

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

PARADOX MANAGEMENT  
IN AN IMMIGRANT SERVICE AGENCY

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Paradox Management in an Immigrant Service Agency", submitted by Ross Watson, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis involves a participant observation study of an immigrant service agency, and investigates how employment workers manage paradoxes in their work with recent immigrants. The primary paradox involves the conflict between the value the workers place on the ideology of multiculturalism and having to teach immigrants to act in accordance with the intolerant norms of Anglo-conformity, in order that these immigrants may be considered suitable for employment. The workers therefore employ various techniques which cannot resolve the paradox but rather serve to manage it. The second paradox for the workers involves accounting for the performance of the clients when it appears they are not learning what the employment courses are designed to teach. This paradox is managed principally through questioning the motivation of the clients in learning the course material. The final paradox discussed centers on the use of psychological counselling in the employment training and the apparent conflict this creates in relation to teaching Anglo-conformity. The conclusions of the research are discussed in relation to the theoretical view of man as a social actor and are placed within the context of literature which examines how order and stability are maintained in social life despite paradoxes which threaten that stability.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis is a study of an immigrant service agency in the city of Calgary and the employment services it offers to recent immigrants. The central focus of the study is on various paradoxical situations faced by the agency workers in their attempts to help recent immigrants become employed. The initial purpose of the study was to identify and describe the skills taught to immigrants which help them to gain employment in the city. However, upon analysis of the collected data, it has become apparent that many paradoxes or conflicts exist in the agency's work. The purpose of this thesis has thus become the analysis of these paradoxes and how they are managed by the workers. The management techniques used by the workers become important as many of the paradoxes jeopardize the work of the agency if left unmanaged. The thesis attempts to contribute to an existing body of literature which seeks to explain how order is maintained in social life despite paradoxical and contradictory situations which threaten that order.

A secondary purpose of the thesis is to document aspects of the acculturation process undergone by recent immigrants in order that they may be considered suitable for employment. The acculturation of immigrants during the employment training suggests that the policy of multiculturalism is an ideology which may be detrimental to the success of immigrants.

### METHODOLOGY:

The methodology used to conduct the research was participant observation. The agency was approached and made aware of the purpose of the research and the activities of the research. The agency was also informed with regard to my experience as a social worker with recent immigrants to Canada. Although the agency contains settlement and employment services, the research was confined to three employment service programs which are: the Job Finding Club, The Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre, and the Employment Centre. From meeting with the Employment Centre supervisor, it was determined that I would volunteer as a counsellor in the morning hours for a period of four months, and assist all workers in the three employment programs. The first two weeks of research was conducted within the Employment Centre. During this time I sat in on worker/client interviews and engaged in discussions with the workers regarding their client's situation as well as other aspects of their work. Other duties included contacting employers to solicit job openings, as well as becoming familiar with the agency literature pertaining to mandates and funding proposals. The Employment Centre was also an open area with partitions, which allowed one to hear the contents of interviews.

I then attempted to become engaged in informal discussions with workers from all three employment programs. This allowed me to become familiar with each worker and their counselling methods. These discussions provided much of the data regarding the opinions and viewpoints of the workers on various subjects. At this time I began to attend lunch and staff meetings. After a brief period of observation, I became actively involved in co-teaching with the workers in the Job Finding Club and in counselling

clients in the Employment Centre. This participation allowed me to establish relationships with the clients which led to interviews and informal discussions with them. For example, I would assist the clients in establishing their skills and abilities and help them to state these skills on their resumes. The clients could question me on matters they did not understand and discuss the problems of job hunting with me. I would also assist the workers in teaching specific skills to the clients and discuss the teaching process with them.

Time spent within the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre primarily involved observation or participation as a group leader when the class divided into groups. When life skills seminars were given to the class as a group I would sit with the clients and observe. However, these seminars would often involve short group assignments in which I would participate. The clients were made aware of my purpose as a researcher as well as a qualified social worker. Therefore, data was collected primarily through participant observation as well as through interviews and informal discussions with both social workers and clients. Notes of observations, discussions, interviews and impressions were taken at the agency and later transcribed. It is important to note that the research method of this study involves a large degree of interpretation of day to day experiences at the agency and is thus difficult to illustrate in a formal manner.

I was able to gain access into many aspects of life within the agency through my role as an experienced social worker. This role enabled me to speak informally with clients outside of class time and obtain the candid opinions and viewpoints of the social workers from both the employment and settlement services. Access was also gained to agency documents such as mandates, letters and funding proposals. Although the research was

conducted over a relatively short period of time, I was able to establish professional yet informal working relationships with social workers and clients. I worked closely with four of these social workers who became the key informants in the research process.

Unfortunately, the study was conducted using only one immigrant service agency as access to other agencies could not be gained. The research was also conducted during a time span of four months. Therefore, the study is somewhat limited in scope; however, within this limitation the study still contributes to the understanding of how paradoxes are managed as part of the maintenance of social life.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

All research is based on certain theoretical premises. Observations and conclusions of research involve interpretations which, to a large extent, reflect the theoretical assumptions on which the research rests. The purpose of this chapter is to make explicit the theoretical assumptions which underly my thesis and to review some of the relevant literature. The analysis of the immigrant agency undertaken here presents a model of social reality in which an individual is viewed as a social actor, capable of manipulating his or her social circumstances. It is a model which may be contrasted with the view of an individual as a 'judgemental dope' who is manipulated by the structural forces of a society and who blindly follows rules and obligations.

This chapter will also examine some of the relevant literature pertaining to models of assimilation and acculturation. These models serve to illuminate the acculturation process undergone by the immigrants in this study, and allow us to compare this acculturation process with the ideology of the government policy of multiculturalism.

It will be useful to begin this theoretical section by examining the work of some of the British anthropologists, such as Leach and Barth, and progress to a discussion which outlines certain aspects of absurdist sociology and ethnomethodology which are relevant to this thesis.

In his study of political systems of Highland Burma (1954), Leach became one of the first British social anthropologists to break with the traditional assumption that societies exist in a state of stable equilibrium analogous to that of a living organism. The traditional view, espoused by Durkheim (1947), Malinowski (1961), Radcliffe-Brown (1952), and others, is one in which equilibrium is considered to be an intrinsic characteristic of social systems. In such systems individuals decipher rules, follow them, and maintain the equilibrium. Forces working to bring about change and a state of disequilibrium are considered destructive (Homans, 1951). Leach argues that societies do not exist in equilibrium but are, rather, in a continual state of flux and change, and that "the structures which we describe are models which exist only as logical constructions of the mind" (1954, p5). In order to undertake a precise study of change in a social system, one has to treat facts 'as if' they are part of an equilibrium system. By treating the social system 'as if' it exists in equilibrium, the researcher can construct, and make sense of, a model of related concepts which would otherwise be impossible (see Leach, 1954, p1X). Thus Leach broke away from the traditional view which assumed that the description of a social system involves the description of a naturally occurring reality as opposed to an idealized model. However, the primary importance of Leach's analysis to this thesis is his treatment of how the individual can effect structural change in a society. Leach states that individuals can possess different status positions in different social systems simultaneously.

"To the individual himself such systems present themselves as alternatives or inconsistencies in the scheme of values by which he orders his life. The overall process of structural change comes about through the manipulation of these alternatives as a means of social advancement. Every individual in a society,

each in his own interest, endeavours to exploit the situation as he perceives it and in so doing the collectivity of individuals alters the structure of the society itself" (1954, p8).

This reflects Leach's notion of how societal change occurs and the role of the individual in this change. Societal norms and rules are the result of behavior frequency patterns formed by free-choosing individuals capable of manipulating situations to their advantage. Other writers, among them Comaroff (1978), Barth (1981), and Bailey (1969), similarly conceptualize the relationship of the individual to society.

In his essay 'Rules and Rulers: political processes in a Tswana chiefdom' (1978), Comaroff provides a vivid example of how rules (in this case ascriptive) rarely determine behavior, and in fact are subject to intense individual manipulation. His analysis of the succession of Tswana chiefs explores the meaning of political rules rather than institutional and constitutional components of Tswana chiefdomship, and illustrates how ascriptive rules for the devolution of authority provide only a framework for political competition. This competition is governed by other factors besides ascriptive rules, specifically the manipulation of genealogies by competing factions. Thus, the typical dichotomy between ascription and achievement is rendered meaningless in this context.

The importance of Comaroff's analysis lies in his treatment of how individuals manipulate rules to their own ends. Although rules exist for the purpose of determining behavior, (in this case the prescription of who shall be king), they are nevertheless subject to interpretation, allowing them to be used and not just followed. Comaroff states that "the potential for manipulation which is built into the rule-set provides a means whereby ambitious royal actors may justify claims for office", thus, "the accession prescriptions create a field of competitors from which candidates may arise,

either by their own efforts or by those of a powerful faction" (1978, p13). It is not rules which determine action; social actors interpret and manipulate these rules. However, in managing and manipulating conflicting rules, the appearance of a normal and consistent state of affairs is maintained. Thus, Comaroff's analysis aptly illustrates the notion that societies maintain a precarious sense of order and consistency even though they are in a "constant state of flux and change" (Leach, 1954, p1X). Leach, Comaroff and Barth stress the individual's manipulation of rules and are concerned "with the ways in which social systems somehow recognizably persist despite their inherent contradictions, and despite the fact that individuals are always pursuing their self interests" (Kuper, 1983, p165).

In his treatise, 'The Analytical Importance of Transaction', Fredrik Barth (1981) develops a transactional model of social relations in which he emphasizes how individuals use manipulation and strategy in negotiating value within social relationships. He begins by explaining that social research must endeavor to do more than merely describe patterns and forms of society which exhibit structural features. He makes it his task to discover processes which generate the forms of social life. By looking at generating forces, social change can be accounted for by observing changes in the generating variables. In analyzing the processes which generate social forms or regularities, Barth examines the choices made by individuals within transactional relationships, and the constraints and incentives which bear on these choices. The choices yield frequency patterns. The important variables in this model are the constraints and incentives on choice, because they affect the course of events and the resulting frequency patterns. In this way one can determine the processes which generate the social form. Barth states "it seems to me we cannot

escape the concept of choice in our analysis: our central problem becomes what are the constraints and incentives that canalize choice" (1981, p35).

This model has been subject to severe criticism, particularly in the writings of Robert Paine (1974). Paine points out several flaws, especially Barth's neglect of the issue of power. Barth states that transactions "are systematically governed by reciprocity" and are balanced (1981, p35); this ignores the fact that reciprocity in transactions can be unbalanced due to differences in the relative power of the interactants. Paine suggests that power must be taken into account "because it is manifest in the status relationships in which the posited transaction is made, and because it determines the value for the items exchanged" (1974, p7). It thus becomes useful to examine the statuses of the interactants.

The analysis of role status is relevant because it involves examining the taken-for-granted aspects of interactions, and serves to show how consistency and normalcy are maintained within interactions. The literature so far discussed may be usefully supplemented, for the purposes of this thesis, by the work of ethnomethodologists and sociologists of the absurd.

Ethnomethodology is useful in the study of interactions because it involves the study of everyday life and focuses on the means by which people construct a socially meaningful world. Ethnomethodology is a very recent development in anthropology and is based in the philosophy of existentialism. The underlying existential assumption of this perspective is that life possesses no inherent meaning and is essentially chaotic. Thus, individuals must create and construct meaning in their everyday lives. This perspective essentially began with the work of Garfinkel and his students in 1967.

Ethnomethodology assumes that "human beings are not merely acted upon by social facts or social forces but are constantly shaping and creating their own social worlds in interaction with others" (Benson & Hughes, 1983, p37). In one respect, ethnomethodologists may be seen as using the model used by Leach. However, Leach implies the existence of a reality independent of the social actor while ethnomethodologists do not.

Ethnomethodologists assume, if only as a methodological imperative, the absence of anything resembling absolute reality. This leaves them free to examine how individuals constitute and maintain a sense of objective reality.

The analysis of how individuals constitute their own social world is difficult because it involves the analysis of essentially taken-for-granted knowledge individuals have. Individuals take for granted that the stable features of an environment are objectively real. These seemingly stable features, in ethnomethodological analysis, appear stable because of the 'work' people do in constituting their environment. Thus, ethnomethodology is a relativist perspective in which reality is regarded as merely 'that which you cannot wish away'. This is in direct contrast to the western scientific conception of most anthropology in which reality exists in an objective state which can be discovered and described.

Ethnomethodologists have developed a variety of concepts which show how the assumption of an objective reality is constructed and maintained. For example, the belief in an objective reality is generally held as an infallible or 'incorrigible' proposition (see Pollner, 1974). Evidence both for and against the existence of an objective reality is interpreted on the basis

of the incorrigible belief that there is, in fact, an objective reality. If evidence against this proposition becomes apparent, the evidence is interpreted through the use of secondary elaborations which manipulate the evidence such that it then reaffirms the initial proposition.

The classic example of the use of secondary elaborations in support of an incorrigible proposition stems from Evans-Pritchard's writings about Azande oracles and witchcraft (1937). All aspects of Zande social life are regulated by witchcraft, oracles and magic. If a hunt ends in failure, or a member of the group becomes ill, the Azande seek the cause of the event in witchcraft. If a Zande suspects witchcraft, he will consult various oracles to determine who the witch is, and take measures to combat him or her. An event may have an ostensibly natural cause; the Azande realize this but view the ultimate cause as being witchcraft. Contradictions in this system of witchcraft are easily explained because the system operates on the incorrigible proposition that witchcraft is real. All subsequent information, contradictory or not, supports this proposition. For example, witchcraft is supposedly inherited, yet this does not mean that all members of a given clan are witches (Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p 24). Secondary elaborations are used to avoid contradiction.

Another method used to maintain the appearance of 'objective reality' is the 'documentary method of interpretation' (Benson & Hughes, 1983, p 90), where we attempt to order phenomena in the world by looking for patterns, which, once established, help us to continually reinterpret the world based on these patterns. Thus we make sense of our world by interpreting phenomena as surface indications of an underlying reality.

Perhaps the most important ethnomethodological concept which shows the work involved in presenting a discovered or objective account of reality

is the notion of 'reflexivity' (Benson et al, 1983, p102). Reflexivity is an inherent property of all accounts, and refers to the idea that an account constitutes reality while reality also gives the account sense or meaning. Reflexivity is exhibited in the secondary elaborations of the Azande described previously because these elaborations are not merely descriptions of a reality, but are also constitutive of it. As Benson and Hughes state:

For ethnomethodology, the facts about society are features accomplished by the members of society using practical reasoning and common-sense knowledge in the course of their everyday lives. In this way the accounts about society and its workings become constituent parts of the very thing they describe. They are, in short, reflexive (1983, p102).

The final ethnomethodological concept to be discussed is no less important than reflexivity and concerns the situationally dependent nature of meaning, or 'indexicality'. Indexical expressions are "expressions which derive their sense and meaning from the occasions on which they are used" (Benson et al, 1983, p100). Garfinkel claims;

That natural language as a whole is profoundly indexical in that, for members, the meaning of their everyday talk is dependent on the context in which the talk occurs ... That is, to understand an utterance members must also know something about the particular circumstances in which the utterance was made, who the speaker was ... and so on (Garfinkel in Benson et al, 1983, p101).

Thus a taken-for-granted body of knowledge becomes part of any social interaction. The notion that the context of an account can have important implications for its meaning is a useful analytical tool in the analysis of interactions.

The indexical nature of interactions is discussed in detail by Lyman and Scott in their essay "Accounts" (1970). The authors consider themselves to be 'absurdist' sociologists, on account of their assumption that there is no

inherent meaning in the world. Meaning must then be created by individuals. Like ethnomethodology, the sociology of the absurd emphasizes the role of man as a social actor. Analysis centers on human interaction or episodes and attempts to render human behavior more intelligible. Lyman and Scott state:

By beginning with the assumption that social life is one of conflict, it follows that every social situation is problematic for those involved. With this model the sociologist must continually search for mechanisms that permit the production - and the reproduction in a continuous series of engagements - of stable, uniform, and persistent interaction (1970, p6).

The specific type of interaction discussed involves talk or 'accounts'. The authors define an account as "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior" (1970, p112). As verbal devices, accounts allow normalcy to be maintained within social interactions when actions fail to meet expectations. The analysis of accounts also involves examining the taken-for-granted aspects of interactions. Lyman and Scott state that accounts "are situated according to the statuses of the interactants, and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectations" (1970, p112). Thus, accounts are indexical expressions which derive their meaning partly from the situational context in which they are used.

The importance of Lyman and Scott's analysis lies in the notion that accounts reflect the statuses of the interactants, and that they are routinized within cultures. The study of accounts thus involves the analysis of taken-for-granted background expectancies. The term 'background expectancies', which is borrowed from Garfinkel, refers to "those sets of taken-for-granted ideas that permit the interactants to interpret remarks

as accounts in the first place" (Lyman and Scott, 1970, p125). During the process of socialization, individuals learn the background expectancies of various situations and the types of accounts which appear normal in these situations. Thus, the background expectancies inherent in social situations determine whether an account will be accepted as appropriate. An important variable which affects the acceptability of accounts is the type of social circle in which the account occurs. For example, one may state that he or she felt depressed and tired as a reason for failing to attend a party. This reason is perfectly valid because 'everybody knows' that people do not go to parties if they feel depressed. However, this reason would not be considered a valid excuse for absence by an employer. A 'social' situation and an employment situation are vastly different, requiring different types of accounts for unexpected behavior.

Appearances also affect the acceptability of accounts. "Since individuals are aware that appearances may serve to credit or discredit accounts, efforts are understandably made to control these appearances through a vast repertoire of 'impression management' activities" (Lyman and Scott, 1970, p126). Thus, accounts given for unexpected behavior must be anchored within the appropriate background expectancies of a social situation in order to be considered reasonable. Lyman and Scott propose that "an account is deemed *unreasonable* when the stated grounds for action cannot be 'normalized' in terms of the background expectancies of what 'everybody knows'" (1970, p127).

Accounts are also affected by, and must be suited to, the role identities of the interactants. The role identities of the interactants determine the possible range of appropriate accounts within a social situation. Once these identities have been established, they limit the range of possible

subsequent accounts. However, accounts also involve an ongoing negotiation of identities. "One account generates the question giving rise to another; the new account requires re-negotiation of identities" (Lyman et al, 1970, p139). Again, the role identities of the interactants affect accounts as part of the various background expectancies of interactions. Lyman and Scott conclude their analysis of accounts by stating that:

Perhaps the most immediate task for research in this area is to specify the background expectancies that determine the range of alternative accounts that are deemed culturally appropriate to a variety of recurrent situations. We want to know how the actors take bits and pieces of words and appearances and put them together to produce a perceivedly normal ... state of affairs (1970, p141).

It is hoped that the analysis of how workers manage paradoxical situations and maintain a sense of normalcy through the use of various accounts will contribute to the anthropological literature which seeks to understand the nature of social interactions and small scale social order.

It will now prove useful to supplement this theoretical literature with a brief discussion of the relevant literature pertaining to assimilation and acculturation. The following review is intended to illuminate aspects of the thesis which relate to acculturation and inter-group contact. The study of ethnicity within Canadian sociology deals largely with ethnic identity, group cohesion, and ethnic integration. Some of the noteworthy works in this area include: Cultural Boundaries and the Cohesion of Canada (Breton, Rietz, & Valentine, 1980), and The Survival of Ethnic Groups (Rietz, 1980). One of the first studies of ethnicity in Canada is John Porter's The Vertical Mosaic (1965), in which he argues that ethnic group survival results from economic inequality. Immigrants remain in the lower classes where

opportunities for upward mobility are limited thus perpetuating a "vertical mosaic" (1965, p56).

Numerous studies of ethnic groups in complex societies have involved the study of assimilation. Two of the important works in this area are; Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963); and Assimilation in American Life (Gordon, 1964). Assimilation involves various aspects of change and is a multidimensional process. A distinction can be made between 'structural' and 'cultural' assimilation (Rietz, 1980, p101). Structural assimilation refers to "large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on the primary group level", while cultural assimilation refers to "changes in cultural patterns to those of the host society" (Gordon, 1964, p71). Gordon points out that cultural assimilation can occur without structural assimilation (1964, p77). The group, as an organizational form, is maintained while the cultural aspects of the group move towards the dominant culture. The problem with this formulation is that cultural aspects of the group, whether traditional or not, may still articulate group membership. Cultural assimilation is therefore difficult to determine and may be irrelevant as ethnic groups are not culture bearing units. Rietz states that "there is no way to tell whether a given cultural change signifies cultural assimilation or a new form of ethnic distinctiveness" (1980, p107). One can assimilate within the ethnic group regardless of the cultural indicators of ethnicity (be they traditional or similar to the dominant culture), or one can assimilate in a direction which signifies Anglo-conformity.

An apparent problem with the early formulations of assimilation involves the assumption that assimilation is a uniform process where the

minority group is completely absorbed within the dominant group when in fact a minority may move towards a majority at different rates in different areas of life (see Warner, 1936 and Gordon, 1964). Banton states that;

Culture change among immigrants proceeds more rapidly in respect to behavior that helps them earn a living, like learning a language, than in their private domestic lives. The implication of a iniform process of change is misleading, as is the failure to aknowledge that the receiving group undergoes change in absorbing the other (1983, p144).

Thus assimilation is a multidimensional process where immigrants can assimilate towards either majority or minority group while a majority group may also be affected by, and move towards, a minority group. Banton sums up assimilation by stating that: "to measure cultural change it is necessary to specify quite closely which feature of culture is being examined and to delimit the populations precisely. Any reduction in cultural differences, regardless of which group moves most, and for what reasons, is seen as part of the assimilation process" (1983, p148).

The study which is perhaps most relevant to this thesis is Hughes and Kallen's analysis of the "processes of ethnic integration" (1974). Kallen examines these processes by distinguishing between acculturation and assimilation. "The concept acculturation or cultural integration, may be used in its broadest sense to refer to the process whereby contact between members of different ethnic groups or categories results in the exchange of objects, ideas, customs, skills, behavior patterns, and values between the two groups" (Hughes & Kallen, 1974, p151). Where there is already a system of ethnic stratification, acculturation of ethnic members occurs towards the norms of the dominant group. Kallen refers to this type of integration as 'dominant conformity' or 'Anglo-conformity'. This model "assumes a considerable status differential between ethnic groups coming into contact,

which enables one group to require the other to acculturate" (1974,p183). It is this type of acculturation which occurs in the employment programs of the immigrant agency in this study. Assimilation differs from acculturation and refers to the "process of penetration, by members of ethnic minorities, of the major social structural spheres of the majority" (Hughes & Kallen, 1974, p152). In the study of ethnic integration it is thus important to determine precisely what is being affected in the transaction between ethnic groups in order to distinguish between acculturation and assimilation.

I have emphasized the processes of acculturation and Anglo-conformity in reference to Kallen's analysis because she feels these two aspects of ethnic integration apply to Canadian society, and because these two aspects apply to this thesis. Kallen states, with reference to Canada, that:

"in order to obtain the necessary skills and qualifications required by the majority for effective participation in the social institutions of the majority society, the minority ethnic member must acculturate to the required degree, to the dominant Euro-Canadian pattern" (1974, p191).

It is hoped that this thesis can contribute to the existing literature on the integration of ethnic members by illuminating detailed aspects of change in the acculturation process, which allow recent immigrants to fully participate in the employment world and become self supporting. The implications of this process in relation to the government policy of multiculturalism will be discussed at the conclusion of the thesis.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **TEACHING IMMIGRANTS THE CANADIAN WAY**

This chapter presents a description of the employment related services undertaken by the agency in which the research was carried out, and in particular describes the teaching process whereby it attempts to orient recent immigrants to aspects of Canadian culture that are related to successfully gaining and maintaining employment. This teaching process essentially amounts to an attempt by the agency to facilitate immigrant adaptation through "Canadianizing" immigrants or teaching immigrants the "Canadian way".

There are three programs within the agency which deal with the employment needs of recent immigrants. These are The Job Finding Club, The Pre Employment Skills Training Centre, and The Employment Centre. The Job Finding Club operates two-week long courses in job search skills while the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre operates a course involving on-site and in-class employment training running for a period of one year. The curriculum of both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre also includes seminars on self esteem and "life skills" training. The third employment related branch of the agency is the Employment Centre. The Employment Centre is usually where initial contact is made between the agency and recent immigrants; as the centre operates on somewhat of a drop-in as well as referral basis. The centre functions in much the same way as Canada Manpower Centres, where individuals can

view available jobs posted on a board and seek referrals to these jobs from the employment counsellors. Counselling is provided to clients as are referrals to a vast array of community services. These three employment related departments of the agency appear to operate from the premise that adaptation is best served through teaching clients to act in accordance with Anglo-Canadian norms and expectations. Anglo-Canadian norms and expectations are part of the "necessary reality" facing recent immigrants which must be accommodated if successful adaptation is to occur. It is this teaching immigrants the Canadian way that provides much of the data for this thesis. What follows is a description of the above data, the significance of which will be discussed in a later chapter.

#### The Job Finding Club:

Research regarding the employment related material taught to immigrants was conducted primarily in the Job Finding Club. The main purpose of the Job Finding Club is to teach recent immigrants skills they will need in order to successfully look for employment. The written funding proposal of the agency states that: "the course is functional in nature in that the participants actually practise the techniques as they are learning, both on each other and in actual job interviews. The program is educational and, as such, provides the participants with information and the opportunity to develop useful job search skills. Thus immigrants can conduct a job search independently in the future with limited assistance from employment counsellors" (Funding Proposal, p2). Another pamphlet from the agency states; "They learn about contacting employers, resumes, interviews, where to find job leads, etc. They contact employers daily and share information with the group. The success rate is high. Day care, phones, and

secretarial services are provided. Participant initiative is emphasized" (Agency Pamphlet). Thus, the course is designed to teach immigrants how to look for employment by formally teaching them a 'skill' that they presumably know nothing about. The agency workers assume that recent immigrants will be unfamiliar with the process of how to go about looking for a job, and that this may prevent them from obtaining gainful employment. The rationale for the course is further supported by the assumption that employment is an important part of successful adaptation for recent immigrants.

The job finding course runs for a two week period and is offered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Clients pre-register at the employment centre one week prior to the beginning of each course. There is no specific criteria to meet in order to be eligible for the course and clients are usually referred from the employment centre or other agencies. There is one worker for each of the English, Spanish, and Vietnamese classes. The setting for the course is an old classroom within the agency building. At one end of the room dividers separate the counsellors' offices from the classroom. There are posters on the wall emphasizing the importance of "career planning" and having a "good attitude on the job". There is a black board as well as a "group progress chart" which lists the clients' names. Clients are instructed to keep a daily record on this chart of such things as attendance, the number of phone calls to employers, and the number of interviews received. The worker and clients sit around a large table situated in the middle of the room. The course runs from 9 am to 12 pm Monday to Friday. As stated in the agencies funding proposal, the job search activities of the course are to include "self assessment, targeting job objectives, identifying employers, developing resume writing skills, and telephone and interview

skills" (Funding Proposal, p11). These activities are considered by the agency workers to be part of an organized job search, and are continually emphasized by them throughout the course.

The number of clients enrolled in each course is usually between eight and twelve. When they arrive at the beginning of each day, newspapers are brought into the classroom in order that they might look for available jobs in the classified ads section. Employment opportunities from Canada Manpower, in the form of job orders are also read to the class by the worker. If a client wishes to apply for any of these jobs he or she is either sent out to the employer immediately or the counsellor telephones the employer on the client's behalf in order to arrange an interview. Job orders are picked up each morning by the worker prior to the start of the class from the Manpower Centre. This activity usually occurs during the first half hour of the class. The rest of the morning is then taken up with the teaching of a specific job search skill, such as resume writing and interview skills. This is the general routine of the Job Finding Club.

The first day of the course begins with introductions. Each client states his or her name, where they are from and how long they have resided in Canada. The worker explains how the course is operated regarding such things as the job orders, the group progress chart, and the hours of the class. The clients are told that the purpose of the course is to help them to become employed as soon as possible. They are advised to attend the class every day in dress that is appropriate for job interviews which can, and often are, arranged from the Job Finding Club by the worker. This advice is usually stipulated in the negative sense of "do not wear blue jeans to the class because employers will expect you to wear ties, dress pants, skirts.

After the initial introduction to the course has been presented, the worker goes over a questionnaire entitled "Test your Knowledge of Job Search Techniques" (See Appendix 1). The purpose of the questions is to show the clients just how difficult locating a job can be. The clients found the questions almost impossible to answer and somewhat difficult to understand. For example, it was explained to the clients that employers decide on the suitability of applicants within the first 2.8 minutes of an interview. To someone who is not familiar with the expectations of employers, and the cultural practices of the employment world, this statistic appears to be ridiculous.

The primary task of the initial Job Finding Club sessions is to "establish job objectives", that is, to determine what the client's skills and interests are and what type of employment these skills can be applied to. This information will then be used in many aspects of the job search including the resume and job interviews. The purpose of establishing these skills and interests is so the client can present him or herself to employers in a manner that employers expect and value. The notion of satisfying employer expectations is the most important aspect of the material taught to the clients during the job finding course. If immigrants are to successfully adapt in Canada and locate permanent employment, they will have to conform in order to meet the standards set by employers in many ways. Determining the skills and interests of the clients and getting them to state these skills concisely is a somewhat lengthy process as the clients are unfamiliar with the notion of defining aspects of their daily activities and personalities as "skills". Those immigrants who have a post secondary education, a lengthy employment record, or a specific trade, usually do not have difficulty defining and expressing their skills and interests. The

majority of immigrant clients however, either due to a lack of English or lack of Canadian experience, have difficulty understanding the notion of "skills". Thus various methods are used in order to get the clients to conceptualize and express aspects of their past and personalities in terms of specific skills. The first of these methods involves using a series of books entitled "The Canadian Classificatory Dictionary of Occupations". The clients look up various occupations in these books in order to determine how occupations are described in terms of the skills and tasks entailed in the job. The clients also use these books to discover information on occupations they may wish to pursue. Thus, clients are supposed to learn how to describe their occupations using the terms of reference familiar to Canadian employers.

A second method used in the course to teach immigrants to properly describe their skills and abilities involves the use of a list of approximately 200 descriptive adjectives. Clients each go through the "Master Skills list" to pick out five skills and abilities that best describe themselves (See Appendix 2). Each client then discusses these adjectives with the class. This type of exercise is also to familiarize the clients with expressing their skills in public. The counsellor then explains that any type of work involves three types of skills, which are; "work content", (skills specific to one type of work); "transferable", (skills that can be used in a number of situations); and "adaptive", (personal qualities that help adaptation to different situations). It is continually stressed to the clients that they will need to be able speak about their skills in a confident and forward manner when they are in contact with potential employers.

Once these exercises have been completed, the worker once again has the clients verbally describe their skills and abilities to the class, and

instructs them to do so in a confident manner. The worker tells the clients not to use words such as "just" and "only", in order to portray a positive image. If a client describes an aspect of his or her life such as caring for children or running a household, the worker reiterates back to him or her how these activities involve certain skills and abilities that can be stated as such to employers. Almost any aspect of a client's lifestyle or personality can be transformed into a skill or ability for the purposes of a resume or interview. These exercises are designed to serve the dual purpose of transforming the client's experience into a form that employers will expect and value while also attempting to train the clients to present themselves in an assertive and self-confident manner. This type of self presentation is defined throughout the course as "selling" oneself to employers, such that employers will want to buy the services of the individual. The worker attempts to instill self assertiveness in the clients as well as knowledge of their own so-called skills and abilities. This process usually takes up the first two or three days of the course.

These skills and abilities are further expressed in the next task of the course which is the construction of a resume for each client. Example resumes are used while the worker teaches the class in a step by step manner on the blackboard. Many clients find it difficult to state their work and education history in a chronological and appropriate manner. Clients also still experience difficulty in concisely expressing their skills and experience in the form employers would expect. Because of these problems, the worker and myself would assist each individual in the construction of his or her resume by asking specific questions relating to what his or her first job was, how long he or she worked at each job, and what his or her position and tasks were. It is important to complete the resume quickly so

clients can begin to apply for jobs. The agency is made aware of new employment opportunities on a daily basis, and resumes are needed to apply for these jobs.

Although clients learn how to construct a resume, it appears that they are never really made aware of why the resume is important in obtaining employment. The worker simply states that the resume is an important part of applying for a job. The clients appear to interpret the resume as just another hoop to go through in order to get a job. They are not made aware of why a resume needs to look attractive in order to gain the attention of employers. A resume is a concise statement of an individual's adult life history that is meant to "impress" employers. The worker also provides counselling regarding aspects of clients' lives that appear attractive to employers and those aspects which do not. For example, the worker advises the clients not to state on their resumes that they have attended English language classes or a job search course; that is, certain aspects of their "immigrant" situation should remain hidden. However, other aspects of their immigrant situation are to be mentioned on the resume in a positive light, for example, their ability to adapt to the changing circumstances involved in their immigration. Once the resumes have been completed and typed they can then be used in job applications throughout the rest of the course.

Up to this point in time the activities of the course have included targeting job objectives and resume writing skills. The next section of the course includes identifying employers, writing application forms and cover letters, with telephone and interview skills soon to follow. This part of the course generally concerns the "employment bureaucracy" because the clients are taught all the expected activities and behaviors that are part of searching for, and locating, a job in Canada. The first of these activities

involves determining where to actually look for a job. The classified ads section of the local newspaper is examined to determine the types of jobs listed. The worker then has the clients list on the blackboard numerous places and ways to search for employment, including the telephone book, manpower employment centres, friends and relatives, personnel agencies, as well as approaching employers personally. The worker also has the clients look up ten job locations from the telephone book in order to call and see if job opportunities are available.

During all of these activities the worker continually reminds the clients how important it is for them to obtain employment and that they should take "what ever" type of employment becomes available no matter what the wage is. It is emphasized that Canadian work experience is needed if clients are to be able to progress to more satisfying and higher paying jobs. The clients quickly realize that they are caught in a paradoxical situation in that they need Canadian experience to work yet they need work in order to gain this experience. This type of paradox makes it difficult to enter the employment world. At this point in the course clients are also beginning to understand how complicated and bureaucratic the process of gaining a job actually is.

The clients then learn how to complete application forms and write cover letters that are to accompany their resumes. Application forms are filled out by the clients with the worker's help. It is emphasized by the worker that the forms are to be filled out completely if the person is to be seriously considered for a job. Like the resume, employers consider the application form as a concise statement of an individual's experience, skills and personal information that must look attractive. The clients are told that many applications for jobs are weeded out of the selection process

because the forms are not completed. In other words, employers look for any way to make the selection of suitable applicants easier. Therefore clients are taught how to properly fill out application forms.

Examples of cover letters are also distributed to the class. Using specific job examples, the clients practise writing these cover letters which introduce themselves, state their experience and skills, and inquire if employment opportunities are available. If a client has found a specific job he or she wishes to apply for, the worker will assist the client in composing a cover letter for that specific job.

What appears obvious here is that the resumes, application forms and cover letters all contain the same information, with the content of each becoming secondary in importance to the format and cosmetic value. Clients are really taught the bureaucratized customs that must be carried out in order to achieve the desired goal of employment. The workers emphasize indirectly that failure to adhere to any of these norms of expected behavior will result in an unsuccessful job search. Most of the material taught to the clients is explained merely within the context of "things you must do in order to get a job". The reason the activities become necessary in the first place is not divulged. Clients are essentially being taught the rules of an important and highly competitive management impression game. From the activities used to describe "skills" and "abilities", to the form and content of the resume and cover letter, the clients are to learn that in order to be accepted (and presumably hired), they have to make a serious attempt to appear the same as other job seeking Canadians. Conformity to the norms and standards of the employment world is of paramount importance if these new immigrants are to be able to "make it" in Canada. The importance of this conformity also cannot be

overestimated because of the highly competitive nature of the employment market. Thus teaching immigrants to use the employment bureaucracy is supposed to help them pass as employable persons and enable them to meet the expectations of employers. This notion of 'meeting expectations' is contained in the idea of "selling" oneself to employers as stated by the agency workers.

The last of the so-called 'skills' clients learn involves telephone and interview skills. Telephone role plays, in which I participated, are used to teach clients how to make telephone inquiries to employers. This role play is rehearsed with the help of other clients playing the employer. During the role play phone call, clients quickly state their specific area of skill and experience and inquire if a position is available. Before the conclusion of the call they attempt to make an appointment to see the employer personally. Again the purpose is to be able to sell oneself to employers in a short period of time. The worker and the other clients comment on each individual's performance with regard to whether or not the individual sounds confident and assertive, and if the individual's English appears to be competent. The worker also has the clients write a short paragraph about themselves on a small card to be used as a script in describing themselves to employers over the telephone.

After the section on telephone skills is completed, primary emphasis is placed on the importance of the job interview. This process involves teaching clients how to 'pass' interviews in order to be hired by an employer. Various methods are used in teaching interview skills including role plays on video tape. The worker continually stresses that the interview is the most critical element in successfully finding a job.

Clients are first given a series of handouts including; "Job Related Questions to Consider", "You Must Know Yourself to Sell Yourself", and "Appropriate Responses to Interview Questions" (see appendix 3). The worker teaches the content of these handouts by having everyone individually read a section of each handout to the class. Important aspects of the handouts are expanded upon by the worker in lecture form in order to help the clients fully understand the importance of the information. Primary importance is placed on the handout entitled "Appropriate Responses to Interview Questions" because it provides an in-depth analysis of typical interview questions. This handout points out not only typical answers to typical questions but also shows why specific questions are usually asked, and what kind of information a specific question is designed to elicit from an interviewee. The handout also points out the personal politics involved in an interview. For example, when an employer poses the general question "tell me about yourself?", the handout states that a person should "try especially to provide information that may indicate something you have in common with the interviewer, so that you are no longer a stranger to him" (Azrin & Besalel, 1980, p190). This type of answer has nothing to do with the actual question but is rather a tactic that can be used to manipulate the interview situation in a person's favor. This tactic is an attempt to make the interviewer like, or at least become familiar with, the person. The rest of the handout summarizes how to answer interview questions in order to completely satisfy the employer's wants and expectations and appear as a perfect candidate for the job. The worker requests that the clients study this particular handout carefully and apply the answers to their particular skills and experience. From these handouts clients also learn that they must appear to possess the personal qualities

employers value, such as ambition, responsibility, self-confidence, and dependability. These qualities are part of the 'correct attitude' necessary for clients to meet employer expectations and pass interviews.

Clients are taught other necessary qualities and skills they must possess for job interviews through the use of a video film on employment seeking and interview techniques. The film presents five individuals in various interview situations, and has the individuals thinking out loud through the use of a narrator. Two of the individuals pass their interviews and are hired while the other three individuals are not hired. At various times, the worker will stop the film and ask the class what the individual in the film is doing correctly or incorrectly in the interview. The first example has a young man applying for a job as an auto mechanic. He would act negatively towards the interviewer and state; "Why won't you hire me, I'm very good and I really need this job", when he was told no jobs were available. The worker would stop the film here and either ask the class what the man was doing wrong, or point out how he was acting negatively and aggressively towards the interviewer. Thus, the lesson in this example was 'do not have a poor attitude towards the interviewer'. The narrator of the film would further state at the conclusion of the young man's interview that the lesson to be learned from this example was to "knock on doors, be positive and don't give up."

The second interview subject in the film was a design student who had recently graduated from college. After viewing this interview, the worker would again stop the film and point out how the subject lacked confidence because he would groan about not being able to find a job in his field of study. When asked by the the interviewer about his employment history, the subject would simply state that it was "on his resume". Thus the worker

would explain to the class that it is expected behavior in interviews to fully answer any questions the interviewer has even if the interviewer already knows the answer to the question. When asked by the interviewer "why are you applying for this job instead of a job in your field?", the subject answered with "I can't find a job in my field so now I can't be too picky." The worker would then explain to the class how this type of response, no matter how honest, demonstrates a bad attitude. The interviewer would likely not want to hire the subject because the job was not the subject's first choice. At the end of this example, the narrator states "be flexible, show a positive attitude, make a good impression, wear conservative clothes and be on time." These are two examples of subjects who did not do well in their interviews and were not hired. After each illustrative example subject, the worker would discuss the interview with the class and attempt to get the clients to realize what mistakes the subject had made. The clients would usually have difficulty analyzing the subject's performance, and so the worker would analyze the performance of the subject for the class.

One of the subjects in the film who passed the interview was a housewife returning to the work force after raising a family. In this example, the interviewer discovered that the subject had had relevant volunteer experience that was not listed on the subject's resume. The subject stated that she did not feel it was a relevant or important experience. After stopping the film, the worker explained to the class that the message contained here was that many activities in a person's life may be of interest to employers, therefore make sure that all prior experience has been brought to the interviewer's attention.

The final example in the film involved a subject who performed exceedingly well in the interview and was hired. At the conclusion of the film, the worker pointed out to the class how the subject had studied the company and was knowledgeable on the position she was applying for, and was very polite and well mannered during the interview. At the end of the film, the narrator stated, "be well prepared, be adaptable, know your qualifications, make a good impression, sell yourself and don't be too pushy."

Once the material on interview skills has been covered, the clients are then ready for the final activity of the course, which involves being interviewed on video tape for the purpose of improving the client's interview performance. I acted as the interviewer or employer in all of the job finding courses I observed. The worker felt it would be better if I interviewed the clients as I did not know them as well as she did, and thus they would treat the video taping as 'more real' if I acted as the employer. Most of the interview questions I used were taken from the handout entitled "Appropriate Responses to Interview Questions".

At the conclusion of each interview, the worker would help the client to improve his or her performance by viewing the video with the client and pointing out apparent problems they were having. For example, from viewing the tapes, most of the clients needed to improve their body language and interpersonal communication. They would not engage in enough eye contact with the interviewer and would move their hands in a manner that signified nervousness. Most of the clients would speak too softly in the interview, which did not display the necessary quality of self-confidence. The clients would still display problems in relating their skills and abilities. The worker would explain to the clients how they still

experience difficulty in answering questions which required them to discuss their positive aspects in a self-confident manner. This is the process of "selling" oneself. An example of this type of question is "Why should I hire you instead of someone else". Thus, the worker works with each client individually in an attempt to improve each individual's interview performance.

It is usually at this point that the two week duration of the course has passed. One can see that the most important and general theme of the course involves helping immigrants to learn what employers will expect of them, and then helping the immigrants to meet these expectations in order to become employed. The way in which a person dresses, the content of the resume and cover letter, the manner in which a person speaks to employers, both during interviews and telephone inquiries, and the level of self-confidence a person displays, all contribute to the purpose of appearing consistent with the expectations of employers. A somewhat extreme example of employer expectations was found in a letter to the agency from a local oil company stating: "I would like to know your judgment on the person's social abilities, potential for 'Canadianization', motivation etc. In words of one syllable, I am more interested in foreigners who have the potential to become more like us in a short time than those who will forever remain distinct with their own accents, clothes, cultural attitudes, etc. We can make a technical specialist out of someone who wants to keep on being an Arab or a Korean, but we cannot make an oilman out of him." From this letter one can see the strict expectations facing new immigrants in the employment world. Thus the material taught to immigrants in the Job Finding Club appears to be designed to teach them the vast array of Canadian cultural norms and behaviors to allow them to "pass" as acceptable

Canadians. In other words, immigrants are taught Anglo-Canadian conformity through a process of acculturation. At least, that appears to be the case from the material taught at the Job Finding Club.

It is important to distinguish between 'acculturation' and 'socialization' as some may be inclined to argue that, like immigrants, all native born Canadians must go through a process much like Anglo-conformity when learning employer expectations. If this were the case it would render the ethnic connotation of the term pointless. However, native born Canadians go through a process more akin to socialization than acculturation. Hughes and Kallen make this distinction clear with the statement that "acculturation" may be used to refer to the process of learning cultural values, ideas, behavior patterns and skills of an ethnic category or group to which one does not belong, in much the same way as the concept 'socialization' is used to refer to the broad process of learning the cultural ways of the ethnic group or category to which one does belong" (1974, p151). This is why the job search program undertaken by recent immigrants is described here in terms of 'Anglo-conformity', although this term is inter-changable with 'dominant conformity', as both assume a one way acculturation process where the minority group must adopt the cultural practices of the majority. The term 'acculturation' also differs from 'assimilation' in that the former refers to a process of learning the cultural practices and patterns of the dominant group, while the latter refers to a process of "penetration, by members of various ethnic minorities, of the major social structural spheres of the majority" (Hughes and Kallen, 1974, p152). I have used the terms 'Anglo-conformity' and 'Anglo-Canadian norms' in this chapter to refer to the norms of the numerically dominant group in Calgary, which is the Anglo-Canadian group. A distinction can also be made here between

'Anglo-conformity' and 'ethnic conformity'. I am saying that clients are taught to act in accordance with Anglo-Canadians as opposed to Chinese-Canadians or Polish-Canadians.

It is difficult to determine precisely what and how much the clients actually learn. Throughout the course the number of clients attending slowly drops as some clients obtain work during the course. This usually occurs because employers contact the agency with their personnel needs and the agency sends people to apply. For example, during the first course I observed, a furniture factory phoned the agency and hired six clients from the Job Finding course. Usually these positions are for unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. The employer can also benefit by hiring immigrants. Under the federal government's "Canada Works" program, if an employer hires someone who has been unemployed for a specified amount of time, the federal government will subsidize the wages paid. Thus, there are ways in which employers can gain an advantage by hiring recent immigrants. Throughout the course then, the number of clients enrolled decreases such that often there are only a few clients left at the end of the two week course. The worker will attempt to find the remaining unemployed clients temporary positions within the agency, often on a volunteer basis, such that they can gain some work experience to be added to their resume. Therefore most of the clients in the Job Finding course end up locating employment of some sort; however it is difficult to determine if the skills taught are actually used in gaining this employment. The relationship between employment and the skills taught will be discussed in a later chapter.

The reaction of the clients to this program of Anglo-conformity and employer expectations is uniform confusion as they do not appear to understand the implications of the behaviors taught, or why these behaviors

are valued. The clients consider the behaviors and course material as simply a means by which to get a job. For example, at the beginning of the course when the class goes over the handout entitled "Test Your Knowledge of Job Search Skills" (see Appendix 1), the clients could not understand how an employer could decide on the suitability of an applicant in the first 2.8 minutes of an interview. What this statistic is stating is that employers make their decisions from an initial general impression of an applicant and how well the applicant comes across in terms of the interviewer's "gut reaction." The clients, of course, feel this presents them with an unfair situation making it even more difficult to find a job.

The clients also have difficulty understanding why they have to speak of their own skills and abilities in such a forthright and assertive manner. It is very apparent that they are unfamiliar with 'selling' themselves in what to them must appear to be an aggressive manner. In one of the Job Finding Club sessions, I spoke to the class and asked the clients what they thought of the job finding methods they were learning, particularly the notion of 'selling' themselves. Every client present stated they found it alien and difficult to speak of themselves in this manner. Clients from Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Eastern block European countries stated that they are streamed or given jobs as soon as they graduate from school. Clients from Central American countries stated that the hiring process in their countries involves personal recommendations only, thus they too are unfamiliar with applying for jobs with the use of a sales pitch. Women from countries such as Vietnam and China find it difficult to speak of their skills and abilities in an interview situation because in their home culture they are expected to act in a passive manner in public. These women were also not supposed to

make eye contact with men, which is a necessary behavior to engage in during job interviews.

Clients in the job finding course also do not display a high level of motivation when it comes to actually looking for a job. For example, when job orders came in that suited many of the clients' skills and experience, they would often be extremely hesitant in applying for the job, or would not apply at all. Later in the course the worker requested that the clients visit an actual job site to make inquiries into possible opportunities; however very few of the clients actually did this. The worker also attempted to get the clients to make telephone calls to employers; however this effort was often futile. These are some of the reactions the clients had to the job finding course. Again, most of the clients find it confusing and difficult to learn the new cultural behaviors and attitudes necessary to meet employer expectations.

One final aspect of the Job Finding Club to be mentioned concerns the psycho-dynamic seminars on self esteem. In each of the job finding courses observed, a woman from a social service agency would give a two hour seminar on self esteem. These seminars would involve such activities as having the class speculate on what the terms 'self esteem' and 'self concept' mean, listing personality traits that supposedly correspond to high and low levels of self esteem, and having each client state various positive aspects about him or herself. The worker stated in an interview that she felt the clients would benefit from these self esteem seminars, in terms of making the clients feel better about themselves. It appeared that this assumption on the worker's part arose from the problems clients experienced in speaking assertively and confidently about themselves.

This concludes the description of the material taught to clients in the Job Finding Club. What follows is a brief description of the Pre-employment Skills Training Centre, and the Employment Centre, which are the other two employment related areas of the agency.

The Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre:

This program operates a training course involving on-site and in-class employment experience for a period of one year. The agency funding proposal states: "At the end of 1986, it was possible for the society to apply for a new PSTC training course - Health Care Service Training - under the Canadian Job Strategies Development Option I. There are 15 refugee /immigrant students participating. They will gain geriatric, mental health, physically handicapped and day care service skills throughout the duration of this one year program, which will finish in February 1988" (Funding Proposal, p12). This program has the clients work at their training sites for two months, followed by attendance at the agency for two months. It was during this time when the clients attended the agency that I observed and participated in the class.

This class consisted of approximately fourteen women and one man and was conducted in a large classroom within the agency. All of the clients were from Vietnam, Central America, and Eastern European countries. The class had recently returned from their on-site job training where most of them had worked with elderly people in hospitals and nursing homes. During the time I observed this class, the curriculum involved English language classes in the morning, with 'life skills' classes in the afternoon. In their home countries, most of the clients worked in professional

occupations such as teaching and accounting, and were hoping to locate similar professional employment in Canada.

With the exception of the English languages classes, the majority of class time involved the subject of adaptation and adjustment to life in Canada. Seminars on adaptation and self esteem were conducted by a woman from another immigrant service agency who was herself an immigrant. This seminar involved examining how the clients' lives had changed as a result of living in Canada and how the clients were adjusting to these changes. The clients compiled lists of aspects of their lives they missed from their home countries, and aspects of their lives which they now enjoyed from living in Canada. The purpose of this exercise was to show how the clients had made trade-offs in their lives when they moved to Canada, with the positive aspects of the move hopefully outweighing the negative aspects. The counsellor stated that "the parts of your lives that you do and do not feel comfortable with will affect how well you are able to integrate in Canada." From informally talking with the clients, it was apparent that they felt these seminars on cross-cultural adjustment were useful and enjoyable.

Other seminars in the course involved life skills as well as an analysis of how the course had improved the clients' self esteem. In the self esteem seminars the clients would list how they felt about themselves prior to entering the program and how their self esteem had improved up to the present point in the course. The counsellor reiterated how this exercise was designed to show each client that other clients feel similar emotions in the process of adaptation. The counsellor stated that she wanted the clients to think positively about themselves in order to help them integrate and adjust.

It is apparent in the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre that the teaching emphasis is on personal adjustment and integration. Clients form into groups and discuss among themselves and the counsellors how they are adjusting to their various roles and duties on the job sites. The life skills classes also focus on cultural as well as psychological adjustment. Thus, the course is designed to integrate clients into Anglo-Canadian lifestyles and help them with the personal adjustment involved.

In an interview, the counsellor who runs the program stated that the course is designed to teach clients what it takes to 'make it' in Canada. Clients learn employer expectations on the job while also learning about adaptation in the class. The counsellor felt the in-class adaptation training was necessary in order to keep the clients' morale up while they are in the adjustment period. Self esteem is included in the curriculum because the counsellor feels that self esteem is a valued quality in society and the employment world, thus immigrants would benefit from improved self esteem. Making clients aware of necessary cultural adjustments is also designed to help clients make it in the employment world. For example, she stated that women have to learn various ways of interacting with men, which many female immigrants are unfamiliar with owing to differing cultural practices. This counsellor, like others, spoke of the "necessary reality" that immigrants must contend with if they are to successfully integrate and adapt in Canada. The counsellor seemed to affirm the notion that teaching Anglo-Canadian cultural norms and expectations is in the best interest of the clients as these clients are having to compete for jobs and integrate in a society that is obviously dominated by Anglo-Canadian values.

An interesting illustration of the integration process occurred when the clients in the program received a 'make-over' at a local beauty salon. The

make-over process involves applying make-up to a person's face and "stylizing" a person's hair. The worker stated that the purpose of the make-over is to make the person appear more beautiful in order to improve self image. The entire class in this program participated in these make-overs and had photographs taken which were displayed at the agency. The results were interesting in that the clients looked more 'Canadian'. Thus, in some cases the adaptation and integration process can involve changes in appearance as well as changes in lifestyle, behavior and attitudes. These were the primary observations from the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre.

#### The Employment Centre:

The Employment Centre is where most of the initial contact with recent immigrants took place. I acted as a volunteer employment counsellor in this area of the agency on numerous occasions, usually whenever extra staff were needed. Most of the workers are employed either on a volunteer basis or through government funded employment programs. Many of the workers are also immigrants. Workers from both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre also work periodically in the Employment Centre.

The centre is located in a large open room with old office furniture. The workers' desks are situated along the outside edges of the room and are separated by dividers. Situated at the entrance to the room is a job board, a waiting area with chairs and a reading table. Above the reading table are numerous pamphlets, most of which are for English language courses. Posters decorate the walls, with slogans such as "Alberta is for all of us". Other instructional posters which list the appropriate steps involved in

looking for a job such as "Construct a resume", "Be on time for interviews", "Wear conservative clothes", and "Keep a positive attitude" are located near the job board. There are other posters which instruct clients on how the Employment Centre operates. Almost all of these posters appear to have been hand made at the agency.

The centre operates on a drop-in basis, although clients are instructed to make appointments with workers after the initial visit. However, clients can drop in at any time to look for jobs on the job board or in the want ads of the morning newspaper situated at the reading table. If a client sees a job and wishes to apply for it, he or she can then ask to see a worker. Once the client is at the worker's desk, the worker discusses the client's situation in relation to the job. That is, the worker will determine if the client's experience and skill make him or her suitable for the job. If the client is suitable or at least feels he or she can competently do the tasks involved in the job, the worker will then telephone the employer and attempt to arrange an interview for the client. The worker will then complete a referral slip for the client, and also have the client complete a general information sheet to be used as a reference for other workers who may see the client on other occasions.

Another essential function for the workers involves having frequent contacts with employers. Employers contact the agency when they require workers, and provide information to the agency workers regarding what type of qualifications and experience they are looking for in employees. Most of the available jobs that come through the agency are for unskilled labor. Workers will also contact various employers to solicit for job openings. The workers also provide short term counselling to clients on job search strategies. There are specific individual workers who speak Spanish,

Vietnamese, and Polish in order to help clients who do not speak English. These are the general duties of workers in the Employment Centre.

From these duties then, the primary function of the Employment Centre workers is to act as liaisons between clients and employers. Through the Employment Centre recent immigrants are made aware of employer expectations as well as the bureaucratized customs involved in finding a job. The numerous instructional posters and pamphlets around the centre, and the processes involved in using the workers, such as the job board and applying for jobs through worker referrals, both serve to show clients the various Canadian norms and expectations that must be complied with in order to gain employment. The expectations of this conformity is less obvious in the Employment Centre than in the Job Finding Club because the operation of the Employment Centre does not involve as much personal instruction. That is, clients are not formally taught the Anglo-Canadian norms involved in the job finding process.

A final observation of interest involves the informality of hiring employment counsellors in the centre. Some of the workers are themselves immigrants who had previously used the agency when they arrived in Canada. These workers are needed at the agency to speak with clients who do not speak English. During the time I worked at the Employment Centre, a Spanish speaking high school student and a Vietnamese speaking man who himself had recently been a client at the agency were hired. Neither of these workers had any previous experience in this field of work and were hired on the basis of their language ability alone. Thus the hiring of workers at the centre does not always involve evaluating applicants on the basis of work experience or related social work skills. These are some of

the primary observations obtained from working in the agency's Employment Centre.

It is also of interest to examine and describe the characteristics of the workers involved in the research. The total number of workers involved in the employment services was approximately 15. There were four workers in both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Center. Most of these workers were either middle aged, middle class women of Anglo-Saxon origin, or women immigrants. Only two workers at the agency were men. The supervisors in both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre were Canadian born women who had extensive experience in the social work profession. The other workers in the Job Finding Club were immigrants from El Salvador and Viet Nam who were untrained in social work but spoke fluent English. The life skills worker within the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre was a middle aged woman from South America who had obtained a Social work certificate in Canada. These were the predominant characteristics of the workers in the employment programs.

#### Conclusion:

In this chapter I have attempted to present pertinent data from observations of an immigrant service agency. This data illuminates how the employment related material taught to recent immigrants involves the promotion of conformity to Anglo-Canadian norms and expectations; that is, recent immigrants go through an acculturation process by being taught the Canadian ways of doing things in relation to finding and keeping a job in Canada, which is an important part of any Canadians' life. In learning to

comply with Anglo-Canadian norms immigrants learn how to 'make it' in Canada and in the employment world. This teaching process is also designed to help immigrants integrate and adapt to all aspects of Canadian life, with employment being an important part of this integration. Most of the data describes the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre because these two programs have a large instructional component, where Canadian expectations and norms of behavior are formally taught to immigrants. The following chapter contains a discussion of the significance of the above data.

## CHAPTER 4

### PARADOXES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

The analysis of the employment-related activities of the agency involves contrasting various aspects of the job search material taught to clients, including the statements of the workers, the general atmosphere of the agency, client reactions, and the worker/client interaction. It is apparent that many paradoxical situations exist which need to be managed by the individual workers in order to maintain a sense of normalcy in their world. The primary concern of the analysis is how the workers manage these paradoxes, and how they legitimize the management techniques used. The paradoxical situations also illuminate how the agency functions for the workers and clients, and why the agency exists.

It may be useful at this time to clarify what is meant by the term 'management'. The notion of having to manage a paradox arises from the fact that a paradox is a contradiction which, by definition, cannot be resolved or made consistent, yet must be lived with. The term was perhaps first used in the social sciences by Irving Goffman within the context of 'managing an impression' (1959). Goffman's use of the term appears to connote the act of manipulating variables which influence how a social actor is perceived by others. In a similar fashion, Cohen and Comaroff (1976) use the term 'management' to connote manipulation. These authors are concerned with demonstrating how the management of meanings underlies transactions within the political process. The term is also used in

discussions of philosophy of science. Woolgar (1985) invokes the term 'management' when discussing how theorists deal with seemingly unresolvable problems. Certain types of epistemological problems require "artful management" when they appear and "refuse to go away" (Woolgar, 1983, p 241). Thus, the term 'management' is not new to discussions of social processes. In the present analysis, to manage a paradox is to present the appearance of resolution within a situation which can never be completely resolved. Thus, the worker must find a way to balance or live with the apparent paradox. A paradox cannot be resolved in principle but must be managed in practice.

The analysis uses certain concepts from Lyman and Scott's discussion of 'accounts' (1970). An account is defined as "a social statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior" (1970, p112). Their concern is with how accounts allow people to reconcile inconsistent or conflicting aspects of social relations. Two characteristics of accounts applied in this analysis are the statuses of the interactants and the background expectancies of the social situation. The authors state that "accounts are situated according to the statuses of the interactants and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectations" (1970, p112). The notion of 'background expectancies' was developed by Garfinkel (1968), and refers to "those sets of taken-for-granted ideas that permit the interactants to interpret remarks as accounts in the first place" (1970, p112).

The previous chapter described how the material taught at the Job Finding Club and the Pre Employment Skills Training Centre involves job search skills for recent immigrants which, by virtue of the teaching of

norms of behavior, attitude, dress etc., that conform with Anglo-Canadian expectations, amounts to a program of integration and acculturation. It was continually stressed to the clients that in order to compete in the job market and become employed, the Anglo-Canadian behaviors taught in the course, involving speech, behavior, dress, interpersonal communication, and writing skills would have to be learned and followed. The most important first step is of course to learn to speak English. They then have to learn the appropriate manner of dress in relation to different occupations, which can vary widely depending on the type of work. Clients also have to learn a vast range of appropriate methods of self presentation as well as the ability to judge which situations require certain methods of self presentation. Some occupations require specific skills and experience while other occupations require certain attributes and attitudes, such as neatness, ambition, and assertiveness. Self presentation in accordance with employer expectations is considered by the workers to be the most important aspect of successfully finding a job.

Another important cultural attribute taught to clients involves self esteem and self confidence. Clients are taught to act in an assertive and self confident manner as employers hire individuals who can 'sell' themselves and speak highly of their own skills, abilities, and experiences. Whether or not an individual actually is self confident is irrelevant. Again what is important is that they appear self confident. Shyness is not considered an appropriate behavior; it may be interpreted as an inability to adequately describe one's skills. Further corroboration that the immigrant clients have to learn to conform to an entirely new constellation of cultural attributes can be found in the fact that the agency workers strive to make the clients appear less distinctive and more "Canadian" in order to help them

integrate and compete for jobs. It would seem that appearing distinct from other Canadians is not thought by the workers to operate in the best interests of the clients. As previously stated, the Job Finding Club worker advised the clients not to mention to employers that they were learning English or that they had sought counselling at the agency as this might not be considered favorably by employers. (It is worth noting however, that usually a letter of introduction from the agency was sent with the clients to job interviews). The agency considers employment as the first step towards the successful adaptation of immigrants in all facets of life. This brief reiteration of the adaptation process is relevant in that it is this process which gives rise to many paradoxical situations which have to be managed by the individuals involved.

#### ANGLO-CONFORMITY AND MULTICULTURALISM: TECHNIQUES OF PARADOX MANAGEMENT

The workers place a high value on multiculturalism and believe that it is regrettable that immigrants need to conform to Anglo-Canadian culture. They appear to be caught in a dilemma between acting in accordance with their ideals and having to teach immigrants Anglo conformity.

There are numerous indications of the multiculturalist values of the workers and the agency in general. To be considered first is the multicultural ethos or atmosphere of the agency itself. Much of the decor of the agency has a multicultural theme. As stated previously, there are posters on the walls with statements such as "Alberta is for all of us". Other posters show children from different racial and ethnic groups standing in front of the federal parliament building. Large maps of various countries line the hallways of the agency, as do advertisements and

pamphlets from numerous ethnic interests groups. Other physical aspects of the agency involve a mix of the typical Canadian professional office, (with waiting areas and reception stations), and an informal or casual atmosphere, (with household furniture and decorations intended to make clients feel comfortable). The day care centre also has a large sign on the door stating that it is the "Childrens Cross Cultural Centre". From these physical features it is apparent that the agency staff believe it is important to provide recent immigrants with a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere, with maps of the clients' home countries and posters which connect the federal government with multiculturalism. This type of multicultural environment is vastly different from the typical Canadian work site to which immigrants will have to become accustomed.

However, it is primarily the statements and actions of the workers themselves which point to the value they place on multiculturalism, and the antagonism they have toward teaching immigrants how to behave in the Anglo-Canadian culture of the employment world. When new clients enter the agency to enroll in a course or to receive help in locating a job in the Employment Centre, the workers take a great interest in their nationality and background. When a Job Finding Club session begins clients explain to the class where they are from, what their interests are, and how long they have lived in Canada. The workers continually express enthusiasm about the clients' history and cultural background. They implicitly communicate that to be from another country is something to be valued and shared. The workers make statements such as "what a beautiful country that must be". They also express interest in the problems associated with adaptation that the clients may be experiencing. For example, on the first day of the Job Finding Club, the director of the agency came into the classroom and stated,

"We'd like to welcome you all to your new home in Canada. Don't worry . . . we are going to help all of you get jobs . . . we will do our best to help you." This was spoken in an empathetic and somewhat paternalistic manner as if the clients were children in need of reassurance. Thus the clients are treated with interest, sympathy, and support for they are in the position of those who need to adapt to a new situation. In other words, the immigrants are treated as "clients", or people to be served by the agency.

In interviews, I have asked the workers from the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre what they thought of the concept of a 'Canadian mosaic' ; did they think Alberta was a multicultural place? They stated in a regretful manner that they believed Calgary and Alberta was not a place that could be considered multicultural or which encouraged multiculturalism. From their experience they believed the Canadian mosaic was a myth, especially in Alberta. From the way in which the workers made these statements they appeared to indeed value the principle of multiculturalism.

These workers would often express concern regarding the problems immigrants encounter in attempting to integrate and adapt in Canada. One worker explained how recent immigrants sometimes 'withdraw' from society, after experiencing failure in coping with the demands and expectations of the new country. Adaptation becomes progressively more difficult for these immigrants until their will and motivation deteriorate. They were thus continually aware of the morale of the clients. Concern for the well-being of clients was also expressed regarding the difficulty of the job search process. They often stated that the employment world is extremely competitive, making the search for employment a very taxing

task even under the best circumstances. This is a difficult position for immigrants to be placed in as they must not only locate a job in order to support themselves, but must also learn the cultural expectations and behaviors needed to successfully gain employment if they are to improve their presently disadvantaged position.

One worker also expressed concern that in learning to conform to Anglo-Canadian cultural expectations, immigrants sometimes feel forced to give up physical indicators of their identity which they value, calling into question their self identity. Immigrants in this situation have to decide which attributes of their native culture are to be kept and which attributes will have to be changed in order to meet employer expectations. Problems with the individual's self concept and self esteem can arise if they are forced to give up important indicators of their identity. Unfortunately, it is often these important indicators such as language and style of dress which have to be altered to meet employer expectations if the individual wishes to be successful in certain types of jobs.

We can see then that the workers in the job search training area of the agency are caught in something of a dilemma in terms of teaching immigrants the necessary skills they will need to obtain a job, while believing that it is 'not right' that immigrants should be forced to conform. This dilemma is managed or resolved by the workers in various ways.

Compartmentalization: Using this technique, the workers teach the job search material as a management impression game to be played by the clients within the context of employment only. The clients then must only appear to possess the specific qualities employers expect in order to pass as qualified individuals. This emphasis on appearance is a constant theme of the course material in the Job Finding Club. Advising clients to dress in a

specific manner and to appear confident in speaking about themselves, the manner and format in which letters and resumes are completed, and the way in which interview questions are to be answered, all follow a similar pattern of presentation which is geared specifically for employer consumption. The Anglo-Canadian cultural attributes are taught as part of selling procedures to be used by clients to impress employers only, and are not taught as attributes intended to become part of the clients everyday lives.

It is worth noting that in teaching clients to speak about their skills and experience in a confident manner, the worker does attempt to instill actual confidence in the clients; however emphasis is placed on learning to present the appearance of confidence. In teaching interview skills however, the worker does not suggest to clients that they should actually possess the attitudes which employers expect and value. The worker instructs clients regarding specific responses to interview questions which do not have to be completely honest and are intended to create the impression of a valued quality or attitude.

By teaching clients to respond in interviews with specific tailor-made answers, the worker teaches job search skills as a management impression game where strict conformity to employer expectations and the Anglo-Canadian norms of the employment world need not become internalized. Such conformity is required only in those aspects of life which are relevant to employment. Immigrants then learn to 'pass' into the employment world. Treating the job search as a management impression game serves to manage the conflict between the values of multiculturalism and the teaching of Anglo-Conformity because it takes pressure off the immigrant to permanently change important cultural elements of his or her identity.

Establishing Blame: A further method used by workers to manage this paradox is to blame the system of the employment world which requires immigrants to look, act, and possess attitudes which are similar to Anglo-Canadians. The workers are very pro-client and feel it is not right that immigrants should have to conform to Anglo-Canadian expectations in order to get a job. However, they accept that it is ultimately in the immigrants' best interest to learn the norms and expectations of Anglo-Canada, if they are to become successfully employed. The workers statement that learning to comply with Canadian employer expectations is a "necessary reality" for immigrants is indicative of this position. In this context, these words essentially mean "something which is unpleasant but cannot be avoided and must be confronted." Thus when questioned on why the immigrant clients had to learn to behave in a manner that made them appear 'more Canadian' in order to find a job, the worker would invariably state, in the form of a lament, that this process was a "necessary reality" for immigrants.

The workers feel constrained by the Canadian employment system and by what they see as the cultural and racial intolerance of Alberta. They are made aware of these intolerant attitudes through their frequent contact with employers. This allows them to blame the employers for making it necessary to teach clients to conform. However, the workers do not make clients explicitly aware of this intolerance. Recall the letter sent to the agency from a local oil company with instructions to send only those immigrants with a "high potential for Canadianization". They seem to want to protect clients from the kind of intolerant attitude expressed in such a letter. The explanations given to clients concerning why they must learn the job search skills usually contain vague statements such as "you must learn these skills in order to get a job here", which insulates clients from

this intolerance. Such explanations are not really explanations at all; they are rather attempts to instruct and motivate clients about what they must do to succeed.

By placing the responsibility for cultural intolerance on employers and the employment system, and by explaining the adaptation process in terms which stipulate that the immigrant has no choice, the workers successfully manage and justify the contradiction of teaching material which they believe is wrong or at least restricting.

Promoting the agency as multicultural: The encouragement of multiculturalism within the agency also serves to manage the paradox inherent in teaching Anglo-conformity while personally valuing multiculturalism; it shows the agency acting in a way that is consistent with the values of multiculturalism. It is as if the agency attempts to ease the clients' integration process by providing immigrants with a setting that is both North American and international. Such a supportive and international atmosphere suggests that the agency acts as an advocate for the immigrant. This atmosphere diminishes the conflict between the Anglo-oriented material taught to immigrants and the workers value of multiculturalism. The agency tacitly supports the immigrant through the expression of tolerance toward cultural diversity while also attempting to present a professional, North American environment. The workers dress in a professional manner with suits, ties and dresses. Thus, the environment or atmosphere of the agency involves a mix of expectations for immigrants. As previously mentioned, the workers also express interest in the immigrants' background and the problems associated with settlement and adaptation.

The fact that the agency does not operate on the same basis as the Anglo-Canadian oriented material taught in the job search classes presented

something of a dilemma for one particular worker who felt the agency should operate on a more 'professional' basis. This would force immigrants to learn to behave in ways which would soon be expected of them in the employment world, which would make them better off. The worker felt that clients should act in a more professional fashion within the agency by making and keeping appointments, and dressing in a manner suitable for employment interviews. Although realizing the problematic nature of the adaptation process and the expectation of conformity, this particular worker did not feel that a multicultural atmosphere within the agency would make the immigrants' situation any easier.

It is likely however that the agency needs to present a multicultural atmosphere with few regulations in order to encourage clients to use the agency. If the agency became more like a typical Canadian employer with the expectation that clients should conform to the specific norms of the employment world, the welcoming atmosphere of the agency would be destroyed and the number of clients using the agency would probably decline dramatically. The agency funding proposals use the high number of clients which use the agency as a rationale for further funding; therefore lowered client use of the agency would reduce the availability of government funds. In an interview, a worker from the Job Finding Club stated that although the Provincial government does not outline specific criteria for obtaining government funds, it is expected that funding proposals contain statistics on client use as a rationale for funding. The funding proposal for the Job Finding Club, dated April 29, 1987, contained the statement "to date we have provided 24 sessions to 196 participants. The average range of placements is 87%". Thus the agency must attempt to encourage potential clients to use its facilities.

Exchanging ethnicity: A somewhat different method of managing the paradox involves considering ethnicity as something that must be 'traded off' or exchanged for the benefits of the new culture. For example one worker did not view the demands of cultural integration and the values of multiculturalism as being in conflict at all. She believes that any change in life, such as entering a new country, involves "trade offs", where certain aspects of an individual's past life have to be given up for the benefits of the new culture. This worker was herself an immigrant and explained to the clients how she had dealt with the changing expectations and demands of a new culture. She therefore did not view the notion of Anglo-conformity in the employment world as problematic because this change is part of a necessary trade off which, although difficult, can be compensated for in other areas of life. Therefore if one views ethnicity as something which can be traded off when it is beneficial to do so, Anglo-conformity and multiculturalism do not stand in a contradictory relationship. This worker in fact stated that she believed in multiculturalism, but nevertheless felt that immigrants must conform to the cultural norms of the new country in order to successfully adapt.

Other workers within the agency held the view that ethnicity is primordial and part of the essence of self identity, and not a fluid and negotiable entity. In fact the supervisor of the Job Finding Club stated that this primordial conception of ethnicity, along with the promotion of ethnic identity retention, is part of the agency's policy. The workers are supposed to encourage clients to maintain their ethnic identity and "cultural heritage". The conflict inherent in teaching Anglo-conformity while personally valuing the merits of multiculturalism thus remains problematic for many workers.

To reiterate the discussion to this point, the workers use various techniques to manage the paradox, such as compartmentalizing the job search material as a management impression game to be used in employment situations. The workers also view the constraints placed on immigrants which require immigrants to act 'more Canadian' as a necessary reality and blame the conservative values and the cultural intolerance of the employment world and Alberta in general. They also attempt to manage the contradiction by providing the immigrant clients with a multicultural atmosphere which is informal and supportive, or as in the case of one worker, by viewing ethnicity as something to be traded off for the benefits of Canada.

#### MOTIVATION: ACCOUNTING FOR CLIENT PERFORMANCE

A somewhat different area of conflict management for the workers concerns the purpose of the Job Finding Club course and the notion of teaching clients 'job search skills'. An implicit assumption of the material taught in the Job Finding Club and the other employment related areas of the agency is that clients can be taught how to look for a job through the formal teaching of a 'skill' that once learned can be used on an on-going basis. An important secondary purpose for the course is simply to get the clients employed as soon as possible regardless of how far the clients have progressed in learning the skills. However, a problem arises in determining if the clients ever do in fact learn these skills. There is evidence which indicates that clients may view the agency not as a place to learn job search skills, but rather as a place where they will be given a job by employers. The workers must then account for why clients do not look for

jobs by learning a skill when learning this skill is the primary objective of the course.

An interesting indication that clients do not acquire a 'skill' concerns a client who went through the job finding course three separate times. At the beginning of this research the client was enrolled in the Job Finding Club for the second time. Prior to this he had been employed for eight weeks until he had been laid off. After coming back to the agency he remained at the Job Finding Club for most of the two week course, until a request from an employer for workers came to the agency. The worker sent this client to the job and he was out of contact with the agency for some time. After approximately two months the client returned and requested to be enrolled in the Job Finding Club once again. He then began to attend the course again, which at the time was half completed. From this example it is evident that not all clients learn a skill to be used on their own once the course has been completed. If clients were in fact learning a skill the client in this example would have been able to use his new skill to locate a job on his own without repeating the course.

There are many other indications that clients do not acquire 'job search skills' and that this becomes problematic for the workers. The performance of clients throughout the course is not measured in any respect, and gives no real indication that clients are actually acquiring these skills. At the beginning of each Job Finding Club session, clients are taught to speak about their own skills in a confident and assertive manner, but they never really learn to perform this task in a convincing manner and are continually coached by the worker to a large extent. During the Resume and cover letter portion of the course, the clients are taught how to construct and write their own Resumes; however almost all of the Resumes have to be revised or

completely rewritten by the worker in order to be used in a job search. At intervals throughout the course clients are requested to make employment inquiries in person and by telephone at five places of employment. In all of the Job Finding Club sessions observed, the majority of clients did not attempt to complete this exercise. At the end of each Job Finding Club session the worker attempts to have the remaining clients begin a more active and serious job search; however, this request is met with much resistance. During the interview skills portion of the course the performance of the clients in interview role plays is usually poor, with most clients simply reciting the same stock answers obtained from handouts and from the worker's coaching. Some clients are also forced to enroll in the job search course against their will by government welfare officials. An agency worker stated that a letter is sent to the clients from the welfare department which stipulates that they must enroll in the job finding course in order to become employable or their welfare funds will be jeopardized. This information was corroborated by a welfare supervisor. Unfortunately, statistics on the number of clients in this situation are not kept by the agency. Those clients who are forced to take the course do not attend classes on a regular basis. In this way their performance would not indicate that a skill has been acquired.

Further evidence showing that clients may not be learning to obtain work through the acquisition of a skill relates to the type of employment many clients obtain. It is not often the case that clients obtain employment by going through the standard channels of applying for a job and waiting for an interview appointment, and they do not often apply for high skill positions. Clients in the Job Finding Club more often obtain employment through requests for workers placed by employers at the agency. An

employer will contact the agency and request that workers be sent to a job site. During my first week of observation at the Job Finding Club six clients were sent to a furniture manufacturer and immediately hired. In these situations, clients do not go through the typical procedure of application forms and interviews as they are simply filling a manpower need. Although no statistics were kept on how clients obtained employment, it was evident in field observations that clients who were given jobs out-numbered those clients who obtained employment on their own. The employer also benefits through the "Canada Works Program" in that the federal government will subsidize a portion of the wages paid if the employer hires individuals who have been unemployed for a specified period of weeks. Most clients in the Job Finding Club have been unemployed for the required period of weeks. The irony here is that the employer actually benefits from a situation that is designed to benefit the clients. An agency worker stated that the employer can pay minimum wages but must employ the individual for at least six months. The agency workers would encourage employers to contact Canada Manpower in order to apply for the Canada Works program. If most clients obtain employment in this manner the assumption that they have learned to obtain work through the acquisition of 'job search skills' seems untenable.

If clients have gone through the Job Finding Club but have not been able to secure a job they can sometimes be hired to work, or encouraged to volunteer, at the agency in order to gain work experience. Such clients usually work as secretaries or receptionists. This makes it difficult to determine if clients actually acquire the skills the job finding course is designed to teach. In numerous instances clients are given jobs, regardless of their ability to present themselves in accordance with employer expectations.

The workers find themselves in a problematic situation where the skills they are teaching to immigrants are not necessarily learned or used by the immigrants. They seem to manage this situation principally by questioning the motivation of the clients. When clients fail to carry out instructions to contact employers either during the course or in their own time, or choose not to apply for jobs which are suitable for them when job opportunities are read to the class, the workers either begin to worry about their motivation or suggest that they are not yet confident enough to complete the task or apply for the job. If this situation has not changed by the end of the course, the workers question the clients' motivation more seriously. They frequently discuss the motivation of clients and feel it is part of their job to help keep the morale and motivation of the clients at a high level. If a client obtains or is given a job during the course, the question of whether a skill has been learned is not important as the goal of employment has been achieved.

It is also a source of frustration for workers when clients appear to show a lack of initiative in actively looking for a job. The principal worker in the Job Finding Club would become baffled at the end of each course and wonder aloud what she could do to motivate the remaining clients. The motivation of clients is also questioned at times in the Employment Centre as workers attempt to help clients find jobs. In this area of the agency clients choose jobs they wish to apply for from available jobs posted on a job board. The clients then speak with a worker about available jobs and have the worker telephone the employer to determine if and when a client might attend an interview. However, in speaking with various clients about possible job interests, the workers sometimes question a client's motivation. One worker in fact became quite frustrated with a client and

stated that they should not be so "picky" and should take whatever type of employment they could find no matter what the wages. Thus if clients do not engage in an active job search, or turn down available jobs, the workers consider this to reflect a lack of motivation on the part of the client, and do not consider this behavior to be a reflection on the course or the type of jobs available. This technique effectively manages the conflict by explaining away the unexpected behavior as being the client's problem.

The workers also measure the success of the course through statistics which indicate how many clients receive jobs in comparison to the total number of clients; however, I could not obtain a copy of these statistics. One worker stated that it is extremely difficult to get an accurate indication of how many clients are still employed after they have been away from the agency for six months or a year. The activities of questioning the motivation of clients and keeping statistics on how many clients become employed serve to keep intact the workers' assumption that the job search course functions as it should by teaching clients a "job search skill".

Questioning the motivation of clients works as a management technique because in our culture it is an accepted practice to assume that if someone does not do things he or she has supposedly learned, it is because he or she is not "motivated" to do so. The notion that people need to be motivated in order to successfully learn a skill is "part of our socially distributed language of what 'everybody knows' " (Lyman & Scott 1970, p125). It is particularly appropriate for workers to question a client's motivation because they are in the role of someone who is deemed capable of evaluating such things. The role of a 'worker' makes for the routine acceptance of their account of a client's state. Moreover, using terms such as 'motivation' is part of the language used by someone in the role of a counsellor when

speaking about a client. As Lyman et al point out, "the idiomatic form of an account is expected to be socially suited to the circle into which it is introduced according to norms of culture, subculture, and situation (1970, p133)". It is also worth noting that motivation is not a mental state that can be determined. It is merely a verbal method or justification for interpreting behavior. This topic has been discussed by C.W. Mills who states that "rather than fixed elements 'in' an individual, motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds" (1940, p904). However, Mills notes that "to term them justification is not to deny their efficacy" (1940, p907). Thus questioning the motivation of clients serves as a useful technique for explaining problems in the clients' performance.

#### THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN ADAPTATION

In both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre the workers include the use of psychological counselling in the employment training of immigrants. The most obvious paradox in this situation is that clients are encouraged by the workers to accept themselves with pride and feel self confident while at the same time being subtly told through the employment training that in order to be successful they will have to change themselves in various ways. This paradox is different than those described previously in that the workers are not aware of it and thus do not manage it. Although the workers do not see the problematic nature of this counselling, the clients are receiving somewhat contradictory messages. We need to examine why the workers do not see these messages as conflicting.

The procedure of teaching clients to describe their skills and interests, which constitutes a large part of the employment training, involves the promotion of self esteem and self confidence in order that clients "feel positive about themselves". Seminars on self esteem are presented by guest speakers in both the Job Finding Club and the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre. In the Job Finding Club these seminars are usually presented on two brief occasions during the course while in the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre they are presented in more detail through a series of lectures. In both courses the seminars involve client participation. In the Job Finding Club the social worker presenting the seminar first has each client speak about his or her own positive characteristics. The worker then has the class compile a list of words relating to positive self esteem and self concept, and has the class discuss how their self esteem and confidence are effected by others. In the Pre-Employment Skills Training Centre the seminars are somewhat more sophisticated and take place over a longer period of time. One such workshop was entitled "Cross Cultural Communication: Looking at Self" and involved topics such as 'developing feelings of self worth' and 'knowing, understanding and accepting who I am'. Here the clients form into groups and compile lists comparing how their self esteem and emotional state have been effected by the employment program. The purpose of the exercise is to have the clients share some of the problems they have experienced with the adaptation process. The overall theme of the seminars is to show clients how self esteem is necessary and valuable for personal well being and for obtaining employment.

However, while clients receive counselling designed to improve their self esteem, they also receive counselling designed to change them in ways

that will allow them to be considered suitable for employment. In order that clients should be considered 'suitable', they are expected by the workers to adopt various aspects of Anglo-Canadian culture, including new behaviors, values, attitudes, style of dress and language. Changes of this nature make immigrants appear less distinctive and more suitable in meeting employer expectations. Although counselling clients to appear less distinctive is not designed to adversely affect their self esteem, one can still question why clients are advised to accept themselves as they are while also being given the contradictory message that if they remain distinct they will not be acceptable or successful.

The make-over process described previously provides an illustration of this paradox. Recall that the make-over process involves applying make-up and stylizing the hair, which greatly changes the appearance of the client. The purpose of the make-over is to make the client appear less physically distinct. Therefore, what is being implicitly communicated to the clients is that they should feel more self confident because now they look more Canadian. Of course the other side of this is the implication that the clients did not 'look Canadian' before the make-over. The coordinator of the Pre-Employment Skills Training Program who was responsible for these clients stated in an interview that the make-over was in fact designed to improve the self esteem of the clients. After the make-over was completed, photos of the clients were displayed at the agency, and the clients appeared to have enjoyed the experience. This example shows the paradoxical nature of advising clients to accept themselves while at the same time expecting them to change themselves in order to successfully integrate.

The workers do not see these expectations as conflicting. In interviews, various workers stated the seminars were necessary as the self

esteem of immigrants can deteriorate upon arrival in Canada due to the pressures associated with adaptation. The self esteem seminars are designed to counter-act the adverse affects of adaptation. Moreover, the workers are in the role of counsellors or people who know how to help others, so the use of psychological helping methods are part of their basic knowlege. Even if the workers do not have the specific training needed to give such help, they are nevertheless considered knowledgable enough to recognize the need for it. The notion that personal psychological counselling is helpful in any and all situations is also a background assumption that is routinely accepted within the context of any worker/client interaction (see Lyman et al, 1970, p124).

Herein lies a further irony in that the workers attempt to deal with the problem of Anglo-conformity and adaptation, which is a social phenomenon, through the use of individual psychology. The onus is placed on the individual immigrant to use his or her psychological defences of increased self esteem to deal with social forces which are out of his or her control.

This discussion has outlined the primary paradoxes and contradictions evident in the agency's attempt to facilitate the adaptation and employment of recent immigrants. The analysis has shown how these paradoxes become problematic for the workers and how they use techniques to manage them in order to maintain a sense of normalcy in their work.

#### THE FUNCTION OF THE AGENCY

The concluding section of this chapter will explore in greater detail how the agency functions and maintains its existence when the clients and workers have different priorities for the employment services. As stated previously, it appears that clients may use the job finding course as a

means to quickly be given a job rather than as a means to learn the appropriate skills necessary to undertake an independent job search. If an individual takes the job finding course for the purpose of being given a job over the two week duration of the course, it would make sense for the individual to take the course over again if another job is needed or the first job does not last. This may account for the client who took the course three times. This intention is also apparent in the Employment Centre where clients choose jobs they would like to apply for from a list of available jobs, and then have the worker contact the employer in order to make appropriate arrangements regarding interviews, hours of work, wages etc.

Clients have a pessimistic view of the typical job finding process. They consistently express disappointment that employers do not contact them for interviews after initial applications have been submitted. They make statements such as "employers always say they will call me for an interview but they never do". Thus they become disillusioned with the normal employment process. Although this is not direct evidence to show that clients use the job search course merely to be given jobs as opposed to learning a skill, when this evidence is taken together with the performance of the clients and the fact that clients are indeed given jobs, it appears that clients do use the course in an unintended way. If the clients see the course as a means to be given a job, this would seem to explain why they do not necessarily learn the skills intended by the course. It should be mentioned that the interpretations regarding the skills taught to clients contained here does not apply to the Pre-Employment Skills Training course, as a relatively small amount of time was spent observing this course in comparison with the Job Finding Club, where five two-week courses were observed. In essence then, the agency serves a very practical function for

immigrants by helping them obtain employment and the means of financial support that go with it. This function could be the primary reason why immigrants use the agency services, which explains how the agency persists even though it's official purpose or design may not be realized.

The workers appear to view the agency as a place where clients need their help and guidance in order to successfully adapt in a new society. The workers are usually employed on a volunteer basis or through government wage grant programs. Most of them find intrinsic satisfaction from helping immigrants to become settled and employed. Thus the workers possess a different view of their relationship with the clients and how the agency functions. Although the workers and clients see each differently, both appear to continually re-affirm the function or role of the other, and this maintains their relationship.

This analysis has involved an investigation into aspects of an agency's employment work with immigrants that are paradoxical, and into how the individuals involved use techniques which allow them to manage these paradoxes and sustain their work with immigrants.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The concluding section of the thesis will involve a brief examination of the theoretical implications and anthropological significance of the research, by integrating the present findings with the theoretical orientation outlined in chapter two.

The primary component of the thesis is the analysis of paradoxes within the immigrant agency and the techniques used by the workers to manage them. On a general level the research is consistent with the work of later anthropologists of the British school such as Leach, Barth and Comaroff. Anthropologists such as these consider individuals as social actors capable of exercising influence and manipulation within the dynamics of social processes, rather than as passive 'judgemental dopes'. The present research is especially consistent with Comaroff's work on the accession of rulers in the Tswana chiefdom, which emphasizes the importance of individual manipulation within a seemingly strict set of rules. Comaroff's analysis shows that it is not rules which determine action; rather, social actors interpret and manipulate rules to suit their own purposes, while maintaining the appearance of a normal and consistent state of affairs. In the present analysis the workers take an active role in attempting to manage and control paradoxes which affect their work. In fact, at the crux of the analysis lies the ability of the workers to manipulate their social situation in the face of unresolvable paradoxes, allowing them to maintain a

sense of order and consistency in their work. What I have attempted to document is precisely how the workers undertake this manipulation. Thus, the most general theoretical point made by this thesis is that individuals do take an active role in managing and manipulating their social circumstances rather than blindly following prescribed rules in a passive manner.

A further theoretical assumption inherent in this research relates to Leach's notion that societies exist in a state of constant flux and change rather than in a state of harmonious equilibrium, the traditional assumption prior to Leach's writing. In the act of managing paradoxes, the workers attempt to maintain the appearance of stability in a changing and potentially threatening situation. If the workers do not attempt to manage these paradoxes, the desired purpose and continued existence of their work may be jeopardized. For example, the poor performance of the clients in learning the job search material must be accounted for and explained as the course could possibly be discontinued through funding cuts should it not fulfill its purpose. Thus, the management of paradoxes by social actors serves to maintain a sense of stability in a potentially unstable situation. It is these notions of manipulation by social actors in response to paradoxes and the inherent instability of social situations which are made intelligible by the theoretical tenets of British social anthropologists.

The ethnomethodological aspects of the analysis also relate to order and stability in social life. Unlike traditional social theorists, ethnomethodologists regard order and normalcy as states to be achieved through actions or 'work' undertaken by the interactants themselves. Garfinkel believes that "orderliness be looked at as arising from within activities themselves due to the work done by parties to that activity" (Benson & Hughes, 1983, p62). The present analysis has shown how the

appearance of orderliness is maintained through the actions of the workers themselves. The management techniques are accomplished by the workers through the use of practical reasoning and common sense knowledge.

These management techniques also achieve a sense of orderliness because they reflexively support the workers beliefs. In the present analysis reflexivity is exhibited in the workers' accounts of the clients performance in the job search program. The poor performance of the clients is explained by the workers as being a problem of motivation. This explanation acts not only as a description of the clients state, but it also constitutes or sustains the clients as unmotivated clients. According to Mills, motives are not fixed elements 'in' individuals that can be measured, but are merely descriptions or interpretations of behavior (1940, p904). Thus, accounting for client performance with the explanation that they are not motivated is an account which exhibits reflexivity.

An account such as this also provides a basis for interpreting the subsequent behavior and performance of clients. Ethnomethodologists describe this way of interpreting subsequent behavior as the "documentary method of interpretation" (Benson & Hughes, 1983, p90). In using the method, we attempt to order phenomena in the world by looking for patterns, which, once established, help us to continually reinterpret the world based on these patterns. If a client's performance were to improve, the worker might state that the client's motivation had improved. In fact, the workers would engage in activities designed to improve motivation. Thus, the workers use of motivation as an explanation for client behavior is used again to explain the change in behavior. This type of interpretation applies to other parts of the analysis such as the use of psychology in the adaptation process. If clients act shy and withdrawn the workers may

interpret this behavior as an indication of low self esteem. If this behavior changes it will be reinterpreted on the basis of changes in self esteem.

The final theoretical perspective applied to the analysis involves the absurdist sociology of Lyman and Scott and their examination of 'accounts'. Recall that the importance of Lyman and Scott's analysis lies in the notions that accounts reflect the statuses of the interactants and are routineized within cultures. These two elements of interactions involve looking at the taken-for-granted background expectancies of interactions, which refers to "those sets of taken-for-granted ideas that permit the interactants to interpret remarks as accounts in the first place" (Lyman & Scott, 1970, p125). What is relevant for the present analysis is that the paradoxes involved in the agency's work, and the techniques used to manage the paradoxes, are all situated within the role statuses of the interactants and their accompanying background expectancies. That is, the paradoxes and the management techniques involved in the study are suited to, or appear 'normal' for, the role identities of counsellors who work with clients. As part of a background expectancy, it is taken for granted that someone in the role of a counsellor should value multiculturalism and work against the pressures of Anglo-conformity on immigrants. In each paradoxical situation the worker is attempting to act in the clients best interest while also making sure that the agency operates in a manner that ensures its existence through continued funding. However, what is considered 'in the clients best interest' is partly determined by the role status of the worker. Someone in the role of a worker will consider the promotion of job search skills, multiculturalism, high motivation and high self esteem to be in an immigrant's best interest even though the immigrant may have different priorities. Thus, the paradoxes and management techniques reflect the

different statuses of the interactants and are routinized within the culture of worker/client relations. Lyman and Scott conclude their discussion by stating that "the most immediate task for research in this area is to specify the background expectancies that determine the range of alternative accounts that are deemed culturally appropriate to a variety of recurrent situations" (Lyman & Scott, 1970, p141). This thesis may have provided a small contribution to this task.

The anthropological significance of this thesis then lies in illuminating how small scale social order is achieved and maintained in a situation in which inconsistencies can only be actively managed but never ultimately resolved. The analysis of how workers manage paradoxical situations and maintain a sense of normalcy in their work with immigrants sheds light on how social order can be maintained in the face of threatened instability.

It is hoped that the present study can also contribute to the field of Canadian ethnic relations through the documentation of a formalized process of Anglo-conformity. Hughes and Kallen, in reference to Canada's existing system of ethnic stratification, state that "acculturation of ethnic members occurs towards the norms of the dominant group", and that the "considerable status differential between ethnic groups coming into contact ... enables one group to require the other to acculturate" (Hughes & Kallen, 1974, p183). These authors believe it is important to determine precisely what is being affected in the transaction between ethnic groups in order to detail aspects of change in the acculturation process. The chapter of this thesis entitled 'Teaching immigrants the Canadian way' provides a detailed account of how immigrants are taught specific aspects of Canadian culture in order that they may be accepted by Canadians as 'suitable' for employment. Thus, immigrants which use the agency programs go through a

process designed to facilitate their integration within the Canadian employment culture. The analysis of the acculturation process contained in this thesis may therefore contribute to the Canadian ethnic relations literature which seeks to determine precisely what is being affected in the transaction between ethnic groups in the process of acculturation.

The present analysis may also shed light on the controversial issue of multiculturalism. The conformity to Anglo-Canadian norms required by the employment world indicates that multiculturalism and the maintenance of distinct ethnic identities may be problematic and in fact detrimental to the success of immigrants. It is ironic that the agency mandate calls for promoting the government policy of multiculturalism, a policy whose benefit to clients remains questionable with regard to employment. On a very limited scale the research undertaken at the agency appears to show that multiculturalism is an ideology which becomes difficult to implement in practice.

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## APPENDIX 1

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF JOB SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Here is a sample quiz for you to try. It will help you to understand why you might be having problems in finding a job.

Answer these questions. See if you really know the tools you need to compete in today's labour market.

QUESTIONS

1. In an employment interview, what will the employer likely consider?
  - a) your education and training
  - b) your skills and abilities
  - c) your attitudes towards others and work
  - d) all of the above
2. You are late for an interview and expect to arrive 10 minutes after the appointed time. You should:
  - a) show up and hope for the best
  - b) forget about the interview because you are late anyway
  - c) call to arrange another appointment
  - d) call the employer, explain that you will be late and what has happened
3. The experts recommend the time spent weekly on job activities should be:
  - a) 10 hours
  - b) 20 hours
  - c) 30 hours
  - d) 40 hours
4. At any given time what percentage of all jobs in the labour market are available?
  - a) 1%
  - b) 2%
  - c) 4%
  - d) 8%
5. At what point in the interview is a fairly firm decision made about your suitability for the job?
  - a) 2.8 minutes
  - b) 5.5 minutes
  - c) 12 minutes
  - d) 16 minutes

## APPENDIX 2

DESCRIPTIVE WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR SKILLS AND ABILITIES

<u>PEOPLE</u>	<u>LEADERSHIP</u>	<u>COMMUNICATION</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>	<u>CREATIVE</u>
helping	arranging	talking	observing	inventing
caring	planning	listening	examining	designing
understanding	directing	writing	analyzing	composing
supporting	coordinating	editing	selecting	playing
empathy	delegating	persuading	diagnosing	writing
consulting	organizing	promoting	inspecting	perform
counselling	managing	selling	testing	amusing
leading	motivating	translating	checking	expressing
educating	initiating	summarizing	consolidating	imagining
instructing	deciding	reporting	problem solving	devising
training	coaching	advising	researching	adapting
organizing	mentoring	debating	defining	developing
	supervising	negotiating	reviewing	

<u>MATHEMATICAL</u>	<u>MECHANICAL</u>	<u>PERSONAL</u>	<u>PHYSICAL</u>
counting	manipulating	concentrating	lifting
accounting	fixing	generosity	sitting
computing	building	flexibility	kneeling
book keeping	assembling	self-control	stooping
budgeting	operating	humor	crawling
money managing	installing	optimism	coordination
manipulating	controlling	loyalty	using my hands

## HANDOUT 11

### JOB RELATED QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What do you like most about yourself?
2. In the last 10 years, what 5 things have given you the greatest pleasure?
3. If you were working a four day work week, what would you do on the other days? What would you *prefer* to do on the other days?
4. Who would you like to be if you weren't yourself? Why?
5. If you could replace a friend or relative in his or her job for one year, which one would you choose? Why?
6. What things did you like about your last job? Why?
7. Do you prefer working: alone, with others, outside, indoors, with tools or equipment, detail work, physically active work, having responsibility, not having responsibility, routine work, knowing what you will be doing each day, variety, being busy, other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are any of the following things particularly important to you: hours, salary, access to bus lines, close to home, learning something new, independence on the job, approval of others or social status on the job, other: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Make a list of the things that you don't want in your work situation and then list its opposite it is often easier to think of what you *don't* want to do than what you do want to do. For example, "I don't like being alone" could be translated in a positive way as "I do want to work with people", this may suggest either working with the public or working in a large enough office or factory so that you would have interaction with co-workers.
10. List as many occupations as you can think of that you were ever interested in and analyze what it is about them that you like.

## HANDOUT 17

### YOU MUST KNOW YOURSELF TO SELL YOURSELF

The Careers Provinces series provided you with the requirements needed in a particular job. What you need to examine next is what you can do that relates to the job. Employers expect each person they hire to already have, or be able to develop, job skills. Although most employers provide some training for specific jobs, you must nevertheless show them that you have the potential to do the job. You have to be prepared to express this potential in completing application forms, in telephone calls and other contacts, as well as in the job interview.

Many people when asked about their job experience respond only in a vague way. For example:

Employer: "What experience do you have?"

Job-Seeker: "I've worked for Samuel Enterprises Ltd. as an accountant for three years."

This response does not indicate what specific skills the job seeker has, nor anything about the particulars of the job duties.

When you answer questions about your job experience, be as specific and complete as possible. A better way to answer the above question would have been:

"I worked for Samuel Enterprises Ltd. for three years. Samuel Enterprises is a Public Relations firm that contracts to radio stations. While working there I was responsible for *analyzing various general ledgers and revenue accounts*. I used my *writing skills* a good deal by *preparing special reports* and *communicating with a variety of clientele* in addition to regular *accounting duties* such as work on *accounts payable, bank reconciliation* and *budgeting*."

You will be better able to describe your experiences and skills as they relate to the job you're applying for by exploring the following areas:

- SPECIFIC SKILLS
- GENERAL ABILITIES
- EXPERIENCE
- EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- INTERESTS AND HOBBIES
- VOLUNTEER WORK

These areas will be explored next in preparing your JOB SEEKER'S CALLING CARD.

## HANDOUT 72

### "APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS"<sup>1</sup>

An interviewer has the task of discovering what kind of person and worker you are in the short time period of about an hour or even less. Therefore, the questions asked by interviewers are fairly standard from one interview to another since all interviewers are trying to obtain the same type of information. On the following pages, these typical questions will be listed with a description of how you should answer each one.

#### 1. TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

When an interviewer says, "Tell me about yourself", he is asking you to tell him about yourself as a person, not merely about your job skills. The type of answer you should give follows the same guidelines as you followed in providing personal information in your resumé, and you can refer back to this to remind yourself about what you should include. Try especially to provide information that may indicate something you have in common with the interviewer, so that you are no longer a stranger to him. Perhaps his children attend the same school as yours do, or you follow the same sport, or have lived in the same city, or his parents had a background similar to yours, or you have the same hobby. These are the specific items you should mention:

1. *Previously Met.* If you have met or seen the interviewer before or heard any favourable comments about him, tell him so.
2. *Common Friend.* If you know someone who works in the company or who knows the interviewer, mention him since this establishes a common acquaintance.
3. *Hobbies and Special Interests.* Tell him what your hobbies or special interests are, especially if they might be job related, such as drawing, building gadgets, designing your own clothes, doing seasonal work as a tax preparer, fixing cars. Also include non-job-related special interest such as being a strong football fan, coin collecting, and keeping tropical fish.
4. *Clubs and Organizations.* Tell him about clubs or organizations you belong to such as Elks, Lions, Bridge Club, bowling club, or PTA. This tells him what kind of person you are, and it is possible that he belongs to one of them or has in the past or has a family member who does.
5. *Personal Stability.* Mention any facts about yourself that indicate personal stability and trustworthiness. Owning a home indicates your desire to stay in the area, as does your having lived in the area a long time. Marriage and children also carries this message. Tell him about your desire to stay in the area and what you like about it.
6. *Parents and Spouse.* Briefly tell the interviewer about your husband (wife) and parents, describing something noteworthy about their background and occupation.

<sup>1</sup>Excerpt from: *Job Club Counselor's Manual: A Behavioral Approach to Vocational Counseling* by Nathan H. Azrin & Victoria A. Besalel, University Park Press, Baltimore, 1980. pp. 190-198.

Only after you have described these personal items should you talk about your job skills and experience. Almost all interviewers will ask you to talk about the personal factors, but even if they don't, try to mention them since the topic serves to create a friendly atmosphere. Then mention the following work related factors:

1. Your interest and experiences related to the job
2. Your past work experience
3. Your training or education
4. Your strong interest and enjoyment of your work

#### HAVE YOU EVER DONE THIS KIND OF WORK BEFORE?

You should never say "no" to this type of question, since no two jobs are alike and so, of course, you have never done exactly this same work. In all jobs, new skills and rules and details must be learned. A cook in one restaurant will never be preparing exactly the same foods with exactly the same equipment and exactly the same schedule as in any other restaurant. What the interviewer wants to know is whether you can learn to do the job in a reasonable time. Consequently, mention all of the experience you have had that makes it likely that you can learn quickly to do the work required in this specific job. Tell him about:

1. Your past experience
2. Your education and training related to the job
3. Nonpaid experience related to the job.
4. How quickly you have learned that type of work in the past.

As an example, the school principal asks you if you have taught French, since the opening is for someone who can also teach one French class. You haven't, but you would tell him that you took French in college, have taught grammar and English, have an aptitude for languages, had spent some time in France, and would have no trouble handling it. Similarly, the interviewer might ask you whether you have worked as a bookkeeper and you haven't, but you could mention facts such as you kept some books as part of your previous job as a secretary, you maintain an exact book of records of your family expenses, you had a bookkeeping course in high school, you're good with figures, and you're sure you could learn the necessary details quickly. If you are asked about whether you ever worked as a furniture salesman, you would similarly describe any selling experience, your interest and knowledge of furniture, your general ability as a salesman, and your assurance that you would learn very quickly.

#### WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?

When an interviewer asks you why you wish to work for his company, he is attempting to learn whether you will be satisfied with your job and likely to stay. To reassure him, you should mention as many positive features as you can about the company, such as:

1. The good reputation that the company has and your pride in telling people you work there.
2. You heard that the company is very fair and appreciates hard working employees (mention any employees who have described it to you).
3. The company has the kind of job that you are good at and like to do.
4. You like this type of work and you feel you can do a good job.

#### 4. WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB?

When the interviewer asks you why you left your last job or why you want to leave your present job, he is trying to determine whether you had difficulties that may also arise in his company. This same question is also asked on some employment application forms. It has been discussed that employees usually leave a job for many reasons and that you should mention only those reasons that are favourable to you. The fact that you did not do well in one company does not mean that you will not do well in another, so you shouldn't be concerned about leaving unmentioned any problem you might have had there. This situation might very well have been unique and would never again occur.

Some of the common reasons for leaving a job are that the company had a cut-back or a layoff, it was a seasonal job, it was a temporary job, it was only part-time, it was only a good job while you were in school, it required too much travel away from home, it was not in a part of the country where you wanted to live, or the company was not doing well and could not keep up with the standard salary level. Other contributing factors may have been that you wanted to go into a different line of work for which you were well qualified and more interested, or that your company had a reorganization and no longer required the position you had.

Avoid saying that you were fired, if you were; rather, mention the other factors involved, such as the job not being sufficiently oriented to your training or abilities, or that it involved a great deal of travel.

Whatever reasons you give, point out that the job for which you are being interviewed does not have the same problem that led to your leaving your last job. If you say that you left your last job because it involved too much travel, or was in a different area, or was not up to your skills, then point out that this job does not require travel, is in a part of the country where you want to live, or is more in line with your training aptitudes. If you were fired because of medical reasons, explain that they have been professionally taken care of. If you were fired because of family problems, assure the employer that they have been taken care of. Whatever the reason, explain in a positive manner how the situation has been, or will be, corrected.

In describing your last job, say as many positive things as you can about it even if it had many undesirable features — all jobs do. Do not say anything negative about the company or the supervisor — only that your needs did not fit in with the job. If you criticize the company or supervisor, the interviewer will view you as someone who is likely to do the same to him if you are hired in his company. On the other hand, he will regard you as appreciative and pleasant if he hears you speaking in a positive way about a company you left and will feel that you are likely to be appreciative and pleasant regarding the job for which you are interviewed.

#### 5. WHAT KIND OF SALARY DO YOU NEED?

When you are asked about your salary requirements in an interview, the interviewer is attempting to determine whether your expectations are too high for them. Of course, you want as much as the company is willing to pay. By naming a salary at this stage of the hiring process, you can only harm yourself. If you mention a lower salary than the interviewer has in mind, you may be hired at a level less than is standard and below what you might have obtained. If you mention a higher salary, it may be more than what he had been thinking of paying and he may well terminate the interview and decide he can't afford you. The wisest course is to avoid mentioning any specific figures or even a salary range until he has decided that you are the right person for the job and has offered it to you. Having decided that you are

a good potential employee, he may well decide that he is willing to start you off at a higher salary level.

One way to answer the question of your required salary level is to tell the interviewer that you would work for whatever he feels is fair based on your qualifications and the company's standard salary level for that position. You might do this by saying, "I know you'll pay as much as I'm worth to you and I can't ask for much more than that", or "You probably have set rates and whatever that is, I'd feel that was fair", or "Your company has a reputation for fairness so I know you will pay an amount that is right for me".

After the interview is over and you have definitely been offered the job, you can then decide whether the salary is high enough. If the salary is too low when the job has been offered, tell the employer about the problem that you have in accepting the job. Tell him that you believe you can do better elsewhere, or that you have been paid more in similar jobs in the past, or that you have another possibility or offer that pays better, whichever one of these reasons applies to you. Tell him what all of the positive attractions are of the job he has offered and how much you wish to accept if only the salary could be increased somewhat. Explain that your decision to accept would be much easier if he could find some way to offer a higher salary. If he is unable to do so, suggest that you would feel more comfortable if you had some assurance that a raise or promotion might be possible in the near future if your work will justify it.

#### 6. WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU INSTEAD OF SOMEONE ELSE?

When you are asked this direct question, the interviewer is asking you, in a sense, to make his decision for him. If you have to hesitate or can think of only one or two reasons, then he will feel that the reasons are not too obvious or are not sufficient. You should quickly list your skills and positive characteristics. Some of these might be: I'm friendly and get along well with everyone; I'm very experienced, I'm very good at that type of work; I'm conscientious; I am efficient; I'm a company person for whomsoever I work and give everything I've got; I don't have to be supervised and always get my job done correctly and quickly; I like this company and would enjoy working here; I'm not a clock-watcher; I'm dependable and don't take time off; I've got many extra skills that would be useful in the job besides the ones that are needed; I work harder than other people; I am always willing to work overtime and get the job done.

#### 7. HOW MUCH WERE YOU ABSENT FROM WORK IN YOUR LAST JOB?

An employer wants to be able to depend on his employees being present, and this question is designed to determine whether he could depend on you. If you were absent a good deal because of some reason, tell the interviewer what the reason was and why you feel that it will no longer be a problem. "I'm in great health and don't expect to be taking any days off". If you are elderly or are a mother of young children or have some type of visible impairment such as a missing limb, this question of dependability is more likely to be asked. The same is true of some types of jobs that have an especially high absence rate and suffer a serious disruption when employees are absent, such as production line work. In answering this question, stress what your past reliability has been and give assurance of your future reliability.