued more of the therapeutic factors. Consequently, they suggested that "high-change groups made use of a wider range of change mechanisms" (p. 43).

A comparison between career groups and personal encounter groups was another aspect of the Kivlighan et al. study. Participants of both types of groups valued universality and the expression of feelings. Career group participants valued acceptance and taking responsibility more highly than the encounter group participants.
Amundson and Borgen (1988) took a phenomenological approach to examining the processes of employment groups. Employment group participants were interviewed about their experiences of unemployment in general and about the critical incidents, both helpful and hindering, in the group. The interviews were conducted approximately three months after completion of the group. Of the 77 people interviewed, nearly half were working and the remainder were actively engaged in job searches. Their findings on the experience of unemployment have been reported above (The Experience of Unemployment, in this chapter). The critical incidents were sorted into 19 categories and are listed below in order of decreasing rates of participation:

1. Mutual support and encouragement among group members.
2. Job search strategies.
3. Instruction in resumes and correspondence.
4. A positive outlook and self-image.
5. Interview practice and preparation.
6. Telephone technique.
7. Belonging to the group; not feeling alone.
8. Job leads obtained through networking.
9. Videotaped feedback of mock job interviews.
10. Leadership provided by the counsellor/facilitator.
11. Enjoying the job-search group routine.
12. Supplies and services provided for job search.
13. Absorbing the enthusiasm and success of others.
15. Follow-up support and services available after program completion.
16. Goal setting.
17. Social comparison: norming oneself against other group members.
18. Contribution to other group members' welfare.
19. Ventilating grievances, problems and personal experiences with group members.

It was evident to Amundson and Borgen that these positive factors "could be divided into two major categories of roughly equal importance. The first category focussed on task orientation and included items related to the establishment of specific goals and the learning of various job search techniques . . . The second category included items concerning support, belonging, and the development of positive self-esteem" (Amundson, Borgen & Westwood, 1990, p. 182). One of the 19 factors, enjoying the employment group routine, was deemed to stand on its own, forming a third category. Amundson and Borgen suggested that these three main categories (support and self-esteem, task orientation, and enjoyment of routine) parallel Toffler's (1980)
tripartite structure of human needs: community, meaning and structure.

From another perspective, there is considerable overlap between the three categories (support, task and routine) and the findings of a review of the empirical research on unemployment. Steinweg (1990) identified six effective strategies for counselling the unemployed: (a) encourage a broad-based sense of self-esteem, (b) help maintain pre-unemployment levels of activity and daily structure, (c) develop social-support networks, (d) encourage external causal attributions for unemployed status, (e) establish links with community resources, and (f) make referrals to vocational rehabilitation programs.

Some other attempts have been made to apply models to the career group experience. Kivlighan et al. (1987) saw the results of their study as supporting Yalom's (1985) notion that learning in groups involves two steps. The first step is emotional involvement and expression, and the second step is gaining a cognitive understanding of the issues at hand. Kivlighan et al. added a third step to this model: acting on new understanding. This three step model provides a framework for understanding and promoting the progress of individuals within the career group.

Borgen, Pollard, Amundson and Westwood (1989) put forward a model that also explains the process of the group
as a whole. The authors identify six stages of group development: Planning, Initial, Transitional, Working, Terminating and Post Group. Each stage is described in terms of characteristics, goals, dynamics and leadership approaches. The model is based on the work of several group theorists (Corey, 1985; Schutz, 1973; Trotzer, 1989; Tuckman, 1963).

Recently, Borgen (in press) reported that pilot testing of a government sponsored program called Starting Points (Westwood, Amundson & Borgen, 1995) indicated that several components of the program were particularly useful: building the relationship, defining specific issues, normalizing client's reactions, focusing on strengths, focusing on required resources and planning next steps.

As helpful as these studies may be, they have been few in number. The lack of attention to process found in career group research also appears in practice. In a thorough review of career research concerning group formats, Kivlighan (1990) applied 12 therapeutic factors of groups derived from the work of Yalom (1985) and of Bloch and Crouch (1985). The therapeutic factors emphasized in each study were identified and it was found that few of the 12 were used by many of the studies.

The career group studies examined have placed almost exclusive emphasis on self-understanding, learning from
interpersonal action, self-disclosure, and guidance. There has been a moderate emphasis by these models on cohesion, altruism, and vicarious learning, and almost no attention paid to catharsis, universality, and instillation of hope. (Kivlighan, 1990, p. 75)

Kivlighan's findings also suggest a serious gap between the focus of research and the experience of group participants. None of the factors most valued by group participants in the earlier study described above (Kivlighan et al., 1987) were highly emphasized by researchers. He concluded that "with the possible exception of client factors and leadership, career group researchers have not addressed empirically many of the important group properties (1990, p. 75).

Personal Agency and Career Counselling

Career Counselling Theories

Whether dealing with a group or an individual, it is important to have therapeutic aims based on a sound theoretical framework. Career counselling in this century has been guided overwhelmingly by two major theoretical positions. The first position has had the stronger impact
of the two, perhaps because of its simplicity and face validity. Known by many names (e.g. trait-factor, congruence, matching), this school of thought emphasizes the adequacy of the fit between the person and the environment in determining one's work satisfaction and productivity. The modern roots of this approach are found in the pioneering work of Parsons, whose succinct summary is still an accurate account of the core principles.

In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: First, a clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources, limitations and other qualities. Second, a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work. Third, true reasoning on the relations of these groups of facts. (Parsons, 1909, p. 5)

Holland (1985) has expanded on the congruence model, adding a typology and including recognition of the interaction between person and environment. Holland's theory of career types has become the most widely recognized and used congruence theory.

The other major career counselling position can be called the developmental school. Ginzberg is credited as
the first to highlight the developmental aspect:

"Occupational choice is a developmental process: it is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years. Each step in the process has a meaningful relation to those which precede and follow it" (Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad & Herma, 1951, p. 185). The dominant spokesperson for the developmental school has been Super. For Super, "the process of career development is essentially that of developing and implementing occupational self-concepts" (1990, p. 207). Drawing from a variety of disciplines, Super sought to construct a framework for understanding the development of the self-concept.

Each of these theoretical approaches was at one time held to be the common standard for understanding career choice, development and counselling. Neither, however, has proved to be sufficient. Cochran (1994) explains that congruence accounts for only a small amount of the variance in job satisfaction. Further, "matching is not an end in itself, but always a means to something of greater importance" (p. 213). Development has remained vague and distant from the concerns of career counselling. Cochran acknowledges the contributions of both the congruence and developmental approaches, but finds them inadequate as a common standard for the field. He proposes another common standard:
For any career problem, what is at stake is becoming more of an agent in shaping and living a career. Enhanced agency is the end to which person-environment fit contributes and toward which development moves. (Cochran, 1994, p. 213, italics added)

**Personal Agency in Careers**

Prominent reviewers have drawn attention to the rising profile of personal agency in vocational psychology (Borgen, 1991, 1992; Spokane, 1991). F. Borgen (1991) identifies a trend spanning two decades in which "people are increasingly viewed as active shapers of their lives, including their careers, rather than passively adjusting to external demands. Rather than external environmental factors being seen as predominant and implacable, causal influences are increasingly seen as deriving from internal factors" (p. 280). On the other hand, he points out that personal agency has always been present, if less visible.

Human agency has long been alive in the guise of Roger's self-actualization, Kelly's personal constructs, and Super's career as implementation of self concept. Somehow, these themes of providing clients with the tools to shape their career lives has been the essence of vocational counseling. (p. 281)
Two Approaches

F. Borgen (1992) points to two leading exemplars of a personal agency perspective in the field of psychology: Bandura and Howard. They come from widely variant perspectives, social cognitive theory and humanistic psychology, respectively. The key points of their positions will be outlined, then highlights of how their positions have been applied in vocational psychology will be considered.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura: Reciprocal Determinism

In social cognitive theory (formerly known as social learning theory), "cognitive, vicarious, self-reflexive, and self-regulating processes" play a central role (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Personal agency operates within the structure of triadic reciprocal determinism, which refers to the causal interaction between action, internal factors and the environment (Bandura, 1986; 1989). Consequently, "persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyors of animating environmental influences" (1989, p. 1175).

Social cognitive theory seeks to explain the interrelationship between knowledge and action. Self-
referent thought mediates this relationship, so that knowledge and skills alone are not sufficient for successful action to take place (Bandura, 1982).

The most central and pervasive mechanism of personal agency is perceived self-efficacy: beliefs about one's capabilities to exercise control over events that affect one's life (Bandura, 1989; 1990). More simply, self-efficacy is the belief that "I can do it." People's self-efficacy beliefs affect their levels of motivation, anxiety, stress, and depression. In other words, it is not people's actual abilities, but their beliefs about their abilities, that has the greatest influence on how they will cope with challenging situations. Self-efficacy beliefs are derived from four main sources: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977).

The self-efficacy mechanism has been studied in a wide range of applications, including athletic performance (Bandura, 1990), nursing home care (Jirovec & Kasno, 1990; Rodin & Langer, 1977), and career development. Research into the importance of self-efficacy in career development will be examined in the next section.
Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive theory made its first inroads into vocational psychology through research efforts that focussed on career-related self-efficacy. Research in career self-efficacy was initiated by Hackett and Betz (1981). They proposed that self-efficacy might be useful in understanding career development processes, particularly those of women. In the first empirical study of career self-efficacy, Betz and Hackett (1981) found that self-efficacy was related to occupational choice and that the efficacy beliefs of women varied according to the traditional gender-appropriateness of the occupation, while for men they did not. Two other early studies investigated the relations of self-efficacy, gender and decision-making skills (Taylor & Betz, 1983), and of perceived mathematical ability, gender and selection of college majors (Betz & Hackett, 1983). A large amount of research has followed in which self-efficacy has been linked to a wide range of career-related variables. In general, this research indicates that self-efficacy beliefs are predictive of academic achievements, career entry levels and work adjustment outcomes (Hackett & Lent, 1992).

The first reference to personal agency in the career self-efficacy movement came in an exploratory study of competencies important to professional women's career development (Hackett, Betz & Doty, 1985). There arose a
cluster of "behaviors by which an individual affected her environment in areas relevant to her educational and career development" (Betz & Hackett, 1987, p. 300). The authors called this agency, "the tendency of the individual to behave in ways that created rather than simply responded to educational or career opportunities" (p. 300). It involves a proactive approach to the environment. Betz and Hackett proposed two factors contributing to agency: behavioral competence (skills) and perceived self-efficacy (confidence). In their view, both these factors were required: "It is our view that skill without confidence leads to behavioral avoidance, whereas confidence without skill leads to ineffectual behavior" (p. 300).

More recently, Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994, 1996) have expanded the theory into a more comprehensive framework referred to as social cognitive career theory (SCCT). SCCT is viewed by its developers as a first effort at career theory integration. The two main theoretical sources on which SCCT rests are social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and cognitive-constructivist concepts (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992). Constructivist psychology emphasizes how humans actively construct meaning from their experiences by means of the cognitive representations they have developed about
the world. In so doing, they influence their own development and surroundings in an interactive fashion.

SCCT aims to explain "the processes whereby (a) academic and career interests develop, (b) interests and various other mechanisms promote career-relevant choices, and (c) people achieve varying levels of performance and persistence in educational and career pursuits" (Lent & Hackett, 1994, p.83). To this end, career-related interest, choice, and performance processes are conceptualized within three interlocking segmental models (Lent & Brown, 1996). Central to each of these models are three social cognitive mechanisms: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goal representations. These social cognitive mechanisms are seen as "the primary means through which people assert agency in their career choice and development" (Lent & Hackett, 1994, p. 84).

Also common to the three segmental models is a feedback loop between performance attainments and subsequent behaviour, so that behaviour influences cognition and, in turn, further behaviour. This follows the reciprocal causation among the person, the environment and behaviour as conceptualized by Bandura (1986).

A comprehensive theory of career development must account for other personal and contextual variables. Consequently, SCCT incorporates three other components that
influence career outcomes: person inputs such as gender and ethnicity, environmental features, and learning experiences. Each of these interacts with the three social cognitive mechanisms to promote or limit career development. Contextual factors are divided into two groups based on proximity to particular career choices. Distal factors work in the background to shape learning experiences while proximal factors exert influence on specific choice junctures.

SCCT is applicable to all ages. The processes of interest development, choice, and performance operate throughout the lifespan but tend to stabilize by young adulthood.

Although it is very new, SCCT has already generated much activity and interest. SCCT has been used as a framework to understand the career development of African American women (Hackett & Byers, 1996), develop interventions for at-risk populations (Chartrand & Rose, 1996), and improve career counsellor training (O'Brien & Heppner, 1996). It has been given prominence in several major volumes in the career development literature (Lent & Hackett, 1996; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994).

Researchers have developed several measures of career-related self-efficacy. The Career Decision-Making Self-

Recently, several measures specifically relevant to job search and transition have been developed. The Financial Independence Self-Efficacy Scale (Houser, D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992) considers self-efficacy in relation to job search and career management activities. The Career Transition Inventory (Heppner, Multon & Johnston, 1994) assesses individuals' self-perceptions of the psychological resources which they possess that relate to career change adjustment. It contains five factors: readiness, confidence, control, social support, and decision independence.

Career search self-efficacy is an individual's perceived confidence in performing tasks associated with career exploration and selection (Soberg, Good & Nord, 1994). The Career Search Efficacy Scale (CSES; Soberg et al., 1994) assesses self-efficacy in four areas: job search, interviewing, networking and personal exploration.
Care must be taken not to consider these as measures of personal agency. They assess self-efficacy, an important component of personal agency but not its only component (Bandura, 1989; Betz and Hackett, 1987). The distinctness of career self-efficacy and human agency was demonstrated by Solberg et al. (1994, 1995). (This finding should be considered tentatively because human agency was somewhat arbitrarily assessed by several personality indices and it referred to a global sense of agency rather than one that is career specific.)

One measure of personal agency has been developed by Betz and Hackett (1987). Recognizing that behavioural competence as well as perceived self-efficacy comprise agency, they constructed an assessment that incorporated both. Situations potentially relevant to educational and career development in a college environment were presented to students on audiotape. They provided responses which were audiotaped and evaluated for agentic behaviour. They were subsequently presented with an agentic response to each situation and asked to indicate whether they were capable of making the supplied response, and if so, how confident they were in that capability.

The development of this instrument was an important step in that it drew attention to the fact that assessing personal agency required a behaviourmetric dimension.
Unfortunately, it is of limited utility for two reasons. First, its range of application is very narrow. This is necessarily so because the situations had to be specifically defined in order to perform their purpose of eliciting realistic responses. But in so doing, the instrument's application was limited to college students. A second reason for its limited utility is that the responses evaluated are imagined; they are not given in response to actual situations experienced by the individual. This method of assessment is greatly superior to traditional paper and pencil self-reports. Nevertheless, the responses should be taken with some caution because they do not represent the actual behaviour of individuals in contexts that are personally meaningful to them. The most reliable data for behavioural competency is drawn from the individual's lived experience.

Humanistic Psychology

Howard: Self-Determination

Humanistic psychology, according to Polkinghorne (1982), is defined by its view of human beings as having the capacities to make meaning of their experience and act with self-determined purpose. Howard, working from this perspective, focuses on the broader issues involved in
personal agency. He views human beings as "self-determining, story-telling, active agents" and personal agency as a "human capacity that may be enlisted in the service of attaining goals, plans, or purposes that persons may entertain" (Howard & Myers, 1990, p. 227). Biological influences, environmental contingencies, social influences, and spiritual and emotional factors play roles in determining human behaviour, but the central determinant is personal agency (Howard, 1986).

Personal agency is made possible by language use, the unique ability of humans that enables them to make meaning of their experience and monitor their actions. Action can best be understood as attempts by the individual to fulfil social roles as he or she perceives them. An important implication for research is that the behaviour of subjects can only be understood when they explain their intentions.

Like Bandura, Howard places limits on personal agency. "Humans are not, however, free to behave in any manner they desire. . . human action can be shown to be influenced by factors both within (e.g., transient physiological states or organic damage) and outside the person (e.g., environmental pressures or social forces)" (Howard & Myers, 1990, p. 227). Although fully functional people have the capacity for self-determination, not all use it (Howard, 1986). When personal agency is not exercised, the person falls under the control
of other determinants such as environmental and biological influences.

**Cochran: Authoring a Life Story**

Cochran has extensively developed conceptions of personal agency similar to those of Howard in the domain of career counselling. For Cochran, the general mission of career counselling is to empower a person to become an agent within his or her own course of life (1994). An agent is active and liberated, setting goals, overcoming obstacles and making things happen. A patient, on the other hand, is trapped and helpless, a victim of circumstance.

For Cochran, personal agency is not a single mechanism but a synthesis of features found in related concepts such as self-determination (deCharms, 1984; 1987), self-legislation (Frankfurt, 1971; Taylor, 1977), and confidence (Bandura, 1989). The best vehicle for understanding personal agency is narrative or story form. From this perspective, "an agent is a person who has become the author of his or her course of life as an ongoing composition" (Cochran & Laub, 1994, p. 178). The person best understands his or her life as an ongoing drama. The story consists of a characteristic pattern of four phases (Cochran, 1990; Cochran & Laub, 1994). First is Incompleteness - a gap between what is and what ought to be. Second is Positioning,
or preparing oneself to act. Actualizing is the third phase, in which action is taken to close the gap. When action is taken and completed, the fourth phase, Completion, is entered. These four phases form a cycle of experience that repeats time and again throughout the life story, like chapters in a book.

To enhance agency is to transform the person's role in his or her life story. A new agent-plot is constructed while the old patient-plot is destroyed. Patient plots are diminished in a variety of situations: (a) the emergence of one's situation into awareness, (b) rehearsing a subjugated experience, (c) leaving a negative context, (d) expressing resistance and (e) making restorations or resolutions. Agentic orientations are enacted in the following process: (a) studying a model, (b) imaginative rehearsal, (c) preparation (i.e., skills, knowledge), (d) enactment of the new orientation, and (e) reflection on the enactment.

More simply, "to enhance a sense of agency is a matter of encouraging or guiding a person to engage in agentic experiences" (Cochran & Laub, 1994, p. 39). Several guidelines for enhancing career agency are provided: (a) act within one's constraints and strengths, (b) develop agentic characteristics, (c) clarify an objective career representation, and (d) clarify a personal career narrative (Cochran, 1994).
Cochran (1990; Cochran & Laub, 1994) has validated aspects of the life story concept through case studies. Kush and Cochran (1993) demonstrated that a career planning program for young people and their parents was effective in enhancing the sense of agency in the youth. Sense of agency was assessed using a battery of tests measuring various concepts related to personal agency. The authors emphasized that the "conditions for enhancing agency can be harmoniously incorporated into career counselling" and called for "a fuller consideration of agency as a theoretical basis for career counseling" (p. 438).

Comparing the Approaches

The differences between the social cognitive and humanistic approaches to career development are striking. The humanists take a macro approach, focusing on the goals, plans and purposes that are close to people's lived experience. Adherents to the social cognitive school incorporate some large scale processes but tend to concentrate on the micro level of psychological mechanisms. Consequently, they provide a thorough account of career development processes; little appears to be missed. Their research methods involve measurement of variables and statistical hypothesis testing. The methods of inquiry used by humanistically inclined researchers are markedly
different; narratives obtained through interviewing reveal patterns of meaning in the individual's experience. In colloquial terms, humanistic scientists are like artists trying to capture the entire forested landscape on canvas. Social cognitivists are similar to naturalists, seeking to observe and describe each different tree in the forest.

This metaphor captures the similarities of the two positions as well as their differences. It is remarkable that despite their widely variant origins and perspectives, both have arrived at the same basic construct and aims; that is, they are both observing the same forest! Both Bandura and Howard agree that personal agency is the capacity for self-regulated behaviour that is made possible through cognitive processes. Furthermore, their basic aims are very similar. Howard (1986) states that there is no greater goal for psychological research and practice than the "goal of helping human beings to reassert control over their lives" (p. 39). According to Bandura (1990), "Social cognitive theory provides a prescriptive specificity on how to empower people with competencies, self-regulatory capabilities and resilient self-belief of efficacy that enables them to enhance their psychological well-being and accomplishments" (p. 157).

The strengths in each approach lead to notable weaknesses. Humanistic approaches can lose sight of the
particulars of a phenomenon and become so broad and vague that their work is of little practical use to those trying to apply it in everyday experience. Important concepts may be omitted. On the other hand, the social cognitive theory of careers is becoming so complex with its account of the particulars that the parsimony required for theories to be easily applied is in danger of being lost. The level of detail can obscure the main principles that most closely fit with human experience. Neither approach has developed a suitable means of assessing personal agency.

The complementarity of the approaches seems apparent. Social cognitive career theory outlines the major aims and processes but chooses to focus on the detailed mechanisms of the processes. Cochran emphasizes the overall aim of empowering persons to become agents of their own courses of life, and puts social cognitive skills in the service of this aim. Each school has chosen research methods appropriate to its emphasis.

In this study, it was seen as desirable to use a model of personal agency that is able to bridge the gap between these two positions so that information from both can be used. It is a necessity that this model is able to provide a method for measuring personal agency. Such a model has been developed by Richard deCharms and is outlined in the next section.
Personal Causation

DeCharms (1968; 1976) has developed a theory of personal agency which has been used to increase the motivation of school children. He refers to the concept as personal causation and considers it to be the core of human agency. Personal causation means "deliberate action to produce intended change" in the world (deCharms, 1987). It requires knowledge to guide action, skills to make the action successful, and moral responsibility to assess the benefits of the action (Macmurray, 1957).

Foundational Concepts

Personal causation represents a basic postulate about human nature. "Man is not a stone, for he is a direct source of energy, nor is he a machine, for the direction of the behavior resulting from his energy comes entirely from within him. Rather, man is the origin of his behavior" (deCharms, 1968, p. 271). (At the time of deCharms' early writings, convention called for the male term "man" to represent the human race, including both genders.) For deCharms, what is primary and unique to human beings is found in the concept of personal causation (1984). It is his fundamental assumption about human motivation.
Man's primary motivational propensity is to be effective in producing changes in his environment. Man strives to be a causal agent, to be the primary locus of causation for, or the origin of, his behavior; he strives for personal causation. This propensity has its roots in his earliest encounters with his environment, forces him to actively engage his environment thereby testing and deriving personal knowledge from it, and is the basis for specific motives. His nature commits him to this path, and his very life depends on it. (deCharms, 1968, p. 269)

The centrality of personal causation is considered by deCharms to be an assumption, not a fact, and as such cannot be proven (1984). Underlying this assumption is another that is even more basic: the ground of human experience is to effect change in the environment, to take intentional action, to be a locus of causality (deCharms, 1968, 1987). Personal causation involves self-awareness as well as intentional action; it is "the personal knowledge of being an agent of change in the environment" (deCharms, 1968, p. 271). A person experiences personal causation when he or she understands the locus of causality for an act to be within themselves (deCharms, 1976, p.9).
The Origin-Pawn concept was developed as a simple means of expressing the concept of personal causation. "An origin is a person who feels that he is in control of his fate; he feels that the cause of his behavior is within himself" (1976, p. 4). Origins seek their own goals and initiate their own behaviour. A pawn is a person who feels pushed around, "who perceives his behavior as determined by external forces beyond his control" (1968, p. 273, 274).

Although origin and pawn refer to two distinct motivational states, a person is not always one or the other. Instead, the Origin-Pawn concept is a continuous variable representing "a feeling of purpose and commitment (or the lack of it) that can apply to any specific motive" (1976, p. 5). A given person will have a certain predisposition towards acting like an origin or a pawn and this predisposition is modified by each situation the individual faces.

DeCharms' notion of personal causation sets the person in a dynamic conflict with his or her environment, "constantly struggling against being confined and constrained by external forces - against being moved about like a pawn into situations not of his own choosing" (1968, p. 273). Since human beings are social beings, "environment" refers to a social context as well as a physical one. The struggle takes place largely in relation
to other people (deCharms, 1987). The resistance of others becomes constitutive of the person's actions (Macmurray, 1957). From this person-environment interaction arise three general patterns of behaviour, according to deCharms (1987). The first is an obvious pawn-type of behaviour: passivity. When encountering resistance from others, this person does nothing. (Seligman (1975) refers to this pattern as learned helplessness.) A second response is aggression. Surprisingly, this too is considered pawn-like behaviour because in reacting against others the person's behaviour originates outside of him or herself. The third pattern is to take goal-directed action. This is the pattern of an origin.

Personal causation provides the basis for understanding human motivation. The feeling of being an origin or a pawn "has strong effects on behaviour" (deCharms, 1968, p. 274), stronger than does the objective situation itself. An origin has a strong feeling of personal causation that overcomes any feelings of constraint. He or she attributes changes in the environment to personal behaviour, thus reinforcing the feeling of personal causation and providing a powerful motivational force for directing future behaviour. The pawn, on the other hand, feels that his or her behaviour is determined by external forces beyond his or her control even in the face of evidence that he or she is
free to act at will. The resulting feeling of powerlessness reduces effective behaviour, the person's feeling of being controlled is reinforced and more pawn behaviour is likely in future situations.

From the perspective of personal causation, the means of achieving a goal may be more important to understanding motivation than the nature of the goal itself (deCharms, 1968). Satisfaction comes in the realization that "I did it" (deCharms, 1976).

Looking at both sides of the coin, we may hypothesize that when a man perceives his behavior as stemming from his own choice he will cherish that behavior and its results; when he perceives his behaviour as stemming from the dictates of external forces, that behavior and its results, although identical in other respects to behavior of his own choosing, will be devalued.

(deCharms, 1968, p.273)

DeCharms acknowledges the theory of achievement motivation (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark & Lowell, 1953) as a major influence on his work. However, he sees an important distinction between the two theories. The goal of the achievement motive is "success in competition with a standard of excellence" (McClelland et al., 1953).
Consequently its goal is externally derived. With personal causation, the goal is internally chosen.

Another theoretical construct that at first appears similar to, if not synonymous with, personal causation is Rotter's (1966) locus of control. In practice, the two constructs have not correlated closely at all (deCharms, 1976). DeCharms (1976, 1981) explains how the constructs are distinct: "Locus of control emphasizes reinforcements... The emphasis is on feeling that one can obtain rewards. The Origin-Pawn concept stresses the feeling that one has determined his own action and goal and is realistic about his actions" (1976, p. 101).

**Personal Causation Operationalized**

Personal causation was operationalized by Plimpton (deCharms, 1976) in the course of developing a scoring system for thought samples. Six categories of origin behaviour were identified from extensive observation:

1. **Internal Control.** The feeling of being in control of what is happening inside and outside of oneself.

2. **Goal Setting.** An internally caused decision to act specifically to attain a definite goal.
3. **Instrumental Activity.** An internally caused activity which is instrumental to attaining a goal.

4. **Reality Perception.** The ability to perceive one's position in one's environment, one's possibilities, strengths and weaknesses. The capacity to recognize a problem and to use the appropriate means to solve it or attain a goal.

5. **Personal Responsibility.** The willingness to assume responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, the attainment of goals, the fulfillment of desires and the solution of problems. This also includes the willingness to assume social responsibility, that is, feeling and acting responsible for others in a group, community or society. An origin is only an origin when he or she treats others as origins.

6. **Self-confidence.** The confidence in one's ability to succeed, to effect successful change in the surrounding environment. It includes faith in a positive outcome or in a positive future, and a positive conception of the world.
Developing Personal Causation

At its core, personal causation is a feeling of personal power. For deCharms, developing personal causation is a matter of developing an ownership of one's actions ("I did it") and a confidence that "I can do it" in future challenges.

Consequently, change must be self-directed, not imposed. "The fundamental step in helping a person to change is to get him to change himself for reasons that are important to him" (deCharms, 1976, p. 64). DeCharms proposes two principles for helping people to change themselves. First, they must see the change as an improvement of self-image. Second, group support and acceptance of change needs to be provided. These two principles are drawn from the work of McClelland.

The more an individual can perceive and experience the newly conceptualized motive as an improvement in his self-image, the more the motive is likely to influence his future thoughts and actions. . . Changes in motives are likely to occur in an interpersonal atmosphere in which the individual feels warmly but honestly supported and respected by others as a person capable of guiding and directing his future behavior.

(McClelland, 1965, p. 327, 329)
Helping learners to change in this way requires of teachers and facilitators a belief that all their students can be origins, and further, a belief that "they themselves can be origins and can have desired effects on students" (deCharms, 1984, p. 306). It is important to help the person to accomplish change for themselves, not to do it for them: "To help a person to be an Origin is not to determine his goals but to help him develop commitment and purpose so that he can reach his own goals more effectively" (deCharms, 1976, p. 5). A helper who does too much risks diminishing the person's sense of personal causation, making the learner more of a Pawn.

On the other hand, helpers must not do too little. There is much work involved in this enterprise: "To help a person become an origin is to free him to do what he must do by structuring, even constraining the situation, so that he makes his own choices based on realistic selection of appropriate action toward selected goals" (deCharms, 1976, p. 206).

Developing personal causation in persons therefore requires that the helper provide learners with an environment in which the feelings and behaviors of an origin are encouraged. As the learners experience being origins, they come to value commitment, internal choice and
responsibility. In short, they come to understand and value their own personal causation.

In order to build such a learning environment, deCharms believes that helpers must assure that certain elements are present in the learner's experience:

1. **Self Study**: The person should be encouraged to consider carefully his motives in a warm atmosphere of acceptance by others in the group.

2. **Internal Goal Setting**: The setting should help the person to translate his or her motives into realistic short-range and long-range goals.

3. **Planning and Goal-Directed Behavior**: The setting should encourage the person to plan realistic and concrete action to attain the goals.

4. **Personal Responsibility**: The setting should help the person learn to accept responsibility for selected goals as well as for the success and failure of his or her attempts to reach them.

    (deCharms, 1976, p. 6)

DeCharms explained that there is no one-to-one relationship between stimuli and responses because personal experience mediates how stimuli will be interpreted and acted upon. Consequently, it is not sufficient to merely set up a program of learning activities to develop personal
agency; care must also be taken to encourage learners to give agentic meaning to these experiences.

In essence, deCharms is saying that to be an origin, one must experience the feelings, attitudes and actions of an origin. Put another way, it is not primarily the curriculum activities but the feelings and actions experienced that develop personal causation. For this reason there is considerable apparent overlap between the conditions for developing personal agency (as described in the four elements above) and the components of the Origin Scoring System. The purpose of the two entities is different, however. The conditions propose what must be experienced in order to become more of an origin; the Origin Scoring System components assess the presence of origin behaviour. Functionally, the conditions guide and assess the experiential learning environment, whereas the Origin Scoring System assesses the personal causation in the individual.

In a major study of motivational training among school children, classrooms in which origin behaviour was developed were found to be different from other styles of classrooms. The key qualities of these classrooms (outlined in the following section) are congruent with the conditions given above for enhancing personal agency. It also can be noted
that the conditions for developing personal causation correspond closely to the components of personal causation (see Personal Causation Operationalized). Koenigs and Hess used the six components to develop the Origin Climate Questionnaire (deCharms, 1976), a short instrument for measuring the degree to which these conditions are operating in a school classroom.

Research

Several early studies provided some support for the Origin-Pawn concept. For example, one study showed that subjects enjoyed working as origins and were more satisfied with their production than those working as pawns (Kuperman, 1966). Another study demonstrated that origin productions were preferred more and remembered better than pawn productions (deCharms, 1968).

The Carnegie Project was deCharms and his associates' major effort in research and implementation of the Origin-Pawn concept. DeCharms (1976) describes the project as follows:

A group of teachers would be trained in motivation enhancing techniques with special emphasis on treating students as Origins. Techniques developed by the trained teachers would be used by them in their classrooms and we would try to assess the effects on
the motivation and achievement of the students by comparing them with a comparable group of students who did not have trained teachers or motivation enhancing exercises in the classroom. (p. 16)

The resulting program extended over four years. A group of children were followed from the end of the fifth grade to the completion of the eighth grade. The subjects were black and came from an inner city school district. Normally, this population displayed a pattern of falling further behind national norms each year. This trend was significantly alleviated by the personal causation training. Other benefits included enhanced language skills, more realistic risk taking, and a significant drop in lates and absences. Two follow-up studies indicated that trained students, as compared with those untrained, maintained higher origin scores four years after the program and that proportionately more of them had graduated from high school after five years (Jackson, 1976).

Extensive classroom observation revealed that origin teachers and their classrooms were different from the others.

What characterizes the Origin classroom is the teacher's warm acceptance of the children along with her firm, consistent rules and high expectations for
their behavior. Controls from within the children are enhanced whenever possible, but external controls may be used when clearly designed to promote the good of the children. The goal is to convert external control to control from within. (deCharms, 1976, p. 175)

The origin classroom style paid off in academic benefits as well. Average learning rates were calculated for each classroom in the study and then correlated with whether the teachers had been trained in origin-enhancing methods or not. The researchers discovered that "there is a relationship between how much a teacher is perceived as encouraging origin behavior and how much learning occurs in her classroom" (deCharms, 1976, p. 175).

**Personal Causation and Career Counselling**

The application of personal causation theory to career counselling in general and employment counselling in particular is apparent. Most striking is the similarity between the conditions for enhancing personal causation (Self Study, Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Personal Responsibility) and the components found in most comprehensive career planning programs: self assessment, occupational research, decision making, action planning and follow through. Further, the heart of personal causation -
feeling that one can make intended change happen - fits well with Cochran's assertion that personal agency is the central issue in career development.

Personal causation theory complements Cochran's work well. Both agree on the central aim of their respective approaches: enhancing personal agency. Each fills in where the other is sketchy. Cochran focuses on the overall process of becoming an agent in one's life, whereas deCharms focuses on defining and operationalizing the concept of personal agency. Indeed, deCharms provides one of the only adequate means of assessing personal agency. In addition, deCharms' level of detail is adequate to form a bridge between the humanistic and social cognitive approaches. Having this connection is critical to achieving a thorough understanding of personal agency in career development because social cognitive career theory has much to offer in terms of explaining the mechanisms that underlie the larger processes, as well as ensuring that all conceptual components are included.

In summary, deCharms' personal causation theory was chosen to represent and operationalize personal agency in this study because of its apparent close correspondence with career theory and practice, its unique position between the two major schools of thought regarding personal agency in career development, and the availability of an assessment
method for personal agency. The application of deCharms' theory in this study is described in the next chapter, the Method.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. An overview of the research design provides a framework for understanding how the study was conducted. Descriptions of the study participants and three group programs follow the overview. A third section gives extensive background for the Origin Scoring System and the critical incident technique. The procedure and analysis sections in the remainder of the chapter explain the study step-by-step.

Overview of the Research Design

Several rounds of pilot interviews were conducted prior to the start of the study proper. This pilot work allowed the researcher to refine both the design of the study and his interviewing skills.

Three employment groups were included in the study. Each group completed an employment program which had as primary components a structured set of learning experiences followed by some form of follow-up. The follow-up ranged from an informal contact after a period of time to more
formalized programming including a work experience component. All future uses of the term "program" in this chapter will refer to the structured program excluding the follow-up.

Prospective agencies with programs meeting the requirements for inclusion in the research project were approached for permission to study a group from their programs. The researcher met twice with each group: near the mid-point in the program to introduce the study and at the end of the program to get the consent of volunteers. Near the end of the program, the researcher met with the group again to ask for volunteers. The volunteers were contacted by telephone four to six weeks later in order to set up individual interviews and a confirmation telephone call was made about ten days before the scheduled date of the interview. The interviews took place eleven to thirteen weeks after the completion of the program.

The interviews consisted of three parts. First, biographical details and a brief work history were taken. Second, anecdotal stories representative of each participant before and after the program were collected. Third, critical incidents were collected from the participants regarding what was helpful and what hindered them in the program.
Concerning analysis of the data, the anecdotal stories were rated by the researcher using the Origin Scoring System (deCharms, 1976; deCharms & Plimpton, 1992). Scores for the post-program stories were compared with the scores for the pre-program stories, for each participant. The significance of the differences was tested using an analysis of variance. This addressed the first research question: Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups?

The critical incidents were sorted into two sets of categories, incidents and perceived outcomes. The outcome categories were compared to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency. (Outcome categories were compared because deCharms' conditions are presented as outcomes rather than as antecedents, as would be normally expected.) Relationships between types of incidents and types of outcomes were also examined. This addressed the second research question: How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency?

Results were validated by brief telephone interviews of one third of the participants and by in-person interviews with three of the facilitators approximately 11 months after the original interviews.
Participants and Groups

Participants

The people of interest to this study were those who felt the need for some form of change in their work situation, either because of external pressures (such as unemployment or inadequate income) or internal pressures (such as dissatisfaction with the nature of their job or occupation).

The study involved 27 participants from three different employment groups. They were "adult workers," meaning that they had completed their schooling and had previously worked full time. This definition excluded young adult students who were completing their education. All were unemployed except for two underemployed individuals; one worked part-time on contracts and the other worked occasional shifts. Ten participants indicated that they had voluntarily left their last employment.

The 27 participants were pooled together for data analysis. Because of the small number of participants, no attempt was made to differentiate the unemployed from the underemployed or the voluntarily unemployed from those who had been laid-off or fired.
Groups

As stated in Chapter One, an employment group comprises participants in a group program which focusses on providing help in career planning, job search, or both. The researcher sought out programs that had proven track records in the sense that they were well spoken of in the employment counselling community and they had completed groups in which high proportions of the members were active in employment, training or job search. The programs involved were required to have at least 30 hours of structured programming spanning no less than ten days. They also had to include a follow-up component after the end of the structured training, as this is recognized as an important stage of the complete process undertaken by an employment group (Borgen et al., 1989).

Drawing the participants from programs of this nature introduces some bias. These programs use extensive screening to evaluate applicants' readiness for the program. This means that the participants have a certain level of motivation or desire for change and are reasonably free of problems that would seriously impair their progress or the progress of the group, although a few exceptions were noted by facilitators and participants. In these ways they may not be typical of people who are unemployed or underemployed in general. The opinion of the researcher, based on the
diverse interview content and origin scores, is that these 27 individuals represented a broad range of experience related to work, unemployment and job search.

The three groups from which the participants came are described below.

Group A

Group A consisted of 12 individuals from the metropolitan Vancouver, British Columbia area. All were unemployment insurance recipients. The program they participated in is offered by "Agency A" on a monthly basis and is funded by the federal government. Participants are screened for readiness, meaning willingness to learn and freedom from major distractions such as financial worries.

The overall goal of the program is "learning how to identify, prioritize and transfer skills, interests and life and work experiences to a labour market that is in a state of constant change." (This, and the following quotations are taken from the agency's promotional materials.) To this end, the program has two parts. In the first part, the participant constructs his or her individual employment profile: "By means of structured learning activities and group informational exchange, individuals access and make decisions about eight underlying career factors of the
Self. In the second part, attention is focussed on the labour market: "Targeting and marketing techniques to find one's fit in the marketplace, especially in terms of unexpected information, options and alternatives, that can be discovered through the process of effective targeting, marketing and networking."

The program spans three weeks, with half of this time given to each of the two parts. After the program is completed, participants may continue to access the agency's resources (i.e. literature, computer, meeting space) and are contacted at three, six and nine months.

Of the 12 participants in this group, nine volunteered to participate in the study. Eight came for interviews, one of whom did not provide stories, only critical incidents. The ninth volunteer was not available at the time of the interviews.

Group B

Group B consisted of 20 individuals and took place in Calgary, Alberta. The program focuses on displaced health care workers and is funded by the federal and provincial governments. The range of occupations served by this program is broad, including nurses, housekeepers, dieticians, laboratory technologists and photographers. The common theme is that they all have worked in health care
settings. The leaders noted that these environments tend to have rigid, hierarchical structures and consequently offer limited autonomy to those who work within them.

The program includes three phases spanning eight weeks. Transitions, the first phase, takes one to two weeks and "focuses on coming to terms with job loss and the transition process." The second phase is Exploring Career Options. This three week phase includes self-assessment and exploration of options in the labour market. Finally, Implementing Preferred Options, involves three weeks in which support and guidance is provided as participants implement their choices.

Two or three monthly follow-up meetings take place after the program is completed. The content and form these take depends on the facilitator, but their main aim is to provide an opportunity for contact and for support of the participants.

Twelve of the 20 group members volunteered for the study. Ten were interviewed, while two were unavailable at the time of the interviews.

Group C

This program targets "discouraged workers" aged 45 and over, although younger people are occasionally accepted. It has three objectives for its clients: (a) to apply their
skills and experience in job related volunteer situations, (b) to build confidence, and (c) to engage in an effective job search. In addition, attitude change is viewed as a main goal.

The group engaged in this program, located in Calgary, Alberta, included 20 participants funded by the Employment Insurance Commission. They were screened according to five criteria: (a) job readiness (willingness to work), (b) willingness to engage in career volunteering, (c) willingness to participate in the job search process, (d) appropriate work and training experience, and (e) realistic employment goals.

Once selected, the participants work through a three step program: career volunteering, weekly classes and follow-up sessions. Participants, with assistance from a volunteer centre, select and set up a career volunteering placement that they will engage in two half days a week for at least four weeks. This placement is supervised, the group leader making two or three site visits.

The weekly group meetings take place concurrently with the volunteer placement. There are two morning meetings per week for eight weeks, covering job search strategies, self-esteem and communication problems. Problem solving techniques are emphasized. Two additional half days per week are spent in career volunteering and job search.
Participants also have the opportunity to meet with a career counsellor once or twice to address personal issues that are barriers to employment.

Following the classes and volunteer placements is a four month follow-up. It is "geared to aid the individual client to participate in active job search strategies." The participant and group leader establish an employment action plan. Progress toward this plan is initially monitored over eight weeks. The group meets every two weeks during this time with individual call-ins in the intervening weeks. Serious problems are referred to an in-house career counsellor for individual help. For the remainder of the follow-up period weekly drop-in groups are offered and participants are contacted by telephone to check on their progress.

Ten of the 20 group members volunteered for the study. One of these could not be reached at the time of the interview, leaving nine participants from group C.

Data Analysis Techniques

Two methods of data analysis were employed in this study. The Origin Scoring System and the critical incident technique were used to address research questions one and
two respectively. Each method's development, procedures, applications, reliability and validity are discussed below.

**Origin Scoring System**

Plimpton (In deCharms, 1976) developed a system for evaluating the levels of personal agency present in thought samples. In thought sampling, the person is asked to write a short story. The story may be fantasy (developed by imagination from a visual or verbal cue) or anecdotal (a real incident drawn from memory). According to deCharms, the story is regarded as an objective record of concrete instances from which inferences may be drawn. Inferences are made about internal subjective states from the behaviours described in the story with the assumption that motivational states affect thoughts and behaviour. Therefore, in Plimpton's scoring system "the operational analysis of subjective states is combined with objective observation and verified" (deCharms, 1976, p.123).

**Development**

Plimpton began the work of developing the Origin Scoring System by thoroughly familiarizing herself with the Origin-Pawn concept through extensive discussion with colleagues, classroom observation and personal experience. Then 240 stories collected from students were sorted into
either origin and pawn groupings. These decisions were based on "a combination of intuition, training and experience, practice in psychology with children, personal past experience and a thorough knowledge of the Origin-Pawn theory, its relating literature and research" (deCharms, 1976, p. 215). The justifications for the categorization decisions were documented.

As the decisions were reviewed, seven categories of origin characteristics were drawn out. All were judged to correspond to the Origin-Pawn concept developed by deCharms. A set of pawn categories was derived in a similar manner but later dropped because they were found to be opposites of the origin categories and added little to the understanding of origin-pawn categorizations.

The seven categories were subsequently applied to more than 3000 stories in order to refine the definitions of the origin categories. Six categories were retained and the seventh, called self-investment, was dropped because of infrequent occurrence.

The procedures used by Plimpton and her colleagues in developing the system and scoring stories are documented in a manual found in the appendix of deCharms' (1976) volume.
Scoring Procedure

Stories are scored within six categories derived from deCharms' personal causation theory. The six categories are listed below (deCharms, 1976; deCharms & Plimpton, 1992):

1. Internal Control: the individual feeling of being in control of what is happening inside and outside of oneself. Unlike the other five categories which look at specifics, this one indicates a general origin-type attitude and behaviour that runs throughout the entire story. In deCharms and Plimpton's revision (1992), this category was renamed Personal Causation and expanded to include three special cases. The first, challenge, refers to the individual taking the perspective of an obstacle being a challenge rather than a threat. The second, self-investment, is to become completely immersed in an activity. The third special case is engagement in noncompetitive play.

2. Goal-Setting: an internally caused decision to act specifically to attain a definite goal.

3. Instrumental Activity: an internally caused activity which is instrumental to attaining a goal.
4. **Reality Perception:** the ability to perceive one's position in one's environment, one's possibilities, strengths and weaknesses. The capacity to recognize a problem and to use the appropriate means to solve it or to attain a goal.

5. **Personal Responsibility:** the willingness to assume responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, the attainment of goals, the fulfillment of desires and the solution of problems. This also includes feeling and acting responsible for others in a group, community and society.

6. **Self-confidence:** the confidence in one's ability to succeed in goal attainment or to effect successful change in the surrounding environment. Included in this category is faith in a positive outcome, in a positive future and a positive conception of the world.

If the story contains a facet that fits within a given category, it is given a score of one for that category. Otherwise it is given a zero. After all categories have been considered, the scores are summed, giving the story a total score of between 0 and 6.
For further information on the scoring system, the Origin-Pawn Scoring Manual (In deCharms, 1976) provides thorough descriptions of the categories and scoring procedures, and numerous examples of scoring. A more recent version of the scoring manual (deCharms & Plimpton, 1992) contains refined descriptions of the categories and scoring procedures.

Reliability and Validity

The scoring system underwent a number of reliability and validity checks. The data used for these validations came from the original study (deCharms, 1976) in which school children were given origin training in the classroom and their progress was assessed using origin scores taken at the beginning and end of the year of training. The children were asked to write six stories from verbal cues. Concerning coder reliability, inter-coder agreement of 90% was reached.

DeCharms and his associates assessed internal consistency in four ways. First, "split-half correlations were computed on the scores of the odd vs. the even numbered stories written by each subject" (deCharms, 1976, p. 128). The reliabilities for the four samples were .60, .91, .80 and .79. These results compared favourably with .65 from a well established test of motivation (see McClelland,
Atkinson, Clark & Lowell, 1953). Second, "intercorrelations were computed between each story score and all other story scores" (p. 128). The intercorrelations ranged from .04 to .30. Third, "intercorrelations were computed between each category score for each protocol and all other category scores" (p.128). The range was .03 to .72. Fourth, Scott's (1960) homogeneity ratio was computed for the two grade levels of students: +.22 and +.31.

Stability was assessed by computing test-retest correlations for two groups. The correlations, +.41 and +.38, appear low but the test-retest interval of one year must be taken into account. DeCharms noted that these coefficients are better than those obtained from another well established test of motivation (.22 and .29). He cautioned against using the same standards of reliability on this freer operant measure as were developed for the more prescribed respondent measures.

DeCharms attempted to establish discriminant validity for the scoring system by comparing the origin scores to results from other measures. The results were weak or inconclusive. The origin scores correlated modestly but as expected with achievement motivation (+.22) and goal realism (+.32). A modest correlation is desirable because one that is very high may indicate that there is a large degree of overlap between the two measures. The scores did not
correlate as expected with those from measures of personal causation and of locus of control, but these were from newly derived measures with unknown reliabilities and notably different methods of collecting data.

Perhaps a more convincing case can be made for the scoring system's discriminant validity by considering that it did identify origins and pawns among students in the classroom (deCharms, 1976). In pilot work, five students were selected for intensive observation. Four were classified as origins and one as a pawn. Later, their stories were independently scored. The origins' scores (8, 11, 11 and 15) were clearly higher than the one pawn's score (1). During the project itself, groups of students who received origin training consistently demonstrated significant increases in origin scores over each of the four replications of the treatment. Their mean scores increased from about 5 to 12 ($p < .001$) whereas their untrained counterparts showed no significant increase. DeCharms concluded that "the origin measure proved highly sensitive to the origin training in the classroom" (deCharms, 1992, p. 328).

The capability of the scoring system to discriminate origins from pawns attests to its construct validity. (That is, the Origin Scoring System does, in fact, measure the personal causation construct.) But more fundamental
support of its construct validity is found in the procedure followed in developing the scoring system. As the description provided earlier in this chapter shows, knowledge of the Origin-Pawn concept (which is the simple expression of personal causation theory) was referenced throughout the process to select and refine the categories of the scoring system. So close is the relationship between the concept and the scoring system that the scoring categories have come to define origin behaviour and hence the key aspects of personal causation.

Applications

Although the Origin Scoring System was first used to score cued stories written by young students, its usage is not limited to children or to fantasy stories. DeCharms later stated that the system was designed for general application - "for coding personal documents for elements of personal causation" (1987, p. 15) - and proceeded to demonstrate how it could be used to assess the personal agency exhibited by characters in literary classics.

DeCharms (1992) has posed questions about the impact of using the Origin Scoring System on first-person, past-tense, self-reports as opposed to the fantasy stories he worked with in his research which typically are third-person, and in the present and future tense. One of his associates
(Jackson, 1976) used the origin scoring system with semistructured interviews intended to measure life goals and responsibility orientation of the same students four years later. There was a significant difference between the scores of the trained and untrained students. Laub (Cochran & Laub, 1994) used the Origin Scoring System with the self-report interviews of adults who had recently experienced major life transformation. Potential participants who reported major life changes were successfully screened by asking for three stories depicting the way they were before the change and three stories of the way they were after the change. The stories were scored and pre-change and after-change totals calculated. "Out of a possible eighteen points for the three stories . . . the 'before' stories ranged from scores of one to six points. 'After' stories ranged from thirteen to eighteen points, indicating substantial change" (Cochran & Laub, 1994, p.57).

Application in this Study

Research question one asked: Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups? The Origin Scoring System provides a means of measuring personal causation which is needed in order to answer the question. Research question one, in operational terms, is restated: Does personal causation, as
measured by the Origin Scoring System, significantly increase from pre-program stories to post-program stories? An affirmative answer indicates that personal agency is an appropriate framework for understanding the progress made by employment group participants.

The Origin Scoring System was used as defined by deCharms (1976; deCharms & Plimpton, 1992) with two exceptions. First, past tense actions were scored under Instrumental Action. This is a necessary modification in scoring self-reports because they are given in the past tense. Second, the order of scoring the stories was modified as it did not suit the different nature of these stories. The stories in deCharms' project were cued by a standard set of sentence stems presented to each participant. He recommended scoring all the stories from one stem together. The stories in this study were not cued in this manner. Scoring all stories of a given participant in one setting (thereby maintaining a stable mental-set) was believed to be the most important consideration in maintaining reliability.

Critical Incident Technique

Developed by Flanagan and his associates, the critical incident technique (CIT) "is essentially a procedure for gathering certain important facts concerning behavior in
defined situations" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 335). The technique has been widely used in research. In most recent applications it consists of semi-structured interviews of participants about their own or others' behaviour followed by an analysis in which the responses are categorized.

Although Flanagan's formulation of the CIT dates back more than 40 years, it remains the clearest and most thorough description of the method. Consequently, Flanagan's work will be cited extensively in this review of the CIT.

Definition of Terms

A clear understanding of the terms used by Flanagan is important for the proper application of the CIT. By "incident", Flanagan meant "any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about a person performing the act" (1954, p. 327). "Critical" referred to incidents which "must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects" (p. 327). When a particular situation has been chosen, "critical incidents" of that situation, both positive and negative, are collected through interviews and records. "Critical requirements" are drawn
from the critical incidents. A "critical requirement" is "a requirement which is crucial in the sense that it has been responsible for outstandingly effective or definitely unsatisfactory performance of an important part of the job or activity in question" (Flanagan, 1949, p. 420).

In this study, an "incident" was an event that occurred in the group program or in the participant's life during the program. Often, it was an aspect of the program that a participant could connect to specific occurrences. An incident was "critical" if the participant believed it especially helped or hindered, a phenomenological judgement. Critical requirements are better termed critical factors, and refer to the aspects of the program or life processes that significantly helped or hindered the participant in taking career related action.

Development of the Critical Incident Technique

The CIT can be traced back to studies undertaken by the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II, established to develop procedures for the selection and classification of aircrews (Flanagan, 1954). Early studies in the program revealed to the researchers that reasons given for the poor performance of pilots and for the failure of missions were very general, vague and incomplete. The researchers realized the
importance of getting a complete record of important events. This led to a method of research that focussed on extreme incidents of performance - either very effective or very unsatisfactory. While investigating these incidents, researchers sought out the critical requirements - those specific behaviours most responsible for the extremes of performance. Flanagan summarized what had been learned in the program about research methodology:

The principal objective of job analysis procedures should be the determination of critical requirements. These requirements include those which have been demonstrated to have made the difference between success and failure in carrying out an important part of the job assigned in a significant number of incidences. Too often, statements regarding job requirements are merely lists of all the desirable traits of human beings. (1954, p. 329)

The American Institute for Research was formed by some of the staff from the Aviation Psychology Program after the war was over. They sought to continue the systematic study of human behaviour but broadened their focus to include nonmilitary settings. The CIT was formalized in the earliest studies of the Institute. One of these studies was carried out to determine the critical requirements of a commercial airline pilot. Pilot interviews and a variety of
records yielded 733 critical pilot behaviours (incidents) which were classified into 24 critical requirements for the job. This provided a solid basis for pilot selection tests.

A larger study followed the same procedure to determine the critical requirements for an air force officer. Other early studies obtained critical requirements for research personnel, hourly wage workers in factories, dentists, industrial foremen, bookkeepers and psychology instructors.

Applications of the Critical Incident Technique

Early in its development, the CIT began to be used in an increasingly broad range of applications. For example, Eilbert (1953) used the technique to develop a functional description of emotional maturity. This was a departure from other studies using the CIT in that the end result was a behavioural profile for identifying a psychological state rather than for evaluating the effective performance of a job or task. Another notable departure occurred when descriptions of behaviour made by observers were replaced by the phenomenological observations provided by the subject. Most of the uses of the CIT in counselling research are examples of the latter.

The CIT's range of applications has continued to broaden over its 40 years of use. Its use in studying work motivation (Hertzberg, Manseur & Snyderman, 1959), group
process (Cohen & Smith, 1976), quality of life (Flanagan, 1978) and student teacher supervision (Housego & Boldt, 1985) are just a few examples.

Woolsey (1986) has called for more descriptive research in counselling psychology and has suggested that the CIT is particularly well suited to the task. Indeed, the CIT has recently grown in use in counselling research. For example, it has been used to study high school counselling interventions (Neely & Iburg, 1989), clinical supervision (Ellis, 1991), and parental influence in children's career development (Young & Friesen, 1992).

**Application in this Study**

The second research question is: How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency? Outcomes include the experience of new behaviours, feelings and attitudes, and the personal meaning given to these experiences. The CIT is useful in addressing this question because it elicits outcomes of incidents and allows for elaboration of the personal meaning ascribed to the experience through the interview process. The operational definition of the second research question is: In what ways are the outcomes of the most helpful incidents and deCharms'
conditions for developing personal agency similar? In what ways are they different?

Justification for Using the CIT

The CIT was chosen as the research method for this study because of its suitability to the research question. By virtue of its essential nature - identifying critical incidents or features - the CIT is well suited to identifying the factors that are perceived by employment group participants as being especially helpful. The CIT also provides the outcomes of each critical event (including the behavioural learning and the personal meaning ascribed to it), information which is needed for addressing the second research question. Amundson and Borgen (1988) effectively employed the CIT in this same context to determine what helped and hindered members of job-search groups.

The CIT was also chosen because it provides descriptive data while maintaining methodological rigor. Descriptive information is important in this case because it provides a more thorough understanding of each factor's importance by providing the context of the contributing responses. This is critical for program developers attempting to properly interpret and apply the results of the study to their particular situations.
Similarly, the CIT was chosen because it generates exploratory information useful for theory-building (Woolsey, 1986). Research focusing on understanding the dynamics of personal agency enhancement and career group effectiveness is scant.

A final aspect of the CIT's suitability is that it is flexible. Flanagan emphasized that the CIT is not a rigid set of rules but "rather it should be thought of as a flexible set of principles which must be modified and adapted to meet the specific situation at hand" (1954, p. 335). This allows for ease of use in a broad range of applications.

Procedure

Flanagan's (1955) formulation of the CIT included five steps: (1) general aims, (2) plans and specifications, (3) collecting the data, (4) analyzing the data, and (5) interpreting and reporting. These steps will be reviewed in this section.

(1) General aims.

A general statement of the objectives of the activity being studied (not of the study itself) is a basic condition for the CIT. It provides the reference point from which the specific behaviours which contribute to the performance of
the activity can be evaluated. The general aim of the employment groups, from the specialized perspective of this study, was to facilitate career goal setting and action on the part of the participants.

(2) Plans and specifications.

Precise instructions are developed for observers, clarifying the standards to be used for evaluation and classification of critical requirements. The group to be studied is specified.

The size of the sample is based on the number of incidents. In some cases as few as 50 incidents are sufficient while in others several thousand are required (Flanagan, 1954). Flanagan recommended keeping count of the number of new critical requirements added for each 100 incidents; when only two or three new categories are added, data collection can stop. For this study, the sample size was arbitrarily set at 20 to 25 participants with a technique (to be described below) used to check the adequacy of the sample.

Incidents must meet specific criteria to be used in the analysis (Flanagan, 1954). The criteria for inclusion of incidents are:
1. The factor is described in detail as a concrete activity or a well defined psychological process. Vague, amorphous factors will not be included.

2. The factor is clearly linked to an antecedent, either a person or another incident.

3. The factor is directly linked to a specific outcome.

(3) Collecting the data.

A procedure for selecting the critical incidents is chosen. Critical incidents are collected in two main ways: by direct observation or by report from memory. The latter was necessarily the means employed in this study because the observers - the participants in the career groups - were asked to identify critical factors from the perspective of having experienced the entire program.

Recalled incidents can be collected from a variety of sources: interviews (individual or group), questionnaires and records. Individual interviewing was deemed the best method for this study. The experience of individuals was of interest here, and interviewing ensured that all relevant detail was collected. Further, using the participants' perspective removes one problem raised by Flanagan (1954): how to decide whether an incident should be included in the study. An incident recorded by an observer may not have
sufficient relevance to the general aim or it may not have a truly critical effect on the aim. When interviews replace observation, the participants themselves make these decisions.

Conducting the interviews twelve weeks after the last regular meeting of the program balanced two concerns: allowing the participants time for gaining some perspective on their experience of the program while capturing the critical factors before the details were forgotten. In reporting retrospective data, Flanagan (1954) advised that the more recent the observations, the better. This principle is important for observations of others' behaviour but it is not so critical in self-reporting (Woolsey, 1986). The reason for this is that the incidents are personally significant and therefore will be remembered much longer and in more detail than will observations of others.

The critical incident interview is different from other types of interviews according to Flanagan (1954). He referred to the principal factors that need to be addressed in the interview:

1. Sponsorship of the study. The participant being interviewed needs to know that the researcher has the endorsement of the program facilitator.

2. Purpose of the study. The purpose and benefit of the study is briefly stated.
3. Group being studied. A statement is made clarifying why the participant has been chosen for the interview.

4. Anonymity of data. The participant is assured that his/her responses will be kept anonymous from those involved in the program. This is particularly important when hindering events are solicited.

5. The question and conversation. The question must be carefully worded. It should refer to the general aim and clarify what is desired in the response.

Flanagan provides specific and detailed instructions on how the interview should be conducted once the main question is asked. (In 1954, convention called for the use of male pronouns in reference to either male or female persons.)

The interviewer should avoid asking leading questions after the main question has been stated. His remarks should be neutral and permissive and should show that he accepts the observer as the expert. By indicating that he understands what is being said and permitting the observer to do most of the talking, the interviewer can usually get unbiased incidents. If the question does not seem to be understood, it can be repeated with
some reference to clarifying just what is meant by it. If the observer has given what seems like only part of the story, he should be encouraged by restating the essence of his remarks. This usually tends to encourage him to continue and may result in his bringing out many relevant details that the interviewer did not know the situation well enough to ask for.
(1954, p. 342)

(4) Analyzing the data.

The purpose of the data analysis is to summarize the data into a useful form while maintaining essential detail and comprehensiveness. This involves selecting a useful frame of reference for the incidents, formulating categories, and selecting an appropriate level of specificity-generality for reporting the results.

The incidents can be categorized in many different ways depending on the frame of reference selected by the researcher when inducing the categories. The frame of reference is the orientation taken by the researcher when inducing categories. It is selected on the basis of the intended use of the results. For example, Flanagan (1954) noted that the classification system used for worker selection will differ from that used for evaluating on-the-job effectiveness. Two frames of reference were used in this
study. The first, type of incident, allowed for orderly reporting of the types of activities and experiences that were particularly helpful to group participants. The second frame of reference, perceived outcome of the event, described the specific changes experienced by the participant. This was of interest for answering the second research question.

For each frame of reference, categories are formulated. Flanagan's (1954) usual procedure was to sort a subset of incidents into tentative groups and then label the groups with brief definitions. The remainder of the incidents were sorted into these groups with new groups added and existing group definitions redefined as needed. When all the incidents were sorted, the larger categories were subdivided into smaller groups. The definitions for the categories were reviewed in terms of the incidents classified within them.

Once the categories and subcategories have been established, a decision is made on the level of specificity-generality to be used in reporting them. A balance must be struck between descriptive detail and simplicity. Flanagan (1954, p. 345) provided several guidelines for this task:

1. The titles used for the categories should be clear-cut, logical and easily remembered.
2. The titles should convey some meaning in themselves without referring to the definitions.

3. All titles of a given level should be parallel in content and structure. Ordinarily, titles and definitions should be stated in positive terms.

4. The titles of a given type of category should be of the same level of importance.

5. The titles used should produce an organization of knowledge that is useful and easily applied.

6. The list of titles should be comprehensive and cover all incidents occurring in significant frequencies.

This procedure is inherently subjective, requiring "insight, experience and judgement" on the part of the researcher (Flanagan, 1954, p. 344). One way of limiting the detrimental effect of this subjectivity on the reliability of the categorization system is to submit the categories and incidents to other qualified judges for review. Andersson and Nilsson (1964) suggest that an agreement level of 75% to 85% for incidents sorted into categories, and 60% to 70% for subcategories is acceptable.

The comprehensiveness of the categories can be tested by another technique. A random sample of 10% of the incidents is set aside before sorting begins. When the main
collection of incidents has been sorted and the categories have been established, the incidents in the sample are brought out and sorted into the tentative categories. If no further categories are needed to accommodate these incidents, the categories are considered to be comprehensive.

(5) Interpreting and reporting.

The critical requirements summarized in the category titles must be explained in adequate detail in order for proper interpretations of the results to be made. Woolsey (1986) advocates descriptions of categories that are "rich, though not lengthy, vividly conveying a picture of the kind of incidents included in the category" (p. 251). She advises that citing a prototypical incident (as opposed to a peripheral incident) for each category and including the respondent's own words is helpful in achieving this end.

The report should also document any limitations (Flanagan, 1954). Bias can be introduced in several ways. For example, data may be collected from a group that is not representative of the population involved.

Validity and Reliability

Research into the validity and reliability of the CIT is scarce. This may be due to the impressive face validity
achieved by most CIT studies. The relative simplicity of the method may be another factor. The few studies that have considered the method have produced positive results. The most important of these studies was done on a large critical incidents study of grocery store managers. The researchers, Andersson and Nilsson (1964), collected 1800 incidents which were sorted into three areas, 17 categories and 87 subcategories. They subjected their results to several methodological checks and concluded that the method is both reliable and valid. Highlights of their findings follow.

Reliability.

One possible threat to reliability is the effect of multiple interviewers. Will different interviewers collect different incidents? Andersson and Nilsson (1964) compared the incidents collected by each of their five interviewers using statistical methods. The number of incidents collected per interview and the distribution among the subcategories differed only slightly among interviewers. This result is corroborated by Finkle's (1950) finding that variations of wording that did not change the essential content of the question made little difference to the types of incidents obtained.

Another threat to reliability was mentioned above: Is the categorization process so subjective as to yield
different results with each sorter? Andersson and Nilsson (1964) found that when subsets of incidents were resorted by different judges, "there is a strong tendency to place the incident in the same category" (p. 401). The proportion of incidents placed in the same category ranged from 75 to 85 percent. The replication of placement into the same subcategory was not so high, ranging from 61 to 68 percent. Considering the large number of subcategories (86), one lesson learned here is to keep the number of categories low in order to maintain high reliability.

Validity.

One might ask how sound is the claim that the CIT will uncover all important aspects of the domain of study? Andersson and Nilsson compared their classification system with 4000 pages of managerial training materials. No new aspects (categories) were found.

Another aspect of validity is the importance of the categories. Do these categories actually represent important aspects of the domain? Andersson and Nilsson asked people familiar with the managerial role to rate the importance of each of the 86 subcategories. Only five subcategories were rated as "rather unimportant" by most of the judges. It is noteworthy that even subcategories containing few incidents were rated as important. Low
frequency of incidents in a category does not mean that category is unimportant.

Further support for the validity of critical incident findings is found in a study comparing the utility of four job analysis methods for developing personnel selection exams. The critical incidents method was strongly favoured by the exam developers for providing them with adequate information (Levine, Ash and Bennett, 1980). Further, expert evaluators rated the exams developed from critical incident data as being of higher quality than the others, although this difference was modest.

Perhaps the most salient indication of validity is found in the method itself. Validation of data is achieved by grouping the observations of multiple observers (Flanagan, 1954). Further validation is possible by examining the quality of the observers' responses. "If full and precise details are given, it can usually be assumed that this information is accurate" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 340).

Flanagan (1954) also emphasized the relative simplicity of judgement required in the CIT: "only simple types of judgements are required of the observer, reports from only qualified observers are included, and all observations are evaluated by the observer in terms of an agreed upon statement of the purpose of the activity" (p. 335).
Data Collection

The preceding sections have provided an overview of the methodology for the study and details about the groups and data analysis techniques. This section gives a more detailed and thorough account of the procedure that was followed for collecting the data in this study.

Pilot Studies

Several rounds of pilot interviews were conducted before the research design was finalized. In the first rounds, a variety of paper and pencil tests were administered. The data acquired was inadequate for addressing the purpose of the research. Furthermore, both participants and facilitators resisted the notion of paper and pencil tests because of negative experiences associated with filling out forms at government agencies. Some unstructured interviewing was tried next. The resistance on the part of the participants largely disappeared but the data collected tended to be vague and unfocussed. At this point, the research design was refined into its current form and a final set of pilot interviews was performed. The interview was given more structure while still allowing the participants the freedom to tell their stories and convey what was most important for them. This last set of pilot
interviews allowed the researcher to refine specific interviewing skills and thereby to minimize the impact of the learning curve on the collection of data for the study proper.

**Employment Group Selection**

Three employment groups were selected based on their programs meeting the following criteria: (a) the agency's program focussed on providing help to unemployed or underemployed individuals in the area of career planning, job search or both, (b) the program contained at least 30 hours of structured programming that spanned no less than ten days, (c) the program contained some form of follow-up after the structured portion was completed, (d) the program was not new - it had run at least once prior to the study, and (e) the program and agency were well regarded among the employment counselling community.

The researcher found potential groups based on information gained from other professionals and the media. The agency director was interviewed in order to get details on the agency's program and to explain the purpose and design of the research study. A one page summary of the research project was provided. If the program met the requirements for inclusion in the study, permission to include a group from that program was sought from the agency.
director. Permission was given verbally to the researcher and in writing to the university. When permission was granted, the researcher met with the group facilitator to explain the purpose and design of the study, and to set dates for contact with the group.

Introduction of Project to Participants

The group facilitator introduced the researcher of the study midway through the program. The researcher briefly explained the research project and what was required of participants. He returned at the end of the structured portion of the program to briefly review the project, explain the consent form and solicit participation by returning a signed consent form. Time for questions was offered at both of these contacts. Questions were asked in each of these meetings by potential participants and occasionally by facilitators. The consent form is found in Appendix A.

Participant Selection and Demographics

Originally, six to eight members were to be randomly selected from each group, giving a total of 18 to 24 participants. This was to ensure balance among the groups. This plan was modified to include all volunteers when 10 to 12 people volunteered from each group. It was believed that
with attrition from each group, the turnout would be close
to the desired numbers. In the end, eight, ten and nine
volunteers were interviewed from groups A, B, and C
respectively. This represents a reasonable balance among
the three groups. All those who volunteered had regularly
attended and completed the program.

In this study, because of the descriptive and
exploratory nature of the method, the selected samples did
not need to be representative in all respects of the
population. All that was required was that salient
characteristics be adequately represented in the sample
(Woolsey, 1986). In this population, gender, age, previous
occupational level and duration of unemployment/
underemployment may be salient. Biographical information
including these characteristics was collected and examined
for adequate representation of both men and women, and a
reasonably complete range of ages, educational and
occupational levels, and duration of unemployment or
underemployment. The distributions of participants in
regard to these characteristics are presented in the
following five tables.
Table 1
Gender Distribution Among Groups

<table>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Age Distribution Among Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

**Educational Level Distribution Among Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Graduate Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 College Dip./Cert.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 High School Dip.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 No High School Dip.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4

**Occupational Level Distribution Among Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Professional I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Professional II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Semiprofessional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Skilled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Semiskilled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Unskilled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupational levels are taken from Roe and Klos (1972).
Table 5
Duration of Unemployment Among Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Durations were rounded to the nearest integer, except in the case of less than one month, in which case a value of one month was assigned. Means should be considered as approximations because of the rounding of values.

Interview Set-up

The selected participants were contacted by telephone four to six weeks after the completion of the structured portion of the program. An interview was scheduled at this time. One or two weeks prior to the interview a confirmation call was made and the participant was given a preview of the interview questions. Earlier pilot work revealed that this preview allowed participants to come more prepared to speak of their experience.
Interviews

The selected participants were interviewed individually 11 to 13 weeks after the structured part of their programs was completed. In pilot work it was found that interviews following soon after program completion were often difficult for the participants. They were frequently so overwhelmed by the mass of information and its personal impact that it was difficult for them to focus on specific helpful events or outcomes. Several of them suggested that their understanding might be more crystalized after more time had passed. Subsequent pilot work confirmed that after a period of time had passed, program participants could better identify critical components and outcomes and place them in perspective more clearly.

The interviews took between one and three hours to complete, with the majority running about two hours. The interviews were taped from the beginning of the anecdotal stories to the end of the interview. All were performed at the office of the agency where their program took place. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, who has training in counselling and interviewing. He has no connection by way of employment with any of the agencies involved in the study.

The interviews followed a common structure: (a) introduction of researcher and research project, (b)
biographical data and work history, (c) anecdotal stories, (d) critical incidents, (e) summary comments. These components will be explained in the sections that follow:

(a) Introduction

The researcher introduced himself to the participant. He was mindful of the importance of developing good rapport.
The purpose and potential benefits of the study were explained. An overview of the interview structure was given. Each participant was assured that his or her responses would be kept confidential. It was further explained that only the researcher and a few others associated with the study would see individuals' names or hear the tapes. Any of their responses used in published documents would be presented anonymously. Finally, the participant was asked if he or she had any questions and if he or she was comfortable with proceeding with the interview. This segment of the interview was brief, taking no more than five minutes.

(b) Biographical Data and Work History

The participant provided his or her age, an outline of work history, education, starting date of unemployment and circumstances, and current employment status. The researcher took notes of this information. Most
participants enjoyed giving their histories, so this part served as a good rapport builder and warm-up, as well as providing a means of collecting important data. This part took 15 to 35 minutes.

(c) Anecdotal Stories

Each participant was asked to "Think back to your career-related activities while you were unemployed/underemployed prior to registering in the program. Think of something that happened that was typical for you at that time. Tell me what happened." As the story was recounted, the interviewer used paraphrases and probes to keep the participant on track and ensure enough of the content was present to rate the story. After the first story had been told, at least three more pre-program stories were collected. If the time of unemployment was brief and/or there were few stories to be recalled from that period of time, as was frequently the case, the participant was asked to think back further. Most pre-program stories were relatively recent, occurring within a year of the program start.

Next, the participant was asked, "Now, think about your career-related activities since completing the program. Think of something that happened that was typical for you at
that time. Tell me what happened." The same procedure was followed to collect four post-program stories.

The goal at the end of this part of the interview was to have collected at least four pre-program and four post-program stories. These stories did not need to be long but needed to be thorough enough to be rated using the Origin Scoring System (deCharms & Plimpton, 1992). This component usually took about 25 minutes.

(d) Critical Incidents

Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique was used to collect information about the most critical program components contributing to change in the participants. The participants were asked to identify "something in the program that was very helpful to you." The interviewer questioned them on the incident to understand what it entailed, how it came about, and what specific impact or changes resulted from it. The interviewer continued to ask for additional helpful incidents until the participant could think of no more. This completed the first of four parts of the critical incidents interview. The remaining three parts followed the same format but addressed other types of incidents: incidents in the program that hindered, helpful incidents that occurred during the program but in other dimensions of the participant's life (e.g., social, family),
and hindering incidents that occurred during the program but in other spheres of life.

The interviewer avoided using leading questions, using paraphrases and probes instead to clarify responses and to probe for more information. For the most part, the sequence of questioning described in the previous paragraph was followed but some flexibility was required to be able to collect the relevant data while being responsive to the participant. The order of the questions does not appear to matter. In a study by Finkle (1950), it did not affect results whether a facilitative or hindering incident was requested first. Similarly, if a participant was unsure of the meaning of any question, it was rephrased and repeated (Finkle, 1950; Flanagan, 1954).

More precisely worded versions of these questions were tried in pilot work, such as "Tell me about an event in the program that was significantly helpful to you." These proved unsatisfactory because words such as "event" had a limiting effect on the participants. The more loosely worded questions, with subsequent follow-up questioning, led to richer interviews.

The collection of critical incidents required between 30 and 90 minutes.
(e) Summary Comments

To close the interview, each participant was asked "What are the greatest gains you made from the program?" After the response, the participant was asked if he or she had any further comments to make concerning the program or its personal effects. He or she was thanked for participating and told that there may be follow-up contact by telephone to clarify responses or verify results. This concluding step of the interview took less than five minutes in most cases.

Data Analysis

In this section, procedures for analyzing the data are explained in detail, first for question one, then for question two. Methods of checking reliability and validity of the scoring and categorization are also included.

Question One: Anecdotal Stories

Transcribing and Editing

The first research question (Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups?) was addressed through analysis of the
anecdotal stories. For each participant, eight anecdotal stories, four from before the program and four from after its completion, were transcribed from the tapes. For ease of rating, the stories were extracted from the interview format and put into narrative form. In so doing the verbatim responses were kept intact. Occasionally, the removal of the interviewer's question or remark made it difficult to understand the full meaning of the participant's response. In these cases, a brief phrase was inserted in brackets to maintain clarity.

The accuracy of the transcription of the stories was verified by a qualified judge. Twelve stories (five percent of the total number of stories collected in the study) were randomly selected. These stories and the transcripts from which they came were given to the judge for examination. He certified that all the stories were consistent with the transcripts.

Stories were required to be at least 75 words in length and those emphasizing behaviour of the participant were preferred. Often more than four pre-program or post-program stories were extracted from the transcripts, requiring that some stories be discarded. In these cases, the stories were examined using three criteria. The criteria, in the order they were applied, are as follows:
(1) Repetition. Does the story describe a situation covered by another story? If so, discard the less complete story.

(2) Specificity. Discard a story that is vague, mainly reflective (versus descriptive and behavioural) or focussed on the future (as opposed to explaining what actually happened).

(3) Length. When discarding pre-program stories, discard the stories that are most variant in length from the corresponding post-program stories. Similarly, when discarding post-program stories, discard the stories that are most variant in length from the corresponding pre-program stories. This helped reduce the potential problem of variant story lengths affecting scores. Methods have been developed to take account of the length of text in motive scores from thematic apperceptive stories (Winter, 1973). This was not considered to be a significant concern in this study because the majority of the stories fell within the 100 to 300 word recommended length and "in most historical materials . . . any factors causing variation in text length are assumed to be random - that is, to have nothing to do with the score" (Winter, 1992, p. 123).
The first criterion was applied to the stories and any that failed the criterion were discarded. If more than four stories remained the second criterion was applied. Then the third criterion was applied if necessary. If more than four stories remained after the application of the three criteria, stories were discarded by lot.

Scoring

The transcribed stories were rated using the six point Origin Scoring System (deCharms, 1976; deCharms & Plimpton, 1992). The procedures for scoring developed by deCharms and Plimpton (1992) were followed as closely as possible. Before each scoring session, the researcher would review the scoring system and several scoring examples. The identity of the author of each story was coded on the back of the page so that his or her identity was concealed. The stories to be scored that day were mixed randomly to further reduce the possibility of identifying the author and to ensure that the scoring of one story of a particular author was not influenced by his or her previously scored stories. Each of the six categories was scored only once for each story, even if it occurred several times. A reference sheet (Appendix B), summarizing the key points from the scoring manual, was frequently consulted. The ratings and the rationale for
each scoring decision was noted on the page for ease of subsequent validation. Examples of stories and scoring are provided in Appendix C.

For each participant, the pre- and post-program totals for each subscale were totalled, giving scores of 0 to 4, and entered on a spreadsheet. For each participant, the scores for the four pre-program stories were totalled and compared to the corresponding total from the four post-program scores. A two-way analysis of variance for repeated measures was performed to check for group as well as treatment effects.

For three of the participants, only three of the required four pre- or post-program stories could be found in the transcript. In this case, the critical incident portion of the interview was reviewed for a suitable story. If none could be found, the following procedure was followed for each of the six sub-scales: the scores for the three existing stories were averaged, any fractional part was truncated as a conservative measure, and this figure was added to the sum of scores for the three existing stories as if it was from a fourth story.

Validity

Validity addresses the question: Does this instrument really measure what it claims to measure? This study
applied a scoring system that was originally developed to measure personal causation in school children to a new situation, gains in personal causation in unemployed, mature workers. This raises two validity concerns: 1) Has the scoring system been used correctly? and 2) Do the scores fit with what is known of the participants?

To address the first concern, one of the two developers of the scoring system, Richard deCharms, was contacted. In lieu of qualified judges, Dr. deCharms suggested that any scoring decisions be carefully documented and that another scorer be trained with whom scoring could be discussed and validated.

In response to this advice, another scorer was trained who possessed a doctorate in Counselling Psychology and regularly conducted research in employment counselling. The training process of this person closely mirrored that of the researcher. It consisted of studying deCharms' and Plimpton's scoring manual and working through the scored examples they provided. After this introduction to the developers' perspective on scoring, a batch of stories from a pilot group was scored independently, then compared and discussed. After the training, the other scorer was given a random selection of stories to score. His scores were compared with those of the researcher. First, ten stories were compared and the percentage of agreement on the 60
categories (6 categories per story) computed. Then sets of five stories (30 categories) were added until the cumulative percentage of agreement stabilized. This occurred quickly after only two sets had been added. For the first 10 stories, the inter-rater agreement was 85%, for 15 stories it was 88% and for 20 stories it was 87%. Discussion between the the researcher and the second scorer at this point resolved several points of ambiguity, and resulted in agreement by the second scorer with 118 of the researcher's 120 scoring decisions in these 20 stories, a rate of 98%. These high rates of agreement provide the strongest support available for the assertion that the researcher has used the scoring system as the developers intended.

The apparent fit between what is known about the participants and their origin scores is the second validity concern. If the origin score is valid, one would expect the most current origin score, the post-program score, to generally reflect the person's condition as portrayed in the entire interview. Following this line of thought, the researcher considered each of the participants in terms of the general sense of personal agency (particularly sense of direction, self-confidence and activity level) they presented in the interview. Based on his perceptions, he attempted to select the highest and lowest quartiles (6 participants in each quartile) before the origin scores for
these participants were known. It was difficult to discriminate those having high levels of agency, but those exhibiting low agency seemed to stand out, so only the lower quartile was used. When all the origin scores had been completed, the participants were ranked in order of decreasing scores. For the lowest quartile of participants selected by the researcher for lowest apparent personal agency, the rankings were 9, 17, 19.5, 23.5, 25, and 26. (A rank of 1 is highest and 26 is lowest. For perfect correspondence, the rankings would be 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26.) The correspondence between the rankings of the scores and the general sense of personal agency perceived by the researcher at the time of the interview lends support to the assertion that the origin score is a valid measure of personal agency for these unemployed people.

A second form of support was acquired from the participants themselves. Three were selected from each group for follow-up telephone contact 11 months after their interviews. As part of that contact, descriptions of gains made based on pre- and post-program origin scores were presented and the participants were asked for their opinions of these descriptions. There was agreement in all cases - often strong agreement - that this was true to their experience.
Reliability

A scoring system that is consistently applied is said to be reliable. One potential source of inconsistency is multiple scorers, each using the system in a different manner. Known as inter-rater reliability, this is not a concern in this study because all the scoring was done by one individual, the researcher. The consistent use of the scoring system over time is a concern here because 208 stories were rated over a four month period. Was the scoring system being applied consistently throughout that time?

This question was addressed in three ways. First, two random selections of ten stories each were rescored after 15 days and 120 days respectively, similar to measures of test-retest reliability. There was 93% agreement for both intervals.

A split-half correlation of .72 was obtained, falling in the middle of the range of values (.60 to .91) reported by deCharms (1976). The scores of the odd-numbered pre-program stories were added to the scores of the even-numbered post-program stories, and this sum was compared with the sum of the scores of the even-numbered pre-program stories and odd-numbered post-program stories.

Although this is reassuring, the most critical reliability question in this study is this: Is the scoring system being used consistently within the set of each
participant's stories? If it is not, little confidence can be placed in pre- to post-program comparisons. To ensure this consistency, all eight of a participant's stories were scored during the same day so that the same cognitive set was being used throughout.

A third way consistency over time was maintained was regular and frequent reference to a sheet summarizing the essential points of the scoring system as presented in the scoring manual. The reference sheet is found in Appendix B.

Question Two: Critical Incidents

Encoding

The critical incidents were encoded directly from the taped interview to a computer data base which was formatted to include the incident's name, description, source and outcome. These entries were the verbatim responses of the participant. Occasionally editorial comments were inserted in brackets to clarify the meaning of a response. Other information was included on the data base to facilitate processing the data: participant code number, incident number, biographic data, group, type of incident (helping/hindering), and context (in-program/out-of-program).

Each incident was subjected to inclusion criteria. In order to be included in the study, the incident had to be
(a) described in detail as a concrete activity or a well defined psychological process (vague events were not included), (b) clearly linked to an antecedent or source, either a person or another incident, and (c) directly linked to a specific outcome (Flanagan, 1954). All three criteria needed to be met for the incident to be retained. No incidents were discarded for lack of a source, but 11 were dropped because the incident was vague, no outcome was identified, or it occurred outside of the time-frame of the program.

The accuracy of the encoding was verified by a qualified judge. A subset of the taped interviews was transcribed in full. Twenty incidents (five percent of the total number of incidents in the study) were randomly selected from this subset. The judge checked each selected incident against the transcribed interview and reported that all salient aspects had been captured.

**Sorting**

Many orientations may be taken when categorizing the incidents. Flanagan called these frames of reference. Two frames of reference were used for categorizing these incidents: the nature or type of incident and the outcome of the incident. A separate sorting was performed for each of these two frames of reference. A subset of incidents was
sorted into tentative groups and then the groups were labeled with brief definitions. The sorting of outcomes began with deCharms' four conditions for developing personal agency, with other categories being added as needed. The remainder of the incidents were sorted into these groups with new groups added and existing group definitions redefined as needed. As the sorting proceeded, some of the larger categories were subdivided into smaller groups, and some smaller categories were amalgamated into larger groupings, as was appropriate. When the sorting was finished, the definitions for the categories were reviewed in terms of the incidents classified within them. Flanagan (1954) provides guidelines for the final labeling of the categories.

Reliability

To check the reliability of the categories, the categories and a random selection of incidents were submitted to a qualified judge for review. He was trained at the doctoral level in counselling psychology and had experience in group facilitation and career counselling. Fifty incidents (13% of the total number of incidents) were validated according to type. The agreement level between the judge's and the researcher's categorizations was 47 out of 50 for 94%. Forty incidents (10% of the total number)
were validated for outcomes. Because one incident could have more than one outcome, the agreement rate was calculated by considering each outcome category for each incident, as was done for the anecdotal stories. For example, the raters might agree on eight out of ten categories, for a given incident, giving an agreement rate of 80% for that incident. The agreement level between the judge's and the researcher's outcome categorizations was 89%. These agreement rates all exceeded the acceptable level of 75% to 85% suggested by Andersson and Nilsson (1964).

The comprehensiveness of the categories was tested by setting aside 39 incidents (10% of the total number of incidents) from three participants (one from each group) before sorting began. When the main collection of incidents had been sorted and the categories had been established, the events in the sample were brought out and sorted into the tentative categories. No further categories were needed to accommodate these incidents for either type of incident or outcome, so the categories were considered to be comprehensive.

Analysis

The second research question (How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to
deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency?) was addressed by comparing the content of the categories of perceived outcomes with deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency. The strength of deCharms' four categories was considered and the categories that were added were considered.

It was of interest to examine the relationships between outcomes and types of incidents in order to provide a better understanding of the factors that helped and hindered employment group participants as well as insights into how these factors were beneficial. To this end all the incidents within each outcome category were tallied by type of incident. Leading types of incidents contributing to outcomes were reported.

Validation of Results

One third (nine) of the participants were contacted by telephone about eleven months after their interviews in order to validate results. Three participants were selected from each of the three groups based on the willingness they expressed in the interview for further contact and on their availability at the time of the validation contacts.
Initially, the researcher explained the purpose of the validation contact. Participants were asked to summarize what had happened in their career development since the research interview. Then the gains they had expressed were reviewed. This was followed by descriptions of gains based on subscale differences in origin scores. Participants were asked to comment on each of these descriptions. In all cases there was agreement - often strong agreement - that this was true of their experience. Finally, they were asked to identify any helpful aspects from the program that strongly stood out to them. They consistently selected aspects contained in their critical incidents lists and usually the incidents they selected were among the first given in the interview. These validation interviews took 15 to 25 minutes to complete.

The researcher also met individually with three of the four facilitators (one from each group) to review the results. All agreed that deCharms' six components of personal agency describe what occurs in their participants and that the categories from this study are valid descriptors of the activities and learning that takes place in their groups. Further details of the facilitators' comments are included in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS: QUESTION ONE

The first section of this chapter presents the statistical analysis that address research question one. This is followed by a preliminary examination of the effects of several demographic variables. The chapter closes with validation of the main results from two sources, the participants' behaviour and the facilitators' comments.

Treatment and Group Effects

Research question one was: Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups? Answering this question required examining the differences between the pre-program and post-program origin scores for each participant. If the differences were not significantly greater than zero, then the answer would be no, personal agency did not significantly increase from pre-program to post-program origin scores for the three groups studied. This was expressed in the null hypothesis,
Ho: $U_1 - U_2 = 0$

where $U_1$ and $U_2$ are the pre-program and post-program means of origin scores for the population of participants in the three employment groups in this study.

Consideration had to be given to the effect of the three groups. If it was found that the origin scores were significantly influenced by the group to which the participants belonged, it could weaken the conclusion that an overall increase was due to an increase in personal agency occurring independently of a particular group. Descriptive statistics are provided for the three groups in Table 6.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean Pre</th>
<th>Mean Post</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>Std. Dev. of Diff's.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>16.71</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>15.33</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre and Post scores have a range of 0 to 24.
To test for both the overall treatment effect and the effect of groups, a two-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor (Winer, 1971) was performed using SYSTAT (Wilkinson, 1989). The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Two-Factor Repeated Measures ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects (Group)</td>
<td>452.80</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>644.59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>644.59</td>
<td>45.33*</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group x Treatment</td>
<td>17.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment x Subjects (Group)</td>
<td>327.06</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* F significant at alpha < .001.

The significant treatment effect indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected. The alternate hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there was a significant increase in origin scores after the programs were completed for the three groups studied. On the other hand, neither the effects of group nor group interacting with treatment were significant.
Effects of Demographic Variables

The impact of demographic variables on the origin scores was examined using stepwise regression. The variables considered were gender, age, educational level, occupational level and duration of unemployment/underemployment before entering the program. The results of the stepwise regression analysis indicated only two variables were useful in predicting the origin scores: age and educational level. The analysis of the regression model using these two variables as predictors is shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8
Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Tol.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.36**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-3.49*</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-3.37</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-3.17*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** T significant at alpha < .001
*  T significant at alpha < .01

Each of the two predictor coefficients is significant (that is, non-zero) at alpha = .01. The fact that the
coefficients are negative indicates an inverse relationship between each variable and the pre-post difference in Origin scores. In other words, pre-post origin score differences tended to diminish with increasing age and with increasing educational level. The high tolerances (0.93 of 1.00) indicate that age and education level are not highly correlated. This is a desirable condition in a regression model because it means there is little overlap between the two variables.

Table 9
ANOVA for Regression Model with Variables Age and Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>299.08</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>149.54</td>
<td>8.82*</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>389.88</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* F significant at alpha = .001

Table 9 indicates that the entire model is significant at alpha = .01, meaning that the constant and two coefficients are nonzero. The squared multiple R is 0.434, indicating that just under half of the variance in the dependent variable (pre-post difference of origin scores) is accounted for by the regression model. This suggests that there are other factors not among those considered in this
study (gender, age, education level, occupational level and duration of unemployment) which have an impact on the origin scores.

Assumptions of Statistical Tests

The data from this study does not meet two assumptions underlying the statistical tests used. The first concerns the level of measurement. The ratings and scores obtained from the Origin Scoring System are ordinal in nature. Traditionally, many statistical measures and methods have been thought to require interval measurement. Glass and Hopkins (1984) claim that the importance of the level of measurement is exaggerated, citing Heermann and Braskamp (1970) for studies making the case that classical methods may be applied to ordinal data.

Another point is that repeated measures analyses of variance assume that the repeated measures are administered independently. This assumption was not met in this study because the pre- and post-program stories were collected retrospectively in the same interview. It would have been methodologically superior to interview the participants once before starting the program and once after the program. This was not possible because the potential participants
could not be accessed before registering and commencing the program. Furthermore, facilitators were not willing to allow access to the participants until the mid-point of the program because many of them experience high levels of psychological distress upon entering the program.

Three statisticians were consulted and the consensus was that the two-factor repeated measures analysis of variance was the best way to analyze this data, although not all the assumptions of the statistical methods were met. One mentioned that the use of randomization tests (Edgington, 1980) with the analysis of variance would eliminate any problems with assumptions, but this requires a huge amount of computing power and specialized programming. The researcher concluded that the method as described in this chapter was the best way to analyze this data, with the caveat that the results should be adopted with some caution.

Summary of Results

In summary, personal agency as measured in origin scores before and after the programs did increase significantly. The age and educational level of the participants were significant influences on the increases they experienced in personal agency. The older participants
generally experienced less of a gain in personal agency than did the younger participants. The participants with a university degree tended to see less of a gain in personal agency than did those participants with less education. There appear to be other factors influencing the gains made in personal agency but they are not among the variables considered in this study. As noted earlier, these results should be adopted with caution because two assumptions underlying the statistical methods used were not met.

Validation of Results

Validation was sought from two sources: the career-related behaviour of the participants after the program and the opinions of the facilitators.

Validation by Participant Behaviour

The 27 participants were interviewed about 11 weeks after the completion of their programs. They were asked about their current status as part of the interview process. This provided a picture of their success in finding employment in the three month period following the program. With the strong increase in personal agency indicated by the
results, a great deal of career activity, including employment, was expected. This was found to be the case.

After approximately three months, eight participants were fully employed, three were in training programs, eight were partially employed, two were volunteering to gain experience, four were unemployed and actively pursuing employment, and two were unemployed and stagnant. More simply, 30% were fully employed, 63% were taking steps to improve their employment positions and only 7% had given up on the job search.

Eleven months after the program, nine participants were contacted. Four were fully employed, two were in training programs, and three were partially employed. None were unemployed and inactive.

**Validation by Facilitators**

The researcher outlined the six components of personal agency with the group facilitators and asked if they believed that adequately described what was occurring in their groups. All agreed that it did, with one commenting that the components provided an "excellent framework for understanding what's happening" in her program.

Another facilitator described how her clients learn that the way they feel is normal and they have a right to feel the way they do. Even more significant, they realize
that "they are not at the mercy of the marketplace. . . When they talk to people in the marketplace, it's 50/50. They have something to offer. And they might decide to say no to a job offer!" When presented with the continuum between agent and victim, she emphatically agreed that her clients were moving away from being victims as they progressed through the program.

The third facilitator pointed out that the constructs of personal agency are applicable to individuals and could also be used with respect to the group as a whole.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS: QUESTION TWO

Research question two was: How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency? Answering this question required two critical incident sortings. The first sorted the incidents into categories by type of incident. This sorting did not directly address the question but provided the framework needed later for linking outcomes to incident types. The second sorting established the outcome categories. In a third step, the outcomes were linked with incident categories to investigate the relationship between incidents and outcomes. This went beyond the scope of question two, but provided useful information. This chapter is organized into three sections corresponding to these three steps. It concludes with a fourth section which presents validation for the categories derived from the sortings.

In both sortings, the incidents were divided in two ways. First, did the incident occur in the program (something that occurred within the program structure) or out of the program (something that occurred during the time period of the program but in some other domain of the participant's life)? The second division was between
helpful and hindering incidents. Although they were not required for answering the question, hindering incidents were sorted and categorized as well. They were included for the sake of completion and provided some valuable supplemental data. Four groupings are produced when these two dichotomous divisions are applied to the incidents:

- Helpful incidents occurring in the program
- Helpful incidents occurring out of the program
- Hindering incidents occurring in the program
- Hindering incidents occurring out of the program

Table 10 shows the distribution of incidents among these groupings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Help</th>
<th>Hinder</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Program</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Program</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Sorting: Type of Incident

The first sorting of incidents used the type of incident as the frame of reference. The categories obtained from the sorting were organized under the four groupings described above. The first grouping, helpful incidents in the program, was the largest and most complex. Its 19 categories were put into six clusters for ease of understanding and reporting. The other three groupings contained far less incidents and no hierarchical organization was required for their fewer categories. In these cases the grouping itself was treated as a cluster. For example, the four categories under Helpful Out-of-Program Incidents form one cluster of the same name and having the same level as the clusters formed under the group Helpful In-Program Incidents. Table 11 provides an overview of the organization of the categories. The names of clusters are underlined.
### Table 11
**Organization of Categories**

#### HELPFUL IN-PROGRAM INCIDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Group Dynamics</td>
<td>C. Skill Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1. Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>C1. Labour Market Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Diversity</td>
<td>C2. Employment Interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Self-Assessment</td>
<td>C3. Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1. Skills Assessment</td>
<td>C4. Resume Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. Assessment (Misc.)</td>
<td>C5. Library Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3. Transition Management</td>
<td>C6. Computer Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C8. Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Facilitation</td>
<td>E. Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1. Staff Manner &amp; Attitudes</td>
<td>E1. Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. One-on-One Help</td>
<td>F. Follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F1. Follow-up Meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 (Continued)
Organization of Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Out-of-Program Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O. Helpful Out-of-Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1. Social Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2. Taking Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindrances In-Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. Hindrances In-Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindrances Out-of-Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q. Hindrances Out-of-Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Significant Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Circumstances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helpful Incidents In the Program

The helpful incidents occurring in the program were sorted into 19 categories under six clusters. The clusters with their corresponding frequencies and participation rates are provided in Table 12. Incident frequency refers to the number of incidents that were sorted into that category or cluster. Participant frequency is the number of participants for whom incidents have been placed into the category or cluster. The incident frequency is usually greater than the participant frequency because a given participant may give more than one incident that is included in the category. For example, Participant #13 provided three incidents - discussion facilitation, staff attitude and facilitator self-disclosure - all of which were sorted into the category Staff Manner and Attitudes under the cluster Facilitation.

Participation rate indicates the percentage of participants who have incidents within the category or cluster. This percentage is obtained by dividing the participant frequency of the category by the total number of participants, 27. The higher the participation rate, the greater the validity of the category (Flanagan, 1954). Borgen and Amundson (1984) suggested that a participation rate of 25% is sufficient for establishing valid categories. This guideline was followed in this study so that the
categories contain incidents from at least seven (26%) of the participants.

Seven incidents could not be categorized under this system. Five were in reference to the volunteering program used in Group C.

Table 12
Helpful Incidents In-Program:
Frequencies and Participation Rates by Category Cluster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Group Dynamics</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Self-Assessment</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Skill Development</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Facilitation</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Structure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Follow-up</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 provides an overview of the helpful incidents. An examination of the categories within each cluster follows.
Cluster A: Group dynamics

These incidents arise from being part of a task-focused group. The vast majority were sorted into the category A1: Supportive Interactions. A second category, A2: Diversity, was formed from the seven remaining incidents because of their primary focus on the diversity of group members rather than on the supportiveness of interactions.

Table 13
Cluster A: Group Dynamics
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Diversity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category A1: Supportive interactions

This category had the highest participation rate among the type of incidents categories. It included the participant's interactions with other individual participants, with small groups of participants and with the entire group. These incidents were viewed as supportive, usually in a social and emotional sense. Three dominant
themes were sharing the common situation of unemployment, exchanging ideas and venting emotions. Although seemingly distinct, these themes frequently overlapped, making it difficult to further subdivide this large category. The activities described in the incidents included group membership, group activities, discussions, making new friends, and sharing experiences and feelings.

Examples:

There were 20 of us. Most of us in the same general age group . . . and most of us had been in our careers a long time, 20 plus years. So one of the things that was great about it is that you got all this support while you were going through this and, learning all this, you had a support system; people who were going through the same thing as you. That was really important, the support part of it. We still phone each other all the time.

There was so much help throughout the class - other classmates helping each other on the resume and also the job search - giving ideas or suggestions.
Some of the assignments we did and talking around the table . . . You would sit with other people who were in exactly the same [situation]. And then we'd go around the room and other people would analyze what they see in me . . . We gave each other feedback.

We made friends . . . Here, you have friends but you're really friends. You don't compete against each other. So you're more relaxed with them . . . They listen to you because they care. So you're not afraid with them.

**Category A2: Diversity**

In this category, participants noted a wide range of experience in their groups. Demographic variations were well represented, such as age, gender and occupation. The incidents in this category were split among Groups A and B; there were none from Group C.

**Example:**

We had one of the groups with the largest number of men . . . we had different concepts and ideas on things thrown in by men . . . and we had a nice variety of backgrounds . . . so we had a little broader focus.
Cluster B: Self-assessment

This cluster includes program activities that were reflective in function, enabling the participant to examine personal characteristics and behaviour.

Table 14
Cluster B: Self-Assessment
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1. Skills Assessment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. Assessment (Misc.)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3. Transition Management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4. Synthesis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category B1: Skills assessment

In this category, the participant assessed his or her skills by examining accomplishments, completing an inventory or doing some other exercise. A popular exercise was STAR stories, described in the first example.
Examples:

It's Situation, [Task], Action, Result. So you want a brief story about a situation you were in - concisely - the action you took and the result of that action . . .

I didn't just write a story; after I wrote a STAR story I analyzed it and pulled the skills out right away and wrote them underneath.

These sorts of skills and how the skills will be employed is very useful . . . to list your skills and then know where you can apply them.

**Category B2: Assessment (Miscellaneous)**

This category includes incidents referring to testing and self-assessment in general or to specific areas of assessment such as values and interests. Skills assessments, covered in category B1, are excluded from this category. The incidents in this category were split between Groups A and B.

Example:

. . . doing all the tests together . . . you measured quite a few different things. There's aptitude or
there's interest, the Myers-Briggs . . . you’re measuring a variety of aspects of your personality and interests.

**Category B3: Transition management**

This category covers a wide range of activities that enabled participants to understand and cope with their employment transitions. Examples are transition lectures, stories of others' transitions and class discussions about the emotions of unemployment. Most incidents in this category came from Group A with the remainder coming from Group B.

**Examples:**

At the very beginning of the program we talked a bit about the emotional ups and downs of being unemployed. . . I think there was a little chart on the emotional roller coaster and I think we just discussed it.

She [the facilitator] told about some people who had been through the program and what they were doing now. Or people that she knew because she had been in the career counselling for a long time. So when she worked
with other companies where people had changed their lifestyle completely. And her own story as well.

On her screen she [the facilitator] had a baby shoe hanging. They would refer to it now and then and say "We'll talk about this later." So at this stage she pointed out that this shoe represented just one step at a time; just taking baby steps.

**Category B4: Synthesis**

Work from different aspects of the program was synthesized into a usable form in these incidents. A wide range of activities were included, such as assembling charts, profiles and books, or exposure to decision-making models.

**Example:**

It was a circle and it had spaces for your interests . . . in the middle it had a goal and then as the days progressed near the end you would fill in more . . . We had some little articles to read and we also did quite a few of those tests.
Cluster C: Skill development

These program activities imparted practical knowledge and skill that enabled participants to be more effective in the job search and in coping with unemployed life. Note that there is overlap between the Self-Assessment and Skill Development clusters, particularly in that self-assessment often continues as the participant works on activities that fall within this cluster.

Table 15
Cluster C: Skill Development
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1. Labour Market Information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2. Employment Interviewing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3. Networking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4. Resume Writing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5. Library Research</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6. Computer Training</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7. Personal Issues Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8. Communication Skills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category C1: Labour market information

Readings, presentations and discussions about labour market trends, opportunities and how to exploit them form this category. Nearly half of these incidents involved guest speakers.

Examples:

We got reading [articles] about the future trends of work... Mostly gave them out in class. Some of them we did discuss... [It was] concrete information.

We had a business speaker who said what the upcoming things were, like what's in and what's out sort of thing. And they brought up things like what you could do... If you liked to walk and you liked animals, people need pet sitters. Those kind of jobs that you don't think of as a job.

Category C2: Employment interviewing

This category focuses on instruction and practice in interviewing for a position of employment. Common components included reviewing frequently asked questions, developing responses, and practising these responses along
with effective interviewing behaviours, often with the help of videotaping. Information interviews were not included in this category because they have a different purpose and format from the employment interview; they were placed in category C3: Networking.

Example:

We picked the people to do the interviewing of us and we picked three people to sit on the panel. . . . If we were the ones that were doing the interviews we were given resumes of the person that we would be interviewing. And we would review that and we knew the position that they were applying for. So then we would be prepared to set up questions just like a real interview for them. And vice versa then . . . we picked the people who were interviewing us and we prepared just as if we were going into a real interview. And as far as the feedback was concerned, it was the tone of voice . . . if we were really fidgeting and keeping focused . . . It was videotaped and we were able to see that afterwards so that the feedback was not just from the people but we could see it ourselves.
**Category C3: Networking**

This category includes instruction and practice making contacts in the labour market in order to acquire information and/or find employment opportunities. Activities within this category centered on gaining motivation for networking and conducting information interviews. The latter is a particular type of interview in which the participant seeks information about an occupation or company. Finding employment through the interview is a secondary concern, if it is a concern at all.

**Examples:**

We would go through case samples of how networking would work and we would watch videos . . . [of] people looking for jobs. They would go from day one when these people would come in all depressed . . . they would start making out their networking cards and talking to people and all of a sudden they would start to see things come back through these people and they would have interviews develop through these networking cards or just through networking through friends and relatives. . . You could see yourself in that position if you did the same thing - that this would actually work.
[The facilitator] just talked to us about the information interviewing and what it was about. . . . You need to make clear when you call and when you go in that you're not necessarily hunting for a job with them; you're just trying to find out more about what they do. . . . We were asked to do it. We were given a couple of days off to do information interviewing.

The videoing on the network call. . . . They gave you a chance to do a cold call and they took a video of it. You could see yourself so you had that vision of a self-confident person sitting down there and making a call.

**Category C4: Resume writing**

This category includes incidents referring to instruction and practice in resume form and use. Covering letters are also included in this category.

**Examples:**

We looked at different resumes that were written up . . . . You could see the different ways that [an applicant's skills] could be presented to different
situations. . . We would study them and pull them apart . . . So we'd have a better understanding of . . . where you'd use the different types . . .

They looked at it and said, "You could probably consolidate sections of it and change it around." So in my computer labs, I used that opportunity to work it over.

**Category C5: Library research**

Participants learn how to use labour market information sources, particularly the public library and government run labour market information centres. This differs from category C1: Labour Market Information in that the primary focus is access to information in print as opposed to the actual content of it. Most of these incidents came from Group B with the remainder coming from Group A.

**Example:**

The one day, the group of us . . . went down to the Labour Market Information Centre. I was pointed out where the different types of job books were. I was pointed out the computer system where I could check the Job Bank, things to do with resumes . . .
Category C6: Computer training

Opportunity is provided to learn basic computer skills, either in a classroom format or on one's own time with the facilities and some assistance provided. Group C had an introductory computer course provided by the university built into its program. The other two programs provided computer time with some assistance to their participants. All but one of the incidents came from Group C participants, giving a participation rate of 70% for just that group. Had the other groups had a more structured, intensive form of computer training the overall participation rate for this category might have been much higher.

Example:

It was a basic course in Windows95. We took the word processing package, Microsoft Word, and some Excel. It was quite short... Everybody had their own terminal. The instructor would give us a little lecture and a demonstration and then we would do some hands on. And she would give us projects to do. And when we were done that, she'd do the process over and over again.
And she would circulate to see who was having trouble and help them through it.

Category C7: Personal issues discussion

This category includes incidents referring to the discussion of issues not directly related to the job search but having personal impact on participants. The range of issues was broad: age, anger, friendship and suicide were mentioned. The discussions were scheduled (as in the "Brown Bag Lunches of Group C), arose spontaneously in classroom discussions or occurred informally between participants.

Examples:

[The counsellor] would come and she would talk on special topics that we had chosen right at the very start [of the program]. For example, we talked about feelings of depression and so she would go more into that and what's normal. . . And that was during our lunch time so we brought our lunch. . . It was a discussion. She would say, "How do you feel about that?" And then we would give our opinions.

That was something that had come up in the class because somebody had said to this person, "Well you
won't succeed at that anyway." And so [the facilitator] made the comment, "Maybe you have to look at that friendship. Is that friendship really good for you?" . . . And somebody else brought out another situation about how one of their friends had reinforced their negative feelings - feelings of fear and failure - versus trying to build them up. And I thought this is what's happening here with my friend. . .

Category C8: Communication skills

In this category, the activities developed the participant's communication skills in general as opposed to those pertaining just to the job search. Most incidents focused on either listening skills or public speaking.

Examples:

We learned to summarize and give feedback - listening skills - through practice in role playing. . . And then I could hear it also in class, I could hear the instructor using paraphrasing. It made me more aware of it and the effective use of it.

At the end of each phase we had to present something and I do have difficulties speaking.
Cluster D: Facilitation

The incidents in this cluster involved the behaviour or attitudes of the staff at the agency. Most were in reference to the facilitators but some applied to other agency staff, such as counsellors, receptionists and managers.

Table 16
Cluster D: Facilitation
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1. Staff Manner &amp; Attitudes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. One-on-One Help</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category D1: Staff manner and attitudes

In most of these incidents participants pointed to the facilitator's manner in leading the group. This included the facilitator's communication skills, sensitivity, authentic caring, self-disclosure, leadership skills and other qualities that were used in effectively approaching
interpersonal interaction and problem solving. In addition, the friendliness and availability of the facilitator and the rest of the staff formed a warm and respectful atmosphere for the participant.

Examples:

I can't see this happening in a class without some kind of leader who can keep the class going. . . . She listened to what the people in the group were saying and had a way to make myself think about me and what was going on. And she had a way of making each person feel like they counted, like they were really important.

They're facilitators but they know how you feel because they've been through it. They know what it's like to be out of a job. [Facilitator] was once on social assistance. The fact that she got over it . . . I said "I think you're my role model!" . . . During discussions they [the facilitators] would sometimes mention things about themselves.

Everybody - even the support staff here - contributed quite a bit. You came and they talked to you and they
always had time for you, which meant you were somebody . . . Everybody was given a helping hand.

Category D2: One-on-one help

In these incidents, participants received one-on-one help. This usually occurred in a private interview with the facilitator but some also consulted with other agency associates such as counsellors, expert consultants or office staff.

Examples:

It wasn't just a group thing because we met with her [facilitator] individually as well. . . So helping is then "What do you need to do this?" . . . It wasn't so much giving me instructions as maybe just thinking.

They also had somebody that was a psychologist who could see you if you needed any help . . . dealing with your emotions and how to go about things . . . one-on-one.
Cluster E: Structure

This cluster contains just one very focused category, described below.

Table 17
Cluster E: Structure
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El. Structure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category El: Structure

These incidents conveyed that the program provided structure, routine and discipline for the participant's job search and life. Almost all incidents focused on the importance of having a set time and/or place to be involved.

Example:

What was really nice about the course is that I was able to be busy again. I had to be there at 9 o'clock. Just have my routine back... At the beginning it gave me structure.
Cluster F: Follow-up

This cluster covers anything done by the agency to follow-up on the main part of the program after it has been completed. It contains just one category.

Table 18
Cluster F: Follow-up
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fl. Follow-up Meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category Fl: Follow-up meetings

These incidents noted a variety of helpful events offered to participants once the program was finished. This help ranged from making office resources available to conducting scheduled follow-up sessions. To be placed in this category, the activity had to have been offered or organized by the agency.
Example:

The facilitators encouraged us to do that [meet together after the course]. They allowed us to use the space and made it available whenever we wanted . . . We'd kind of go around; it wasn't formal at all. There was no facilitator or anything.

Helpful Incidents Out of the Program

Cluster 0 contains the categories of incidents that were helpful to the participants and occurred outside of the structured activities provided in the program. Table 19 lists these categories. Category descriptions and examples follow the table.

Table 19
Cluster 0: Helpful Out-of-Program Incidents
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Social Support</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. Taking Action</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category 01: Social Support

In this category, participants found encouragement from others such as family and friends, as well as from other participants outside of the program structure. Usually, the encouragement was delivered through supportive words but in a few situations it was through helpful actions. Also included in this category is the participant sharing course ideas with others, thereby reinforcing those ideas.

Examples:

My daughter was extremely supportive of me - from the time I handed in my severance to going through the program - and still is! She just keeps saying, "Mom, you've got so many skills; there's a lot of things you can do." . . . And my son is the same way. He's not quite as adamant about that kind of thing but very supportive. . . My son isn't as verbal but he'll put his arm around me and say, "Well I know it'll work out okay, Mom. You're okay."

. . . talking with people who have gone through the same type of thing and have made a career change who would come out and say, "You know, that is hard work."
Or "You know, that's good you're taking the time to do that." Sort of validating the fact that I was doing it.

... going to the [computer] course at the university. We were put into small groups and I think our group became a little close knit one. Because we would go ... twice a week. ... We carpooled and what do you do when you're in a carpool? You talk. So you share a lot of things and you learn and we would tell each other our problems and then they can help you.

**Category 02: Taking Action**

In these incidents, participants took action in other areas of life based on information or ideas from the course. This allowed them to gain experience which reinforced those ideas. Most of these incidents involved career-related action while a few noted involvement in recreational activities.

**Examples:**

Because of the course, I helped three people write their resume. I got from the course the format, style,
which format to use, that sort of thing. I got those skills from the course.

Leads that my information interviewing and that kind of thing were bringing; I would come in and share those. And I would say, "This happened to me." And I would get feedback.

It helped me to get out and be around people and not to be thinking about this stuff too much of the time . . . I remember giving myself permission . . . the first or second weekend just not to think of this stuff. I like to go vacation for the weekend and it was great because then I could come back refreshed.

Summary of Helpful Incidents

Table 20 provides a list of the ten helpful incident categories, both in and out of the program, having the highest participation rates. The complete list of helpful categories, rank ordered by participation rate, may be found in Appendix D.
Table 20
Helpful Incidents Combined (In and Out of Program)
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1. Staff Manner &amp; Attitudes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1. Social Support *</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2. Taking Action *</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1. Skills Assessment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1. Structure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1. Labour Market Information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. Assessment (Miscellaneous)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2. Employment Interviewing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. One-on-One Help</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes out-of-program category.

Hindering Incidents In the Program

Cluster P contains the categories of incidents that were hindrances to the participants and occurred in the program. Table 21 lists these categories by decreasing
participation rate. Category descriptions and examples follow the table.

Table 21
Cluster P: Hindering In-Program Incidents
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. Participants</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category P1: Program Aspects

These hindrances were due to some specific aspect of the program. Several participants mentioned excessive debriefings and concerns about the length of the program, but most incidents were one-of-a-kind complaints.

Examples:

It seemed that there was a lot of reflection in the course which I thought we didn't need. Just after you do the role playing, then you'd spend another half an hour analyzing what every other group went through.
There was a lot of exercises . . . a little overkill. But that's mostly because I was really getting a good understanding of what I wanted by the end of the first week and two weeks would have been good.

**Category P2: Participants**

The behaviour or attitude of other participants was a hindrance in these incidents. Most involved participants disrupting classes. Sometimes it was the participant's own attitude that was problematic.

**Examples:**

There was one classmate who right from the beginning was very negative. At first it was okay; I felt I could keep that removed from myself. And over time it became rather difficult to the point of one time he was complaining I had to leave because I was coming up with my own doubts and my own feelings about it. It seemed like most of us were respecting not laying that [negative viewpoints] out in class. So I found that difficult that there wasn't that respect.
I think the one dilemma that came up . . . was the death of our classmate. . . . I knew [from previous experience with this person] that this person was quite psychologically having a lot of problems. . . . But when she had committed suicide, that sort of bothered me that I hadn't spoken up.

**Hindering Incidents Out of the Program**

Cluster Q contains the categories of incidents that were hindrances to the participants and occurred outside of the structured activities provided in the program. Table 22 lists these categories. Category descriptions and examples follow the table.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Significant Others</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Circumstances</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category Q1: Significant others

Significant others disapproved or failed to support the participant's involvement in the program, or difficulties in significant others' lives or in relationships with significant others interfered with the program in some way. Significant others refers to family, partners or close friends.

Examples:

Hard to deal with family. I think it's a generational thing. I would talk to my parents or my partner's parents and they would ask me if I found a job yet. And I would say, "Well no, I'm doing this career course." To them that doesn't mean anything. That means "Yeah, but why don't you have a job?" ... They think it's just a lot of talk.

A prolonged period of unemployment I find is that I'm beginning to feel isolated. Even there is a good church support group ... they don't understand. It's not them - they don't exclude you, they include you - but there's certain areas. A person's career is so big a part of their life and it's so much that you have in
common with people. You walk in and one of the first things you might say when you meet somebody on Sunday morning is, "How did it go this week? How's work this week?" You have to say, "Well, I don't seem to have any interviews this week." So after a while, you begin to lose that area of commonality.

My grandfather's still sick so I was dealing with that.

**Category Q2: Circumstances**

A diverse range of environmental and circumstantial difficulties which were viewed as hindrances during the program included contact with former workplace, part-time work, dealing with bureaucracy, household moves, employer attitudes, ongoing rejection and weather.

**Examples:**

The ongoing rejection. Rejection is hard to handle.

I was still in contact with my former job, trying to see what was going on with severance pay and everything. And I was having to go down to the Labour Standards Branch quite a few times and make phone calls and run around . . .
I had just signed up for a day's seminar in the medical field again and I really wanted to go to it . . . so I had to go to that and miss a day [from this program]. I felt really bad about that . . . I just didn't want to miss anything.

Second Sorting: Outcome of Incident

The second sorting had as its frame of reference the outcomes of the incidents. The outcomes from helpful incidents were of primary interest, although the hindrances were sorted as well. The sorting began with deCharms' four conditions of an agency-promoting environment. These conditions make up the first four categories in the following section and are identified with a "D." As the sort proceeded it became clear that these four categories alone were not sufficient so others were added. The additional categories are numbered 5 through 10 in the following list.

The participation rates given in the following descriptions are from Table 23 and are based on in-program incidents only. Participation rates from out-of-program
incidents and for all helpful incidents combined are presented in Tables 24 and 25 respectively.

**Descriptions of Helpful Outcomes**

**XI. Self Study (D)**

Participation Rate: 96%

In these incidents, participants considered or shared their motives and other personal characteristics in an accepting atmosphere. The following examples show the range of this category. In the first, the participant began to think about herself in general terms. The second example is more specific; the participant reflected on skills that she discovered she had. The third example shows how self study both reinforced what she already knew and added some new awareness. The next two participants explain some of the implications of self knowledge, in both of these cases major decisions. The last example illustrates that self study can apply to deeper motives that go beyond career behaviour.

Examples:

It kind of makes you think about "Well, what could I do? And what would I like doing?"
That made you stop and think, "Yeah, I do have a lot of these skills!" Because, as I say, in health care you do a whole bunch of things and you're always organizing and you're always managing your work assignments so that you get finished between certain hours. And you're dealing with patients . . .

A lot of times they reminded me of things I already knew about myself. . . Sometimes it pointed out other skills I wasn't as aware of.

It was a good chance to do some self-reflection and say this is what I like and this is what I don't like. It was a long road to get to the point to say "Yeah, there's security in nursing but I don't want to be a nurse anymore."

What impacted me was all the little tests on analyzing me and the kinds of work that would be suitable. And it kept coming back to this kind of field. . . Yeah, there's a theme here . . .

It helped me to reflect on how I'd made decisions in my life. Maybe I did sort of fall into things . . .
X2. Internal Goal Setting (D) Participation Rate: 48%

Participants translated their motives and other self-characteristics into realistic short range and long range goals. The first three examples show aspects of the goal setting process. The last example emphasizes the role of realism in setting goals.

Examples:

That seemed to pinpoint things... Certain areas that I wanted to maybe go into... So yeah, that wheel helped with goals for sure... just making things more concrete... making things less vague. Instead of saying "Oh, I want to work with people," I could narrow it down and say "Well, maybe I want to help people by being an advocate."

It gave us ideas about careers we hadn't thought of... one was office administration which is what I'm doing [now].

I really don't know if I'd have done so much thinking or changing my mind or the areas that I went through to choose that definitely I'm going to stay in nursing [if the atmosphere had not been so positive in the agency].
I can go and I can find out what's out there and find out if I want to do it... And to be realistic about this too; they never taught us that the sky is there and you can reach it if you make your mind to. That there's going to be obstacles and things are not going to always go just the way you want them to.

X3. Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour (D) Part. Rate: 70%

Participants planned realistic and concrete action in order to achieve their goals. In the first example, a participant plans an aspect of her job search. The other two examples illustrate goal-directed action: the participants take concrete steps toward a specific goal.

Examples:

So I thought "Who can I target?" So what you can do is figure out target companies once you've refined what kind of things you'd like to look at... I identified mine into three or four areas I wanted to target... and I made a plan.

But it also helped me feel that is an area I would like to be in. So that's when I joined and got involved
with our church palliative care course. I'm taking a course in February.

... forcing myself to prepare for questions that I would normally say, "Oh, they'll never ask" was good because, for instance, one question that I was worried about was ... "Why did you leave your job?" ... I was able to frame it in a way that was true but also didn't make it sound like I was a basket case.

X4. Personal Responsibility (D) Participation Rate: 63%

Responsibility was accepted for goals and for success or failure in meeting them in these incidents. The first two examples show the attitudes of participants who have taken responsibility for action in general. The third is an example of taking responsibility for the consequences of one's action. The fourth example illustrates the role of persistence, a key quality in those who maintain responsibility for their goals, while the last example shows a particular application of persistence, completing the program.
Examples:

I've got to do something for myself. Somebody else can't do it for me. And they've got to think about their situation and do it.

It makes me feel more in control and less like I'm playing a waiting game.

I was able to really feel what was important to me and take ownership of that and then look at why past jobs did work and didn't work.

Having that reminder that I am doing what I can do now and I need to keep doing it and keep trying. It keeps me going in times of discouragement.

I turned down the first job and I thought, "God! What am I doing?" But I thought, "I need to put some work into this. If I'm going to do it I have to do it."

... I decided to stick with the course and follow through and see what would happen.

The categories that have just been described, X1 through X4, correspond to the four conditions for developing personal
agency proposed by deCharms. The six categories that follow were added by the researcher of the current study.

X5. Confidence and Reassurance  Participation Rate: 100%

Participants experienced some of a variety of psychological supports, primarily emotional in nature. This category also includes bonding to other individuals and sensing one's membership (belonging) in a group. A generous number of examples are provided to show the range of this category: self-confidence, reassurance, normalization, relief, positive outlook, strength and safety.

Examples:

It normalizes the situation of being unemployed. It makes you feel less alone - that you're not the only one going through the process.

So one of the things that was great about it is that you got all this support while you were going through this and, learning all these new things, you had this support system; people who were going through the same thing as you.
The fact of just letting it out is a healing process to me. Because some people keep a lot of things in and the fact that they can let it out gives them some form of relief. And the fact that you can identify with other people experiencing the same thing makes it even better - that you're not alone. It's like a big weight has been taken off your shoulders.

You were somebody. You meant something. And it was a caring environment that created a feeling that you can do anything, that there is still life out there for a lot of people.

It [the tests] helped me to get a better grip on the kind of person I am and that's all part of self-esteem. .. get a little more comfortable with me.

.. just getting over a bit of shyness because it's a hard thing to phone somebody you don't know and ask them questions .. I'm still shy but I'm able to do it a bit more now.

I don't get nervous in interviews .. I feel fairly relaxed when I go in to an interview .. I seem to be able to stay fairly natural and not twitch.
When I felt I was very successful in completing an exercise it was great. . . when you are actually role playing it you get this enormous sense of satisfaction because you've done it. We found the answer.

It sort of just reassured me that I'm good at what I'm doing and that this is an area I should stay in.

It's certainly given me a more positive outlook in the job field, that I can go and I can find what's out there and find out if I want to do it.

Rather than saying, "Here I go again changing careers because I'm not happy," you can look at it . . . "Maybe my needs right now are different and I'm needing to look at my needs and my values and reassess them in this change." And that's okay because you go through different life stages.

The support she [the facilitator] is able to give just gives you more strength for me to carry on with the conviction to make a career change. She is very much a mentor . . .
I didn't feel stressed. She [the facilitator] was able to put you at ease within that first couple of days so that you did not feel . . . you were going to be put into uncomfortable circumstances that were going to embarrass you and make you feel real small.

X6. Skill and Knowledge Participation Rate: 100%

A skill or information was acquired in this category. Acquiring a skill enhances participants' abilities to do specific things. Information or an idea may be used to guide action or increase opportunity, or it may simply be an increased awareness of opportunity or resources. Feedback on performance is a form of information.

This category differs from Planning and Goal Directed Behaviour in that acquiring a skill is viewed as a valuable end in itself and is not explicitly tied to a specified goal.

The first set of examples illustrate a variety of skills acquired. Most apply to job search but the last concerns general communication skills that the participant found useful in other contexts as well.
Examples:

If you write a STAR story down you tend to remember it and when you get into an interview situation . . . you remember those STAR stories. . . They say "Give me a situation . . ." And you can go back to these. It helps you in your interviewing because you can pull them quicker because you've written them down.

With the school board I was interested and . . . I did use a different approach in that I found out a name of a contact and, after handing in the application, contacted her directly a week later. So just realizing taking that route as opposed to being one of many applications in there and waiting for them.

I got out of it the fact that now I know how to assess my job skills and how to use the computer for the job bank. So in the sense that if I'm ever unemployed I know where to go to look for work and upgrading skills.

I find it [paraphrasing] useful in my personal life relating to my kids and in the information interviews that we set up here in class. I have used it at home and it's helpful in clarifying rather than assuming
what somebody says to me. . . [In an interview] I'll use it if I feel confused about what the person is saying.

The next set of examples involve information. The first two show participants gaining specific information about the labour market, one gained through program activities, the other through an activity outside of the program. In the third example the participant refers to prospective career ideas. The last example is more general; it shows the value of hearing the ideas of different people.

Examples:

The little thing that helped me [was] the fact that they told me I was going through a transition period and described the phase . . . The other thing that helped me was the fact that they showed me the different resources that were available to me. All the resources: the library, the LMIC, what government agency did what if the question came up - that sort of thing.

. . . I was able to go in and talk to her [a paralegal] about the kind of work she does and the scope of the
work and how much time does she spend doing this. What kind of different places do paralegals . . . get employment. I had this concept that it was just law firms; that's not true at all.

You might bring up an idea and B. [another group member] with his background in computers would say "You know, that's a really good idea. You could try this or that."

... listening to what other people were going through, how they were feeling, what some of their ideas [were], things that maybe I didn't think about before — just different points of view.

Although skills and information seem quite distinct, it was found during sorting that there was considerable overlap between the two as is shown in the following example. It was often difficult to distinguish whether something learned was a skill or knowledge, so the two were combined into one category. This is a sensible combination when skill and knowledge are viewed as two ways to equip a participant for future action.
Example:

Looking at the different type of resumes available because I wasn't familiar with them . . . I would never have thought of that before. You know, a resume's a resume; here it is. That opened my eyes to if you're applying for this type of job then you change your resume so that it applies to the position you're applying for and you're telling them something they want to see.

X7. Opportunity

Participation Rate: 48%

More opportunities presented themselves to participants as a result of the incidents in this category. Usually, this gave the feeling and appearance of progress and success. The opportunity could be a job offer or contact, a chance to exercise an ability, making a social contact, etc. The following examples show various opportunities from a variety of sources.

Examples:

I got my job through E. [another group member]. We were talking at a party and she said "I interviewed for this job today . . . but it's not what I want." And I
said "Well, that really sounds like what I'm looking for. Would you mind giving me her name and I'll call her?" And that's how I got this contract.

From this program I have formed a very, very good relationship with another person from the group and we see them socially outside. With the socialization of this family, we are able to meet other people who are in the business and if I want to plug something, I have the chance to plug something. So there are opportunities that are coming out of this socialization.

One place I phoned [for an information interview], she gave me five numbers of other places that might be better suited for me . . . that was a good experience.

. . . in the articles I read . . . I think the big thing was this Alzheimer's unit: to know that's opening next year and also I've got the names to go and apply.

X8. Discipline and Purpose Participation Rate: 48%

Participants experienced enhanced self-discipline and/or sense of purpose through having the schedule and structure of the course to follow.
Examples:

I do need to structure myself somehow . . . I'm a very scattered person . . . If I don't have any sort of structure, I get into a rut or I start procrastinating or I never complete tasks . . . I'm learning to impose them on myself . . .

I was unemployed before and I know that feeling of needing something to do every day.

If nothing else it was getting myself going in the morning.

X9. Amusement and Diversion Participation Rate: 44%

This category includes emotionally satisfying occurrences that were due to humour, interest, fascination or enjoyment. These outcomes often provided further motivation and sometimes relieved pressure from the demands of the program or unemployment.
Examples:

The group work . . . makes for more interesting dynamics than one-on-one which I've done before.

[The variety in the program] made you think in different directions . . . it kept my interest.

I kept in contact with my friends a fair bit while I was going through the course . . . that was good because you can't dwell on it for 24 hours a day. So a bit of balance . . .

I had fun doing [the STAR stories].

X10. Helping Others Participation Rate: 41%

In these incidents a participant helped another person in some way. Some participants considered this an end in itself. The persons helped were either fellow group participants or people outside the program, as these examples illustrate.
Examples:

We brought up different suggestions for other people too. If we knew someone was looking for work - it was a sort of internetty I guess - helping each other with the different areas of job search.

If anybody's asking me about things I can tell them now, "Did you know that the Centre was here? You can access this, this, this and this." I have lots of times been used as a resource for many people. My own kids. It was really good to know that, to have that knowledge that I can tell people.

I passed on the articles to my brother who's about to graduate.
Participation Rates of Helpful Outcomes

The frequencies and participation rates for the ten outcome categories are tabulated and presented in Tables 23 through 25. The tabulation of outcomes was more complex than that for the first sorting by type. An incident could be sorted into more than one category because participants often cited several outcomes for one incident. Further, in some cases one incident would have two or more occurrences of the same category of outcome. For example, one incident referred to three different skills. For the purposes of these tabulations, an outcome category was counted only once per incident.

The outcome categories are listed in Table 23 in order of decreasing participation rate for in-program incidents only. The four deCharms categories are indicated.
Table 23
Outcome Categories from Helpful In-Program Incidents
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Skill &amp; Knowledge</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self Study *</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planning &amp; Goal Direction *</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Responsibility *</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Internal Goal Setting *</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunity</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Discipline &amp; Purpose</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Amusement &amp; Diversion</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Helping Others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes deCharms' categories.
The outcome categories for out-of program incidents are listed in Table 24 in order of decreasing participation rate. Most categories do not appear in this table because their participation rates are below 25%.

Table 24
Outcome Categories from Helpful Out-of-Program Incidents
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self Study *</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes deCharms' categories.

The tallies from the in-program and out-of-program incidents were combined and presented in Table 25 in order of decreasing participation rate.
Table 25
Outcome Categories from Combined Helpful Incidents
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Skill &amp; Knowledge</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self Study *</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planning &amp; Goal Direction *</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Responsibility *</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Internal Goal Setting *</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Helping Others</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Amusement &amp; Diversion</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Discipline &amp; Purpose</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes deCharms' categories.
Outcomes of Hindrances

Seven categories of outcomes were sorted from the pool of hindering incidents. The hindering incidents were more difficult to elicit and were generally less potent than the helpful incidents in the minds of the participants. This is even more true of the outcomes of hindrances. Frequently, participants would struggle to come up with anything more than a vague negative feeling they had about the incident. Sometimes it was difficult for them to describe a negative outcome because they sensed that the incident had prevented them from getting the most from the situation but it was difficult to describe exactly what they had missed because they had not experienced it. In several cases, when an outcome was described, it turned out to be positive, causing confusion as to whether this was really a hindrance. For example, a participant confronted with a negative situation in the program decided to make the best of it and learned something helpful from it. In any case, the outcomes from hindering incidents were difficult to explain and tended to be more vague and nonconcrete than were the helpful outcomes.

The descriptions of the five outcome categories are presented below. The first four are derived mostly from in-program incidents. The last category, social stress, came solely from out-of-program incidents.
Descriptions of Hindering Outcomes

Y1. Interference Participation Rate: 56%

Participants in these incidents believed that their progress had been diminished, either by holding them back, or by missing an opportunity or not being able to fully exploit it.

Examples:

[I missed] a chance to take the work that I'd done on my own and just be able to talk about it . . . just to hear myself talking about it. . . I needed to process that more one-on-one with someone who knew about all these instruments. . . I think it would have affirmed or convinced me that I was on the right track.

Just the fact that instead of getting on with the lesson, she [another participant] was making all this noise. . . I wanted to learn but because she was making all these complaints, the lesson was being held back.

Y2. Frustration/Worry Participation Rate: 56%

This category includes emotional reactions in which the heightened emotional intensity prevented participants from
fully concentrating on their learning or embracing what was happening in the program. Frustration, anger or worry were the most commonly mentioned sources of distraction.

Examples:

"Shut up for once, would ya!" Yeah, [I'm mad about it]! . . . It was when I was struggling with stuff, that's when I tend not to speak up. And that's when I would resent it [other participants dominating discussions] more because that's when I needed to speak up.

For the first two weeks I was finding it very frustrating, almost stressful, because I was bringing up all these horrible things that I thought I just wanted to put to sleep. I didn't want to go over them anymore. I had been over them. I decided that it wasn't what I wanted to do. I saw value in assessing them but I didn't want to do it for two weeks . . . I found myself really agitated and really irritated and it just didn't sit with me very well.

Sometimes it would get you into a panic that you felt that you didn't have enough time to look for a job.
Something has to give so it's the job search. Maybe you missed an opportunity . . .

Y3. Withdrawal Participation Rate: 33%

This category includes any response in which participants withheld themselves from full commitment to the program or a specific aspect of it. Common forms were silence, passivity, boredom and doubt.

Examples:

I just didn't contribute, or I contributed stuff that wasn't really helping me for myself. . . I just stood back sometimes and listened but didn't really jump in because it didn't really relate to me.

Sometimes you can rap on and on and on over something. . . . My mind would be on something else. Daydreaming or something like that.

I just didn't think anything was going to come of this whole thing. My sense of reality was, "Hey, wake up and join the real world here people! This is nice stuff but when we leave here, we're all going to be back to where we were before: unemployed and no
prospects." . . . I guess I have a lot of disagreement with the hidden job market [concept] . . . I didn't believe in it so I didn't utilize it.

Y4. Discouragement

Participation Rate: 33%

This category encompassed emotional reactions that were demotivating for participants. They spoke of discouragement, confusion, and loss of energy or hope.

Examples:

I think where I had a lot of difficulty was with all these tests. One would tell me that I'm one thing and another would tell me I'm another thing and they really didn't match . . . and that's how I felt [confused]. And I got to point where I didn't want to do these tests anymore because I thought I'm feeling crazier than I did when I came in here. Like I'm supposed to be more clear about what I'm doing and I just feel like I'll never know what I want to do so forget it.

I would come home after a day and I would be a little drained because it was just so much information. . . being physically tired at the end of the day.
... and then when you get out in the real world you realize, "Well, no, I can't afford to go back to school." Or "No, I can't get sponsored." So it's kind of difficult... you go out there - like you face a lot of walls.

Y5. Social Stress

Participation Rate: 26%

In this category, participants experienced a variety of social stresses as a result of being in the program. Examples were lack of support, strained relationships and isolation. These incidents were entirely from out-of-program situations.

Examples:

I found that [lack of parents' support] an external pressure because I felt like I had to explain it all the time. . . They didn't respect it; they just wanted you to be out working. . . it was just pressure. I felt like I had to justify it all the time. . . I found it very difficult sometimes because when they were questioning it, I was questioning it.

The occasional thing will come up [i.e. Christmas presents] and I feel there is pressure, "Well, you
don't have a salary." And even though he [my husband] says, "Well that's okay. I understand," I wonder if he really understands... I've never had to ask [my husband] for anything... Quite a bit [of a loss of independence].

It's just that they seem to be living such a normal life. They don't have any problem thinking about going out to brunch on Sunday because they've got a paycheck coming in... So you sometimes just stay away.

**Participation Rates of Hindering Outcomes**

The frequencies and participation rates for the five outcome categories are tabulated and presented in Tables 26 and 27. The tabulation of hindering outcomes followed the same guidelines as for the helpful outcomes explained above.
Table 26  
Outcome Categories from Hindering In-Program Incidents  
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1. Interference</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2. Frustration/Worry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3. Withdrawal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4. Discouragement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only outcome category found for out-of-program hindrances, Social Stress, is shown in Table 27.

Table 27  
Outcome Categories from Hindering Out-of-Program Incidents  
Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y5. Social Stress</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes Linked to Type of Incident

In an attempt to determine the most common ways of achieving the various outcomes, all the incidents in a given outcome category were tabulated against the different incident type categories. The highlights of this analysis are presented in Table 28. Only type categories with participation rates of at least 25% are listed. Outcome categories for which no type categories reached this minimum rate were not included.

Consider the first entry, for example. This line means that 48% of the 27 participants reported that skill assessment exercises helped promote self-examination and self-understanding. Furthermore, because it had the highest participation rate in this group, skills assessments were the most common (but not necessarily the best) way of promoting self study among this group of participants.

The hindering outcome categories are similarly presented with their antecedents in Table 29.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Category</th>
<th>Incident Category</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1. Self Study</td>
<td>B1.Skills Assessment</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1.Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2.Assessment (Misc.)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B3.Transition Management</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D1.Staff Manner &amp; Attitudes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5. Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
<td>A1.Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D1.Staff Manner &amp; Attitude</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O1.Social Support *</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2.Employment Interviewing</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1.Skills Assessment</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3.Networking</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6. Skill &amp; Information</td>
<td>A1.Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1.Labour Market Information</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2.Employment Interviewing</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C4.Resume Writing</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3.Networking</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C5.Library Research</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C6.Computer Training</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X8. Discipline &amp; Purpose</td>
<td>E1.Structure</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes out-of-program category.
Table 29
Hindering Outcome Categories and Their Antecedents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Category</th>
<th>Incident Category</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1. Interference</td>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2. Participants</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2. Frustration/Worry</td>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2. Participants</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3. Withdrawal</td>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4. Discouragement</td>
<td>P1. Program Aspects</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y5. Social Stress</td>
<td>Q1. Significant Others</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validation of Categories

The categories obtained from the two sortings were validated in two ways. First, they were compared with pre-existing sets of categories. Second, the categories were presented to practitioners for their critique.
Validation from Theory and Research

The categories from the current study were compared with two established categorization systems, Yalom's (1985) therapeutic factors for group psychotherapy and Amundson and Borgen's (1988) group employment counselling helping factors, and a third set of components developed by Cochran (1994). Moderately strong similarities were found and are discussed in the following sections.

Yalom: Group Therapeutic Factors

Yalom (1985) developed 11 categories of therapeutic factors observed in psychotherapeutic groups. The factors included altruism, group cohesiveness, universality (the perspective that "we're all in the same boat"), interpersonal learning - input (understanding self better through others' input), interpersonal learning - output (interpersonal skills), guidance, catharsis (venting feelings), identification (admiring and imitating someone in the group), family reenactment (gaining insight into or dealing with family of origin issues), self-understanding, instillation of hope, and existential factors (accepting the givens in life and taking responsibility). Through Q-sort methodology, Yalom was able to rank the categories by order of importance to group members. This ranking, in decreasing order, is shown in Table 30.
Table 30
Comparison of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors with Outcome Categories of Current Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yalom</th>
<th>Current Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Input</td>
<td>Skill &amp; Info., Self Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catharsis</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
<td>Self Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Output</td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential Factors</td>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universality</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instillation of Hope</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>Helping Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reenactment</td>
<td>Conf. &amp; Reass., Self Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yalom contended that these therapeutic factors are present in all groups, regardless of their focus or population, so they were compared to the outcome categories of the current study as a means of validation. It is
apparent that there is a strong correspondence between most of the therapeutic factors and half of the outcome categories. Some of the matches are very close, such as Altruism and Helping Others, whereas in others one category corresponds to only a part of another, as in the case of Family Reenactment and Confidence and Reassurance.

The other half of the outcome categories (Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, Opportunity, Discipline and Purpose, and Amusement and Diversion) do not correspond to anything in Yalom's system. This does not necessarily mean that the remaining outcome categories are invalid. Kivlighan et al. (1987) suggested that most psychotherapy groups do not emphasize the role of action as do career groups, so this area was overlooked by Yalom. The outcome categories, Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, Opportunity, Discipline and Purpose can be grouped under the broad area of taking action.

**Amundson and Borgen: Helping Factors**

The research of Amundson and Borgen (1988) concerning helping and hindering factors in employment group counselling was described in the literature review. It was initially believed that the 17 categories from that study could be compared to the incident type categories in the current study in order to validate the latter. Closer
examination of Amundson and Borgen's categories revealed that they contained a mixture of incident types and incident outcomes. For example, "instruction in resumes" is defined more as a type of activity or incident whereas "belonging" appears to be an outcome of incidents. The reason for this mixture is found in the wording of the question posed to the participants: "... begin by telling me what have been the positive high points of being in the group" (p. 107). The researchers intentionally used a broad research question to avoid limiting the responses in such a way that important information would not be presented. The problem that a vague question introduces is confusion between process and outcome in the respondents (Bloch & Crouch, 1985). Despite this problem, the Amundson and Borgen study contained the best information for validating categories. Their categories are compared with both the incident type and outcome categories of the current study. This comparison is shown in Table 31. The result is a clear correspondence between the categories used in the two studies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amundson &amp; Borgen</th>
<th>Current Study *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Support</td>
<td>Supportive Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Strategies</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Instruction</td>
<td>Resume Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Outlook</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Prep. &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Employment Interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Technique</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Leads</td>
<td>Supportive Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Support **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videotaped Feedback</td>
<td>Employment Interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Staff Manner &amp; Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-One Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline &amp; Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies &amp; Services</td>
<td>Staff Manner &amp; Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-One Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorbing Others' Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Supportive Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31 (Continued)
Comparison of Amundson and Borgen's Helping Factors with Categories from Current Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amundson &amp; Borgen</th>
<th>Current Study *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Library Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Support &amp; Services</td>
<td>Follow-up Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>Confidence &amp; Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Supportive Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventilating</td>
<td>Supportive Interactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Italics in current study column indicate outcome category; plain text indicates type of incident category.
** Indicates out-of-program category.

Cochran: Components of Career Agency

Cochran distinguishes career agency from agency in general and identifies four major characteristics of a career agent. First is acting within situations suited to one's personal characteristics. This corresponds to the category Self Study. Second is developing agentic characteristics, such as internal locus of control, confidence, a sense of challenge, purposefulness, meaningfulness, self-legislation, responsibility and
planfulness. This broadly defined characteristic includes several of the categories from the current study including Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, Personal Responsibility, Confidence and Reassurance, Skill and Knowledge, Discipline and Purpose, Amusement and Diversion, and possibly Helping Others. The third characteristic of an agent is clarifying an objective career representation, meaning a clear view of one's options and potential consequences within a chosen course of action. This corresponds with Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, and Skill and Knowledge. Fourth is clarifying a personal career narrative, or more simply, clarifying one's career purpose and identity. This closely corresponds to Self Study.

The correspondence between Cochran's four components and the current study's outcomes is not particularly clean or evenly distributed because Cochran's components are broadly defined and somewhat overlapping. Nevertheless, all but one category (Opportunity) from the current study can be accounted for within Cochran's components.

Validation from Practitioners

The researcher met individually with each of the group facilitators in order to get their feedback on the results. Both sets of categories, incident types and outcomes, were
presented to the facilitators. All said the categories were valid descriptors of the activities and learning that occurs in their groups. They believed the participation rates to be reasonable, although sometimes surprising.

One facilitator described the two sets of categories as "accurate" and agreed with the relationships presented between types and outcomes (Table 28). She particularly endorsed the leading role given to supportive interactions, explaining that an important task in the first day is to quickly establish to group members that "there is no being attacked; they're here to learn their strengths." Another facilitator echoed these sentiments, saying "that (the primary role of supportive interactions) certainly supports my experience. If that's not there, nothing will happen." The third facilitator noted "the social nature of learning" evidenced in the leading three helpful types of incidents. Another said that the leading categories speak to the importance of facilitation skills and building a supportive learning environment.

The leading role of skills assessment was no surprise to one facilitator: "Interest testing is almost useless. It's really useless at the start because there's no context. But skills assessment gives context. It confirms what I see to be most useful with people." A second facilitator said
she planned to place more emphasis on skills assessment in future programs.

One facilitator was glad that structure came out as a category because "structure is important when a person is going through transition . . . it's critical to moving through the transition." She also affirmed the role of follow-up.

When asked about the important role of outside learning while the program proceeds, one facilitator answered "I think it's absolutely true. We have 'Review-Preview' and they'll say 'I sat down with my spouse last night and we had a serious discussion about what we talked about in the group yesterday.' They all phone their friends and talk about the program." Another facilitator was surprised the participation rates for out-of-program incidents was not higher. The third facilitator described the strong, reciprocal interplay between a personal issue in one individual's life and his group participation. Commenting on the strong representation of significant others among the out-of-program hindrances, a facilitator said "It doesn't surprise me at all. They couldn't count on their spouses" (for support).

The relatively low participation rate for goal setting surprised two facilitators. One noted that "one of my objectives was for goal setting."
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to investigate the usefulness of viewing employment group programs as processes of enhancing personal agency. Two research questions were posed to assess the adequacy and value of using deCharms' personal causation theory with employment groups as a means of understanding the gains experienced by the participants. For each of these two questions, the results, the limitations of the results, and their implications for theory, research and practice are discussed primarily in terms of deCharms' theory of personal causation. However, to more fully explore the meaning and implications of the results, other theoretical perspectives are integrated into the discussion, most of which have been introduced in the literature review.

Question One:
Enhancement of Personal Agency in Groups

Findings
The first research question was:
Does personal agency significantly increase in individuals after participating in employment groups?
If a fundamental outcome of employment group programs is the enhancement of personal agency, then one would expect to see the participants' levels of personal agency greater once they have completed the program than when they started it. This was observed in the results.

The analysis of variance showed a highly significant \((p < .001)\) difference between the pre- and post-program origin scores for the participants in the three groups. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion drawn that the origin scores had significantly increased from before to after the program. The suggested meaning of this result is that personal agency of the participants in these three groups had increased over the course of the programs.

To ensure that the gains made in scores were not group dependent, the two-way analysis of variance assessed the effect of group membership on the difference in origin scores. This effect was not significant. Apparently the increases in agency observed in the participants were achieved independently of group or program membership.

Although group membership was not related to gains in personal agency, preliminary results indicate that two other variables may have been. The relationships of five variables to gains in personal agency were explored using
regression analysis. The five variables were gender, age, occupational level, educational level and duration of unemployment. Of these five, age and educational level were correlated with increased origin scores. Both of the correlations were negative. These results suggest that in general, the gains made in personal agency over the course of a program by older participants are less than those made by younger participants. Similarly, there is a tendency for the gains made by more highly educated participants to be less than the gains made by those having less education.

Limitations

Several limitations arising from the methodology require that these results be viewed with some caution. First, the results cannot be generalized to other employment groups. This data collected in this study was primarily of a qualitative nature. As such, its main aim was not generalizations of results to the broader population of all employment groups, but rather the "extension of understandings" about employment group effectiveness, providing "detailed descriptions that enable others to understand similar situations and extend these understandings in subsequent research" (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 394). For generalization to other employment groups to be valid, a representative sample of
groups obtained by random selection would be required. In this study, to achieve the extension of understanding desired, three exemplary groups were intentionally chosen in hopes that they would best show the essential qualities and dynamics of an employment group. Consequently, the null hypothesis referred to the population of all members of these three groups, not of all employment groups.

The second limitation is that the results should be generalized to other members of the three groups not participating in the study with caution. For unqualified generalization of results, an experimental research design is required, the cornerstone of which is random selection of a sample that represents the larger population. To comply with ethical requirements, the participants of this study were volunteers, placing the study in the category of quasi-experimental research (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). This opens the study to criticism that the sample of 26 participants is not a valid representation of the population of all members of the three groups. In particular, the volunteers may have been the group members who benefited most and were consequently the most satisfied with their programs.

These criticisms do not appear to be serious problems with this sample for several reasons. First, the sample size is large in relation to the population. With 26
participants out of 52 individuals in all three groups, the sample contains half of the population. Second, although no comments can be made as to how well the sample reflected certain demographic patterns in the groups, it is possible to say that there is relatively good representation in general in terms of gender and age. Third, a quarter of the sample showed only minimal or no gains in origin score differences. Further, numerous in-program hindrances were mentioned by these participants. If the sample was seriously biased toward positive participants, there would likely be very few with low gains and they would have few negative remarks to make about the programs. Fourth, the very strong result ($p < .001$) suggests that significance would be present even if some bias is present in the sample.

A third limitation on the results arises from the Origin Scoring System. The six categories are assessed only for their presence or absence in a participant's story, not for degrees of intensity. This crude manner of scoring did not prevent the scoring system from picking up changes in levels of personal agency but it may have underestimated them. When scoring, the researcher often noticed that an increase in quality in a given category from pre-program stories to post-program stories did not register because the pre-program story had been rated a one, indicating the presence of that category, and no higher rating could be
given for that category in the post-program story, even though it demonstrated a more mature form of the category. This was particularly true of the category Reality Perception. The impact of this problem was that the post-program scores should often have been higher, the resulting pre- to post-program differences greater, and consequently the results even more significant than they are reported.

A fourth limitation arises from questions about the data not meeting all the traditional assumptions underlying the analysis of variance and other statistical methods used in the study. These concerns were discussed in chapter four.

A final limitation to note is that these findings apply only to unemployed individuals. No statements can be made about personal agency and the underemployed because there were only two underemployed participants in the study and they were pooled with the unemployed. Pooling was deemed to be appropriate because the two individuals considered themselves to be unemployed.

To summarize, there are limitations on the generalizability of these findings but there is also reason to cautiously adopt them as valid. The researcher has confidence that the results of the study accurately reflect what occurred for the members of these three employment groups. To ensure that the results apply to employment
groups in general, another study is required with a random selection of a sample of a larger number of groups.

Implications

An Overarching and Unifying Purpose

The central contribution of this study is that the gains made by employment group participants may be viewed as gains in personal agency. It supports Cochran's (1994; Cochran & Laub, 1994) assertion that the general mission of career counselling is essentially "helping people to become agents of their own courses of life" (Cochran & Laub, 1994, p. vii). This statement is an apt description of the employment group experiences described by the participants of this study. In general, they entered their respective programs confused, frustrated and even defeated. Their job searches were generally ineffective and they were at a loss of how to improve their situations. By the time of the interviews, three months after their programs were over, they demonstrated clearer goals, improved skills, a better understanding of their abilities and more confidence. Most had already proven the value of these gains by taking successful steps towards their goals. Not all participants made dramatic gains; in fact, most could be described as modest. But in the participants' eyes they had taken significant steps in a positive direction that were achieved
because of help they received through the programs. DeCharms might say that these people had started with many attitudes and behaviours of pawns and had made significant shifts towards becoming origins. In Cochran's terms, they had moved from being passive victims of their environments - patients, in short - to being agents, actively shaping the ongoing stories of their lives.

One might object that applying the findings of the current study to the broader field of career counselling is unjustified. Although the focus of this study was employment groups, all three of the programs involved contained substantial self-exploration components of a type similar to those found in career development programs (e.g., Yost & Corbishly, 1987; Amundson, 1989). It could be argued that these programs were essentially career development programs, as well as employment programs, and that the gains made in career development programs may also be viewed as essentially gains in personal agency.

There has been growing interest recently among career development theorists, researchers and practitioners in bringing convergence to the numerous theoretical positions found in the field (Hackett, Lent & Greenhaus, 1991; Osipow, 1990; Savickas & Lent, 1994). Increasingly, authors of research reviews and articles on convergence note that many of these theories view people as active agents shaping their
environment (Borgen, 1991; Spokane, 1991; Savickas & Lent, 1994).

In a recent conference, leading theorists and practitioners in the field of vocational psychology explored the notion of theoretical convergence (Savickas & Lent, 1994). Some participants noted the importance of personal agency. According to Bordin (1994), one emerging consensus of the conference was that "the individual must be viewed as more than a passive participant with pushes and pulls exerted by the environment" (p. 53). Proponents of the theory of work adjustment stated that "the individual functions as an intentional agent" (Rounds & Hesketh, 1994, p. 178). Although most contributors did not specifically acknowledge the significance of personal agency, many implicitly made reference to it by highlighting agentic qualities and behaviour. For example, Super (1994), in commenting on the significance of representing the self as the keystone in his Archway of Career Determinants, said "it is the individual who, in his or her own way, synthesizes the effects of these determinants; It is the person, the self - the keystone of the arch - who is the decision maker" (p. 67). The Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making includes "a learning component that makes it possible for people to take charge of their own destiny" (Krumboltz, 1994, p. 27). Krumboltz also described human beings as
"struggling to satisfy their most basic instincts while striving to make a significant impact on their world" (1994, p. 27) and required that a theory "must empower people to take responsibility for their own lives" (1994, p. 27) for it to be useful.

The current study contributes to this growing realization of the importance of personal agency in career development, and goes beyond this to support Cochran's proposition that enhancement of personal agency is the overarching purpose that encompasses the major existing positions in career psychology. For example, Cochran (1994) has identified the relationship of personal agency to the congruence and developmental schools of thought. Improving the congruence between the person and the work environment is not an end in itself but contributes to the higher goal of placing the person in a position to be able to more effectively shape his or her environment. Neither is development of vocational identity an end in itself. Rather, it is one important facet of the higher purpose of enhancing personal agency. In another major position, the social learning approach to career decision-making (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990), Krumboltz has provided a detailed explanation of the mechanics of making career decisions. But viewed in a larger context, these career decisions are
the steps of an agent (or a pawn), actively shaping (or passively responding) to his or her environment.

In addition to providing an overarching framework for career theory, personal agency might address another concern identified at the convergence conference: the gap between career theory and career counselling practice (Savickas, 1994). Harmon expressed concern that "the theories we have available do very little to tell us how to practice interventions that will change the experience of those for whom work is drudgery" (1994, p. 226). Osipow (1994) suggested that the gap is so great that separate theories are required for career counselling. An underlying problem contributing to the theory – practice gap is the narrowness of the theories; they tend to explain the experience of selective groups while ignoring large segments of the population (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Harmon, 1994).

Enhanced personal agency is a goal appropriate to most, if not all, persons, regardless of most socioeconomic and demographic variables. For both the business manager and the unskilled labourer out of work, the goal is to become more of an agent of their own lives at whatever level they find themselves. Whether one belongs to a privileged or disadvantaged group, both face constraints and can learn to understand to deal with them more effectively with their
limitations. In other words, all can grow in personal agency.

In summary, the concept of personal agency can effectively unite many of the major theories of vocational psychology. Enhanced personal agency is the implicit goal that most share. This common reference point provides a way of relating the different theoretical positions to one another. Equally important, personal agency is sufficiently broad and flexible to capture the concerns of a diverse population and thereby promises a more satisfying basis for career counselling practice.

A Focus for Theory Building, Research and Practice

I think it is an appropriate ambition for research in psychology to provide an understanding from which practitioners can offer services that successfully accomplish the goal of helping human beings to reassert control over their lives. (Howard, 1986, p. 39)

Realizing and adopting an overarching purpose provides theoreticians, researchers and practitioners with a clear focus for their work. This is particularly important for those delivering services, where immediate demands and details can easily displace one's focus on goals and the broader perspective of one's work. By keeping in view the
goal of enhancing personal agency in each participant, the group facilitator can become more effective by staying on track as the program proceeds and the program developer can ensure that all activities contribute to the central goal. Further, the goal of enhanced agency is made lucid and achievable by deCharm's provision of six categories of agentic behaviour. By these, practitioners can know what behaviours and attitudes they are trying to develop and to what degree they have been successful.

DeCharms applied personal agency to groups of school children. In this study personal agency was applied to employment groups. It may prove to be a useful concept for other fields concerned with human development and motivation, particularly in the group context. Studies similar to this one conducted with other types of groups could confirm if this is the case.

The Role of Age and Education

The finding that enhancements in personal agency diminish with the age and educational level of the participant begs an explanation. While this is beyond the scope of this study, some suggestions are offered that may be explored in future research. Before proceeding, the reader is cautioned that these are preliminary findings. Replication in other studies using multivariate analysis is
required before these proposed relationships can be adopted with confidence.

One explanation for older participants making less dramatic gains than their younger counterparts is that they may start out with a higher level of personal agency due to their life experience. This explanation does not appear to fit well because a post-hoc analysis of the pre-program origin scores suggests that the younger half of the participants were similar to the older half. (Pre-program means of 7.8 and 9.1 respectively; \( t = -0.78 \) with \( df = 24 \) is not significant at alpha = .05.).

Another possibility is that older workers may experience less dramatic gains in personal agency as they participate in employment groups because they are generally slower to change. The workplace of the 1990's is foreign territory to many of them and mounting a successful job search may require learning new skills and adjusting long-held attitudes (Canaff, 1997). In addition, the normal fears associated with career change may be more acutely felt by older workers because they often have more at stake than younger people - an established career identity, financial obligations, and a cherished, stable lifestyle (Newman, 1995). One would expect career change to come with more difficulty - and perhaps resistance - to these older workers than to those who have been in the workforce for just a few
years. One group in the current study was composed entirely of people 45 years of age and over. Their interviews generally conveyed more of a struggle and discomfort with the changes they were having to make.

The relationship of age to gains made in personal agency suggests that programs dealing with older workers may need to employ a different approach. The pace may need to be reduced, expectations of participant progress may require modification and additional work may be required, particularly in the area of attitude change.

A possible explanation for the inverse relationship of educational level to gains in personal agency is that education generally enhances one's personal agency. With higher levels of personal agency as they entered the program, they had less room to improve. This explanation is reasonable when one considers that with advancing levels of education, students must examine their motives and goals. They also tend to acquire more problem solving skills which in turn raises their levels of confidence and perseverance. These are all aspects of personal agency. Some support for this explanation is found in this study. The participants with university degrees generally had greater levels of personal agency before the program than did those without degrees, based on a post-hoc analysis of pre-program origin
scores (Pre-program means of 11.1 and 6.7 respectively; \( t = -2.94 \) with \( df = 24 \) is significant at alpha = .05).

In an era of limited resources, one implication of this finding is that it may be desirable to target unemployed workers with less education; they show the promise of making the greatest gains as a result of being in an employment program. Before accepting this conclusion, however, more research is required. Many of the participants in this study had been unemployed for relatively short periods of time. Borgen and Amundson (1987) found that people tend to lose self-confidence regardless of educational level after a more prolonged period of employment.

Constraints on Personal Agency

One mistaken conclusion sometimes made concerning personal agency is that, given the motivation and training, an individual can achieve virtually any goal and overcome any obstacle. Personal agency has limitations. Although a person forms goals and acts to achieve them, his or her actions take place in an environment. Although the environment may help in achieving goals (as was the case in these employment groups), it may also place constraints on the person (Bandura, 1982). Other agents in the environment may oppose the person's goals and some are powerful enough to hinder or even prevent goal achievement. In short, human
beings are "persons in relation" (Macmurray, 1961), exercising personal agency within the confines of their relationships with social and physical environments. (In fact, for Macmurray, the appropriate use of agency by an individual agent is for the well-being and benefit of others in the larger community of agents. Bakan (1966) agrees. He proposed two fundamental modalities of human existence, agency and communion, and believed that agency without communion was unhealthy.)

Bandura (1989) notes that "the notion that humans serve as entirely independent agents of their own actions has few, if any, serious advocates" (p. 1175). Indeed, most theorists dealing with personal agency acknowledge the significance of environmental limitations in their theories. In deCharms' (1968) view, people are in continual conflict with their environments, "constantly struggling against being confined and constrained by external forces - against being moved about like a pawn into situations not of his choosing" (p. 273). In this struggle, people do not always get what they want and must compromise or even submit when situations warrant it. Howard states that "humans are not, however, free to behave in any manner they desire... human action can be shown to be influenced by factors within (e.g., transient physiological states or organic damage) and outside the person (e.g., environmental pressures or social
forces)" (Howard & Myers, 1990, p. 227). From a social cognitive perspective, persons and their environments dynamically interact to cause behaviour:

Persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyors of animating environmental influences. Rather, they make causal contribution to their own motivation and action within a system of triadic reciprocal causation. In this model of reciprocal causation, action, cognition, affective and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants. (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175)

The participants referred to a variety of specific constraints they were experiencing. One man in his forties viewed employment groups such as the one he was in as a politically driven movement to keep workers quiet during a bleak economic time:

You tell people, "Well, it's tough out there but if you're just creative enough and you go and you do information interviews and you figure out this and you figure out that, keep pushing and you'll eventually find success." Well, the fact is that not everybody will. And there's 10% unemployment in Canada and there's down-sizing the economy and there's all kinds
of problems that are beyond the level of the individual . . .

A highly educated participant from Europe described the global economic situation and concluded that without a war to boost production, there just is not enough work to go around. An older university graduate from abroad explained her difficulties in finding suitable employment in an economy which values qualifications above experience. She found the Canadian system to be very rigid and had been unable to find employment equivalent to the professional work she had done in her country of origin. Another participant believed that he had missed an opportunity to get technical training because a government agency had moved too slowly to get the required funding arranged in time.

These beliefs may or may not be true, but to the individuals who hold them, they are reality and consequently influence their affect and behaviour. Social cognitive theory explains that personal agency is not only a function of self-efficacy, but also of outcome judgement (Bandura, 1982; 1990). Individuals may be very confident in their ability to perform a particular task, but if they believe there is little chance of achieving a desirable outcome, they are not as likely to attempt the task. One study found that managers who believed that organizations are difficult
to change lost faith in their own decision-making capabilities easily, while those who believed change was achievable grew in managerial efficacy even in the face of numerous difficulties (Bandura, 1990).

Assuming that the perceived constraints are indeed true, what can one do when encountering these barriers besides merely giving up? One participant in his mid-fifties expressed frustration over the social constraints he experienced in the marketplace concerning his age.

You sometimes wonder why am I going through this whole process if the employer still believes that older workers are not effective? I can train but if I'm not given an opportunity to do these things then it's all for nothing. . . it's the employer that really has to be educated and I wonder if they are doing enough in that field.

When asked what needed to be done to educate employers, he suggested that participants could organize to lobby for funding to this end and that agencies could place themselves more in the public eye through use of the mass media. This participant's thoughts of collective action echo Bandura (1982), who, recognizing the social interconnectedness of people, says "many of the challenges and difficulties they
face reflect group problems requiring sustained collective effort to produce any significant change" (p. 143).

But when is individual action inadequate and collective action required? For any of the participant's situations mentioned in this section, one could argue that they have taken the perspective and posture of a victim and could do more for themselves. On the other hand, perhaps they have done all that could be reasonably expected of them, but the forces of global change and labour market restructuring described in chapter one are simply too much to overcome; only sociopolitical change through collective action will help them out of their situation. How does a person know when their limits of personal agency have been reached? Answering this question, being largely a function of one's basic beliefs about human nature and socioeconomic systems, is not easy and is beyond the scope of this study.

What can be said is that employment group programs hold the possibility of helping people to take more responsibility for what is within their control. Davies (1996) countered a criticism that an employment program (Employment Support Network) was "encouraging the unemployed to tolerate the intolerable, rather than pushing for social change" (p. 153) by saying:

Yet a support group can help construct personal power.

Not only were Network members helped to recognize their
responsibilities with regard to changing their employment situation, they were also encouraged to recognize and discuss the socioeconomic context. Members were helped to move away from the paralyzing effect of self-blame into mobilizing their energies toward creating changes in their lives (p. 153).

Question Two:
Conditions for Personal Agency Enhancement

Outcomes
The second research question was:
How do the outcomes derived by participants of employment groups compare to deCharms' conditions for developing personal agency?

The sorting of critical incident outcomes established the importance of deCharms' four conditions: Self Study, Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, and Personal Responsibility. The participation rates for the categories corresponding to these conditions were 96%, 48%, 70% and 63% respectively. However, these four categories were not sufficient to include all of the incidents. Six others were added as the sorting proceeded:
Confidence and Reassurance, Skill and Knowledge, Opportunity, Discipline and Purpose, Amusement and Diversion, and Helping Others.

As well as being insufficient, deCharms' four categories apparently are not the most common outcomes derived by participants of employment groups. The participation rates for two of the added categories, Confidence and Reassurance, and Skill and Knowledge, were both 100%, clearly exceeding three of the four deCharms' categories. The fourth deCharms category, Self Study, had a similar participation rate.

In fairness to deCharms, these two leading categories may be present in his four conditions. In the case of Confidence and Reassurance, he acknowledged a role for emotional support when he stated that self study consisted of "helping individuals to understand their motives in a warm and encouraging learning environment" (deCharms, 1976, p. 6). But in stating it this way, he limited the presence of emotional support to the self study aspects of a program. The current study shows that confidence and reassurance developed through a wide variety of program components. Furthermore, the fact that all participants identified outcomes of confidence and reassurance points to the need for a separate category to communicate its importance; it should not be merely an adjunct to another category.
Similarly, it could be argued that Skill and Knowledge is included in the deCharms category Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour. The learning of skills and knowledge can be viewed as instrumental in attaining goals. This position was not taken in the current study for two reasons. First, deCharms appeared to require goal-directed behaviour to be strongly tied to a goal; that is, the goal had to be explicitly stated or at least clearly implied. For many of the participants, learning how to write a resume or knowing where to look for occupational information were ends in themselves; they did not explicitly link them to career goals. A second reason for not including Skills and Knowledge in Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour was that there was a qualitative difference between the two groups of incidents. In those classified as Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, a goal was dominant; the behaviour was secondary and instrumental to achieving the goal. The opposite was true for Skills and Knowledge outcomes. As mentioned above, acquiring the skill or knowledge was the focus and source of satisfaction for the participants.

To summarize, the second research question can be answered this way: The four conditions proposed by deCharms for enhancing personal agency (Self Study, Internal Goal Setting, Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour, and Personal Responsibility) are important but not sufficient to describe
the outcomes of an effective employment group. Six other categories of outcomes were identified. Two of these, Confidence and Reassurance, and Skill and Knowledge, were more frequently cited than any of the others, including the four deCharms' categories.

**Conditions for Developing Personal Agency**

A more thorough set of conditions than that suggested by deCharms is required to describe an employment group program that enhances personal agency. The ten outcome categories found in this study could be adopted as such a set but a question must first be asked: Do each of the additional six categories reflect conditions in the group that promoted a sense of personal agency? Just because participants raised these as valued outcomes does not mean they all can be subsumed under the label personal agency.

In order to determine if it was reasonable to include the additional six outcome categories as conditions of personal agency, they were compared to the six dimensions of the Origin Scoring System (Internal Control, Goal Setting, Instrumental Activity, Reality Perception, Personal Responsibility, and Self-confidence). Confidence and Reassurance fits within the origin behaviour category Self-confidence. Many of the outcomes classified under Confidence and Reassurance referred to feelings of "I can do
it!" Those outcomes that were more of a reassuring nature also fit under Self-confidence because they provided the foundation for self-confidence to develop. For example, feelings of "I'm not alone" led to changed beliefs: "I'm not such a bad person after all." The shift to a more positive attitude allowed them to believe that they did have value and that they could do something to improve their positions.

Support for including Confidence and Reassurance as a leading condition of personal agency is found in social cognitive theory. Confidence and Reassurance corresponds closely to self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1989) states that perceived self-efficacy is the most central and pervasive mechanism of personal agency, contributing significantly to motivation level and performance accomplishments. Further, Bandura (1977) proposed four basic sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states. Each of the antecedents of Confidence and Reassurance in the current study correspond to one or two of the sources of self-efficacy, thus providing a better understanding of how each of the antecedents builds confidence. For example, Supportive Interactions and Staff Manner & Attitudes contain elements of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion. Social Support usually is offered in the form of verbal persuasion. Skills Assessments make use
of other varieties of verbal persuasion. Employment Interviewing and Networking are effective because they provide performance accomplishments.

Skill and Knowledge is easily included under either Instrumental Activity in the case of taking action to learn specific skills or knowledge, or Reality Perception in the case of learning new information that gives a new perspective of the job search, the labour market or an occupation. Acquiring skills or information can increase an individual's personal agency by improving their ability to help themselves. Bandura (1977) notes that "expectation alone will not produce desired performance if the component capabilities are lacking" (p. 194).

Opportunity is not a behaviour at all. Rather, it is a feature of an individual's environment which allows him or her to take action, which is fundamental to exercising personal agency. It implies personal responsibility, an origin behaviour, because individuals must decide to take action to exploit it. So Opportunity is considered to be a condition for enhancing personal agency.

Discipline and Purpose conveys a sense of Personal Responsibility and enables more effective Instrumental Activity. It is also included as a condition for enhancing personal agency in employment groups.
Helping Others is included by definition under Personal Responsibility. Feeling and acting responsible for others is an important aspect of deCharms' notion of personal agency.

The role of Amusement and Diversion in developing personal agency is not so clear. A case can be made by arguing that participants needed periods of refreshment in order to continue on productively in the program. Also, some of the outcomes could be described as noncompetitive play, a special case of the origin behaviour Internal Control. But these arguments are not as solid as those given above for the other categories. For now, this category is suggested as a possible condition for developing personal agency but its importance is not known.

The hindrance outcome categories can also be related to the development of personal agency, but in the negative sense. All five categories imply a lessening of action-taking or attitudes and feelings that would tend to impede internally chosen action. Each of the five form an opposite to one of the helpful outcome categories. Both Interference and Withdrawal imply diminished Goal-Directed Behaviour. Withdrawal may also indicate decreased levels of Personal responsibility. Frustration/Worry, Discouragement and Social Stress point to a lack of Confidence and Reassurance.
In summary, all the additional outcome categories except one can be included as conditions found in employment group programs that enhance personal agency. The remaining one, Amusement and Diversion, is tentatively included. In doing so, this study has developed a more thorough and explicit set of conditions relevant to developing personal agency in employment groups. It is proposed that the four conditions for developing personal agency set forth by deCharms be expanded to the ten listed in Table 32 when applied to employment groups.

Table 32
Conditions of Employment Groups that Enhance Personal Agency

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<td>Planning and Goal-Directed Behaviour</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Amusement and Diversion</td>
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Although the groups of interest in this study were those that dealt with employment issues, it could be argued that their purposes, activities and dynamics are similar to other types of group programs. If this is so, then the ten conditions given in Table 32 may well be applicable, for the most part, to many other types of groups. Research in other group applications is required to verify this possibility.

Helpful Program Aspects

Having established the conditions for developing personal agency in employment groups, the next step is to determine the aspects of the program that were helpful in achieving these conditions. The sorting of critical incidents by type provided much information on the activities and experiences participants found helpful. Some highlights are described in this section.

Program - Life Interaction

First of all, the distribution of incidents demonstrates that learning occurs outside the program as well as in it. About one out of every six helpful incidents took place outside the program. Participants clearly valued these external experiences. More than half of the participants cited incidents from other aspects of their
lives as being very helpful. The two helpful out-of-program categories, Social Support and Taking Action, ranked third and fourth among all the helpful categories. The participants acquired two main benefits from these out-of-program incidents: they gained confidence and reassurance, and they became more aware of themselves and their situations.

Drawing a distinction between the participant in the program and the rest of the participant's life is not meaningful or productive. The intentional use of life situations beyond the program will enhance and even accelerate learning and development.

Task - Support Balance

The clusters of helpful in-program incidents reveal two major components: task orientation and supportiveness. Task aspects of the program include self-assessment and skill development. Support includes group dynamics and facilitation (leadership). These two components appear to act in a balanced partnership when the nearly identical participation rates are considered.

The helpful out-of-program incidents provide the same picture. Social Support (support) is coupled with Taking Action (task). Their participation rates are equal. Similar
task - support splits were found among the hindering incidents as well.

This is a powerful confirmation of Amundson and Borgen's (1988) proposition that both task and supportive aspects must be addressed in employment groups. They included a third component, routine, which corresponds to Structure, one of the clusters of helpful incidents in the current study.

Supportive Social Interaction

Although task orientation and supportiveness are both vital to an effective program, the latter appears to have more widespread impact. Supportive social interaction refers to the positive interpersonal processes that occur during a program. Whereas the task component has definite goals and activities that often take the spotlight, support considerations are often taken for granted. This may be a serious mistake. According to the participants of the study, interpersonal experiences were the most often cited types of helpful incidents. The three most common helpful incidents were process oriented: supportive interactions with other participants, supportive and positive staff manner and attitude, and social support outside of the program. The first of these led all other helpful categories by a wide margin; nearly all the participants
mentioned it. Incidents of this variety often were among the first recalled in an interview and tended to be stated with more emotional expression, indicating their powerful impact.

The importance of the interpersonal domain was mirrored in the hindrances. The category Participants trails far behind the other category, Program Aspects. This obscures the fact that having a troublesome, irritating or disruptive participant was the most commonly mentioned hindrance. (Program Aspects has a much higher participation rate because it covers a numerous and varied assortment of activities and other program issues.) Outside of the program, more than half of the participants reported being hindered by problems with family or friends, or simply by not receiving their support.

By linking type of incident categories to outcome categories, some of the functions of social interaction are revealed. First, supportive interaction among participants was clearly the most common means by which confidence and reassurance was gained. They were also the leading contributor to Skill and Knowledge, primarily through the sharing of helpful ideas and perspectives. Similarly, by offering constructive feedback to individuals, self study was promoted. These three functions of supportive interactions correspond closely with the three types of
support proposed by Niles (1996): emotional, informational and appraisal. Yet another function may be that social interaction in the group helps participants to improve their social skills and expand their social network, both important factors in creating and grasping employment opportunities (Silliker, 1993).

The pre-eminent importance of supportive interaction is echoed in other research. In interviews of 93 unemployed people, Amundson and Borgen (1987) found that the leading positive factor in coping with periods of unemployment was support from family, mentioned by more 58%. The second most helpful factor was support from friends (41%). The researchers concluded that "Positive social relationships provided security, encouragement, and stability and were particularly important at a time of high stress and low self-confidence" (p. 102). In another study, Amundson and Borgen (1988) interviewed employment group members using the Critical Incidents Technique in a manner similar to that used in the current study. They too found that "Mutual Support" led their 19 helpful categories with a participation rate of 66%. Four other related categories were formed: Belonging, Absorbing Enthusiasm, Social Comparison and Ventilation. These are all included under Supportive Interactions in the current study.
Kivlighan and his associates (1987) found that "career group participants highly value the emotional aspects of the career counseling process" (p. 43) and called for leaders to promote more emotional processing in their groups as well as helping participants to make sense of their thoughts and feelings and to appropriately act on them.

Perceived social support was found to be one significant predictor of job search intensity in a group of older workers (Rife & Belcher, 1993). Among the sources of social support available, unemployed peers were the most highly valued. This finding was corroborated in the current study, which found supportive interactions with other group participants the most frequently mentioned source of help. Employment groups provide the positive peer support for older workers called for by Rife and Belcher.

Far from being frivolous and nonproductive, the supportive social processes operating in an employment group appear to provide a strong therapeutic effect (Davies, 1996) that is the very foundation for helping clients. Rather than being taken for granted, the social climate of a group needs to be given much care and attention.

Facilitators

Several participants recognized their facilitators as playing the critical role in setting a good climate. For
example, one participant said this of her facilitator: "I can't see this happening in a class without some kind of leader who can keep the class going... She listened to what people in the group were saying... and she had a way of making each person feel like they counted, like they were really important."

Staff Manner & Attitudes was the second most common type of helpful incident. More than half of the participants attributed it to gains made in Confidence and Reassurance and some believed it helped promote Self Study. The other category relating to facilitation, One-on-One Help, was also among the ten most commonly cited helpful incidents. Several participants mentioned the lack of individual help being a hindrance to them. Since they were not included in the participation rate of One-on-One Help, the value of this category may be somewhat understated.

Amundson (1995) emphasizes the importance of the counsellor creating an atmosphere in which a client can work productively. Evidently, the same phenomenon observed in individual psychotherapy, wherein the working alliance between the counsellor and client is critically linked to the relationship between the two (Bordin, 1979; Hartley, 1985), is present in group employment counselling as well.
Skills Assessment

Activities that helped group members to assess their skills were the most commonly mentioned of the task-oriented interventions. A few individuals referred to interest tests, values inventories and other types of assessments but there were not enough to warrant a separate category for any one of them. But fully half of the participants contributed incidents to Skills Assessment. They reported two major outcomes from this category. The first was in Self Study: they became more aware of their abilities and potential. The second gain was in Confidence and Reassurance: realizing skills they were unaware of increased their sense of confidence and power. These two outcomes are illustrated in the comments of this participant: "It came to me that I have a lot more marketable skills than I thought. And I can put them into a form on a resume that's going to grab somebody's attention... I started exploring and building this confidence that I had all these of skills that I didn't even know I had!" Clients need assistance in seeing the full range of skills they possess (Amundson, 1996). Becoming aware of the skills she had helped this woman to think and behave with more personal agency.

Given that career counsellors have long emphasized interest testing and more recently, values assessment, some may find the prominence of skills assessment surprising.
This provides a timely warning to facilitators, counsellors and program developers concerning the assumptions on which they work. What the professional believes is most helpful to clients may not be what the clients find gives them the most help. Periodically, the views of clients need to be considered in order to determine what is most effective.

Skill Development

The categories clustered under Skill Development were numerous but none represented more than 44% of the study participants. One reason for this is that some of the activities were group specific. For example, a given activity might be heavily emphasized in Group A, outlined in Group B and not covered at all in Group C. The lower rates may also reflect differing needs among the group members so that a range of attributes are found useful but none is favoured by the majority. This is an important issue to remember when dealing with adult learners. From the perspective of personal agency, agentic behaviour is promoted when learners are free to choose that which will best help them to achieve their goals in their own way.

Many of the categories were significant contributors to the participant's store of skills and information. Two categories, Employment Interviewing and Networking, boosted many participants in Confidence and Reassurance. The fact
that they knew how to be interviewed and - even more important - had been through a mock interview in class raised their self-confidence. Rehearsing desired behaviour, such as positive interview demeanor or appropriate network questioning, is a powerful means of promoting the desired behaviour in real life situations. The experience of mastery arising from effective performance is the most powerful influence on self-efficacy perceptions, according to Bandura (1977). As one individual explained, "To do the role play was very very helpful ... I had to prepare for the role play and that helped me prepare for the real type interview. ... When I went into the interview, I didn't feel uncomfortable ... ."

Structure

Often overlooked entirely, the importance of having structure was raised by half of the participants. In the absence of a job, the employment program provided a place to go, a schedule to follow and people to be with. The importance of this should not be underestimated. The outcome of an extended period of unemployment coupled with a failed job search leads many to states of apathy, isolation and hopelessness (Borgen & Amundson, 1987). Introducing some structure renewed a sense of purpose and self-
discipline that many of the participants in the current study felt they had lost.

Providing an appropriate amount of structure is an important issue in developing personal agency. DeCharms (1976) said that "to help a person become an Origin is to free him to do what he must do by structuring, even constraining the situation, so that he makes his own choices based on realistic selection of appropriate action toward selected goals" (p. 206). Referring again to the discouragement and hopelessness felt by some unemployed people, this is a situation in which self-confidence and consequently personal agency can run very low. It requires a high degree of supportive structure at the onset of the program which can diminish as the program proceeds and self-confidence grows.

Change of Perspective

Numerous changes of perspective were found among the outcomes. Changes of perspective are important in employment counselling because "many clients unnecessarily limit themselves through their view of themselves or the labor market" (Amundson, 1996, p. 155). From the constructivist framework, a client's perspective does far more than merely filter experience; "the representational model actively creates and constrains new experience and
thus determines what the individual will perceive as 'reality'" (Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988, p.200).

Most changes of perspective contributed to outcomes in the Self Study and Confidence and Reassurance categories. For example, one participant was able to see herself in a new role as a result of working on a skill inventory:

I never thought of myself as a financial manager . . . Yeah, I manage the house. The paycheque came in and then it had to go everywhere. So you learn that you actually have a skill. You can actually budget, you can organize. . . you realize that you don't think of the everyday things you do as a skill.

While positive perspectives build confidence, confidence, in turn, can build a more positive perspective. Bandura linked self-efficacy to one's perspective on his or her future outcomes:

People's perceptions of their efficacy influence the types of anticipatory scenarios they construct and reiterate. Those who have a high sense of efficacy visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides for performance. Those who judge themselves as inefficacious are more inclined to visualize failure scenarios that undermine performance by dwelling on how things will go wrong. (1989, p. 1176)
Bandura (1989) notes that the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and future perspective is bidirectional; a change in one affects the other.

Another participant was reassured when she discovered that her employment problems were not necessarily due to her foreign origin.

I thought my problem was because I came from abroad but coming here and finding that there are people with Canadian experience still looking for a job at this age is a consolation. . . I might feel that "Well, just because I didn't grow up here, that's why I'm having so much problem." But I meet people who also grew up here . . . having the same sort of problem makes me feel that I'm not alone.

Perspective changes also contributed to enhanced planning and goal-directed behaviour. The following participant was able to shift from vague, general goals and plans to concrete specifics as a result of talking one-on-one with her facilitator.

[Something changed in] my way of thinking . . . I just am trying to look at gradual processes like little things to start doing instead of thinking of the big picture. Now I am looking at volunteering, maybe
working somewhere part-time . . . more attainable things that I could do more realistically . . .

These changes of perspective were achieved by reframing existing cognitive structures of the participants. Amundson (1996) identifies 12 reframing strategies used in employment counselling, many of which were present in the participants' accounts of critical incidents. Two strategies, information giving and normalization of reactions to situations, were found throughout the incidents. Normalization occurred with particular frequency via participant interactions, as did positive affirmation and modeling. Facilitators also employed positive affirmation, as well as introducing new cycles of information and focused statements. The transitioning activities changed participant perspectives through externalizing problems and limiting negative thinking. Applying rational decision making and identifying accomplishments and skills, also appeared in the incidents.

Limitations

The factors covered in the previous sections, along with others presented in chapter four, were very helpful to the participants but the claim cannot yet be made that they are all direct contributors of personal agency. The question used to collect the critical incidents, "Tell me
about something that occurred in the program that was very helpful to you" was general in focus. It did not specify "helpful in causing you to have a greater level of personal agency." It has been demonstrated earlier that most, if not all, of the major outcomes of these incidents were aspects of agentic behaviour but further study is required to establish stronger connections between agentic behaviour and the activities that promote it.

This study provides information about beneficial components at work in the groups, not a complete understanding of the processes as a whole. The reason for this limitation is found in the nature of the research method. The critical incident technique focuses on discrete aspects of a process, allowing for analysis and categorization but artificially separating them from the whole. The result is a relatively thorough understanding of some of the elements of the process being studied with only partial insight into the flow of the complete process.

During the course of interviewing, the researcher became aware of another limitation. The participants will only mention incidents of which they are aware, and not all critical factors will be mentioned because some may be transparent to them. This was particularly noticeable in the case of group leadership. Although many mentioned the importance of the facilitator, a large minority (30%) did
not. With several of these, it was apparent from their comments that the facilitator played an important role but they did not explicitly mention this as a critical incident because they were unaware of it or took it for granted. Consequently, the categories acquired in this study are judged to be reasonably thorough but not necessarily complete.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the usefulness of viewing employment group programs as processes of enhancing personal agency. Personal agency was conceptualized and operationalized using personal causation theory (deCharms, 1976). The aim was accomplished in two ways. First, it was found that the gains made by group participants could be understood in terms of personal agency. Levels of personal agency increased significantly between pre-program and post-program assessments. Second, it was found that deCharms' four conditions for developing personal agency were valid in employment group work but they were insufficient for describing all the learning outcomes described by participants. Consequently, a list of ten conditions was suggested for developing personal agency in
employment groups which incorporated deCharms' four conditions.

The results of this research strongly suggest that personal agency is a useful construct for understanding the processes of employment groups. It provides a useful theoretical framework for guiding fruitful directions of research, not only in the specific area of employment counselling but in the broader field of career counselling. In supporting Cochran's (1994) assertion that the overall aim of career counselling is to enhance personal agency, the study points to the possibility of a theoretical framework capable of integrating many of the diverse theories of career choice and development.

The concept of personal agency provides practitioners with a clear understanding of their major aim, to develop agentic attitudes and behaviour in their clients. Further, it operationalizes this concept so that the expected agentic behaviour is apparent to group facilitators and progress can adequately be assessed.

The outcomes and factors that led to them provide important information for employment group program design. Several key characteristics of effective programs were uncovered in this study, leading to these suggestions:
1. Promote the use of the life experiences of the participants as the program proceeds as a means of gaining complementary ideas and perspectives, testing new behaviours and gaining emotional support.

2. Ensure a balance between task and support oriented activities in the program.

3. Foster supportive social interactions with the facilitator and especially with other group members. Consider this as the foundation for the effectiveness of the program.

4. Ensure facilitators have a high level of skill in establishing and maintaining a supportive climate in a group.

5. Include identification of skills in the self-assessment component of the program.

6. Include a variety of job search skills in the program in order to meet the typically diverse needs of a group of adult learners.

Finally, enhanced personal agency often carries with it a self-motivating effect. This may be the most important benefit of all. Discovering that one can take more control of one's life is a liberating and empowering experience that
often spreads from career concerns to other domains of life bringing more satisfaction and fulfillment.

Practitioners play a critical role in launching their clients on the journey to enhanced personal agency. They do well to remember that one of the central goals of helping people is that "they learn how to help themselves more effectively" (Egan, 1994, p. 8). DeCharms (1976) noted the importance of helping people accomplish change for themselves, "not to determine his goals but to help him develop commitment and purpose so that he can reach his own goals more effectively" (p. 5).

One facilitator emphasized that instilling this sense of self-responsibility in her clients required her to be conveying the message to them throughout the program that they are capable of making effective career choices for themselves. She explained that this message is communicated through her attitude and manner as a facilitator as well as through the activities used during the course of the program. As much as possible, clients are assisted in making their own decisions rather than having them made for them. They are trained in important skills in order to take action for themselves instead of having it done for them. These thoughts are summarized well by Amundson: "Counselors must believe in the capacity of their clients to solve
problems and communicate this through word and deed" (1996, p. 157).

Practitioners are best advised to consider their clients as their co-facilitators as they proceed through the employment program. As co-facilitators, clients learn to take responsibility for their progress and, in so doing, become agents of their own career development and of the development of others in their group.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX B

ORIGIN SCORING REFERENCE SHEET
ORIGIN-PAWN SCORING SYSTEM

GS  Goal Setting
Nonphysical-need goal, freely set, explicitly stated, followed by some activity or involvement.

IA  Instrumental Activity
Past or present activity, freely chosen, explicitly stated, to attain a goal (stated or implied).

RP  Reality Perception
Ability to understand one's situation: position in his environment, possibilities, strengths, weaknesses.

Types: Perception of...
  Causes and Motives
  Blocks
  Intelligent Adjustment, Compromise, Acceptance of Expertise
  Planning
  Social Interaction (one's place in relationships and society)
  Punishment, Obedience, Social Sanctions

PR  Personal Responsibility
Willingness to assume responsibility for the consequences of his actions, the attainment of his goals, fulfillment of his desires and the solution of problems. Also, responsible concern for others

Types:
  Responsibility for Action and Goal Attainment
  Responsibility for Consequences
  Social Responsibility (respects or helps others)
  Concern for Others or to be Reunited with Others

SC  Self-Confidence
Self-Confidence in ability to attain a goal, achieve a positive outcome or show pleasure in originship. Must be related to story theme and person's effort.

Types:
  Goal Attainment or Positive Outcome
  Overcoming Blocks (self or external)
  Confidence in Personal Capability
  Affect over Goal Attainment

PC  Personal Causation (IC Internal Control)
Origin-Thema runs through whole story. Person totally chooses and directs his behaviour. The individual feeling of being in control of what is happening inside and outside of oneself.

The decision is entirely independent of external influences or the situation originates beyond the person's control but the source of the decision is within him.

Special Cases:
  Challenge (takes perspective of challenge vs. threat)
  Self-Investment (complete immersion in an activity; lost in one's work)
  Play (engaged in play or anticipating it)
APPENDIX C

ORIGIN SCORING EXAMPLES
This appendix contains five examples of transcribed stories (accounts of career related experiences) given by participants during the courses of their interviews. A detailed description of scoring decisions is provided with each story. The reader who wishes to work carefully through these examples may find it helpful to refer to the reference sheet for the Origin Scoring System found in Appendix B.

Although the main purpose of this appendix is to show how scoring decisions were made, it also serves another useful purpose. Two pairs of pre- and post-program stories are provided. By comparing these pairs of stories, the reader can get a sense of the movement toward origin behaviour experienced by their authors. This movement reflects the overall trend found in their stories. The first participant (#4) had a pre-program total (from all four stories) of 8 and a post-program total of 18. The second participant (#9) went from a score of 4 to 17.

Example 5 is provided to show a story in which no evidence of personal agency is found.

Example 1
Participant 4: Pre-program Story 2

I stayed in that job and started to get depressed because it wasn't what I wanted to continue doing. But again, I didn't look for work because I didn't know what kind of skills I had to sell. An English degree is probably the most vague degree you could ever get, however, I figured you'd need to know how to write wherever I was. Anyway, I stuck with it and I ended up getting laid off. This was about a year, over a year later, just over a year and a
couple of months. They had no money. A couple of people were going to start going part time and they were eliminating my position and I guess at the time I wasn't getting along very well with the Director or something like that. I don't know. Anyway, I wasn't offered a better job, I was offered a different job for reception, and that just was not me at all. I thought I needed work experience. What do you do with an English and Communications degree? It just doesn't seem like enough. I needed work experience. I'd had excellent summer jobs, that's the thing. I had worked at an advertising agency in the accounting department, computers, met great people. That was 2 summers. They called me back the next summer to go in. Then I spent another summer as the coordinator at the pool and it was great. And I got to do it again for a while later through the school year, one day a week. It was excellent. But I guess I never knew how to sell it. I look back and I think "Well, that probably was pretty good work experience."

I didn't know what I'd be looking for at all... Just to be in a job, administratively hopefully. I mean, in that first job I took, the fact that I could work doing layout and, and working in outgoing communications... I don't think I ever really thought about it. [It was like] "So let's do this, okay. That looks like a good job."

Scoring: This story is typical of many pre-program accounts in that it is scored for RP but nothing else. In the first paragraph, she shows awareness of a potential block in that the degree in English was vague in comparison to others, and she sizes up the situation, concluding that the writing skills would be useful. She continues to describe her awareness of blocks in the second paragraph by adding that she lacks work experience. The following description of summer work is not scored IA because it appears to be done out of passive response rather than inner control, particularly in light of the lack of clear goals conveyed in the last paragraph.

Scored: RP. Score: 1.

Example 2

Participant 4: Post-program Story 1

I feel very focused, I know what I'm looking for. I was ready to go out and get a job as a technical writer or some junior position or even an administrative position that entails a lot of writing. So I felt very motivated and felt really good when I finished.

I went and paid for the technical writing course right away. I knew I wanted to do it and I thought, well, I want to know (I have always been like this), I want to know - I
understand the field of technical writing - but I want to know what the rules are. What are the guidelines? What are the details of this? Just like, wanting to enjoy graphic design, before I put anything on a piece of paper, I want to read a book on layout or something. I want to know as much about it as I can before I will have confidence in myself that what I am laying out on this piece of paper makes sense.

So that's one of the main reasons I took the course and I also thought it'll look good on a resume because this is what I want to do and I thought, well, looking at what I've got, part of what I learned in [Agency A] in doing the research is that the experience I do have should be able to get me a job - well, complimented with the clicking and all that kind of stuff and finding someone that is willing to employ me. But that's a big part of it. I have to have confidence in the experience that I have. It's just like standing up in front of people, you got to know what you want to say and it's just the same as I want to know what experience I actually have to give to an employer.

So I went right out, signed up for that and got involved in it, started talking to people, saying, "Who do you know?" I mean, my cousin's new in his job, but a couple of people phoned me and then they said, "I know somebody you can call." You know, just chatting. It became a very social exercise, which is not really what I like to do, but you kind of get into it. (I drank a lot of coffee.) Met people who had been in the advertising industry. I just learned about the different places technical writers work and it's one of the most disappointing things is the majority of them are consultants or work on contract basis, which doesn't really appeal to me.

Scoring: A very determined focus on getting a job as a technical writer is a strong example of GS. "Wanting to know what the rules are" is another goal. Acting on this goal, she "went and paid for the technical writing course," an instance of IA, as is the networking she describes in the last paragraph. The determination expressed in carrying out these actions ("I went right out") and wanting to learn as much as she could are evidence of taking responsibility for action and for goal attainment, scored PR. RP is scored for realizing that the course is a means to overcoming a block, and for engaging in social conversation in order to network, even though she didn't feel comfortable with this, an instance of intelligent adjustment. Origin behaviour is strong throughout the story and there is considerable self-investment present, so it is scored PC.

Example 3

Participant 9: Pre-program Story 1

Okay, I just moved to Calgary the beginning of September and I think there was about a week before I started this program. I had just finished work and was not used to the idea of being out of work and thought I should hit the ground running. I was going through the yellow pages and not really knowing a lot about Calgary so I was looking under health and a lot of industries related to health. I had called them up and asked if they were doing any hiring, and they'd say "Yes, oh yes. What's your background? Do you know anything about our business?" or whatever and I would pretty much not know anything. And if they did give me a positive response I would panic because I thought "Well, you know, I don't want to come in and talk to these people since I don't really know anything about them." And then I thought "Well, if I'm going to be calling these people cold call I probably should know a little bit more about it." But I didn't really know how to go around researching.

It was fear I think [that caused me to just jump into the yellow pages and phone] of being idle. I didn't know what to do with them [the contacts that I got].

This is a totally new experience for me. But I went away on holidays, travelled for a couple of months in August and then I remember, I think, being panicked: "I have to get back and start!" And thinking I would know what I had to do. I just had to get on with it, right? That was my thing: I had to get on with it. Then when I came back and started calling and sort of feeling my way around and then I realized I didn't really know how to do this job search.

I just, in a way, wanted to work. Didn't want to be a nurse anymore, didn't want to be a nurse for a long time. But it was security and it was my job and that was okay because I knew I was safe. This is during that week when I came to Calgary House, rushing around trying to do all those things. I think at the back of my mind, it was the same thing: I just need to work. Doesn't matter if I don't like it or like it. I just need to work and that's what I was digging in the paper [for]; running around trying to figure this out and figure that out so I could be working and that would be it.

Scoring: "Going through the yellow pages" and making phone calls are both IA. Her use of the yellow pages was a means of overcoming a block. Realizing that she needed to know more to be more effective at cold calls and the job search as a whole are examples of recognizing blocks. Recognizing blocks or the means to overcome them are aspects of RP. "I should hit the ground running" might appear to show the determination of PR, but not in this case. The
motive here is not freely chosen and internal. Rather, it is fear of not having work, which she states in the second paragraph and further elaborates near the end of the story as she describes her frantic search for work. Likewise, "I wanted to work" is not scored GS because the goal is not freely chosen from inner intention and because it is very vague.

Scored: IA, RP. Score: 2.

Example 4

Participant 9: Post-program Story 3

I used to just get the globe. I like the globe and I don't like the Calgary Herald. I think it's- I don't like that paper. But I force myself to read that paper because it gives me a good idea of what's happening in the region. I don't think it tells me what's happening in the world much, but it tells me what's happening in the region. And I don't mean that- I guess I do mean that in a bad way. I don't find them a very good paper. But it at least gives me a general idea of what's happening around me.

[I look for] trends, like if there's businesses coming to Calgary, or growth areas. If someone's got a contract here, some business is closing down or some of the things. The Lifestyle is always interesting. Well, that part's interesting this morning. There's a thing— she's an electrical engineer laid off in the fall in '86, whatever happened here, and she just changed careers, went into animation and it was interesting, set up her own company. Just things like that. Just little tidbits of info from people who have moved forward. Gives me an idea what's going on and it's helpful.

Scoring: The participant read the newspaper, specifically looking for trends, an instance of IA. Although she doesn't like this particular newspaper, she reads it anyway because of the benefits, an example of intelligent adjustment under RP. RP is also present in several references to having an idea of what is happening around her. She forces herself to read the paper in order to get the information she needs; this demonstrates taking responsibility for achieving her goals, scored PR. Several times she mentions that she is getting information that is helpful, indicating a positive outcome (albeit a modest one) which is scored SC. Overall, this story conveys a sense of strong intentional activity; she is working purposeful toward her goals, so it is scored PC.

Scored: IA, RP, PR, SC, PC. Score: 5.
Example 5

Participant 18: Pre-program Story 2

I didn't [know how to do a resume]. I didn't have a clue. In fact I had never written out a resume. I had never handed in a resume to anybody. Because when I was hired in the hospital I came from a call-out with the armed forces and just filled out an application form and I was called for an interview. I went to the interview. I talked to the chef and he had asked me one or two questions and I was hired. And I was on three-month probation and I lasted through that and I was on ever since.

Scoring: This story carries a strongly pawnish theme. The author confesses to being uninformed and describes going through the motions in a job application process. The process appears to be in control of him rather than the other way around. Although there is activity on the part of the participant, it is all reactive rather than intentional and inner directed, so the story is not scored IA.

Score: 0.
APPENDIX D

HELPFUL CATEGORIES BY PARTICIPATION RATE
### Helpful Incidents Categories Combined (In and Out of Program)

#### Frequencies and Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Incident Frequency</th>
<th>Participant Frequency</th>
<th>Part. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Supportive Interactions</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1. Staff Manner &amp; Attitude</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1. Social Support *</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2. Taking Action *</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1. Skills Assessment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1. Structure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1. Labour Market Information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. Assessment (Misc.)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2. Employment Interviewing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. One-on-One Help</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3. Networking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3. Transition Management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4. Resume Writing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5. Library Research</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6. Computer Training</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7. Personal Issues Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8. Communication Skills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Diversity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4. Synthesis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1. Follow-up Meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * denotes out-of-program category.