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A Naturalistic inquiry into the experience of job loss

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A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF JOB LOSS
(In transition from the Home Care Program and Placement Coordination Services, to the Community Care Access Centres in Ontario, Canada)

BY:
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ABSTRACT

This research paper is the result of a "naturalistic inquiry" to explore job loss, as experienced by displaced senior managers of the Long Term Care System in Ontario, in 1997. The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of a group of downsized Home Care and Placement Coordination managers, who lost their jobs in the transition to Community Care Access Centres. The methodology included the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews (which were tape recorded), to collect the data from a sample of volunteers across the province. This qualitative study validated other research, which has demonstrated that sudden organizational change has predictable effects on people. The fifteen managers interviewed for this study, demonstrated the familiar five stages of a patient's experience of impending death, as described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. In today's employment uncertainty, Human Resource and Career Counseling personnel can learn from the experience of these former managers. Information about what the experience of job loss means to people and new attitudes about the role of work in our lives, could make the difference between trauma or transition.
DEFINITIONS

Authentic Power: Power that is based upon the perceptions and values of the spirit (multisenory). A power that loves life in every form that it appears, a power that does not judge what it encounters, a power that perceives meaningfulness and purpose in the smallest details on earth (Zukav, 1989).

Consciousness: Information of the system; the capacity of the system to interact with the environment.

Empower: To give power and authority to; to enable; to permit.

Empowerment: Enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives through a relationship with the community (Rappaport, 1989).


External Power: Power based on the perception of the five senses. Power to control the environment, and those within it, is power over what can be felt, smelled, tasted, heard or seen (Zukav, 1989).

Health: A resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capacities (World Health Organization, 1984).

Job: Tasks or units of work for pay.

Naturalistic Inquiry: Qualitative research study for the purpose of exploring human experience in context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Transformation: The induced or spontaneous change of one element into another.

Transitions: An event in which an individual (a) experiences a personal discontinuity in life, and (b) must develop new assumptions or behavioral responses because the situation is new or the required behavioral adjustments are novel (Hopson & Adams, 1977).
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990’s, organizational restructuring in the health care industry has left many employees vulnerable. Downsizing, mergers and streamlining of management have resulted in health care managers and others facing job loss. The trend towards integrated health care systems has surfaced as an opportunity to increase financial accountability and control costs while, at the same time, reduce fragmentation of services.

Community health care organizations in Ontario are no exception to this trend. As early as 1986, the Honourable Ron Van Horne, Minister for Senior Citizens Affairs, promised the people of Ontario that his first priority would be to enhance community care services, by improving access to the delivery of services, thereby preventing unnecessary institutionalization. Ten years later, all three major political parties (Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic Party) had developed policies for a new way to plan, manage and deliver services and community support. In 1996, the government of the day unveiled plans for Community Care Access Centres (CCAC’s).

The reforms of January 25, 1996, were intended to simplify access, preserve existing community-based organizations and reduce administration. The government moved immediately to streamline 74 existing Home Care Programs (HCP) and Placement Coordination Service (PCS) programs into 43 Community Care Access Centres. The
staff and unionized workers were assured a transfer to the new organization but the fate of the management positions rested with the CCAC Boards.

By May of 1996, the CCAC Project Team had placed advertisements in local newspapers, inviting applications for the Board of Directors of the CCAC’s. Many of the CCAC Boards were announced throughout the summer of 1996 and most of the incorporations took another four months. The early announcements for new Chief Executive Officers (CEO’s) were made in late November.

A December 12, 1996 letter, from the Ontario Home Care Program Association (OHCPA) had this to say of the first appointments;

“It is with some concern that the members of OHCPA are receiving the news of the appointments to the CEO position, for each of the CCACs. While we appreciate that the Boards are autonomous and are being encouraged to advertise publicly and widely for the position, we are concerned at the pattern that is emerging. We fear that there will be little or no continuity between the present Home Care Programs and The Community Care Access Centres, due to the fact that, in many instances, neither the existing Program Director nor PCS Director has been hired for the CEO position, and we do not believe that this was the intent of the Ministry when the decision was made to amalgamate the two programs under the umbrella of the CCAC.

The question of conflict of interest with the hiring of Long Term Care Area staff has been raised previously with the Ministry’s CCAC Project Team but the issue has been raised again with the recent announcements....” (Appendix one)

Loss of job among the former Home Care Directors and PCS Directors quickly presented as a troubling Human Resource issue. The complex political, economic, and personal context in which the job loss occurred made it a phenomenon, suited to a naturalistic inquiry. The purpose of this interpretive action research design is to describe the experience of job loss for Home Care and Placement Coordination Service managers,
who lost their job in the merger of the two agencies into Community Care Access Centres.

Data gathered by observing the experience of downsized managers, in this particular health care restructuring, will validate the experiences for those who participated and will confirm or refute other research in the area of job loss. Studying this phenomenon may help those in similar situations, with career growth, self-insight and communication. By better understanding their experiences, predictions may be made in relationship to health care restructuring, and measures will be offered to enable personal and organizational growth.
~CHAPTER TWO~

LITERATURE REVIEW

In our social and organizational systems, adaptation to downsizing, restructuring and other large-scale change is occurring at a much slower rate than actual job losses. Business and government face up to this crisis with strategic plans and business approaches. However, the costs of these approaches have been organizational trauma. As a consequence, the partnership between governance/ownership and staff has been eroded. Organizations are feeling powerless and employees are feeling overburdened and overstressed. The need for meaningful work experiences has not changed, but our ability to address these needs has deteriorated. As a result, business and services are suffering the long-term effects of short-term decision making around Human Resource issues. The need for research in the experience of job loss has never been more obvious. Job loss and the effects of job loss increasingly affect society as a whole and the future of humanity. Further research will lead us to develop new thinking, new perspectives and to gain new insights into individual career development and organizational Human Resource development.

The emotional, psychological and financial impact of job loss on individuals and society in general, has begun to receive growing recognition, as we move from a post industrial society to an information/knowledge age (Banathy, 1994; Latack et al., 1995). Previous qualitative research on job loss suggests that experience of the event is a significant life crisis and that, although unique to the individual, it follows a familiar process. Researchers have also found the impact of job loss is considerable, even without long term unemployment (Latack & Dozier, 1986). However, at least one other
researcher documented that the health-damaging effects of job loss were reversible when the participants found other jobs (House, 1989). Both qualitative and quantitative studies have linked various stress symptoms and ill health to loss of job (Westin, 1991; Kessler et al., 1989; Feather and Baber, 1983; Jacobson, 1987). Depression, anxiety, minor psychiatric morbidity and decreased self-esteem and life satisfaction have been demonstrated as reactions to job loss (Caplan et al., 1989). A ten year study of employees terminated when a sardine factory in Norway was shut down, quantitatively demonstrated that the lives of those who lost their jobs had been profoundly affected. This research was able to establish a causal relationship between job loss and various measures of health such as sick time and disability pension (Westin, 1990). These studies, although they demonstrate the significance of the crisis of job loss and the potential long-term cost to the overall system, are limited in guiding further understanding of this experience, in the context of current business culture. From that perspective, little is still known about how to prevent the devastating emotional, psychological and financial effects of the event.

The effects of job loss also include the experiences of leaving, letting go and moving on. Extensive qualitative research has been universally accepted in helping us understand the experience of individuals facing the ultimate loss of death (Kubler-Ross, 1969) and parallels can be drawn with the experience of job loss. The predictable and sequential stages in the process of death and dying have been observed in other losses as well (Viorst, 1986). Many researchers have studied individual variation in reaction to grief and bereavement (Zisook et al., 1982) and in relationship to job loss (Jacobson, 1987; Armstrong-Stassen, 1994). Research has addressed suffering from various
perspectives and extensively from the perspective of approaching death and dying (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The role of loss and suffering, in growth and development, has been studied (Viorst, 1986). These studies are important because they recognize that job loss is a process rather than an outcome.

The recognition of loss of self within the bureaucratic context has also been researched through qualitative study (Ferguson, 1984). The study of how modern organizations have tremendous capacity to hurt people and damage human possibility (Ferguson, 1984) acknowledges the interaction of the context of work experience with an individual’s sense of self. Unfortunately, this research does not go on to look at the link between loss of self to job and loss of job.

“Necessary losses” have been linked to transition and transformation, which ultimately lead to the becoming of a separate self (Viorst, 1986). This process of “becoming” and the increased awareness that accompanies the journey, have been well researched (Rogers, 1961). Additionally, research has linked increased conscious awareness and health (Newman, 1994; Chopra, 1993).

Although little research has been done linking job loss to empowerment and transformation, research has linked job loss to transition through stress (Jacobson, 1987; Caroll et al., 1995). Research, in the area of community development, has demonstrated that personal crisis is a trigger motivator to empowerment (Kieffer, 1984). The weight of research evidence views job loss as predominantly negative and the transformation evolves from the coping process. Research, looking at transition through job loss, has focused on the meaning of job loss in terms of changes in ideas, beliefs and values of those exposed to it. Job loss may have different meanings for different people. This
research led to the conclusion that the meaning of an event, as well as its stressfulness are not adequately understood when taken out of context. Although this research looked at the experience of job loss in relationship to the context in which job loss occurs, the authors concluded that it is necessary to examine the transitions in more detail (Jacobson, 1987).

In examining the context of job loss, demographics have surfaced as an important variable to be studied (Zajac and Westphal, 1996). Females within bureaucracies (Ferguson, 1986), as well as a sex-linked bias in Board committee membership in the corporate world, are demographic factors that have been researched (Bilimoria and Piderit, 1994). However, the experiences of health care managers, within a bureaucratic context in Canada, have not been researched.

The inevitability of job loss has led to a growing interest in conceptually trying to understand the process by which people cope with job loss (Kessler et al., 1989; Armstrong-Stassen, 1994; Latack et al., 1995; Caplan et al., 1989; Jacobson, 1987; Caroll et al., 1995; Westin, 1990). The insight gained from this research has added to the development of process models of coping with job loss. One intervention demonstrated positive results when the focus was on building trust, engendering skills and the motivation to use them and providing social support (Caplan et al., 1989). Other researchers have gone on to suggest a model to generate career growth through job loss (Latack and Dozier, 1986). Other researchers observed the predictability of job loss in nursing executives through the observation of warning signs (Biroidi and Gardiner, 1992). These researchers have not gone on to link the models to individual experience or context. The development of models that consider the human experience of job loss, as
well as the application of development models in the health care system where job loss is predictable, have yet to be researched.

In general, there is little research that links the human experience of job loss to career development, organizational development and outplacement counseling. There is limited literature to guide organizations in the area of Human Resources, to an understanding of the experience of job loss within the bureaucratic context, in spite of the inevitable continued personal crisis that can be anticipated by the further restructuring of health care organizations.
~CHAPTER THREE~

METHODODOLOGY

This project is a naturalistic inquiry into the experience of 15 Home Care and Placement Coordination Services senior managers who lost their positions, as a result of the implementation of Community Care Access Centres across Ontario. This is a social/behavioral inquiry and the naturalistic paradigm is the paradigm of choice (Lincoln, 1985 P. 231). The sample consisted of 14 females and one male, ranging in age from 40 to 58 years (Average=51.5). The management experience in the group ranged from 8 to 26 years (Average=14). Four of these managers had experienced a job loss prior to this one. Eleven of the fifteen reported a second income, although in one case it was reported as minor. Six participants are prepared at the Masters level, 7 at the Baccalaureate level and 2 participants had multiple diplomas (Appendix Two). The purpose of this study is to describe the problematic experiences of job loss, accumulating sufficient knowledge to lead to greater understanding or explanation.

Naturalistic inquiry is a qualitative study for the purpose of exploring a human experience in context. The design is emergent as inductive analysis begins with the data themselves, rather than with a hypothesis. It is generative in that it attempts to discover constructs through the process, and the construction of the units of analysis is derived from the behaviour observed.

This data was gathered through small focus groups and in depth interviews. Data analysis began with the very first data collection in order to facilitate an emergent design. The purpose of the focus groups was triangulation of the data gathered by interview. Rochester Institute of Technology faculty members were available for discussion and
consultation, throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Written consent for all participants was acquired and all the data were shared with the participants prior to finalization (Appendix #3a & 3b). Everyone who participated in the study was a volunteer. Four focus groups of fewer than 10 people and 7 in depth unstructured interviews were held to study the experience of job loss in the context of Long Term Care restructuring (Appendix #4). The downsizing took place between December 1996 and May 1997. The data was collected from March of 1997 to May of 1997.

The interviewer in this study, was herself a downsized manager during this Long Term Care restructuring. The interviewer and interviewees are to be considered caring companions (professional colleagues) with a commitment to empathic search for meaningful information (Lincoln, 1985).

The sample was purposefully selected with the intent that all eligible individuals would have the opportunity to volunteer for focus group and/or interview participation. The potential population was the 74 directors of Home Care and PCS and an unknown number of other managers at a senior level, who would lose jobs in the transition to the new organization. At the time of writing, 12 of the 74 potential population were not eligible for this study because they had been successful candidates for the new CEO positions. Some potential participants did not take part due to the time and expense involved in travelling. Individuals who were able to gather together, within the Southwestern region, were the primary participants in the research. Of the fifteen participants, 13 were from the pool of 62 directors who were not transferred to the CCAC. Two participants were from the pool of other managers who lost their jobs during the transition. When the data collection began (March '97), 16 of the 43 areas
had gone through the process of advertising and selecting CEO’s for the newly structured board. At the time of writing (July 1997), all but two of the 43 CCAC’s had appointed CEO’s. At this time, only one PCS director and 11 Home Care Directors were successful in the competition for CEO of CCAC (out of possible 41). One displaced Home Care Director and 14 of the PCS Directors were retained in capacities within the CCAC, other than CEO (Appendix #5a & 5b).

All the four focus groups and seven interviews were taped for fidelity, and field notes were taken for validation (Appendix #5). The interviews and data analyses were conducted concurrently, as an open ended and evolving process, from unitizing to categorizing. Recorded interviews were listened to repeatedly until themes and patterns began to emerge. Once the themes emerged, other information began to fall into place. This was done systematically and intuitively, beginning with the first interview. Data collection was terminated when no new information came up on interview (saturation).

The human nature of naturalistic inquiry precludes objectivity. Trustworthiness was addressed through the use of audio recordings, which were reviewed for authenticity by an advisor. With the exception of the final focus group, PCS participants were collected in one focus group and Home Care participants in the other focus groups, to provide a trusting environment. The data, once compiled, was returned to all the participants for participant validation and a final focus group (#4) was arranged for any adjustments to the derived interpretation of information presented.

Once the data collection began, the interviewer built upon her intuitive and expressive knowledge to fulfill the requirements of the inquiry. The researcher/interviewer held many advantages as an inquirer, besides her traditional
holistic emphasis. She had participated in major research projects where interviews and focus groups had been used as part of the action research and she was familiar with the theories of naturalistic inquiry. As well, she had many years of practice as a nurse and was comfortable interviewing. However, she was underprepared in two areas:

(1) In hindsight, active listening required much more practice than was anticipated.
(2) The potentially therapeutic opportunities of a knowing human connection were only understood retrospectively. For this reason, during the interviews, the researcher only understood the information from her own perspective. However, on analysis, it was clear that truly understanding people’s experience from their own perspectives would have triggered different responses from the interviewer and may have led to a more mutual understanding of the phenomenon.

The focus groups had small numbers of participants due to the geographical challenges and in retrospect, were more like collective individual interviews. This was most characteristic of the focus group with three members. The fact that many of the participants were former colleagues of the researcher, led to a mutually supportive gathering that several members commented on as being helpful.

After the third focus group, no new themes were emerging and although the individual interviews were unique and people’s experiences were felt differently, the themes and patterns became relatively predictable after 4 or 5 interviews. No new interviews were scheduled at this point of saturation.
~CHAPTER FOUR~

"Understanding in depth, what one person is experiencing can provide vital clues to what others are going through" (Briskin, 1996, P.31).

FINDINGS

In this study, the individual experience of job loss was described within the context in which the job loss occurred. As people described their experiences, the context came up in every interview. In fact, it was such a dominant theme that the interviewer had to probe for other aspects of the experience.

4.1 Context of Job Loss

Many people described how confident they were going into the application process, as they applied for the new positions of CEO of the CCAC. They spoke about the research they did for the interview itself and how they had worked the last few years to enhance their management skills for new responsibilities. In reflecting over their experiences, some of the participants commented:

- "I felt extremely confident. I had a really good relationship with the CCAC Board."
- "I thought I had a very good likelihood of being selected...."
- "I really felt as secure as secure could be."

The security was felt no less by those individuals on contract as opposed to those with "permanent" positions, as illustrated by the following comment:

"One year ago, I signed a contract but I was given a verbal commitment that the job would last 3 more years...[there was] a 99.9% chance that it would roll over [to the CCAC]. I'm the .1%. In retrospect, I really wish [the verbal commitment] had [been] written into my contract."

As participants contemplated the series of events in retrospect, they wondered if they had done enough to try and influence the outcome of the search for a CEO. They
questioned if the people who got the jobs had done more networking to assure their position. One person said,

“I guess there was a level of naivete. I think I was really naïve” [and later]
“I think there was a lot of influence peddling going on.”

In spite of this realization, people who lost their job did not express regret about their actions. One person said, “I never did any probing. I don’t think I’d want to do that.”

By contrast, when one participant saw the signs and took an active role, she described it as “playing hardball with the [bureaucracy].” In reflecting on how hard her organization had worked to prevent the erosion of the management, she said,

“We’ve worked incredibly hard…I made an incredible difference…I think I have paid an incredible price…I paid a personal price….”

Other participants frequently expressed a belief that their competence and experience were not considered during the recruitment process for a new CEO. Although none of the participants were given reasons why they were not successful, they had these observations:

- “No one investigated my performance.”
- “You could tell by the looks on their faces [Board’s] that they did not understand a word I was saying.”

It seemed in some cases, the Boards were looking for reinforcement to support decisions that had already been made. Designated referees were asked the leading question:

“Can…[name] make the transition [to the new job]?” In hindsight, participants expressed confusion about what actually transpired. The Board, which was downsizing, did not take responsibility because it did not want the policy in the first place and the new Board did not feel any obligation to the incumbent. It was not clear who was responsible, and one participant suggested bureaucratic collusion when she said, “It was manipulated that
way.” Throughout the process of recruiting a new CEO, managers who were working for one Board but applying for the position with the new Board, felt caught in the middle of the politics going on between the two Boards. As one interviewee put it,

“I knew because of what was happening [at the Board level] that I was really vulnerable... I guess it was that horrible position where you’re caught.”

The dilemma of balancing responsibilities in the old job while moving on to apply for the new job, left managers more vulnerable than they were aware at the time.

Several of the participants felt strongly that the outcome was not the original intent of the policy. There was a general understanding that the intent of the policy was to give 74 incumbents an opportunity to apply for 43 jobs. So participants continued to be confused in hindsight, by the series of events that had taken place:

- “This situation is murky.”
- “You’re caught between two Boards who are potentially your employers.”
- “You never knew what the motivation was... we had no idea what the CCAC [Boards] were looking for and we had no idea what the Long Term Care Office was telling them....”

In general, the participants felt there was an agenda within the bureaucracy of the Ministry to have a new beginning and that the new Boards were influenced by that. Additionally, given the chaotic climate of health care, participants were aware of other local politics, which played a role in the decisions about CEO’s. In hindsight, as one participant listened to the story of others, she realized,

“there are more and more clues that there was systematic bias [against the incumbents].”

Issues came up about the importance of gender in the context of this job loss. Participants expressed a definite devaluing of themselves as people throughout this
period of time and questions came up about the dominant values in the process. At the
time of writing, 13 of the 41 announced CEO’s were male. Prior to the reorganization,
there had been 4 males out of 74 positions. Only one of these four male incumbents lost
his job. One person said it this way:

“We are in this female dominated profession...we have
been...um...in...um...a health care program that has been undervalued,
deresourced and...it’s coming of age and the men are going to take it
over and I’ll tell you I’m pissed off...because I think that now there is a
new respect for these jobs.”

Another person said:

“I remember saying [a few years ago] that you are going to see a lot more
men....”

Another participant saw what was happening as a “backlash against pay equity.” She
said:

“They want the power back...the old boys are back in power...we got a
little [power] like the women during the war.”

Not only did these individuals feel hurt by the very system to which they had dedicated
their time and energy, but also they felt as though they no longer understood the context.

A few of the participants described the loss of ability to maintain their values, if
they stayed in the new system. As they watched the process, they felt it was impossible
to be themselves and be part of the new governance structure. One person said,

“I was grateful for the choice...when in actual fact I don’t know that I had
a choice...for them [new Board] to expect respect and commitment....I
just didn’t think I could do it.”

Another person commented,

“I was told it would not be appropriate for me to apply for the CEO job. I
have my own standards and I wouldn’t keep my mouth shut.”
Others who looked at the system in retrospect, expressed relief that they did not have to be part of the chaos. Once the new CEO was announced in their respective areas, there was confusion about how the unsuccessful candidates would be managed. The outgoing Boards had done no planning, as they were also caught by surprise. The agenda of the new Boards was not explicit. Many of the rejected managers were therefore expected to report for work following the announcements of the new CEO’s. Participants commented this way, “There is something sick about how they treated us.” She went on to say, “As women we tend to rationalize sick behaviour.” Another said, “The whole process seemed dishonest…you were always caught going around in circles.”

Another commented, “I have a feeling that the whole thing is rotten…and…this kind of thing is probably going on in many places but no one knows.”

In summary, the context within which this job loss occurred, was seen as negative and devaluing of the participants as human beings. No one seemed comfortable in acknowledging the reality of the situation and no one took responsibility. Many participants were left feeling somewhat victimized, with no place in the system to turn for support. They expressed a new level of mistrust for the system. The entire context remains unexplainable to many participants, even in hindsight. The new CEO’s are doing a similar job to the former directors and one interviewee describes the whole process as “much ado about nothing.”
4.2 EXPERIENCE OF JOB LOSS

"The demands of the workplace can be absolutely ruthless and crushing, while the dreams of the people in the same workplace can be inspiring" (Briskin, 1996, P.20).

For the participants in this study, loss of job was a profound and painful experience, which forced them to reflect on what “job” had meant to them and who they were without the job. As the people in this study spoke about their commitment to the job and what the job meant to them, they spoke about how they “lost” themselves to the job. Many of them described their exaggerated commitment to the job as an expectation of themselves. Individuals said, “I did the job the only way [I] knew how.” One person said, “I really liked my job. I am programmed to work the way I do.” Another person said, “I loved the job more than any I had done.” Individuals described themselves as workaholics and one person said, “My husband says I am too attached to the job.”

Dianne Fossel, in her book Working Ourselves to Death, describes workaholism as the “cleanest of all addictions.”

One participant described how the job loss “fundamentally changed everything.” A new job required relocation; her children went to live with their father; her family home was up for sale; she felt like a stranger in her own town, and her income was dramatically altered. For the managers in this study, work provided structure and a sense of purpose, socialization and self-esteem, not to mention financial security and a dream of a comfortable old age.

Involuntarily losing the job prematurely, was a crisis for all of the fifteen individuals interviewed and there were many personal losses described along with the loss of job. Few, if anyone in this study, felt they had been recognized for their worth in the process
of restructuring and many of them would not want to lose themselves to another job in the future. They spoke about their personal paradigm of work being altered, and they spoke of a greater need for self, apart from job. This realization or insight comes as a result of having lost their job. One person reflected, “I’ll never take stability for granted again.”

The participants in this study, recovering from the personal crisis of job loss, demonstrated that crisis or change [job loss] triggered a response that was “like a death.” The process paralleled the familiar five stages of a patient’s experience of impending death as identified by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. These stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance were illuminated in the findings of this study as predictable stages of loss and grief. Death as a metaphor surfaced in many of the interviews. The following recurring themes emerged as individual stories unfolded:

- Experiencing the trauma,
- Feeling loss of self,
- Suffering-experiencing death and dying,
- Experiencing conscious awareness, and
- Moving on.
The trauma of losing the job plunged participants into feelings of loss of self that led to depression, similar to the experience of death and dying. Out of this suffering came an increased conscious awareness of self which led to a transition of moving on.
• Experiencing the Trauma
   Shock and Denial:

When asked to think back to how they felt when they were informed that they were not successful applicants, many of the participants in the study expressed attitudes of shock and disbelief. Their disbelief was expressed this way:

- "I couldn’t believe that...that...they would take someone who knew the community and do that to them."
- "It’s just something that I couldn’t believe."
- "It was a real shock...I really thought I had value to the organization...I had a good relationship with the Board...."
- "I was just blown away."
- "I never had a clue [in reference to the loss of job]."

Similarly, to Kubler-Ross’s patients, this shock and disbelief was a temporary experience from which they recuperated.

As the managers in the study tried to piece the scenario together, in retrospect, they realized how denial had played a role in their experience. They said:

- "In hindsight, I should have seen the handwriting on the wall."
- "I totally blocked it" [what was happening at the time]."
- "I wasn’t piecing it together."
- "All of a sudden it was like a light went on."
- "I probably should have seen the ad as a signal” [the ad had asked for lesser qualifications than she, the incumbent possessed].
- "They [the Board] didn’t come into the office...they seemed to want to keep their distance...I told them we have been left out of the information loop and we don’t feel good about it."
- "You get the sense you are the enemy” [of the CCAC Board].
- "You know...I didn’t see it...."

By contrast, one of the managers who was not surprised, talked about how the signs were all there. She said,

"It was fundamentally clear that things were going to change...fundamentally...structurally."
This individual had been through a restructuring earlier in her career and she demonstrated the learning that takes place through the experience. She validated this when she said, “I’ve been through this before...I ... so I don’t get caught by surprise.” Surprise was not a feeling that people liked. It would have been helpful for the information to be more explicit.

**Anger:**

Once the individuals got over the shock, they were “angry that [they] didn’t get the job.” It did not seem fair. They expressed their anger in different ways about different happenings in the process. These are some of their comments:

- “I felt angry...I was somewhat bitter...you feel like the rug’s been pulled out under you...”
- “I didn’t lose it [job]...It was taken from me.”
- “I still [a year later] get angry about it [when speaking about a former job loss].”
- “I have worked an 8 or 9 hour day from the start...I think I was really quite angry... And then I got feeling really angry for [the people left behind].”
- “I have so many unfinished projects...and I feel bad...that frustrates me and angers me....”
- “I almost felt some betrayal, ...I shared everything I discovered and found with [Director] and now [Director] is doing my job.”
- “I just felt...a bit...a bit cheated that I couldn’t spend 2 more years there.”
- “there were days when you felt angry but you didn’t know who to blame.”
- “I have strong feelings whether it is anger...I am pissed off about how I was treated.”
- “I think the anger for me came with this consultant saying it [the final decision about who would get the job] was just a flip of the coin.”

Anger was not an easy feeling for people to talk about. One person said, “professionally...you should be able to handle it [anger].” They did not want to feel angry, however being angry delayed the feelings of loss, which felt even worse.
• Feeling Loss of Self

"To be successful in the new world of efficiency, some part of the self had to be like a machine, without emotion, hence an enigma to others as well as to oneself." (Briskin, 1996, P.106)

Anger and a great sense of loss flowed in and out of many of the participants. However, not everyone felt the profound loss. As one person said,

“I didn’t feel traumatized…angry but not traumatized because I know my skills are OK…there’s a difference between anger and feeling put down.”

But for many, this job loss triggered the pain of other losses as they tried to make sense of their experience. Certainly everyone interviewed, seemed to have gone over and over the details in his/her mind trying to make sense of them, struggling to find meaning in the event. Feelings of powerlessness come out of descriptions from many perspectives. A few individuals said it this clearly:

• “It was the most helpless feeling I have ever had in my life…in terms of employment…there was nothing you could do about it.”
• “It is the powerlessness…the absolutely…gut level powerlessness….”

The perception of feeling invisible within the organization, once the announcement was made, was expressed by a few of the participants and contributed to the powerlessness and loss of meaning, as a result of loss of self. One person said:

• “They don’t mean to …but they see me as invisible.”
• “It’s like we never existed…its like Home Care never existed.”
• “One other thing I have found hard to accept…management meetings…when they talk about the future and I am not part of it.”

Individuals were aware of insensitivity to their situation and situatedness. Some of the circumstances that participants described were clearly devoid of sensitivity for them as individuals with pride in their work. One person said, “There is an expectation that I am going to train the person who is taking my job.” In some situations, there was an expectation that the managers who lost their job would participate in the transition to the
new Board and they would share their expertise with them. This contributed to the feelings of hopelessness, as pointed out by one person, “I felt so totally used.”

Individuals struggled with who they were and what the job loss meant to them. One person, while describing this “being” without working said,

“You waffle from one day to the next. Why do we feel we have to explain what we do with our life…”

Interviewer: It’s kind of our culture, I guess.

“I can’t be flippant about it any more…it’s not that easy…my biggest fear is that I’ll sit down and be a couch potato.”

Interviewer: What is bad about being a couch potato?

“It’s a sedentary lifestyle that has no meaning….”

This person went on to say, “I knew who I was when I was working!”

Another person said it this way:

“I had nothing to do… no place to go… you were disappearing into this huge hole of nothingness after having so much responsibility.”

By contrast, other participants felt in control and did not describe a loss of self. One person saw this event as a career transition:

“I have a career plan that I am executing…we all have different aspirations…I wasn’t my job…a CEO is what I am. I’ve lost a job, I haven’t lost my career.”

This person, who had been through the experience before, described this view as the “self-confidence” piece.

• Suffering – Experiencing Death and Dying

For many, the mourning of the loss led to suffering and pain expressed in various ways:

• “This is awful…it is slow torture.”
• “I was being emotionally raped...there was such a raping...there was such a personal rape that went on there...when I think about how I felt then...it’s very powerful...[tears]...it really is....”
• “You don’t know how painful it still is for me....” [about former job loss]
• “I thought I was going to go berserk...it was dreadful.”
• “The word abuse has come to mind.”

Several participants described how the devastation was so bad that it led to illness, medication, family stress and for at least one person, thoughts of suicide. One person told it this way:

“It was the loss of my...the fear...that’s what it was...I guess that’s what it was...I went through several weeks of agony...uh...you know...crying...inside the walls of my house...that was the paralysis for me.”

Later, the same person said,

“I meant it felt so bad for so long...I thought I was going out of my mind” (and later) “sometimes the feelings were so bad that death would be easier than dealing with this constant agony...unrelenting agony.”

These are some other comments:

• “I wasn’t sleeping very well.”
• “Personally, my [relationship has] been on a downward spiral.”
• “My level of anxiety is very high...I was actually at my doctor’s office...I did go on medication.”
• “I have been sick actually...I’ve lost quite a bit of weight...and I developed an infection....”
• “I know that although I didn’t ever really...aah...I think there was once or twice when I wasn’t really going to...wouldn’t have done anything...but I thought about the whole concept of suicide...and I thought about...I thought about suicide...I thought about not committing suicide...as much as I was studying the whole aspect of why people commit suicide.”

In some cases, it seemed too painful to talk about it. In spite of the personal trauma and devastation, one person said, “I didn’t want it to be a funeral.” The participants forced
themselves to carry on with work and life in the face of these feelings because they were expected to remain at work:

“It’s one of those things where there is no script...when someone dies everyone knows what to do... but here ...we had to take control in a control-less situation and weave it together.”

Some individuals felt they must have done something wrong for this job loss to have happened. They felt guilt about the job loss, as though it was a failure and guilt about the family sacrifices they had made to keep the job up until now. It seemed like a “Catch-22.” They said:

- “I think I took it personally...that I hadn’t been doing a good job.”
- “I’ve been dwelling on forgiveness...forgiving myself...for you are who you are...not the what ifs...forgiving myself is difficult when you’re a perfectionist and you don’t make compromises.”
- “I also have felt that I let my family down...I was trying to put bread and butter on the table and kind of ignoring my [family].”
- “There are 58 years gone...and I’ve missed them...there are 58 years of living that I have kind of missed.”
- “My one regret about work that I have is that I have not had enough time or enough energy to go back to school.”
- “What I regret most is that when I did go home, I didn’t have quality...I sacrificed my parenting because of my job enmeshment.”

Not understanding how the sacrifices they made had resulted in job loss left some people feeling confused. Speaking of an earlier loss of job, one participant said,

“The pain is terrible...the shock is terrible...It was a real shock...I really thought I had value to the organization...I had a good relationship with the Board...that’s why it is so confusing to me ...where did this come from.”

As well as loss of self, there was isolation and a loss of relationships. Individual participants spoke of an appreciation and respect for the staff members with whom they worked. These staff members worked hard, and in some cases, provided great fellowship and joy for the managers. It compounded the loss, when the downsized managers did not feel comfortable returning to offices, which were occupied by their competitors. So in
some cases, many cases, long term friendships were lost along with the job. One person said; “these people were important but I haven’t been back.”

- Experiencing Conscious Awareness of Self

“To give up oneself is to find oneself. The individual, having sacrificed his individuality becomes a greater individual.” (Copley, 1923, P.125)

Out of the suffering, a new self began to emerge. Many individual participants looked for hope in their circumstances and expressed optimism when thinking of the future. One person said this:

“You have to look at this as an opportunity to do something different…if I could find something that would be really a lot of fun…”

One person said coping has something to do with “how you feel about yourself.” She said, “I would never accept defeat.”

Other people described being a survivor. There was a sense that they would deal with this crisis some way. One person credited coping with previous loss for the development of her present coping skills:

“I have always been a survivor…I hate to say practice makes perfect…but you cope with one [loss] and bring some of the skills into the next loss in your life.”

As personal empowerment evolved, people looked for role models in their environment. Several of the participants talked about getting strength and gaining support from family, friends and colleagues throughout the process. Other significant people, who had lost their jobs prior to this experience, acted as role models for the participants. One participant whose husband had lost his job a few years earlier said:

“Having his [husband’s] experience was very helpful…he was very very supportive.”
Support also came through memories of mothers who also had coped with losses.

These are some of the references:

- "I’m a survivor…I remind myself of my mother…the only time I ever saw her cry was….”
- "My mother brought us up that we were all equal…she just did what she had to do…I believe that the most important relationship we have in our lives is with our mother…whether negative or positive.”
- "My mother prayed."
- "My mother worked until 70…I came from a family that had very strong women…my husband’s mother was also a very strong woman."
- "My mother is such an accepting person…."

Participants looked to the future with a reframed view of work. Some individuals felt discouraged with the public system and were looking elsewhere for the next job:

- "I don’t have a lot of passion for staying in the public system…..”
- "I thought I would stay in health care, but now I don’t know."

**Moving On**

As time passed, resignation became a more energetic expression of letting go. For some, it was rather spontaneous, as one person commented, "I just said, Oh to hell with it!" Another person saw it as a more gradual process:

"I find myself thinking less and less about that [negative experience] and starting to focus more and more on where I am going from here."

For another person, letting go had something to do with forgiving. She said,

"there has to be a level of forgiveness to let go…also it is a two pronged forgiveness… forgiveness of me and forgiveness of others…..”

For some, moving on meant redefinition of self and a reframing of work. Part of the self-awareness that came out of the depression and struggle was an awareness that they had lost themselves in the job. This is how one person reflected on her new self:

"Having balance [in my life] is much more important to me now…I have a more philosophical beat. I really look at life that way now…I may not
always stay here [new job] not having a job may not be the end of the world.”

Interviewer: Are you inferring by the comment “I really look at life that way now” that it is different from how you did [look at it] prior to job loss?

“Absolutely… I was so enmeshed in the job… the value I placed on ‘me’ was tied into being the director… and actually at that level of enmeshment it is very unhealthy.”

Others equated moving on with health:

“You have to get on with life… it ties into my personal belief that health is self-actualization.”

Individuals looking at reframing work, described getting on with life as approaching work differently:

- “I’m out of the office at 5 [now].”
- “I will not be a slave ever again to a job.”
- “I never really looked at what I was going to do with the next phase of my life.”
- “I thought… never again will I knock myself silly… never again will I invest that much in a job… I no longer carry home briefcases full of work.”

Recovery from ‘Loss of Self’ was demonstrated by one person who said of her current position, “I would just as soon not be given any fancy title… I’m not who my job is anymore.” She said she felt really good about this realization.

People did not describe the other side of this transition as happiness, but they did describe the new self as more aware. They said things like:

Interviewer: How are you today?

- “I have a more philosophical bent now… I’m more at ease… more of a perspective… and I have huge amounts of empathy for colleagues [those who are going through the experience of being downsized].”
- “I’ve started to do some reading about meaning in life… what else are you going to do that is going to give you some personal satisfaction… I have to feel needed and I have to feel intellectually competent… I’ve
been exploring...I suspect I’ll probably apply for a Board...I’ll probably end up doing volunteer work in the community.”

A few of the participants, in their struggle to find meaning, identified a new awareness of nature and community. They described a link between meaningfulness and the struggle like this:

“Now that you have some time to think about this kind of thing...I mean...probably...if we had this interview 2 years ago it wouldn’t be the same...right...so it is your experience and your environment that influences the way you are.”

Interviewer: Does this relate to the empowerment thing?

“There has to be...there has to be...the outcome has to be worth the energy you put into it...[long pause]”

Interviewer: And when you are working on your self-development, does the outcome feel selfish?

“No but you know...it’s like...two months now we’ve had this frigging winter weather...but you know...you think of well...just...just when spring comes and I get in the garden...I mean I never got in the garden when I worked...I didn’t have time to get in the garden...now it’s the only thing I want to do...get in the garden...I walk around the house every day to see which flowers are up and which ones the squirrels have eaten off...I never had time to do that kind of thing and maybe if I had time and...I didn’t bother...for some reason or other, nature...or something...seems more real...I mean I’ve watched the Hale-Bopp comet so much...I mean I was never interested in that kind of stuff...What was the last thing we had?”

Interviewer: It was an eclipse wasn’t it?

“Yes...why am I interested now? It all seems so important and it seems like I am pretty meaningless in the scheme of all of this...stuff...that I’m...that I’m more aware of what’s going on...I mean we really are pretty insignificant.”

This same person connected the struggle with the things that had meaning now.

“Now...I...I mean it is not an unpleasant feeling not to have to go to work...it isn’t...but I’ll tell you...I have to...I mean I force myself to have
Moving on meant accepting the past. Relationships were described as very important throughout the process. In retrospect, several participants expressed regret that they had not spent more time developing those relationships throughout the period of time that they were working. One reflective participant said this of relationships and the future:

"I...I...I'm not sure what I would do in terms of...day to day...but I would be...I would be comfortable with...with...just being with me. I don't need the job...to validate me."

Interviewer: Do you know what you do need?

"That's one of the biggest dilemmas of my life...I want...I want peace and happiness. I think that's pretty basic to what everyone wants. I want...a meaningful relationship...I want to form a...a new relationship with my children. I want relationships but I also want peace and serenity."

Some individuals recognized the transition as long term and looked forward to the transformation. One person said this:

"My two months of being able to sit back and reflect have not done a whole lot towards a vision for the future..." "It's a bit like the grieving process...it takes a long time" "I'll be very interested to know where I'll be in 2 years..."

As the participants talked about their experiences, they were able to describe the many insights, opportunities and personal strengths that had come through dealing with
this crisis. Some described a kind of transformation that arose out of the crisis. One participant talked about the increased spirituality she had developed throughout the process. One person said, “one of the things that I didn’t understand before, that I understand better now, is living in the moment.”

Generally, people agreed “job loss sucks.” The losses are profound and most people felt they paid “an incredible price” for the job. Despite the catastrophe of the events, everyone was struggling to “move on” as they described that as their only alternative. One participant who was struggling with compounded losses put it this way, “I feel like I stepped off a cliff…but it’s O.K.” This comment that “things are not O.K. but that’s O.K.” has been validated by others who write about transitions (Steinem, 1994). Two participants said that, in spite of the consequences, they would do it again:

- “I don’t think I would have changed anything…I don’t have…any regret…not one.”
- “If you ask me if I would have done anything differen…no…I would have taken the job.”

There was recognition that life carries with it, pain and suffering, and in hindsight, these participants did not want to avoid life. Another participant expressed it this way; “God expects us to do some things.”

There was optimism, care and concern for their fellow man and an obvious sense of community in many of the stories. There was great strength and survival instincts, as people fought against becoming a ‘victim’, while exercising their freedom to choose their attitude in this given set of circumstances. Participants talked about developing a sense of humour or using humour to help make sense out of their stories. Although the participants agreed that you were “either anointed or iced” in this process, they were
going to rise above it. Humour helped them put it in balance. In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl says of humour:

“Humour was another of the soul’s weapons in the fight for self-preservation. It is well known that humour, more than anything else in the human make-up, can afford an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds.” (Frankl, 1984, P.54)
~CHAPTER 5~

**DISCUSSION**

5.1  **The Context**

"One doesn't have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over others. It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as those over whom it is exercised."

(Focault, 1980, P. 156)

Individuals in this study felt a loss of self within the bureaucratic context of their jobs. They expressed isolation, a lack of connectedness to the system, a depersonalization, and they ultimately felt invisible and cut off. Some expressed a gender-linked system bias while the only male in the study experienced the same isolation and rejection. The participants felt lured into a false sense of security at the outset, giving them a feeling of trust in the system and in the individuals involved in the process. The contrast between their perception and reality became clear, as the gap between the values of the participants and the values of the organization were highlighted, throughout their experience. The participants felt frustrated and powerless when there was no place to turn with their concerns. The old Board and the new Board were separate entities within the same bureaucracy and 'no one took responsibility'.

A brief discussion about "bureaucracy" is necessary to understand the particular context, in which loss of self occurred, into perspective. The experience of the study group highlighted four particular aspects of bureaucracy:

- Relationships and communication,
- Dominant values,
- Implicit and explicit messages, and
- Diffusion of responsibility.
• **Relationships and Communication**

Bureaucracy is viewed as both a structure and a process. The large size and complex structure of bureaucracy, to a process of formalized relationships, which prevent people from connectedness. Bureaucracy is about power. Although there is shared power in the system, it is delegated vertically to individuals who have demonstrated consistent values and goals with those ‘in power.’ Power is seen as something that is “external”, meaning it can only be acquired through the five senses, and must be distributed based on competition (Zukav, 1989). The formalized relationships prevent connectedness’ and promote depersonalization and alienation. Since people develop ‘self’ through a series of interactions with others, bureaucracy threatens self-identity (Ferguson, 1984). This predictable risk, along with a lack of awareness described by the participants as “naivete” helps us understand the loss of self, as described throughout the interviews. The individual experience was shaped by the context in which it occurred. Biordi and Gardiner quote other nurse managers as being “too innocent to see it [firing] coming”, in an article where they describe a constellation of warning signs of impending job loss (Biordi and Gardiner, 1992).

• **Dominant Values**

Bureaucracy, viewed as a social system in Ontario, necessarily reflects the dominant values of that social context. The CCAC Boards, within the context of this study, were appointed by the bureaucracy within the Progressive Conservative government of the day. Language and reference points are gender specific and as long as the dominant power develops the models, the models will reflect the language of the dominant power. This may become exclusionary. The feminine perspective within this
context is, not surprisingly, a minority view. The experience of the women in this study is validated in the literature (Ferguson, 1984). Ferguson qualifies her case by explaining that experience, which is typically female is not the same as saying all women have the same experience or that no men have those experiences. The fact that the male participant had a similar experience also supports the view that the issue is broader than one of gender. Demographics, as a factor in the selection of CEOs in other contexts, have been studied by others. Research has show that more powerful Boards are more likely to change CEO characteristics in the direction of their own demographic profile (Zajac and Westphal, 1998). Other recent research found evidence of sex-based bias in Fortune 300 firms when they tested predictors of the odds of membership on certain Board committees for male and female directors (Bilimora and Piderit, 1994).

- **Implicit and Explicit Messages**

  Whilst bureaucracy gives the explicit message that it is neutral politically, Ferguson describes it as much like “explicitly authoritarian political systems” (Ferguson, 1984). As one arm of the bureaucracy placated the incumbents, another arm was going in a different policy direction. The information that passed through the channels was selectively screened along the way and this left the study participants out of the loop and confused about the events. Their perception of how their values aligned with the values of the bureaucracy was not, in reality, how they experienced it throughout the process. The interaction of the value systems defined the meaning of the experience to the participants. The meaning of job loss was experienced within the context of the bureaucracy.
• **Diffusion of Responsibility**

Another characteristic of bureaucracies is the diffusion of responsibility. This is one way of creating perceived accountability. By assuring policies and guidelines have the least opportunity to be opposed, they are viewed and modified by everyone with a vested interest in making them work. This assures successful implementation and prevents opposition. No one person is ultimately responsible for the new direction. In the implementation of a restructuring policy that is intended to leave some people without a job, the preparatory process becomes even more important. By dividing up the pieces of the implementation policy, no one needs to feel accountable for the system as a whole. The participants’ experience, that no one took responsibility, is the inevitable and intentional outcome of the bureaucratic process and structure.

5.2 **A Personal Experience**

“Metaphorically, a psychological death occurs whenever we are forced to let go of something or someone and must grieve for the loss. The death may be an aspect of ourselves, an old role, a former position, or beauty or other youthful qualities that are now gone and must be mourned; or a dream that is no more. Or it may be a relationship ended by death or distance, that leaves us grieving” (Bolen, 1984).

No matter how the stories of the world differ in detail, there are always recognizable common themes. Loss of job is no different. While qualitative research does not produce generalizations, the experience of job loss within the bureaucratic context may provide helpful direction in planning organizations of tomorrow. Recognizing that loss is a far more encompassing theme in our life than just loss by death helps us understand that this account of job loss paralleled the experience of death and dying.
• **Experiencing the Trauma**

Participants in this study described, in great detail, the moment of knowing when "all of a sudden the light went on." It was as if time stood still for a moment and after that moment everything changed. The experience of job loss pushed individuals toward a journey of inner growth, through the suffering that evolved out of the crisis of the event. Although self-actualization is a life long journey, an event can accelerate the passage from one stage to another (Sheehy, 1976). When the event is in the form of a "life accident" and it coincides with a passage in the life cycle, it may force the resolution of passage issues more effectively (Sheehy, 1976). It is worth noting that many of the participants were in their fifties and Sheehy calls this the passage to the age of mastery (Sheehy, 1995). The negative effects of job loss documented by other researchers (Kessler, et al., 1989; Feather and Barber, 1983; Jones, 1991) were validated by this group of managers. Individuals suffered serious health problems including depression.

However, this group of individuals self-managed the prevention of further negative consequences of the event (Armstrong-Stassen, 1994; Latack, et al., 1995). Jacobson found that job loss in the recession of the early 1970's did not appear to be the sort of 'crisis' which was followed by a reorganization of people's ideas about themselves or about their work lives. In his group of engineers and scientists, unemployment failed to cause an assumptive world shift. The experience in our study seems to contradict those findings. These individual health professionals did express a shift in their beliefs and values about their personal self and about the world in which they live. These findings are more consistent with the view of personal crisis
as a trigger motivator to empowerment (Keiffer, 1984). Keiffer suggests that people engage in a journey of empowerment only after a personally experienced crisis. The injustice alone is not enough, but they also need to have a feeling of pride and determination. Individuals in this study spoke of the injustice of the decisions, they spoke with pride about their work, and they were determined to survive in a healthy way.

- **Loss of Self**

  Viorst states that a number of contradictory selves dwell regularly within a single person (Viorst, 1986). This may lead to a disturbance in a person's sense of wholeness. When the individuals in this study lost themselves to the job, they validated this perception. The identity of some managers became fixed to their position. This was expressed by comments such as, "I knew who I was when I was working." The individuals in this study talked about the self-deception and expressed a disturbance in the connection between the outer and inner self, when the tie to the position was severed (Viorst, 1986). This insight (need for new self) is what plunged individuals into the pain and suffering of dying (death of old self).

- **Suffering – Experiencing Death and Dying**

  The suffering of loss of self is well-documented (Viorst, 1986; Kubler-Ross, 1969). The depression was a tool to prepare for the impact of the loss of self. Mourning often triggers reviewing of the meaning of life (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Research tells us that for those who have another job pending, they do not need to experience the depression. Kessler states that the worst psychological effects of job loss can be minimized if opportunities exist for reemployment (Kessler et al., 1989). This was not
consistently experienced in our study, as some individuals who found other jobs continued to go through the process as described. For others, whilst Kessler’s findings may be true in the short term, the “dejobbing” of society (Bridges, 1994) would suggest that job loss is not an option any more than death. Involuntary job loss is an occupational fact of life in the 1990’s. It may have been this social context which pushed individuals along the process regardless of the acquisition of a new job. The two most meaningful external supports during this stage came from people who had experienced a similar event and family who continued to give them unconditional love. Images of the individuals’ mothers, were brought into awareness as they searched for insight and support. This is not surprising in light of Viorst’s statement that true self evolves out of our earliest relationship, in “the sensitive attunement of mother to child” (Viorst, 1986). With or without a job, many individuals found the pain and suffering, during this stage of the process, led to a search for “true self” (Viorst, 1986).

- **Conscious Awareness of Self**

  A new awareness of themselves was the evolutionary next step in “becoming.” Although individuals spoke of support through relationships with family and friends as vital during this process, the real strength came from inside. They spoke about needing to be their true self ("being comfortable with just being me"), rather than having a job to validate them (Viorst, 1986). This need was the same with or without a job and spoke to the alignment of the internal and external world (Jung, 1933; Rogers, 1961; Briskin, 1996).

  The link between health and conscious awareness was discussed in the interviews throughout the process. Some individuals described it as support in preventing
devastation, and others described it as evolving out of the process. According to Newman, “expanding consciousness”, regardless of the form or direction it takes, is health (Newman, 1994). Chopra describes this by saying “control of life in the new paradigm belongs to awareness” (Chopra, 1993). He says that what the ancient sages termed the ‘self’ can be defined in modern psychological terms as a “continuum of awareness.” With this increased awareness, the disempowering quality of the loss of job dissipated and began to take on the frame of opportunity. There was an understanding that “losing is the price we pay for living” (Viorst, 1986). The process of becoming a separate, reflective person, required some “losing, leaving and letting go” (Viorst, 1986). Participants equated this new awareness to a more healthy state of being. This did not always mean the absence of physical symptoms, but a more gradually attained feeling of “peace.” This sounded very much like the quiet acceptance that Kubler-Ross described in her dying patients. Kubler Ross goes on to say that this state is neither depressed nor angry and should not be mistaken for a happy state, as it is almost devoid of feeling (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

- **Transition: Moving On**

  The view of job loss as a transition in career (Latack and Dozier, 1986; Jacobson, 1987; Scott and Jaffe, 1991) was validated by the experience of participants in this study. As well, the sense of gaining mastery by experiencing job loss and surviving, left individuals more empowered (Fink, 1997; Keiffer, 1984) and more able to deal with other losses. Some participants spoke about the focus groups as part of the healing process(*Appendix 7*). One person said this:

  “The value of this kind of group activity, although coincidental to your project...cannot be measured... I found this (participation in interview,
reading findings and final focus group] to be very healing... because.... Uh... Because I was no longer isolated and the strong behaviour that I found in myself is no longer strange behaviour but in fact everyone is feeling the same way... so I am feeling positive now and understanding myself better... So life in general is better... I worried for a long time because I lost my passion for work....”

They had acquired new skills and competencies. Individuals spoke of how previous losses helped them cope with this loss and how this loss helped them cope with other ongoing losses. This increased “self efficacy” bodes well for the future in light of Bandura’s social learning theory, which postulates that performance of a behavior is contingent upon efficacy expectations and outcome expectations (Bandura, 1977). The change in awareness of these individuals is the first step in changing the awareness of the larger context. There was a realization in this group that the less immersed they became in the workplace the more of themselves was available for the full continuum of living (Briskin, 1996).

5.3 **What Can Be Learned from this Experience of Job Loss?**

“Looking at the whole requires an ability to stand back far enough to see the outline of patterns that weave together complexity and multiplicity. (Briskin, 1996, P.30)

Response to job loss can be seen as reflective of the way our culture and social worlds are structured. A person’s life, at any given time, incorporates external and internal aspects. The external aspects refer to the culture and society in which we interact, and the internal world concerns the meaning of the interactions (Sheehy, 1976). Within the context of work, the dynamics are the same. Once it is realized that as individuals, we are produced by our circumstances and the circumstances are products of
human activity, the individual experiences of people within the organization will take on
new meaning (Ferguson, 1984). Work situations in which we can transform ourselves at
the same time as we transform the external world need to be created (Ferguson, 1984).
Ferguson states that what needs to be done can not be done by individuals in isolation.
Moving from crisis to cultural change requires an understanding of the emotional process
involved in finding new beliefs, structures and practices (Scott and Jaffe, 1991).

Organizations today, do not function as adaptive living systems (Senge, 1990). They have not incorporated the knowledge and principles we have come to recognize as
important. A system that does not view itself as living does not have a “conscious
awareness” and therefore does not have health (Newman, 1994). The link between the
loss of awareness and the loss of intelligence in relationship to the human body has been
made (Chopra, 1993). Assuming that all living systems need awareness to have
intelligence, organizations who are interested in becoming “learning organizations”
(Senge, 1990) will be interested in developing awareness.

Just as death is part of the cycle of life, downsizing is part of the cycle of
organizational development. As long as we fear death and downsizing, we deny people
the opportunity to connect with the larger system and we give up or opportunity to learn
about the experience. Dying is a necessary form of change that needs to be viewed as
much as a beginning as it is an end (Chopra, 1993). The virtual corporation of tomorrow,
according to Davidow and Malone, will reflect new values about people. They say,

“A just society, a virtuous society, will tend to the needs of the
disenfranchised. Thus, the last requirement of the coming business
revolution is that it also exhibit the quality of mercy.” (Davidow and
Malone, 1992, P.268)
~CHAPTER SIX~

CONCLUSION

"Less than half of the work force in the industrial world will be in "proper" full time jobs in organizations by the beginning of the twenty-first century." (Charles Handy, 1992)

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature and experience of job loss, by downsized managers in community health in Ontario and to identify themes and patterns which describe the experience (Appendix #8). The findings demonstrated that these organizations deal with job loss like the society, within which the organizations exist, deals with death. As well, the individuals involved, experienced job loss as dying. The study was in effect, “reflection-in-action” (Schon, 1983) around the issue of job loss in a government organization.

The in-depth understanding of these individuals’ experiences provide us with a micro view of what society is experiencing. As a society, we cannot bring the jobs back from the dead (Bridges, 1994) and as a result, a new view of work is evolving. The work world is transforming and individuals are transforming in response to the crisis. Society needs to understand the experience of job loss from the individual perspective, to accommodate their needs. We cannot teach people who are transforming how to transform, instead they will teach us (Kubler-Ross, 1996). As society increases awareness of the role of change in organizational and individual actualization, we will find ways of coping with the hopelessness, helplessness and isolation that accompanies loss of job and loss of self. The individuals, in interaction with the context in which they work, provide us with clues about the necessary nature of the organization of tomorrow.
Career and Organizational Development are an integral part of Human Resources and true learning organizations will view them as interconnected. Human Resource functions that encompass career and organizational development, are as much an organizational issue, as an individual issue. To continue to approach these areas as separate entities perpetuates depersonalization within the work context. Understanding individual experiences within the context of career and organization will give bureaucracies and organizations a new awareness, as they move into the future. Learning organizations see the system as a whole and the interrelationships exist within the whole. Understanding the themes and patterns in the experience of job loss will enhance the awareness within organizations, of the fact that “all people matter equally” (Franklin, 1990). Continuing to separate job loss and career development from organizational development lacks a sensibility for the subtle interconnectedness of the whole that gives living systems their uniqueness.

Organizations everywhere are professing a desire for transformation. The stages of transformation of an organization in crisis, run parallel to the experiences of an individual in crisis. Creative organizations will want a better alignment of individual and organizational values, which will provide the context for individual transformation, at the same time as organizations are transforming. These transformed organizations will evolve out of the process of developing a “conscious awareness” of the experiences of individuals within the organization.

Experience of job loss can be seen as a reflection of the way our cultural and social worlds are structured. Prior to the job loss, many individuals felt alienated and separated from their true self. Through a difficult passage, triggered by the crisis of job
loss, they found a new level of energy and a transformation of consciousness. Although this did not bring back the job, they found inner resources of strength, wisdom, and insight that they had not experienced before. The new way of life that evolved was frequently one they would have wanted to follow anyway. As the individuals in this study transform, society is transforming.

A humane concept of work needs to recognize that people are emotional and spiritual as well as intellectual and physical beings. The road of life’s work is an ongoing process of discovering oneself and then expressing oneself. It is a never-ending journey filled with challenges and obstacles. “Conscious awareness” of the self, in relationship to those challenges and obstacles (context), helps individuals stay on course.

In the words of Laurence Boldt:

“We cannot address the needs of the community, the nation, or the world apart from the consideration of the psychological and spiritual needs of the individuals and vice versa.” (Boldt, 1991, P. xxxv)

6.1 Further Research Directions

Further research, to determine the interrelationship between context of job loss and the context of personal life (such as life stage variables, Sheehy, 1976; Super, 1992), would reveal further predictors of adjustment in job loss. Likewise, there is a need for research to look at processes to retain diversity within the demographics of organizations. As society transforms, diverse demographics would support the development of a balance work force.

Many other dilemmas and questions remain:

1) Can organizations support, facilitate, teach and advocate for the individuals who are employed in their systems?
2) Can Career Development, Organizational Development and Human Resources integrate in a fashion that holistically meets the needs of individuals?

3) How will organizations optimize their own well being?

### 6.2 Recommendations for policy makers within the health care bureaucracy

The ‘loss of soul’ in organizations, an experience common to many, must be viewed within the context of specific work and in society as a whole, past, present and future.

Keeping this in mind, bureaucracy needs to:

1) Recognize that the implementation of policy should be more related to the values held by the individuals doing the implementing rather than the values held by the writers of the policy.

2) Acknowledge that disenfranchised employees, past and present, are harmful to the system as a whole.

3) Acknowledge that independent Boards with powerful mandates need to have a process for acquiring information and knowledge, in order to have authentic power (Zukav, 1989).

4) Establish a process to resolve conflict between various vertical departments and Ministries, before recommending integration in the health care system.

5) Recognize that vertical integration or pyramid thinking and learning organizations are mutually exclusive.
6.3 **General Recommendations for Human Resources**

Organizations are living entities and the well being of every individual affects the whole. Learning Organizations must recognize:

1) We need a much broader view of work. The view that work perpetuates loss of self to job, and therefore loss of job becomes loss of self, does not serve a society well when it’s organizations are in the process of downsizing.

2) People need to leave organizations feeling valued. Perpetuating the denial of the individual’s experience of job is eroding the ability of the government and business to develop partnerships based on trust.

3) Human Resource is the overall most important aspect of organizations today. The degree to which we understand human beings is the degree to which we understand organizations.

4) Career development is an organizational issue as much as it is an individual issue.

5) Organizational development that does not give primary consideration to the spirit of the human being will be limited in scope and span of influence.
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COPY

December 12, 1996

Mr. Geoff Quirt,
Acting Assistant Deputy Minister,
Population Health and Community Services System Group,
Ministry of Health,
9th Floor, Hepburn Block,
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Toronto, ON M7A 1R3

Dear Geoff:

It is with some concern that the members of OHCPA are receiving the news of the appointments to the CEO position for each of the CCACs. While we appreciate that the CCAC Boards are autonomous and are being encouraged to advertise publicly and widely for the position, we are concerned at the pattern that is emerging. We fear that there will be little or no continuity between the present Home Care Programs and the Community Care Access Centres due to the fact that, in most instances, neither the existing Program Director or PCS Director has been hired for the CEO position, and we do not believe that this was the intent of the Ministry when the decision was made to amalgamate the two programs under the umbrella of the CCACs. If it was meant that the transition would be transparent to the client, we question whether this is now possible, given the present state of instability in those Programs where the new CEO has been hired from outside of Home Care and PCS.

The question of conflict of interest with the hiring of Long-Term Care area office staff has been raised previously with the Ministry's CCAC Project Team, but the issue has been raised again with the recent announcements of the CEO's in both Windsor-Essex and Perth. It is our understanding that the CCAC Boards have avoided such conflict with the local Home Care Program Directors by having little or no contact with them in most cases, to the point of not even informing them of the advertisement for the position of CEO for the CCAC in their area. This, in our opinion, is even less than common courtesy. We would appreciate your review of the conflict of interest issue so that we can be assured that if there is such a perceived conflict, the LTC area office staff declare their intentions publicly in advance of the hiring process. We would like to be able to reassure our members that this process has been fair and equitable.

The fact that middle management positions are being advertised as well has caused further questions to be asked of the Association. It was our understanding, with major changes taking place at the provincial, local and service provision level, that middle management would be the one area of relative stability to ensure the continuity of service delivery to our clients, which of course is our paramount concern.

We wanted to share these concerns with you in the expectation that the Ministry too has a concern with the seamless delivery of services during the transition and beyond, and we are anxious to receive your views on the effects of these changes on home care in this province.

The OHCPA Board is writing as well to the Premier and interim Minister of Health to apprise them of the critical nature of this situation.

Yours sincerely,

Meline C. Batten, CAE,
Executive Director
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

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**Avg.**
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT

A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A MASTERS THESIS AT THE ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY:
THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY IS TO DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE OF JOB LOSS FOR A GROUP OF DOWNSIZED MANAGERS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE.

I have read the information sheet, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate.

Date: _______________
Name: _______________
Signature: _______________

I agree to have my name published as a participant in the pilot study:

Yes__
No__

Signature: _______________
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT

A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A MASTERS THESIS AT THE ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY:
THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY IS TO DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE OF JOB LOSS FOR A GROUP OF DOWNSIZED MANAGERS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE.

I have read the information sheet, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate.

Date:_________________
Name:_________________
Signature:_______________

I agree to have my name published as a participant in the pilot study:

Yes___

No___

Signature:_________________
Appendix
Protocol for Research on
Health as Expanding Consciousness

The data collection process entails one initial interview of 45–60 minutes focused on what is most meaningful in the experience of the participant(s). After the initial pattern analysis, as described below, one or more subsequent interviews are conducted to reflect on the pattern depicted in the data. Each interview is tape recorded. The steps in the process are as follows:

1. The Interview: After explanation of the study and agreement of the participant to continue, the initial interview begins with a simple, open-ended statement such as: “Tell me about the most meaningful persons and events in your life.” (This question may be modified to fit the particular focus of the study.) The interview proceeds in a non-directive manner. If the interviewee needs help in thinking of something considered important, the interviewer may prompt the interviewee to think of something from childhood that stands out in memory.

The interviewer is an active listener and clarifies and reflects as necessary. The interviewer is free to disclose aspects of him- or herself that are deemed appropriate. Occasionally more direct questions are utilized. In being
Appendix

fully present in the moment, the interviewer will be sensitive to intuitive hunches about what to say or ask.

2. **Transcription:** Soon after the interview is completed, the interviewer listens carefully to and transcribes the tape. There are times when the interviewee will get off on a topic that does not relate directly to his life pattern (e.g., the details of a recipe, or some other aside). The interviewer will be sensitive to the relevance of the data and may omit it in the transcription (with an appropriate note to the place on the tape in case it later seems important).

3. **Development of Narrative:** The interviewer selects the statements deemed most important to the interviewee and arranges the key segments of the data in chronological order to highlight the most significant events and persons. The data remains the same except in the order of presentation. Natural breaks where a pattern shift occurs are noted and form the basis of the sequential patterns. The pattern of the whole will emerge, made up of segments of the interviewee's relationships over time.

4. **Diagram:** The narrative is then transmuted into a simple diagram of the sequential pattern configurations. This step is optional but has been found helpful in actually seeing the pattern of the whole.

5. **Follow-up:** In the second interview, the diagram (or other visual portrayal) is shared with the interviewee. No interpretation is made. This is simply an illustration of the participant's story in graphic form, which tends to accentuate the contrasts or repetitions in relationships over time. This mutual viewing is an opportunity for the interviewee to confirm and clarify or revise the story being portrayed. If the interviewer is in doubt about any aspect of the story, now is the time to clarify.

The nature of the pattern of person-environment interaction will begin to emerge in terms of the energy flow, e.g., blocked, diffuse, disorganized, repetitive, or whatever descriptors and metaphors come to mind to describe the pattern. The interviewee may express signs that pattern
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recognition is occurring (or has already occurred in the interval following the first interview) as the interviewee and interviewer reflect together on the interviewee's life pattern. If not, either of the participants may want to proceed with additional reflections in subsequent interviews until no further insight is reached. Sometimes no signs of pattern recognition emerge, and if so, that characterizes the pattern for that person. It is not to be forced.

6. Application of the Theory: After the interviews are completed, more intense analysis of the data is undertaken by the investigator in light of the theory of expanding consciousness. The nature of the sequential patterns of interaction are evaluated in terms of quality and complexity and interpreted according to the participant's position on Young's spectrum of consciousness. They represent presentational relationships (see Chapter 6, pp. 88–92). Similarities of pattern among participants of the study may be designated by themes and stated in propositional form.
The following summary is my best information at this time regarding status of PCS Directors/Managers. There are a few position that really weren't clearly PCS Directors but continued in the CCAC management. I tried to identify that fact but there are probably some errors.

Severed 10
continued 14
retired 2
unknown 3
combined HC/PCS 3
PCS position vacant at transition 2
short term contract provided, outcome unknown 1

CCAC CEO 1
The contents of this telecommunication are governed by the laws of Association/member privilege and may contain confidential information intended only for the person named. Any other distribution, copying or disclosure is strictly prohibited. If you have received this telecommunication in error, please notify us immediately by telephone and return the original transmission to us by mail without making a copy.

DATE SENT: June 18, 1997
TO: Kathy Desai
FAX NUMBER: (519) 539-8664
FROM: Meline Batten
PAGES SENT: 10 (including cover sheet)
ORIGINAL TO FOLLOW? NO X YES ___ HOW? MAIL ___ COURIER ___
MESSAGE:
Kathy, I just received the attached list of CCAC contacts from the Ministry -- it's not even up to date, so I have added a few more names of those CEOs that we are aware of.

Will try to keep you posted as the final announcements are made.

Regards,

Meline

P.S. Cholly Boland in Timiskaming is a male.
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Simcoe/York LTC Area Office
June 17/97
# APPENDIX #6

## DATES AND LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>R.R. # 2 INGERSOLL</td>
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<tr>
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<td>STOUFFVILLE</td>
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<td>MAY 1, 1997</td>
<td>R.R. # 2 INGERSOLL</td>
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<tr>
<td>JULY 18, 1997</td>
<td>R.R. # 2 INGERSOLL</td>
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## LIST OF DATES FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

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<tr>
<td>#7</td>
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<td>TORONTO</td>
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Comments on Focus Groups

I enjoyed reading the comments of others, and couldn’t help but think that the bureaucrats and the Boards really did get away with an unscrupulous process. My fantasy would be that someone who cared, and who could make a difference, would read your document, and stop any future inappropriate decisions and actions. As well, there would be some form of retribution for those of us who were essentially victims. Dream on!!!!

"The value of this kind of group activity, although coincidental to your project...cannot be measured... I found this (participation in interview, reading findings and final focus group) to be very healing... because.... Uh.... Because I was no longer isolated and the strong behaviour that I found in myself is no longer strange behavior but in fact everyone is feeling the same way... so I am feeling positive now and understanding myself better.... So life in general is better.... I worried for a long time because I lost my passion for work...."
Kathryn Desai  
Career and Human Resource Development  
Executive Leader Internship Proposal Form

TITLE:  
The purpose of this study is to describe the experience of job loss for a group of downsized Home Care and Placement Coordination managers who lost their job in the transition to Community Care Access Centers (CCAC) in Ontario in 1997.

BACKGROUND:  
Ontario, Canada, has been in a process of Long Term Care Reform since the late 1980’s. Succeeding Ontario Governments have recognized the trends in Ontario to higher institutionalization rates, the inconsistencies in funding between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the consumer demands for improved quality and enhanced quantity of service and the shrinking allocated dollars. The Liberal party of Ontario, The new Democratic Party and the Conservative Party each had a turn at developing a model of Long Term Care Services which professed to promote the well being of Ontario citizens at the same time that it would preserve the public funds.

The most recent policy direction (Conservative) supported a CCAC, which would be governed by a ministry appointed board.

In the summer of 1996, a document entitled “Employment Continuation Guide”, was circulated by the Long Term Care Division of The Ministry of Health. This document stated:

“Unionized Home Care and Placement Coordination Services workers will transfer to CCACs. Management is not entitled to trade union representation.”

In late fall of 1996 the newly implemented CCAC boards began to advertise for Chief Executive Officers in the 38 Ontario counties. The counties in South Western Ontario Region were the first to advertise. As the new organization (CCAC) was a merger of the former Programs of Home Care and Placement Coordination Services, it was the intent that the major competition would be between the managers of those programs.

It soon became clear that the nation wide search, the lead role of the Long Term Care offices (former Ministry of Community and Social Services), and the autonomy of the CCAC boards was leading in a different direction. By Christmas of 1996, six of the nine positions in the South West Region were filled by candidates other than the managers in Home Care and Placement Coordination. The backlash of this trend lead to two of the remaining three positions being filled with the former directors of Home Care.

The purpose of this study is to describe the experience of job loss for senior managers in Home Care and Placement Coordination Services during the transition to CCACs under the Conservative Government in Ontario in 1997.
OBJECTIVES:

This naturalistic inquiry will explore the experience of displaced senior managers in the Long Term Care System in Ontario after the implementation of the new conservative policy to merge Home Care and Placement Coordination programs in order to create new agencies called Community Care Access Centers. The outcome of the study will evolve through inductive analysis. Within the naturalistic paradigm, data are not viewed as given by nature but as stemming from an interaction between the inquirer and the data sources. The researcher will collect the data and do the data analysis and will be able to connect with the participants by virtue of being in the same position herself. Although the outcomes of naturalistic inquiry, (that is the nature of the findings will emerge) cannot be pre determined, the literature review indicates that there are some predictable experiences in job loss. At the outset, it would be reasonable to expect that the following more specific objectives may be achieved:

- to document case studies from participants
- to understand this experience compared to other experiences of change or loss
- to understand more fully the transition from employment as a senior manager to another role status
- to make recommendations to restructuring organizations from a human resource development perspective

The outcome will be “grounded theory”. The connecting themes are discovered empirically and the outcomes are negotiated with the respondents. Inductive analysis of interviews, observations and focus groups will include coding and classifying themes and patterns. We will explain the phenomena of job loss in a way that will allow us to predict behavior. Participants will be the creators of their shared reality and the facilitator, as well as the participants will experience change through the relationship (Jung). We will identify and learn positive approaches to human resource potential development through experience. There will be a deeper understanding of the experience for human resources, organizational development and career counseling.

PROJECTED TIME LINE:

Phase 1 of this project will start in early March. It will be orientation and overview and the original focus groups.
Phase 2 will cover March to June. This will be either the in depth focus groups or the individual interviews.
Phase 3 will be a presentation to the participants in June. The facilitator will report back to the participants through a focus group and ask for validation or enhancement. This is to establish authenticity (known in the scientific paradigm as validity and reliability).
Phase 4 final presentation in August of 1997.