

**Relations among Informal Learning, Educational Credentials,
and Work Transitions among Immigrants**

Progress Report

Submitted by

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September 2001

Project Title: **Relations among Informal Learning, Educational Credentials, and Work Transitions among Immigrants**

Principal Investigator: Terry Wotherspoon, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan

1. Statement of Research Accomplishments on Project to Date:

The initial phase of the project has involved an updated literature review, conceptual clarification, completion of the final survey instrument (questionnaire), and identification of the subject pool. Because informal learning is an emerging area of study, it has been necessary to devote time to work on updated definitions and operationalization of the concept. Towards this objective, the Principal Investigator attended two national conferences sponsored and funded by the New Approaches to Lifelong Learning Strategic Research Network (SSHRC funded) concerned with identifying and assessing the definition, scope and alternative sites associated with informal learning, with an explicit focus on linking informal learning practices among immigrant visible minority groups and Aboriginal people. This process has yielded the questionnaire that will be sent to members of selected immigrant groups in Saskatoon and area in phase 2 of this project.

Two conference presentations have been made to date based on this conceptual work:

Terry Wotherspoon, 2000. "Exploring Relations among Indigenous Knowledge and Formal Learning in Aboriginal Communities," Contested Terrain: The Boundaries and Practical Impact of Informal Learning, New Approaches to Lifelong Learning 4th Annual Conference, October, Toronto, ON.

Terry Wotherspoon and Bernard Schissel, 2000. "Systemic Racial Stereotyping and Discrimination: Identifying Issues, Challenges and Successes in Formulating Policy-Sensitive Research," 4th National Metropolis Conference, March, Toronto, ON.

One forthcoming conference presentation emerging from this work has been accepted:

Terry Wotherspoon, "Interactions among Formal Learning, Informal Learning and Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Immigrant Youth in Canada," to be presented at the Workshop on "Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Immigrant Youth," 6th International Metropolis Conference, Nov, 2001, Rotterdam.

2. Students working on project:

Crystal Maslin, M.A. student, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan – in progress. Project data partially employed in thesis.

Andy Rathbone (tentative), M.A. student, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan – in progress. Project data to be employed in thesis.

3. Updated abstract:

The research addresses issues related to the translation of educational credentials, as well as capacities and skills not recognized through formal credentials, into successful labour market integration among immigrants. In particular, the research is concerned to identify the informal learning that immigrants are currently, or have recently, been engaged in, in order to highlight the ways in which a broad base of knowledge and skills, over and above those attained through formal educational processes, are being utilized, devalued, or underemployed through immigrant involvement in the labour market. There are two phases to the research – first, a survey of 100 to 200 immigrants from mixed backgrounds will document the nature and extent of their informal learning activities, and to assess how these activities are related to the achievement (or lack) of success in the labour market; and second, interviews with representatives of immigrant-serving agencies to highlight interconnections among formal educational background, informal learning capacities, and labour market involvement.

4. Projected termination date for project: September, 2002.