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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SELF-PERCEPTION

OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND PERCEIVED CONTROL

IN A UNIVERSITY POPULATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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BY

JODY R. MARKOW

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the self-perception of psychological empowerment in a classroom setting. Specifically, the purpose of this research was to determine if the self-perception of psychological empowerment was related to perceived control and academic achievement in a population of university students. Subjects consisted of 24 students between the ages of 22 and 37. The majority of the subjects were enrolled in a diploma program in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. These students had all completed a previous university degree and were working towards teacher certification.

The primary methods of data collection consisted of an empowerment survey, a locus of control measure specific to achievement goals, and an interview with two key informants from the sample.

Results indicated that those students who perceived themselves to be empowered (Y Emp) reported a significantly more external locus of control than those students who did not perceive themselves to be empowered (N Emp). Descriptive data from the empowerment survey and the interview suggested that there were mitigating circumstances which were of direct concern to the sample and which might account for the results. The findings offer tentative support for the context specific nature of empowerment as predicted by empowerment theory.

Consideration is given to the diverse ways that empowerment can be conceptualized and the implications of this for a student population. Some suggestions for further research are offered.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente étude porte sur l'autoperception de l'habilitation psychologique en milieu scolaire. Plus particulièrement, la recherche visait à déterminer si l'autoperception de l'habilitation psychologique est reliée à un sentiment de maîtrise et de réussite scolaire dans une population d'étudiants universitaires. L'échantillon se composait de 24 étudiants âgés de 22 à 37 ans. La majorité des sujets étaient inscrits à un programme de diplôme à la faculté des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université McGill. Tous ces étudiants détenaient déjà un diplôme universitaire et préparaient une accréditation d'enseignement.

Les principales méthodes de cueillette des données consistaient en une enquête portant sur l'habilitation, en un locus de contrôle spécifique aux objectifs et en une interview avec deux informateurs clés de l'échantillon.

Les résultats indiquent que les étudiants qui se perçoivent comme habilités (Y Emp) font état d'un locus de contrôle beaucoup plus externe que les étudiants qui ne se perçoivent pas comme habilités (N Emp). Les données descriptives de l'enquête portant sur l'habilitation et de l'interview semblent indiquer qu'il existe des circonstances atténuantes qui présentent un intérêt direct pour l'échantillon et qui pourraient expliquer les résultats. Les résultats confirment provisoirement le caractère spécifique au contexte de l'habilitation telle que prédite par la théorie.

L'étude examine diverses façons de conceptualiser l'habilitation et les répercussions de telles conceptualisations sur une population étudiante. Certaines orientations de recherches ultérieures sont proposées.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter III

Chapter IV

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The ability to take responsibility for major life decisions, requires that the individual must feel competent to make appropriate choices and feel that one can be effective in one's actions.

This and other definitions of empowerment evoke a variety of responses from many voices. Cochran (1985) reports from his perusal of the literature that

> The term empowerment has been used in the past decade by thinkers on the political
>
> right...as well as the left....This breadth of utility can be thought of as testament both to its
>
> possible significance and to its lack of clear definition. (p. 12)

A major source of agreement in the literature on empowerment is that, except for the most general of terms, the construct does not lend itself to a consistent definition that allows for systematic measurement. Undoubtably one of the difficulties is the scope of the construct. It has been applied to such areas as the health system (Dunst et al., 1988; Lewis & Lewis, 1990), social welfare (Appleton & Minchom, 1991; Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989), and the schools (Sleeter, 1991; Wassermann, 1990), to name but a few. Furthermore, the unit of analysis can be either the individual, the organization, or the community (Hasenfeld et al, 1989). Psychological empowerment is the application of the construct to the individual. However, it has been suggested that the conditions within a setting (or *context*), preclude any discussion about psychological empowerment. For example, Rappaport (1987) asserts

that to assess the impact and influence of empowerment at any level of analysis, one has to acknowledge the interplay of political, sociological, economic, and spiritual forces. Taken together, the empowerment of an individual suggests a process which implies a mastery over one's environment and the achievement of self-determination (C, chran and Dean, 1991; Rappaport, 1981,1987).

It becomes increasingly clear that to understand the process of empowerment, the individual cannot be viewed independent of his or her environment. Power (and by extension empowerment), coexists within a social sphere whereby personal power can be either enhanced or rendered stagnant. While all individuals possess personal power in the form of individual potential or capability, this power cannot be *given* by another, only nurtured or developed (Ashcroft, 1987).

Behavioral manifestations of empowered persons have been identified in areas such as academic achievement (Fisher, 1988), citizen participation (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), and health care (Dunst et al, 1988). However, in each of these areas the operationalization of empowerment has not been consistent. Furthermore, few researchers have attempted to measure psychological empowerment. One of the difficulties that has been encountered has been the determination of a precise definition.

In an effort to objectify the definition of an otherwise elusive term, Ashcroft (1987) took the word empowerment and its derivatives and reviewed well known dictionaries for "a composite picture of the fundamental and most commonly held meanings for the word" (p.142). Taking the root word *power* as the basis for her analysis, Ashcroft defined empowerment as "'nurturing belief in capability and competence' where competence is sufficient/appropriate/effective action" (p.145). Empowerment

thus becomes the belief that one can control external events and the knowledge that one has the competence and skills to do so.

Given that empowerment is a mechanism by which people gain mastery over their environment, an ongoing process is implied. Some researchers suggest that there are identifiable steps to this process. In a program which was conducted over a three year period, Cochran & Dean (1991) originally set out to investigate the effects of stress and support by following a large sample of urban families as their children went through the transition of leaving home to entering primary school. What the researchers realized at the completion of the program was that their efforts led to a *process of empowerment.*

The program was based upon an underlying set of assumptions from which interventions were generated. For example, it was assumed that all of the families in the sample had strengths. Therefore, support from social practitioners were offered on the basis of these strengths. Families were asked to identify current rearing practices which were considered to be paramount to the development of their child. These ideas were then shared with other families in the community. Families were further encouraged to form a community self-reliance, with the underlying assumption that knowledge concerning child rearing practices could be found in "the older generations, in social networks, and in ethnic and cultural traditions" (Cochran et al. 1991, p. 262). Finally, in an effort to facilitate active involvement in the school, parents engaged in a number of activities designed to build confidence and develop practical skills. For example, parents role-played parent-teacher conferences, invited teachers to partake in discussion groups, and became informed about issues in the school that were of direct concern to their children.

The developmental change that was observed in the families over a three year period was referred to as a process of empowerment. Distinct, systematic steps were identified through which each of the families proceeded. Initially, the parents became cognizant of their own self worth. The next step was a redefinition of their relationships with others within their formal community networks. Finally, parents became more active in their child's school on a variety of levels. This ranged from an increased belief that they could initiate actions on behalf of their children, to taking initial steps towards collaborating with teachers and other school personnel.

Although there is general agreement in the literature that empowerment suggests a process, Ashcroft (1987) makes the valid argument that if we are to attempt to measure the construct of empowerment, then it is both possible and necessary to put a "stop-action on a process [thereby allowing for] the *state* of being empowered" (p.143).

Zimmerman & Rappaport (1988) have made some inroads into the systematic measurement of psychological empowerment. Their research provides empirical support for the delineation of empowerment into three indices of personality, cognitive and motivational measures of perceived control which combined to form one discriminant function which they identified as empowerment. The personality component was operationalized as locus of control (Rotter, 1954).

The source of responsibility to which an individual attributes the outcomes of an event has been defined as *locus of control*. The perception that one's successful performance or actions in a situation is contingent upon one's own endeavours delimits an internal locus of control. An individual who perceives control as external, attributes those same actions and events to luck, fate, or under the control of powerful others (Rotter, 1954, 1966). Locus of control and other measures of perceived

control have been studied as a precursor to a number of social behaviours and psychological states in a variety of contexts. In particular, one area which has received extensive attention as a result of its salience to a student population has been academic achievement.

In a recent study, college students scored significantly more internal after they were enrolled in a study skills and college adjustment course. Higher academic achievement as measured by grade point average (GPA) was associated with a shift in locus of control for external scorers. The researchers concluded that students who were initially more external were able to take increased responsibility for their academic career and were therefore able to improve their academic achievement (Cone & Owens, 1991). Similarly, Crandall, Katkovsky & Crandall (1965) developed a locus of control measurement specific to an achievement situation to assess children's beliefs about their responsibility for their academic successes and failures. Although they found that the scale predicted differently for the two genders at different age levels, they suggested that this might be attributed to motivational factors. For example, boys' participation and effort in an intellectual activity appeared to be dependent on whether it was an activity of the child's own choosing. Therefore, although more internal beliefs are generally found to be associated with greater academic achievement, there appear to be many factors which mediate this connection. In a comprehensive review of 98 research reports, it was found that the magnitude of this relation was found to be small to medium and tended to be towards the lower end for adult populations (Findley & Cooper, 1983).

Therefore, the objectives of this research are (1) to determine if undergraduate students who perceive themselves to be empowered have a higher academic performance than students who do not feel empowered and (2) to determine if the self-perception of empowerment is related to greater

internal control beliefs. It is hypothesized that university students who report that they see themselves as being empowered within the context of a classroom, will also be identified as being more internal on a locus of control measure and will exhibit a higher academic performance than those students who do not perceive themselves as empowered.

The following chapter will examine the literature on empowerment as it relates to perceived control and as an important mediator in academic achievement.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

While not subject to any formal history taking, it is the general consensus that the construct of empowerment emerged as an active force in the rapidly changing social and economic climate of the United States in the late 1960's (Cochran, 1985; Kieffer, 1984; Trickett, 1991). Although it appears that empowerment was in large part shaped by political ideology (Cochran, 1985; Sleeter,1991), it is being increasingly used as a model for practice in such diverse areas as social welfare, community psychology, health services and education. However, within each of these areas, the focus of empowerment changes depending on the particular application.

The present review will examine the construct of empowerment as it has been used in a series of populations in a variety of settings, and as a model of the helping relationship. The model will be explored as an alternative to current practices in education. In particular, the self-perception that the student has control over desired outcomes will be examined as it relates to academic achievement.

Definitions of Empowerment

Social Welfare and Community Psychology

For the most part, the construct of empowerment has been applied to populations which characteristically lack control, or which, by the nature of their position in society, appear to be powerless. Within the disciplines of social welfare and community psychology, the target populations tend to be persons who are socially oppressed and persons who are labelled as disadvantaged in any one of a number of contexts. The empowerment process is seen as involving a redistribution of power. The explicit understanding is that this process must be approached from the level of both the individual and society. Thus, the individual cannot be examined in isolation and must be seen within a broader social context. An example of this conceptualization of empowerment is "a process through which clients obtain resources- personal, organizational, and community -that enable them to gain greater control over their environment and to attain their aspirations" (Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989, p.501). At the personal level this might mean informing clients about what their rights are or providing them with training so as to increase their knowledge and skills about handling their own needs. It might also mean linking them with services which broaden their support and resource network. At the organizational level, empowerment could involve professionals using their power to institute accountability measures which rely on client feedback. Finally at the community level, greater control over agency resources would be transferred to the hands of the consumers of these human services (Hasenfeld et al, 1989).

Solomon (1976), reorients her definition to focus more on the individual albeit within a social and culture specific context. Based on her extensive work in the United States in urban black communities, she defines empowerment as "a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles" (p.6). These valued social roles include those of parent, spouse, employee and community leader. To depend on the practitioner for services as opposed to believing that one's own actions can be effective, only serves to reaffirm the individual's powerlessness. Therefore, the social practitioner seeks to empower the client by engendering a sense of self-determination in the individual. This concept of empowerment can also be applied to a group or a community. However, it is the interrelatedness of the social histories of the individual and the group that becomes paramount. Therefore, such things as membership in a minority group or growing up in a poor, urban neighbourhood must be taken into consideration when discussing the empowerment of the individual. Thus, powerlessness can be on either a personal or a collective level, and inherent in this powerlessness is the dependency on *others* for control over life decisions (Solomon, 1976).

Definitions are also forthcoming in the area of community psychology (Kieffer, 1984; Rappaport, 1981,1987; Zimmerman, in press). Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as " a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs" (p.122). He sees empowerment from an ecological perspective whereby the individual cannot be seen in isolation from his or her environment. It would seem evident that the contextual nature of the construct alters its appearance depending on the setting, group of people or situation that is under study. For

example, Trickett (1991) documents the evolution of an alternative inner-city high school, and the efforts to create a setting which empowered its participants. While it was generally acknowledged that the students, parents and teachers felt empowered with respect to such things as their relative influence in the school and sense of autonomy, for certain racial groups this was less evident. Compared to the white students, the black students did not cope as well with the self-directedness that was inherent in the high school. In addition, Trickett suggested that the black students may have had different goals with regards to empowerment than white students. Furthermore, although political empowerment, ["participating directly in decision making" (p.208)], did not extend equally to all levels, a sense of psychological empowerment, ["personal sense of control or influence over events" (p.208)], did. Therefore the actual structure of the school was seen to be empowering, while on an individual basis, the reports were mixed.

Health Care

While social welfare and community psychology stress the interplay of the individual and the environment, empowerment within the area of health care focuses, in large part, on the interpersonal dynamics between the client and the health practitioner. Patient education and patient participation in medical decision making is often a function of this relationship. However, active participation in support groups and foundations often serve to further educate an individual about his or her medical condition. As a collective, the membership may advocate for greater research efforts through fund

raising and lobbying. Therefore, a lesser dependency on health practitioners and institutions enables patients to gain greater control over their lives (Saibil, 1984).

Although the literature in this area focuses on health care in the United States, recent surveys which have compared service delivery in Canada suggest that there are logistical differences between the two systems which might limit comparisons in some areas (Blendon et al, 1993; Hayward, Kravitz & Shapiro, 1991). For example, in one study, 50 percent of the physicians surveyed in Canada cited the lack of well-equipped medical facilities as a problem they face in their practice, compared to 14 percent of respondents in the United States (Blendon et al., 1993). While most health services are free, comprehensive and available to all of Canada's citizens, the waiting period required in some provinces for specialized services is a concern to both patients and doctors. In addition, many rural or remote areas are without physicians. On the other hand, in the United States, total health care, as in the case of serious illness or injury, or basic access, as in the case of economically disadvantaged individuals, is not affordable to large proportions of the population (Hoye, 1991). Therefore, even though it is necessary to be cognizant of some of the potential differences in perspectives between the two countries, it is difficult to ascertain to what degree such issues play a direct role on the interpersonal dynamics between the health practitioner and his or her client. Nonetheless, recent shifts towards increased participation in one's health care and the subsequent acknowledgement that people of all ages are capable of making informed decisions about their health has begun to redefine the traditional doctor-patient relationship (Dunst, Trivette, Davis & Cornwell, 1988; Lewis & Lewis, 1990). Therefore, most of the literature in this area defines empowerment in terms of the individual relinquishing the role of

passive recipient, and instead embracing a partnership between patient and practitioner, where informed decision making becomes a joint effort. To be empowered then,

> The learners or clients must have the necessary information to make informed decisions, be able to deploy competencies to obtain resources to meet needs, and attribute behaviour change to their own actions if they are to acquire a sense of control over life events (Dunst et al, 1988, p. 72).

However, that is not to say that this partnership has become equally accepted by the professionals. In fact, although beliefs in personal control generally appear to be adaptive (Taylor, Helgeson, Reed, & Skokan, 1991), there is also ample evidence which suggests that physicians often resist collaborative efforts on the part of their patients (Lewis et al, 1990). This resistance is not only found in the area of health services, but professionals in any helping relationship tend to discount the importance of the role of collaboration. This issue will be elaborated on in later sections of this chapter.

Education

Within the field of education, empowerment is a combination of some of the themes found in social welfare, community psychology and health care. A substantial portion of the literature takes the stand that education must be seen within a social context (e.g. Cummins, 1986; Simon, 1987; Sleeter, 1991). The primary emphasis here is on those students who have been marginalized economically and culturally. To empower in these terms is to enable such students to have the opportunity to participate on equal terms with those who are more privileged. By altering the power

relationships between student-teacher or school-community, this enables a school to empower minority students. This approach goes by many names, but is often called "Critical Pedagogy".

Marginalized groups are often made to feel that they are inferior in society, and educators advocating a "Critical Pedagogy" maintain that schools often mirror these societal 'norms'. For example, Cummins (1986), cites research where certain minority groups fail academically in one country where they are considered a low status group, whereas in another country, they are extremely successful academically because they are considered a high status group. In effect, to empower means that a student will not only develop the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically, but this will only be possible if the individual is given the opportunity to develop a confident cultural identity as well. The empowerment of marginalized students necessitates that the interactions within the school must promote equality of opportunity for all its students. In this way, the school interactions actively *transform* societal norms rather than reflecting them by *disabling* its students. Thus, empowerment plays the dual role of a mediating construct in a student's academic performance, and as an outcome variable of schooling (Cummins, 1986). Other researchers have also acknowledged that empowerment can either be a process or an outcome (e.g., Zimmerman,in press). The student-teacher and community-teacher relationship is another area of focus. Teachers position themselves along a *"collaborative-exclusionary"* continuum (Cummins, 1986). A collaborative approach actively promotes participation of parents in their children's education, and students are encouraged to be active generators of their own learning by sharing some of the control that a teacher typically has in the classroom. This is in sharp contrast to an exclusionary orientation where the teacher is seen as the

exclusive expert in the classroom and participatory input outside of strictly defined margins is seen as unnecessary and unwanted (Cummins, 1986).

This perspective on empowerment within the educational realm is a view shared by many, although it is interpreted in a variety of ways. Ellsworth (1989) reviewed thirty articles which dealt with "Critical Pedagogy" appearing in major educational journals, and found almost as many different labels as she did articles. Although most researchers shared a number of common assumptions in their attempts to theorize and operationalize a critical pedagogy which addresses social oppression, Ellsworth maintains that the diverse emphasis also showed that each researcher sought to dictate "who we `should' be and what `should' be happening in our classroom" (p.299). Based on her own experiences to institute a critical pedagogy in a university setting, Ellsworth argues that the teacher sacrifices diversity of expression by making judgements about what his or her students need to be empowered for. In effect then, within the classroom of critical pedagogy, the *dominant* group might shift sides, but nonetheless continues to exist. Despite attempts to interpret, understand and react against oppression on the part of both students and teacher, there will always be unequal power dynamics, biases and oppressive orientations.

Advocates of a critical pedagogy ideally see students developing the ability to criticize the way things are and envision how things might be different from the basis of their own experiences. However, this process of empowering students in the interests of social justice is very difficult to put into practice (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Sleeter, 1991). It assumes that the teacher is willing and able to help "students articulate, critically examine, and develop their own beliefs and action agendas for the emancipation of oppressed people" (Sleeter, 1991, p.22).

Within Canada, multiculturalism plays a large role. In addition to the ethnic diversity of Canada's population, Canada is one of the few countries that has an official government policy of multiculturalism. Accordingly, the government of Canada has committed to supporting all cultural groups that express the desire to develop within the Canadian context (Kach & Defaveri, 1987). Because each of the ten provinces has its own educational structure, most have developed their own policies of multiculturalism within the schools. These provinces have tried to incorporate into their educational system, respect for the languages, traditions, and customs of all its citizens. In addition to increased access to education in both official languages (i.e. English and French), the majority of the Canadian provinces offer other linguistic programs. In particular, Native-language and heritage-language programs have evolved in communities where there is a concentration of a population of Native people or other ethnocultural groups. Within Quebec, in addition to measures which have been taken to preserve the French language and culture, the Ministry has recognized that the growing immigrant population has necessitated allocating additional funding to school boards that service rapidly growing ethnic communities. Education is considered instrumental in its role to support and sustain the cultural development of the individual (Council of Ministers of Education, Canadà, 1992).

Unfortunately, some of the difficulties that have been acknowledged with a critical pedagogy can also be found true of a Canadian attempt to bring multiculturalism to the classroom. In practice, teachers are faced with ambiguous definitions of multiculturalism and few guidelines for implementation in the schools (Kach & Defaveri, 1987). In addition, as Ellsworth (1989) pointed out, it is often the teacher who decides which cultural patterns will and will not be brought into the classroom.

A second perspective of empowerment in the schools focuses on personal power as a prelude

to collective power. It addresses individual potential and the capability of the student. The teacher is seen as a facilitator of the process which nurtures these inherent qualities.

Traditionally, schooling has focused on academics: the planning and development of a curriculum, the subsequent implementation of this curriculum through appropriate strategies and techniques, and an evaluation process. Moving towards a more progressive education entails going beyond teaching academic skills. It includes personal development as a goal of education, and thus expands the notion of achievement beyond that which standardized tests are used to evaluate (Trickett, 1991). It has been suggested that present day psychological trends reflect progressive education of yesteryear (Zimiles, 1986). Progressive schools sought to nurture and support competencies, desired to increase autonomy, and attempted to respect the validity of childrens' strengths and experiences. It encouraged them to take control and responsibility for their own learning (Trickett, 1991; Zimiles, 1986). In effect, graduates of these schools were found to be "more open, less influenced by social sex-role expectations, more accustomed to making choices, more closely tied to their peer group, and seemingly possessing an interpersonal stance when facing adults that enabled them to hold their ground and to express themselves more easily and directly" (Zimiles, 1986, p.212). This is the language of empowerment.

Ashcroft (1987) maintains that an education that indeed empowers, optimally strikes up a balance between too much input on the part of the teacher which fosters dependency, and too little input which does not tap into an individual's potential. Thus, an empowering philosophy of education acknowledges existing competencies and provides help in highly individualized ways to transform this potential into power. Along these lines, empowerment is defined as "'nurturing belief in capability and

competence' where competence is sufficient/appropriate/effective action" (Ashcroft, 1987,p.144). This is the definition that I have chosen to use for the purposes of this thesis.

Perceived Control

There is a general consensus that there exists within each individual a need to feel in control over the people, situations, and institutions that influence their well-being and valued life goals (Renshon, 1979). The perception that one's actions can produce desired outcomes is what is known in the psychological literature as perceived control. Although definitions of empowerment often vary throughout the literature, an underlying theme is that "efforts to exert control are central" (Zimmerman, in press).

The past thirty years or so have seen a whole host of variables which have sought to explain the underlying mechanisms of perceived control. Some of the explanations which have been more time resistant include the drive for competence (White, 1959), origin-pawn dichotomy (deCharms, 1968), internal and external locus of control (Rotter, 1966), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1987), to name but a few. This lack of conceptual clarity does not lend itself to simplicity. However, regardless of how the concepts of control and choice have been operationalized, they have been found to have positive effects in areas as diverse as stressful life events (Ozer & Bandura, 1990), children's health care (Lewis, Lewis & Ifekwunigue, 1978), coping with chronic disease (Dunst et al., 1988), community effectiveness (Cochran & Dean, 1991), and academic achievement (Findley & Cooper, 1983).

In an effort to operationalize empowerment in a college sample, Zimmerman et al (1988) used a composite of personality, motivational and cognitive measures of perceived control. Each of these three areas was conceptualized as representing individual differences in the way control or mastery over the environment was manifested. While the authors contended that the combination of these domains contributed to a single function (i.e. psychological empowerment) better than any one measure used alone, they also found that each measure correlated moderately with each other. Thus, this was seen as an indication that "each measure [assessed] both an overlapping and a unique aspect of empowerment" (p. 746). The personality component of perceived control in this study was operationalized as locus of control.

Locus of Control

Locus of control is defined as a generalized expectancy for internal or external control of reinforcements. Based on social learning theory, the construct of locus of control reflects broad, stable personality characteristics and the interplay of these characteristics with a series of related events or situations (Rotter, 1954, 1966). The premise of social learning theory is that people respond to their environment based on their prior learning and past experiences. The older an individual becomes, the more consistent or stable an individual's personality characteristics become (Phares, 1976). Therefore, an individual develops generalized expectancies of how his or her behaviors or actions relate to outcomes and the causal elements that affect this relationship. When an outcome is perceived to be contingent on the individual's own behaviour, then that person is said to have an internal locus of

control. For example, previous experience might have led a person to expect that good grades are contingent on the amount of work or effort that is put into studying. Therefore, if the outcome in a task is perceived to be dependent on how hard an individual works at it, then an individual is likely to expend a great deal of energy on tasks that are perceived as important. On the other hand, some individuals have not experienced contingency between their efforts and outcomes in the past and instead see the outcomes as being dependent on factors beyond their control. Forces such as luck, task difficulty or powerful others are perceived as controlling events, and this describes an external locus of control. Therefore, an internal and external locus of control can been conceived of as a generalized expectancy to perceive reinforcement or goals either as contingent on one's own behaviour (internal control), or as a result of factors beyond the individual's control (external control).

Since locus of control refers to expectancies for control over one's environment, it would be expected that individuals who have an internal locus of control would exhibit more active efforts to control their environments. Seeman and Evans (1962) examined the relationship between locus of control and information seeking behaviour in tuberculosis patients. It was found that patients who had an internal locus of control were more knowledgable about their condition, tended to ask more questions of the medical personnel and were less likely to be satisfied with the quantity of the information they were given. Similarly, prison inmates with an internal locus of control were more informed about the way the prison was run and were familiar with parole regulations and the possibilities for employment upon their release (Seeman, 1963). Senior citizens who felt that they had control over desired outcomes in their lives were rated by nurses and interviewers as having a greater zest for life and being more assertive (Reid and Ziegler, 1981).

Reduced information seeking behaviour and assertiveness would be expected for those individuals with an external locus of control because these people would not expect their efforts to have any impact. Therefore, a basic characteristic of internal individuals appears to be a greater attempt at coping with, or gaining mastery over their environments (Phares, 1976).

Perceived Control and Academic Achievement

In a comprehensive review of the literature which examined the relationship between locus of control and achievement, Findley and Cooper (1983) found that internal control beliefs were associated with greater academic achievement. Although these effects were not found to be as strong for adults as they were for adolescents, more recently, it has been shown that when college students who had external control beliefs were trained to attribute their academic success or failure to controllable causes (i.e. effort), their subsequent performance improved (Perry & Penner, 1990). Similarly, college students who were given the choice over the teaching mode in their discussion groups in an introductory psychology class did significantly better on one of the course exams than a group which did not have a choice. In addition, students in the "choice" condition reported more favourable attitudes about their learning experience (Liem, 1975).

Diener and Dweck (1978,1980) have examined the issue of controllability in grade school classrooms. Their research has shown that those children who perceived themselves as unable to surmount failure (i.e. helpless) attributed their failure to uncontrollable factors such as lack of ability rather than controllable factors such as effort. In contrast, those children who attributed their failure to

a lack of effort often showed an improvement in their performance by persisting at a task and focusing on improved strategies (i.e. mastery oriented). Initially both of these groups of children were equal in ability, but their performance on a task differed significantly because of the self-perception of the controllability of the situation. Dickens and Perry (1982) have taken this concept and have extended it to a university classroom. They found that students' perceptions of control or lack of control over their achievement influenced what they attributed as the cause for success or failure. Therefore, those students who felt they had little or no control spent less time studying, attended fewer classes, and did not feel it was important to do well academically. Taken together, these studies indicate that not only does control over one's affairs appear to be an important antecedent of academic performance, but an individual's *perception* that he or she can control their academic outcome is equally important.

Not only has the concept of perceived control been conceptualized from differing vantage points, but the extensive applications have been met with a large degree of positive results. Seligman & Miller (1979) subsume the entire area under the umbrella term of "psychology of power". They claim that this area has far reaching implications for a variety of populations in a variety of situations and that the potential benefits of power and control are many.

Empowerment, whether in social welfare, community psychology, health care, or education revolves around how the concept of power operates in society, and whether there is a perception of control over one's affairs. However, David Nyberg (1981) contends that within educational theory a direct discussion of power is often neglected despite its role at all levels of schooling. At the level of the classroom the basic parameters of learning are dictated by the relationship between the student and the

teacher. Power is conceived as operating within a social sphere whereby "the minimum and necessary conditions of power are two people and one plan of action" (p.538). Although Nyberg essentially views power as a positive force in education, I would agree with Ashcroft (1987) who observes that Nyberg rejects the importance of the role of personal power. A model of empowerment bridges this gap by advocating that within any social context the individual operates as a powerful player. The perception that one is in control of a particular event and the subsequent knowledge that one has the competency to exercise that control, allows an individual mastery over his or her environment. This has also been called psychological empowerment.

While empowerment has been seen as a multilevel construct which can be applied to the individual, the organization and the community (Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989; Rappaport, 1987), psychological empowerment specifically addresses the construct at the level of the individual (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, in press).

Empowerment as a Theoretical Model and as a Value Orientation

Empowerment of the individual, the organization or the community can be either a value orientation or a theoretical model. A value orientation is suggestive of interventions that allows for the achievement of self-determination and a mastery over one's environment. A theoretical model outlines the processes and outcomes of empowerment that define efforts to exert control over the environment, whether through individual or collective actions (Rappaport, 1981, 1987; Zimmerman, in press).

Empowerment as a Value Orientation

Characteristically, professional help givers have a tendency to rush in and *fix* a problem, sometimes without having a basic understanding of the full impact their actions have on the people they are trying to help. (Dunst, Trivette, Davis & Cornwell, 1988) Benevolent helping relationships are often ineffective because they tend to ignore the strengths and competencies that people have, they foster dependency, and they don't take into account that people often understand what their needs and problems are. Brickman et al. (1982) call this *trap* the *dilemma of helping*. As the name intimates, it is not the client, student or citizen who is responsible for solving their problems. Rather this burden falls upon the expert. Therefore despite good intentions, the implication is that the help recipients should not be blamed for their problems, and along the same vein they cannot be held responsible for, nor are they in control of the solutions. Models of helping relationships which traditionally perpetuate this line of thinking have been found between doctor and patient (Dunst et al.,1988; Lewis & Lewis, 1990), social

practitioner and client (Appleton & Minchom, 1991; Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989; Solomon, 1976) and student and teacher (Sleeter, 1991; Wassermann, 1990).

A value orientation which embraces the central tenets of empowerment acknowledges that while the individual is a victim of society's problems, she or he also possesses the potential to become an active participant in the solutions to these problems (Brickman et al.,1982). People are seen as being already competent, or at least having the potential to become competent. Therefore, poor functioning is in actuality a result of society's inefficiencies, and suitable conditions must be put in place for competencies to flourish. To be empowered an individual needs to learn new competencies in collaboration with the *expert*.

Despite the numerous versions of an orientation of empowerment that have been proposed (e.g., Dunst et al.,1988; Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989; Rappaport, 1981,1987), there are common strains which run through all of them. Counter to the deficit model which states that one has to demonstrate inadequacies before support will be offered, the empowerment orientation declares proactively that all people have strengths. Decision making rests with the individual, including the option to accept or reject help. Active involvement in the process is encouraged, and the helper-recipient relationship is seen as a partnership and a professional collaboration.

The beneficial qualities of an empowerment orientation have been described in the areas of health care, social welfare and education. In one study, children in grades five and six were given the opportunity to give informed consent for a vaccine. Students were familiarized with the nature of the project and then asked if they had any concerns. The questions were found to be appropriate and reflected a clear understanding of the relevant issues. The next set of instructions stated that a consent

form would be sent home to be signed by parents *only if* the student initially consented or indicated that they were uncertain. Those that said no would not be considered any further. Of a total of 54% consent forms that went home to be signed, only 15% of the parents agreed to let their child participate in the vaccine trial (Lewis & Lewis, 1990). These same researchers designed a program which incorporated the teaching of decision-making skills into a health education curriculum which was to be taught by the classroom teacher. In a pre- and post-test designed to assess the acquisition of decision-making skills, the most significant factor that related to the scores was teacher attitude concerning the child's right to make decisions. Significant gains were only evident in those classrooms where teachers believed that it was appropriate for children to acquire decision-making skills in the area of health care (Lewis & Lewis, 1990). Taken together, these two studies indicate that the children may be prepared to take an active, responsible role in their lives, but perhaps the adults are not yet ready to relinquish control.

Empowerment as a Theory

One of the most comprehensive attempts to develop a theory of empowerment has been from the perspective of community psychology (e.g. Rappaport, 1981, 1987; Zimmerman, in press). According to this perspective, a theory of empowerment consists of both processes and outcomes of individual or collective efforts towards self-determination and a mastery over the environment. Actions, activities or structures may make up the processes that are empowering whereas the outcomes of these processes result in a level of being empowered and the operationalization of empowerment.

However, the outward appearence of empowerment will vary from individual to individual, population to population and context to context. In addition, the level of analysis may be either the individual, the organization or the community. Furthermore, political, social, economic or spiritual forces all come into play in any assessment of the impact of empowering processes or outcomes of empowerment (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, in press).

Fundamental to a discussion of empowering processes are efforts to gain control, obtain needed resources and an understanding of one's socio-political environment. Empowering processes might include active participation in skill development, problem solving, accessing resources or independent decision making (Zimmerman, in press)

Empowerment outcomes are difficult to operationalize since they are situation and population specific. As a result, very little research has been conducted which empirically tests this component of empowerment theory. In the Zimmerman and Rappaport study (1988), psychological empowerment distinguished a high citizen participation group from a low citizen participation group. Zimmerman and Rappaport believed that in addition to beliefs in one's competence and efforts to exert control, psychological empowerment includes an understanding of the socio-political environment. These results have since been replicated using different measures of perceived control which combined to form a single construct. However, in this latter study, there was some evidence that the interaction between participation and the perceived control measures was stronger for African Americans than for white individuals (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz & Checkoway, 1992).

Therefore, as a process, the nature of empowerment will vary depending on the context and the population. However, as an outcome, even though it too will vary across situations, it is necessary to

operationalize the construct to understand the consequences of an individual's efforts to gain greater control over his or her environment (Zimmerman, in press).

Within education, the process of empowerment has been treated as a value orientation and as a progressive approach to learning. Although the literature is replete with examples of the varying stages of the empowerment process, there have been minor attempts to measure systematically the construct as an outcome variable. In one study a grade four classroom with high computer access was found to have greater student empowerment than a control classroom. Empowerment was measured by the number of student initiated ideas and actions and the consequences of these initiations as determined by coded field notes and video (Fisher, 1988). Aside from this attempt, studies that measure empowerment in the classroom as an outcome have not been forthcoming. In addition, most research attempts that have examined the process of empowerment have used broad indices such as *student voice* and *classroom robustness*.

Empowerment, whether as a model or as an orientation has as a basic requirement that any environment that is empowering enhances the possibilities for people to take control of their own lives. Making informed decisions, accessing resources, and developing a sense of self worth all require taking control.

The proposed study will attempt to determine the relationship between an individual's perception of empowerment, and his or her academic achievement in a sample of university students. Although researchers have maintained that empowerment cannot be viewed outside of a socio-political context (e.g., Zimmerman et al., 1988, 1992), this negates the fact that every individual possesses a degree of personal power regardless of the context. "A few people have power all the time; most

people have it occasionally (though they tend to forget about it or try to explain it away); and everyone has power available" (Elbow, 1981, pp.369-370). The present study seeks to determine if a student's self-perception of psychological empowerment is related to academic performance. Furthermore, a second question which will be addressed is whether an individual who has a self-perception of empowerment can be characterized by an internal locus of control. The following chapter will examine the method of measurement for this inquiry.

CHAPTER III

Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the self-perception of psychological empowerment is related to academic achievement in a sample of students in a university setting. Although there is a lack of agreement as to a precise definition of empowerment, a recurring theme in the literature is that an individual's efforts to exert control are central (Zimmerman, in press). Previous attempts to measure psychological empowerment have used different indices of perceived control (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz & Checkoway, 1992).

The perception that one believes oneself to be in control of a particular situation or event, and the subsequent knowledge that one has the competency to exercise that control, allows an individual mastery over his or her environment. Therefore, the belief that one is competent, capable and able to act in a sufficient, appropriate, effective manner is empowerment defined for the purposes of this thesis. It was hypothesized that those students who perceive themselves to be empowered would report a higher level of academic achievement than those students who do not perceive themselves to be empowered. It was further hypothesized that students who have a self-perception of empowerment would be found to have a greater internal locus of control than those students who do not feel empowered.

Rationale

The principal aim of this study was to determine if the self-perception of psychological empowerment was related to academic achievement. The area of academic achievement was chosen because of its significance to a student population.

There is a growing body of empirical support that there exists within most individuals a need to feel in control in situations and in institutions that influence their well-being and valued life goals. In particular, within the educational system it has been found at all levels that personality, motivational or cognitive aspects of perceived control affects the academic achievement of individual students (e.g. Stipek & Weisz, 1981). Empowerment has been found to be a composite of all three of these areas of perceived control (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). However, unlike motivational and cognitive indices of perceived control which can be considered state variables, a personality measure operationalized as locus of control, has often been considered to be a variable that is more generalizable and stable. Lefcourt (1980) maintains that within a milieu that does not provide extreme constraints, one can discuss an individual's causal perceptions as relatively stable personality characteristics. Therefore, a locus of control scale will be administered as a means of obtaining a baseline for an individual's perception of control.

Subjects

This research was conducted on a sample of 24 students enrolled in an educational psychology course in the Faculty of Education at McGill University during the spring semester of the 1993-94 school year. The subjects in the sample, with the exception of 5 students, were all working towards a McGill Diploma in Education (1G program). The remaining 5 subjects either did not give any information concerning their degree in progress (n=3), or were currently enrolled in a program other than the 1G program. The assumption of the 1G program is that each student has achieved a high level of content knowledge through a previous university degree in an area other than education. The program is called the '1G' program because an additional 1 : ear of study is required after students have graduated from a previous university degree. The satisfactory completion of this program fulfils a partial requirement for teacher certification in the Province of Quebec. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the previous degrees of these students.

Table 1

Summary of Educational Background of Class

of Students From Which Sample was Drawn (N=62)

Highest Degree Obtained	Frequency
Bachelors	37
Bachelors (Honors)	16
Masters	6
PhD	1
Unknown	2

Participation was solicited from those students enrolled in the educational psychology course. Twenty-four students in a class of 62 volunteered to participate in the study. The sample (N = 24) consisted of 16 women and 8 men with ages ranging from 22 to 37. Two of the subjects did not report their age.

Instrumentation

Demographics. Participants were asked to report their gender, age, year of study, degree in progress, and previously earned university degrees. This information was to ascertain the homogeneity of the sample. The literature on locus of control points to a number of possible mediators between locus of control and academic achievement, some of which are specific to an adult population. Effect sizes (i.e. of the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement) have been found to be larger for studies in which only men are involved. However, with respect to age, effects have been found to be smaller for students of college age (Findley & Cooper, 1983). Finally, locus of control is considered to be a generalized expectancy variable (i.e. individuals have a generalized belief about control) whereby the strongest effect should be found in novel or ambiguous situations (Rotter. 1975). Norwicki and Duke (1983) suggest this as a reason why the size of the locus of control - academic achievement effect is often larger for younger subjects than for older subjects. Younger subjects have had fewer specific experiences in academic situations. Therefore novel, ambiguous or transitional (i.e. entrance into a new school or switching a program of study) situations should all be instances where generalized expectancies are maximized. However, with the exception of two subjects, all of the

participants in the sample had earned at least one previous university degree and had been enrolled in the program since September of 1993. It was therefore assumed that the current academic context was not novel for the majority of the subjects.

Finally, to provide an index of academic achievement, students indicated their GPA (Grade Point Average) from the previous semester. Of the total sample of 24, only 14 reported a numerical GPA. The remaining 10 subjects either gave a letter grade or did not report anything. In addition, since this achievement index was based on self-report, it is possible that some respondents may have chosen not to report their true GPA.

Self-perceptions of empowerment. The second half of the survey involved students' self-perceptions of empowerment (see Appendix A). Respondents were asked to indicate whether they perceived themselves to be empowered as students, thereby setting the context for the response (i.e. in an academic situation). Therefore, subjects either indicated "Yes" that they did perceive themselves to be empowered (Y Emp), or "No" that they did not perceive themselves to be empowered (N Emp).

In attempting to elicit information about an individual's feelings of empowerment, it is important to specify the context for this inquiry. An individual's perception of empowerment as a student may not necessarily extend to other areas in his or her life such as the role of a parent or spouse. In addition, because there is such a lack of uniformity with respect to the meaning of empowerment, a generic definition was provided which was adapted from a definition of psychological empowerment proposed by Ashcroft (1987). Therefore, "'nurturing belief in capability and competence' where competence is sufficient/appropriate/effective action" (Ashcroft, 1987,p.144),

became "the belief that one is competent and capable so as to be effective in one's actions". However, respondents' indication that they believed themselves to be empowered as students was not taken as conclusive evidence that they were in fact empowered. This thesis is only concerned with the *self-perception* of empowerment.

Descriptive data and interview data. To provide a descriptive component to this analysis, respondents were asked to identify contextual characteristics of their environment that may inhibit or promote the development of empowerment. Therefore they were asked to give specific examples of situations where they felt they were, or were not empowered as students.

The purpose of the descriptive data was to provide individual accounts of the self-perception of empowerment, given that a theory of empowerment predicts that psychological empowerment is context and population specific. To the extent that the sample represented college age students in the IG program in an academic context, it was expected that certain themes of empowerment (Y Emp and N Emp) would be generated.

A second procedure which was instituted was a nonstandardized interview with two IG students in the educational psychology class. The purpose of this procedure was multifold.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) outline the many forms that an interview may take depending on the information that is required. According to these guidelines, the interview in the present study had the following objectives:

1. To confirm the findings which were generated through the descriptive data (i.e. *confirmation survey*).

2. To determine the value orientation of two representatives from the sample with respect to their self-perceptions of empowerment as students (i.e. *participant-construct survey*).

3. To project the possible implications of two students' current self-perceptions of empowerment as students, on the future roles they will undertake as teachers (i.e. *projective survey*).

The first volunteer was solicited at random from the educational psychology class. She in turn reported that certain events had recently transpired with the students from the 1G program and that she perceived these events to be related to her feelings of empowerment. In an effort to understand what had transpired, she volunteered to contact the 1G student who she perceived to be a key player in the recent happenings. Written consent was obtained, and the two students agreed to do a joint interview which was taped on audio cassette.

The final purpose of the interview was to add information to the baseline data that otherwise would not have been available, using *key informants*. This included recording the two participants' participation in the events that had transpired, and their reflections and insights into the process of the recent occurrences in the 1G program. These insights often serve to sensitize the researcher to value dilemmas and suggest implications of specific findings (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

Therefore, questions which were posed to the two 1G students in the interview included (a) initial expectations of the 1G program, (b) current perceptions of the 1G program, (c) a description of the recent events which had transpired in the 1G program and their perception of these events, (d) perceptions of empowerment, and (e) projected future perceptions of empowerment as teachers.

Although the information from the descriptive data and the interview both supplemented and added to the quantitative analysis that was conducted, such information has its limitations. Self-reports

are sometimes inaccurate accounts of actual behaviour and are only as true as the reporting. However, it does provide insights into how individuals judge their situations and the rationalizations behind the actions that are performed. However, the use of the descriptive data and interviews posed unique problems of reliability and validity (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

It was recognized that subjects' written and oral descriptions were unique and personalized and therefore, this aspect of the research may approach, rather than attain external reliability.

Therefore, the present study approached external reliability to the extent that the methodology and procedures were described in adequate detail. Multiple data procedures tend to enhance internal reliability. While the combined results from the locus of control scale, empowerment survey and interview data may have approached internal reliability, triangulation, or a comparison of data from different sources, would have furthered this end (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). This would entail interviewing faculty and administrators connected with the 1G program and/or other students in the sample.

With respect to external validity, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the sample was representative of the population and the degree to which the two students who were interviewed were representative of the sample. In addition, possible experimenter bias in the nonstandardized interview must be taken into account. Therefore, the generalizability of this study must be interpreted with caution (Borg and Gall, 1989).

The internal validity of this study is subject to the effects of a number of possible extraneous variables. Foremost amongst these was the reliance on the perspectives of various informants and the notion that this study was only concerned with the self-perception of empowerment and events.

However, in an attempt to improve the internal validity of the data, the combined use of audio recording and low-inference narratives (i.e. from the descriptive data and the interview data), were used extensively (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

Locus of control. The Multidimensional-Multiattributional Causality Scale -MMCS (Lefcourt, Von-Baeyer, Ware & Cox, 1979) measures causal attributions for success and failure for achievement and affiliation (see Appendix B). The MMCS is comprised of 48 Likert type items, 24 which deal with achievement and 24 which deal with affiliation. These two areas were paired on the MMCS because of their relevance to a student population. Within each area (i.e. achievement and affiliation), half of the items deal with attributions for success and the other 12 with attributions for failure. Within each 12 item set, there are 3 items for each of four attributions (ability, effort, luck and context). The MMCS scores can be divided into internal attributions (ability and effort), and external attributions (luck and context). Therefore, it is possible to derive many different scores from the MMCS. Although both subscales were administered, only the achievement subscale was used in the final analysis of the study because it measures specific expectations associated with academic learning. Each subscale has a possible range of scores from 0 - 96, with the Likert rating for each item being zero to four (disagree to agree), and the higher score indicates more external orientations.

When individuals perceive contingency between their actions and the outcomes of those actions, they tend to have more goal directed behaviour i.e. they persist in their pursuits regardless of obstacles or adversity. The MMCS is a goal and attribution specific scale designed to be a better predictor of behaviours associated with their respective goals then are generalized locus of control

measures (Lefcourt et al, 1979). Stronger effects have been associated with domain specific locus of control measures especially in the area of achievement (Findley & Cooper, 1983; Rotter, 1975).

The MMCS has undergone five revisions between 1979 and 1990 to improve reliability coefficients. Although the scale has been normed on a variety of populations, it is recommended for university age students. Measures of internal consistency were obtained from several samples. Cronbach α values were found to range from .58 to .80 for the achievement locus of control scale (both externality and internality), whereas α values for internality with respect to achievement ranged from .50 to .84 and for externality from .62 to .81. Corrected Spearman-Brown split-half correlations ranged from .67 to .76 for achievement and .61 to .65 for affiliation. Test-retest reliability of the MMCS ranged from .51 to .62 from 1 week to 4 months for the achievement locus of control scale and from .50 to .70 for the affiliation scale (Lefcourt, 1991).

Validity data have been reported for the MMCS and Rotter's I-E scale. Correlations for achievement have ranged from .23 to .62 and for the affiliation locus of control scale from .37 to .55. (Lefcourt, 1991). Low to moderate predictive validity has been found between the MMCS affiliation measure and a variety of social interaction criteria. However, although the achievement subscale has been found to be related to various behaviour and affective responses, the results must be viewed with caution. As with the Rotter I-E scale, social desirability in university student samples can often be a contaminant (Lefcourt, 1981). However, Phares (1976) maintains that even though the Rotter I-E scale is not free from the effects of social desirability, this only accounts for a portion of the variance.

Procedure

Subjects were solicited from an educational psychology class comprised of sixty-two students. Participants were asked to complete a package consisting of the Multidimensional - Multiattributional Causality Scale (MMCS), demographic information and the survey on empowerment. Those who chose to participate in the study were instructed to return the completed surveys to class the subsequent day ·with a signed consent form. Prior to consent, candidates were assured that the information would be completely confidential, their identity would remain anonymous and their participation was entirely voluntary. At the completion of this phase of the data collection, two volunteers were solicited from the 1G class to do a joint interview which was taped on audio cassette.

The results of this investigation will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Interpretation

An analysis and interpretation was made of the collected data. Of a total of 27 subjects who returned the survey package, the final sample consisted of 24 students. Three surveys were spoiled because the locus of control scale was returned without the empowerment questionnaire and demographic information and therefore could not be analyzed. The remaining 24 subjects were divided on the basis of their self-perception of empowerment. The groups consisted of those students who responded that they did perceive themselves to be empowered [Y Emp; (n=17)], and those students who did not perceive themselves to be empowered [N Emp; (n=7)]. The breakdown of the sample by group and gender are reported in Table 2.

Empowerment and Academic Achievement

Hypothesis One stated that those students who perceived themselves to be empowered (Y Emp) would report a higher GPA than those students who did not perceive themselves to be empowered (N Emp). Because several subjects either reported a grade range instead of a single GPA score or did not report any GPA at all, 10 cases were deleted due to missing data leaving a final sample of N=14. A simple one-way analysis of variance indicated nonsignificance ($F(1,12) = 0.001$, ns). Therefore hypothesis one does not appear to be supported.

Table 2		
Breakdown of sample by Group and Gender (N =24)		
Group	Female	Male
Y Emp (n=17)	11	6
N Emp (n=7)	5	2

Empowerment and Locus of Control

Hypothesis Two stated that those students who perceived themselves to be empowered (Y Emp) would evidence a more internal locus of control than those students who did not perceive themselves to be empowered (N Emp). Locus of control (LOC) was determined using the achievement subscale of the MMCS. Prior to doing the main analysis, a preliminary examination was conducted to determine if gender could account for any variance in the scores since gender has sometimes been found to be a confounding variable on a locus of control scale. No difference was found between the mean scores of men and women on the achievement subscale ($F(1,22)= 0.172$, $p > .05$), and, therefore gender was not included in the remaining analysis.

A one-way analysis of variance was performed to determine whether an individual's perception of empowerment was related to his or her locus of control for an achievement situation. Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of students' locus of control on the MMCS achievement subscale based on whether subjects perceived themselves to be empowered or not. The analysis yielded evidence of significant differences between the means of the two groups ($F(1,22) = 5.813$, $p < 0.025$). Locus of control scores on the MMCS achievement subscale could range from 0 to 96 with a higher score indicating a more externally controlled individual. Given that students who reported a self-perception of empowerment had a higher mean score on the MMCS than those students who did not have a self-perception of empowerment, this indicated that the former group (Y Emp) tended more towards the external end of the LOC continuum than the latter group (N Emp). Therefore, hypothesis

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of LOC Scores

for Each Empowerment Group

	Locus of Control	
Group	M	SD
Y Emp (n=17)	56.19	8.91
N Emp (n=7)	46.47	8.91

* $p < .05$

two does not appear to be supported as indicated by the statistically greater mean score of the group

which reported a self-perception of empowerment. Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of the

locus of control scores for the total sample.
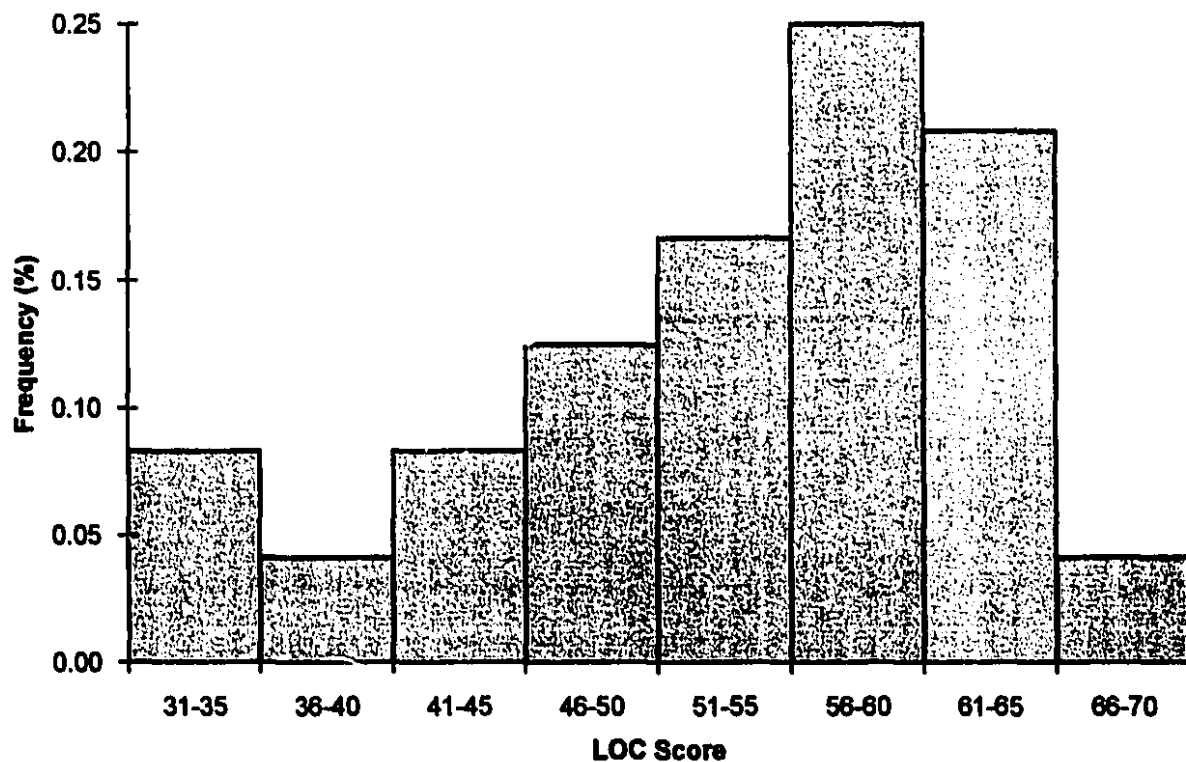
Figure 1. Frequency distribution of locus of control scores for achievement (N=24)

A second analysis was conducted using a Pearson Chi-Square to confirm the ANOVA results

using a different division of the scores. Subjects were divided by a median split with regards to their

locus of control for achievement scores.   Based on this division, perceived empowerment (i.e. yes or no) could still be distinguished by internal or external locus of control [x^2(1, $\underline{N}$ =24) =5.042, p < 0.025] with a greater proportion of empowered (i.e. Y Emp) subjects indicating an external locus of control (see Table 4).

Table 4			
Frequency Table of Empowered Group by LOC			
	Locus of Control		
Group	Internal	External	Total
Y Emp (n=17)	6	11	17
N Emp (n=7)	6	1	7
Total	12	12	

Descriptive Data

In addition to indicating whether they felt empowered or not as students, subjects were asked to give reasons and scenarios to explain their responses. All but two subjects completed this section. These descriptive data served to help put some of the quantitative analyses into perspective and offer possible explanations for the results.

There were certain themes that emerged across both groups. Many respondents qualified that while they felt empowered as students, they did not feel empowered in the program in which they were currently enrolled (i.e. 1G program):

"If the question actually is: Do I feel empowered in this program? the answer is no. The same cannot be said of my undergraduate degree." (student; N Emp)

In addition, a number of people pointed specifically to some of their instructors as playing very central roles in their feelings of unempowerment:

"The attitude of our previous ...professor...left the majority of us feeling disempowered, myself included" (student; N Emp)

"Unfortunately I have found that...2 factors combined tend to be the norm, i.e. giving well reasoned arguments that support the profs opinion is the surest route to success. I feel empowered insofar as I've been able to play this game successfully." (student; Y Emp)

Many students saw grades as indicators of how well they performed, but not necessarily as a measure of their learning. In other words, although grades were given varying degrees of importance, many saw their marks as reflective of the degree to which they adhered to a professor's agenda, and not necessarily a reflection of their learning achievement. A number of respondents suggested that the class work they were required to complete was of minimal practical use:

"I do not feel empowered when I have to follow a course of study that I do not feel to be especially relevant simply because some prof. has deemed it important. This leads also to having to fulfil course requirements that are simply `busy' work and not truly relevant." (student; N Emp)

"In order to receive credit for a course one must do all of the work the prof. asks - no matter how mindless, useless it is. Busy work is a waste of time..." (student; N Emp)

I can also feel empowered when the prof. inspires and leads us to learning [sic] something new, as opposed to scare tactics and huge tedious assignments....The latter case seems to promote distrust, negativity and disempowerment." (student; Y Emp)

The areas that appeared to distinguish those students who perceived themselves to be empowered was participation in a collective effort towards taking action to rectify a situation which many people felt was compromising their education. For others, it was the knowledge that the student body had taken action towards change, they had been listened to and consequently change had taken place. For still others it was a combination of their participation to effect change and actually see their efforts come to fruition:

"As a student, I've affected change at McGill by being part of a group who has changed the 1G program." (student; Y Emp)

"This semester in particular, all of the students in the 1G program banded together to enforce some necessary changes, and it worked." (student; Y Emp)

Although a number of students who perceived themselves to be empowered maintained that there were areas of the program that caused them to feel unempowered, they were still able to feel empowered as individual students. This was not the case with the unempowered group. Therefore, despite experiencing difficulties in the immediate socio-political environment, individuals were still able to feel empowered as students to the extent that they felt they had control over how much effort they put into their course work and they knew what they needed to do to achieve their performance goals (i.e. grades):

"I feel empowered as a student to the extent that I feel I have control over the amount of work/effort I put into something and can, therefore to some degree determine the `mark' or results I get/earn." (student; Y Emp)

"When a prof. is objective, organized and professional, then it's up to you to do the work and succeed. When I'm is [sic] the above scenario I usually do quite well." (student; Y Emp)

On the other hand, without an exception, people who did not feel empowered identified the progr   n and/or certain professors as the significant factors in how they responded. They did not feel that they had had a relevant, positive learning experience, and the expectations of some instructors were perceived to be unrealistic and unfair.

Overall students made the distinction between feeling empowered as a student and feeling empowered in the program in which they were enrolled (i.e. 1G Program). As students, most subjects said that they felt empowered. However, there appeared to be a collective feeling that both the diploma program and a number of the faculty in the program were instrumental with respect to feelings of unempowerment. Students did not feel that they had control over their education and in large part felt powerless until action was taken to effect change. Therefore in an effort to understand this unexpected situation that clearly was of relevance to the entire class, two volunteers were solicited who agreed to do a taped interview. The objective was to try to understand the scenario that the majority of the respondents had alluded to either directly or indirectly in their written accounts.

Interview Data

Two students ("student 1" and "student 2") in the 1G program agreed to sit down to try to give a more complete explanation of the events that had transpired leading up to some of the written comments of their fellow classmates.

In the Fall semester of 1993/94, at the beginning of the 1G program, it appeared that students were dissatisfied with the content of certain courses. What follows is an interpretation of the events from the perspective of two of the students:

"We had just piles of work dumped on us and it was almost as if, oh, I don't know - maybe I'm paranoid - but they just wanted to distract us enough and keep us so busy that we wouldn't have time to say wait a minute, there's no content to this for making all these laminated pictures....I don't understand why you want four - why isn't two enough - I don't even understand pedagogically why I'm doing this but I've got to do it and here's my deadline and they're not providing any kind of guidance." (student 1)

"Like someone telling you to bake something and just throwing something at you and you don't know what you're baking....we were told to make these units and ...you weren't really told how they worked or why they worked or if it was a good way or if there was another way you could do it." (student 2)

When the second semester came around and there did not appear to be any evidence that things were going to be different from the first semester, a collective feeling of displeasure began to emerge:

"We [the students of the 1G program] kind of made a connection there. You know, we put up with a lot. The whole class was pretty silent - the moral was really low and you could see it on everyone's faces. They were stressed out to the point where they shouldn't have really been stressed out." (student 1)

Although it is difficult to localize where the turning point occurred i.e. when things began to change, it was the opinion of student 1 that actions on the part of student 2 "started the ball rolling". Student 2 reached a point where her anger and frustration with the inadequacy of her teaching placement and with her supervisor was unacceptable. Furthermore, she had had no success in trying to rectify the situation through the proper channels. Therefore she wrote a letter to the department administrator:

"The letter basically said that the [co-operating] teacher should not be used again. That it was frustrating to be in a situation that I didn't feel was up to McGill standards and that I was aware that there were problems in the past [with the same teacher] and this is even more frustrating.

So that's sort of what I did and I guess I told enough people that I had talked to [the department administrator]....[The other students] were [also] feeling frustrated..." (student 2)

The effects of this initial action seemed to fuel other students to follow suit:

"Well what happened is that a few other people...I don't know if it gave people confidence that there was someone that was going to listen or what happened...I kept telling people go, if you've got a problem go, because [the department administrator] listens. I mean I could feel he was going to take some sort of action. So I told [student 1] and I told about three or four other people and I think [student 1] kept spreading it to other people and I think more and more people went up to him. What happened was, different people were coming and complaining about the same thing." (student 2)

In fact, the department administrator did take action and the supervising professor who been the subject of many of the complaints was relieved of his responsibility for the students in the 1G program :

"Shortly after...[the department administrator] showed up on our Monday class and said, `Well, a situation has come to my attention and this is unusual but I am going to ask you to evaluate your supervisors right now and it was a week later and [the supervising professor] was out." (student 1)

Since that point the students report that morale in the group has improved and the student placements are better thought out. Student feedback is solicited in an effort to place student teachers in constructive settings. However, as for whether the overall quality of the program has improved:

"Well I wouldn't go that far. I think there is going to be some efforts made. I really couldn't say. We have a different course now with a completely different man. He's unlike anyone any one of us has ever had. So in a sense it's good. We're going to end with him. But I don't know - I can't measure it. What's going to happen next year, I don't know." (student 2)

Discussion and Summary

An analysis and interpretation of the data suggests that although those students who reported a self-perception of empowerment did not evidence greater academic achievement as measured by GPA, the small sample size and missing data precludes anything more than a very tentative conclusion. However, beyond the obvious methodological constraints is the issue of academic achievement and whether GPA is an accurate measure of this domain. Individual accounts within the descriptive data leads one to believe that academic achievement can be interpreted in many different ways by students and is affected by a number of possible factors. This will be addressed in greater depth at a later point in this chapter.

Initially the data concerning locus of control was somewhat surprising. However, a closer look

suggests possible alternative explanations for the results that were obtained. Although one would

expect individuals who scored at the internal end of the LOC scale to feel that they had greater control

over their environments (i.e. perceived empowerment), this was not found to be true. It has been

noted in previous research with locus of control that the meaning that is attached to externality on a

LOC scale (i.e. attributing outcomes to forces outside of the individual's control) may not always be

descriptive of the way an external scorer exhibits his or her behaviour (Rotter, 1966). In fact, it has

been found among a college and adult population that individuals who score external, often act like

internal scorers to the extent that their behaviour and actions suggest more overt striving to exert

control over their environments (Phares, 1976, Rotter, 1975). It has been suggested that these

individuals expound external views as a defence or rationalization against expected failures. For

example, two of the highest scorers on the MMCS (i.e. the most external scorers in the sample), also

reported that they perceived themselves to be empowered and in control in an academic situation. The

following quotations illustrate this:

"I do feel empowered, but not in the sense of feeling completely confident in my academic

abilities per se, but in my ability to discern the requirements of the course and what the prof.

wants." (student; Y Emp)

"Over the years I have proven to myself that I am capable of consistently getting very high

marks....Because I have proved [sic] my abilities to myself I have managed to also decrease my

stress associated with school. I also get [positive] reinforcements from others...about my abilities."

(student;Y Emp)

Phares and his students (Davis, 1970) called these individuals *defensive externals* and found that these people were more likely to take action or become involved in activities that would improve their academic standing than "congruent externals" who exhibited more passive behaviour patterns. In fact, these two students also reported amongst the highest GPAs in the sample. Rotter (1975) suggests that *congruent externals* would most likely be found in cultures which have a more fatalistic outlook.

A second possible explanation for the results rests with the possibility that although LOC is traditionally thought of as a personality variable, it might be measuring a situation specific variable in this study. Lefcourt (1980) maintains that when there are extreme constraints in the environment that can be of a social, political or economic nature, then LOC is often specific to that situation and cannot reliably be said to measure broad, stable characteristics of an individual's personality. The assumption that underlies LOC as a personality variable is that a person who has an internal locus of control believes that he or she can influence the outcomes of a situation on the basis of his or her actions. Therefore, on the basis of the written accounts of the subjects in the sample, the fact that two thirds of the sample or 67% made either a direct or indirect mention of the 1G program and the events that had transpired, suggests that it was of paramount importance to the majority of the respondents. In the follow-up interview, it was further suggested that as a collective body the 1G students had been involved in recent events that had revolved around changes in the program as a result of their group

efforts. At least for the two individuals who had been interviewed, this was the first time in their school career that they had seen such changes come about:

"I couldn't actually believe that they listened to us. - they actually took what we said....When has anything like that been done before - where a bunch of students say this man is wrong or he's in the wrong and...people [administrators] say we agree with you and we're going to do something about it. But I think that's why people would feel empowered. I've never seen anything like this done. You know what it means when someone is on a tenure track." (student 1; interview)

Therefore, it is possible that a number of other respondents were also in a situation that was both extreme and novel for them, based on the evidence of anger and frustration that was very apparent in the responses. Therefore, if one can assume for a moment that what the MMCS was measuring was situation specific, then the high proportion of external scorers begins to become more understandable. For example, studies which have been done with populations who characteristically lack control or who are powerless by virtue of their place in society (i.e. low income or minority groups), tend to score more external as a group. Gurin, Gurin, Lao & Beattie (1969) suggested that their sample group, which consisted of urban blacks, would be hard pressed to view their oppressive environments as under their personal control. To do so would be paramount to excessive self-blame which would only serve to reaffirm their powerlessness. In addition, Gurin et al. (1969) factor-analyzed Rotter's I-E Scale (1966) and found that those individuals who attributed blame to the "system"

(i.e. 'system-blame' dimension), were also found to have engaged in many civil rights activities. Therefore, people who perceive the "system" or powerful others as controlling outcomes, may attempt to change this dynamic in an effort to gain greater personal control.

Using a sample of white middle-class subjects, Levenson (1974) was able to factor analyze Rotter's I-E Scale (1966) into three dimensions of expectancy: Internal, Powerful Others, and Chance. Levenson believed that those individuals who believe that outcomes are dependent on chance would behave differently than those individuals who felt that powerful others were in control. Her contention was that a lack of personal control does not necessarily motivate people to become fatalists. Rather, powerful others are often a reality and yet the potential for control still exists.

In the present study, it was very evident from the written responses that many subjects perceived certain professors as 'powerful others' and as having a great deal of control over students' academic outcomes (i.e. grades and/or learning). Thus, the tendency for the majority of the group to score external is not surprising. At the same time, it is also not surprising that a majority of individuals also reported that they perceived themselves to be empowered, given that collective action had been taken which had led to certain changes and subsequently, greater perceived control on the part of a number of the students. However, the difficulty remains that the same subjects who reported that they did not perceive themselves to have a great degree of personal control (i.e. external LOC), also said that they had a self-perception of empowerment, which, can be defined as evidencing feelings of control over one's environment. The question is, how do we explain this dichotomy? A possible explanation appears to lie in the descriptive explanations.

Many subjects distinguished between an overall feeling of empowerment as a student and feelings of empowerment in the 1G program. However, even those students who did not overtly make a distinction between their feelings of empowerment as a student in different situations, made distinctions in the area of achievement goals.

Previous research in which an attempt to operationalize empowerment was conducted, used indices of perceived control in the domains of personality, cognition and motivation (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Although a single discriminant function was formed by these three measures, the authors recognized the equal importance of the individual indices. In the descriptive data it was evident that subjects had different motivations and cognitions concerning intellectual achievement and many distinguished between the relative importance of learning goals versus performance goals. Learning goals refer to an individual's striving to improve competencies (i.e. developing new skills). Most people in the sample who were concerned with learning goals were frustrated with such things as a poor school placement, "busy" work which was perceived to be empty of content, lack of challenge and an inadequate learning base. On the other hand, performance goals deal with an individual's concern with gaining positive feedback regarding their competence (i.e evaluations or grades). Performance goals tended to be less of an issue with respect to empowerment, because for those individuals who saw this as important, it was easier to discern what was needed to achieve good grades. Conceivably the type of goal or goals that an individual pursues provides the framework for how one responds and interprets different situations (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Using this framework, it might be possible to begin to understand why the groups (i.e. Y Emp, N Emp) did not differ on a measure of academic achievement (i.e. GPA). Grades and hence GPA scores appear to be only one dimension of achievement i.e. a high

GPA does not necessarily indicate learning. For some individuals who reported a self-perception of empowerment, the concern was with performance, and for others, grade level was secondary and learning was foremost. For example, consider the following two illustrations of these differing goal orientations:

"Over the years, I have proven to myself that I am capable of consistently getting very high marks. I am very close if not top of my class in many subjects....I also get [positive] reinforcements from others...concerning my abilities." (student; Y Emp)

"I don't evaluate myself on purely empirical grounds (i.e. grades). Of course that is part, but it is about mind expansion, new ideas too. When I get those I feel empowered." (student; Y Emp)

Therefore, it appears that an individual's perceived personal control may have consisted of cognitive dimensions (i.e. feelings of self-efficacy and confidence) and motivational factors (i.e. goal orientations) in addition to possible personality factors (i.e. locus of control).

Although empowerment may consist of many personas, the issue of control is central to any of the forms it takes. In general, the importance of control was often brought up spontaneously by respondents. When individuals did not perceive that they had control over their environments they felt unempowered:

"I think a lot of us thought we had no control over our lives; no control over the work and the work was not meaningful - it didn't make any sense to us....we had no recourse to stand up and say `why do we have to do this again?'." (student 1; interview)

"Busy work is a waste of time, but as a student I have no say in whether or not I do it. I must, to get my credits." (student; N Emp)

From an ecological perspective of empowerment (i.e. as in community psychology or social welfare), the individual cannot be examined in isolation from the broader social context, and to a large degree this is what is we have seen in this study. This conceptualization of empowerment involves a redistribution of power whereby individuals acquire resources on a variety of levels-personal, organizational and community (Hasenfeld et al, 1989). The ecological perspective also suggests a framework for the understanding of an overall picture which provides a clear distinction between processes and outcomes. Empowering processes refer to efforts to exert control, obtain needed resources, and critically understand one's socio-political environment. Outcomes are the consequences of gaining greater control or obtaining needed resources. The outward form of these processes and outcomes often vary from situation to situation, population to population and possibly from individual to individual and therefore become very difficult to operationalize a priori (Zimmerman, in press).

Although the original intent of this study was to try and examine the "state" of being empowered, it appears that inadvertently the opening strains of the development of a "process" of empowerment may have been uncovered.

The structure of the academic program was such that a great deal of the content and certain instructors/supervisors created an environment in which individuals felt powerless by virtue of their perceptions of a lack of control. Powerlessness, while not completely imposed on the individual by his or her environment, is often conceptualized to a large extent as being embedded and reinforced in the structure of social institutions (Kieffer, 1984). This is reflective of the perceptions of the student sample in this study:

"I guess that I don't really think that students are empowered generally. I don't put much weight into course evaluations....because we're just little people." (student 1; interview)

"I see most educational situations as a hierarchical power relationship where the prof. uses grading, either consciously or subconsciously as a way of rewarding students who meet their criteria." (student; Y Emp)

However, according to the students who were interviewed, the situation began to change when action was taken on an individual level and subsequently on a collective level, and when this action on the part of the collective was perceived to have an effect. Therefore, despite the existence of 'powerful others' who students perceived to be exerting undue control on academic outcomes, individual students still saw the potential to try to gain control and the actions of these individuals formed a collective effort. Efforts to exert control were made by participation in problem solving in one's immediate environment. Individuals who were perceived to have the power in the institution (i.e. administrator,

professor) were made aware that students perceived the quality of their education was being compromised by certain factors. On the basis of these actions the department administrator used his power to institute accountability measures based on students' feedback in their evaluations. For many, this signified gaining greater control over their environments; the perception that the collective action had been instrumental in advancing positive change.

While participants in this study did not necessarily gain significant control or influence, they did perceive that they had made a difference and that someone who held the power in their social institution had listened to them. It was not necessarily that they *had* more power, but that they *felt* more powerful:

"Someone actually listened to me....I finally said this bugs me and I want something done about it and someone listened." (student 2; interview)

Therefore, although the self-perception of empowerment was in large part subject to a larger, social context, there appeared to be a personal level of empowerment that transcended contextual boundaries. Although it is possible that in order to reach a personal potential for empowerment, an individual may have needed to have had previous experience in their social environment.

The overall results of this study suggest that although the academic achievement and locus of control did not appear to be related to empowerment in the expected direction, there were mitigating circumstances which might be able to account for these findings. However, it is apparent that

methodological issues such as sample size need to be addressed. These and other limitations of this

study, and research implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the self-perception of empowerment within the context of an academic environment. Empowerment involves the central concept of an individual's efforts to gain control over his or her environment. A locus of control measure specific for achievement goals (MMCS) was used as an indice of perceived control. Academic achievement was chosen as the focal point of empowerment efforts, given the salience that an achievement situation has for a university population. It was hypothesized that those subjects who scored with an internal locus of control on the MMCS achievement subscale would perceive themselves to be empowered as students. It was further hypothesized that students with a self-perception of empowerment would report a higher GPA than those students who did not have a self-perception of empowerment.

A total sample of 24 subjects out of a class of 62 university students in the Faculty of Education at McGill University volunteered to be in the study. Subjects were divided on the basis of their self-perception of empowerment where 17 individuals reported that they perceived themselves to be empowered and 7 did not perceive themselves to be empowered. This was determined on the basis of self-report as indicated in a questionnaire on empowerment. In addition, subjects were asked to provide an explanation of their self-perception of empowerment as well as demographic information and GPA. The Multidimensional-Multiattributional Causality Scale-MMCS (Lefcourt, Von-Baeyer, Ware & Cox, 1979) was administered to determine locus of control for achievement. The analysis and interpretation of the data did not appear to offer support for the contentions that the self-perception of

empowerment is related to GPA or an internal locus of control. In fact, it was found that a student's perceived empowerment was related to an external locus of control in this sample. Certain themes in the descriptive data appeared to indicate that extenuating circumstances had taken place in the 1G program and this provided some clues to account for the results. In an effort to understand these circumstances, two volunteers from the 1G program were interviewed.

In the months preceding the study, it was suggested that students in the 1G program at McGill University were largely dissatisfied with the quality of the education they were getting. However, through the collective efforts of a group of students, changes in the program were effected based on student feedback.

On the basis of the descriptive data and the interview with the two students, it appeared that many subjects felt empowered as students to the extent that they had had successful experiences in their academic history and felt confident that they could discern what was required to achieve good grades. Therefore it is not surprising that there were no significant differences for GPA between the two groups (i.e. Y Emp, N Emp). However, many of these same individuals also qualified that they did not feel empowered in the 1G program. This latter feeling stemmed from the belief that as students they did not have any control over bad school placements and course content which many students described as nothing more than "busy work". Many students who did not feel empowered, perceived certain professors' actions to be at the root of these beliefs. On the other hand, students who did perceive themselves to be empowered, focused on the action that had been taken on the part of the collective student body to effect change. In some cases students identified their participation in this action as the empowering component. In all, students who perceived themselves to be empowered as

students (n=17) saw value in the efforts that were made to do something about a situation that was not seen as just, and the subsequent changes that came about as a result of these efforts.

Therefore, the findings that students who perceived themselves to be empowered also evidenced an external locus of control is congruent with the reports from the descriptive accounts and the interview. However, several other alternative interpretations were proffered as explanations for the results.

The high frequency of scorers towards the external end of the locus of control continuum has been previously reported in the literature for college populations. These individuals, called *defensive externals*, are said to expound external views as a defence against expected failures (Phares, 1976, Rotter, 1966, 1975).

A second possible explanation for the results suggests that given the extreme nature of the situation with the 1G students, the LOC scale measured a situation-specific variable instead of a personality variable.

It does not appear that one explanation provides a better alternative than the other. In fact all three of the explanations are plausible given that the nature of empowerment can vary from individual to individual and from context to context (Zimmerman, in press). The nature of the situation is such that there were such varied reactions to the events which took place in the 1G program. Therefore, any attempt to compartmentalize the explanations might not be feasible.

<u>Limitations of the Study</u>

Methodological issues are of primary concern in this study due to the small sample size (N=24) and the uneven number of subjects in each group [Y Emp, (n=17);N Emp, (n=7)]. Although the statistical analysis from the administration of the locus of control scale and the empowerment questionnaire yielded significant results, this must be regarded with caution. Most studies with a locus of control scale divide subjects' scores so that only the upper extremes and lower extremes are retained as measures of externality and internality. The scores that fall in the middle third are often discarded because the scores represent subjects who tend to have combined external and internal qualities. Unfortunately, this was not possible with the present study given the obvious limitations with sample size. A similar scenario was played out with GPA. Of a sample of 24 subjects, 10 had to be eliminated from the analysis for academic achievement because of missing data, leaving 14 subjects remaining who had to be further divided into two groups (i.e. Y Emp; N Emp).

A further constraint with the methodology had to do with the reliance on self-report data. Self-reports of locus of control and empowerment are only accurate to the degree that the self-perceptions are accurate and they are answered honestly. Similarly, for GPA, there are no guarantees that individuals answered honestly or accurately.

Finally, given that completing the survey and returning it to class from home presents more of a *pure* volunteer situation than actually doing it in class, and given that volunteers' need for social approval tends to be higher than nonvolunteers (Borg & Gall, 1989), then this becomes a possible confound. Social desirability already accounts for a portion of the variance on the locus of control

scale and conceivably this could increase the saturation of that factor. In addition, one also questions whether the group that did not return the questionnaire represents a subsample. If an individual does not feel empowered, one has to question how likely it is that he or she will take the time out to complete the survey and return it.

It is also difficult to determine whether subjects responded consistently to the LOC questionnaire and empowerment survey. Subjects appeared to have differing conceptions of their role as a student depending on the context. Therefore, it is conceivable that responses on the LOC questionnaire and responses to the empowerment survey were answered with respect to feelings of empowerment and control in different areas. The basic tenets of a theory of empowerment espouses the importance of recognizing that it is context specific (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, in press). The main distinction here is that the majority of the subjects had already completed a previous degree and therefore had had experience with which to draw from in a university setting. In addition, of the total of 24 subjects, 10 reported that they had either completed post graduate degrees or an honours undergraduate program indicating that for at least 42% of the sample, they had completed advanced schooling. A student may feel empowered in some scenarios (i.e. previous degrees), and yet not have the same perceptions in all experiences as a student if mitigating circumstances arise such as what appeared to be the case with the current sample.

Although efforts were taken to adhere to certain procedures to enhance the credibility of the study (i.e. multiple data collection methods, low inference narratives), it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the results are reliable and valid. The process of triangulation and the use of a wider range of informants from the 1G class might have improved the replicability and accuracy of the

findings. However, it did appear that the use of the qualitative data often clarified the quantitative data. Where the LOC measure and the GPA tallies were only able to provide limited information, the descriptive data provided insights that would not have been otherwise possible in a study of this nature. The nature of empowerment is that it is context and population specific. However, it often differs from individual to individual as well. This is exemplified in the interview and the notion of how each of the two students perceived the same events in different ways.

For example, it has been suggested in the literature (e.g. Ashcroft, 1987) that empowerment operates within a personal and a social sphere. The two individuals who were interviewed appeared to perceive themselves to be empowered in different ways in different situations i.e. the personal sphere versus the social sphere. However, student 2 perceived that as a result of her feelings of empowerment in the social sphere (i.e. school), she experienced a greater sense of confidence and was able to take greater risks in her personal life (i.e. with her family and in her relationships):

"Before, I was seen as the daughter and now I feel more like an equal - which is weird, because I don't know if [my parents are] ready for that....even with my brothers....It's a whole circular thing because the empowerment has given me energy and I don't know , belief in myself, I guess. I am important and what I think is important and that should be important to other people." (student 2, Y Emp)

However, one must take into account the sequence of events in the social sphere that facilitated this. Her actions (i.e. writing a letter) only enabled her to perceive a greater sense of control to the extent

that this action was acted upon by a person in a position of power (i.e. department administrator) and thus was perceived to have an effect. Therefore, we find that the self-perception of empowerment for student 2 resulted from an interaction of her attempts to use her personal power to mobilize the power in her socio-political environment, and the subsequent results of these actions.

Student 1 on the other hand maintained that she already felt empowered in the personal sphere in her life. Yet she also maintained that she did not feel empowered in her current social sphere in the same way as student 2. Her past experience as a student had been that her previous efforts to exert control (i.e. writing evaluations about a course) had not led to any significant changes so she was sceptical at best.

A further distinction between student 1 and student 2 lay in their differing definitions of empowerment. For student 1 empowerment meant having a sense of well-being:

"Is it just a sense of well-being? I think that's what I might lean toward, because I don't want to have power over other people but I think I want to have power over my own life. And if I had, I would feel a sense of well-being." (student 1)

She went on to say that she did feel ultimately that she has control over her life because she is able to make her own decisions. Yet as a student she did not feel empowered. She was tentative in her perceptions that either individual or collective efforts to exert control in her current setting will in reality, make a difference:

"As a student I need to be empowered by feeling that my opinion matters and that my voice mattered if you follow that through...Obviously, my voice mattered because we got somebody thrown out. But not really thrown out - he's still on the payroll. The mechanism of the machine could work so far - he's still here and he's going to be here for another 10 years - we're going to shuffle him - find somewhere else to put him." (student 1)

For student 2, her definition of empowerment was more oriented towards a social sphere:

"I guess that's where I feel the power. I did change something for myself and for everybody else and when everybody made that decision, they did it for themselves and for everybody else. I guess I see empowerment as knowing you can make a change." (student 2)

Therefore, although both individuals perceived empowerment as making a change or making a difference in her immediate environment, the significance for each of the two individuals rests in different domains. Given that these are just two accounts from a total sample of 24, it is very conceivable that there were other significant differences in the way the remaining sample viewed the empowerment process. The current methodology does not allow for this.

Recommendations and Research Implications

Psychological empowerment from the perspective of community psychology, consists of beliefs about one's competencies, efforts to exert control, and an understanding of one's socio-political environment (Zimmerman, in press). Most of the subjects in the study appeared to believe that they were competent as students as indicated by the descriptive data. In addition, particularly for this sample, most subjects had completed a previous degree, often in advanced studies. Despite these overall feelings of competency, they did not necessarily feel that they had control over their current situation. However, recent events had given them more of an understanding of their socio-political environment in the sense that they became cognizant of the actions that could be taken within their social institution to try to effect change.

The original definition of empowerment that was proposed for the purposes of this thesis reads, "'nurturing belief in capability and competence' where competence is sufficient/appropriate/ effective action" (Ashcroft, 1987, p.145). Given that some individuals reported that they were satisfied with their teaching placements and had had some course work that had 'nurtured beliefs in capability and competence', it would be expected that if other individuals had been solicited to be interviewed, varying degrees of empowerment would be found. In no way does this researcher assume that the two 1G students speak on behalf of the rest of the class. However, the fact remains that many individuals did allude to the fact that the program had failed them to the extent that it did not nurture the belief in an individual's confidence and competence that he or she could be an effective force in the classroom as a

teacher. So there are many possible levels of analysis within this sample. Perhaps this also becomes suggestive of future methodologies.

Although the locus of control scale did provide an initial indication of perceived control, it did not furnish a complete picture without the descriptive data, and even then, a reliance on data gleaned from self-report is always suspect. However, the interview enabled the researcher to get the broadest understanding of the situation. Keiffer (1984) suggests that a process which involves self-reflection and the generating of ongoing hypotheses allows a researcher to go beyond some of the ambiguities of empowerment. Participants can be always consulted for clarification and refinement. He further conceived of empowerment as a "long-term process of adult learning and development" (p.10). Tentatively, this appeared to be what was glimpsed during the interview - two individuals at varying stages of empowerment which was suggestive of ongoing transactions between personal and social spheres. Therefore, the mitigating events that did transpire which enabled students to perceive themselves as empowered (i.e. the collective action and subsequent happenings) has a number of implications for future practice. Zimmerman (1990) has proposed a learned hopefulness model which is suggestive of some of the events that were recorded in this study.

Learned hopefulness is conceived of as the antithesis of learned helplessness. Experiences (e.g. developing and using new skills, problem solving, etc.) which are perceived to provide opportunities for greater control over one's environment, are considered to be a necessary step in the process of developing psychological empowerment (Zimmerman, 1990). Based on the written accounts of the sample and an indepth narrative by two of the subjects, it is possible that once students of the 1G program experienced the perception of control over their environments on the basis of their collective

actions, that a sense of hopefulness began to emerge. This may have been an important first step towards the development of future facilitators of empowerment in the classrooms.

An important point that emerged in the interview was subjects' perceptions of what would make them feel empowered as teachers, given that as students in the 1G program, they were being trained to be teachers. The answer was very enlightening. Both subjects agreed that to feel empowered as teachers, they would need to believe that their students perceived themselves to be empowered. Herein lies the difficulty.

If an educational institution is training teachers to teach, and given that teachers are facilitators of the empowerment process of students, then is this a reasonable expectation if they (the student teachers) did not appear to know what it is to feel empowered as learners? Although both students 1 and 2 were able to concur on what they perceived to be an outcome of empowerment, (i.e. confidence and self-esteem, relevant learning experiences and necessary tools and skills), these were also the same areas that many students in the sample perceived to be lacking in their training based on their written accounts. In addition, the evidence suggests that many students in the 1G program believed that their learning outcomes were not within their control (i.e. external control). Therefore future research might attempt to determine if this link indeed exists between student teachers perceiving themselves to be empowered as learners, and in turn becoming facilitators of the empowerment process of their own students.

This study has attempted to further an understanding of empowerment given that it is an area that has warranted so much attention in the literature, but has reached so little consensus. Although the results of this research are only tentative and warrant further study, the combined descriptive accounts

and level of significance on a perceived control measure (LOC) would suggest that an individual's efforts to exert control over his or her environment is central to the self-perception of empowerment. However, these findings only serve to point the way to future research in an attempt to clarify and expound upon some of the issues which have been suggested in this thesis.

APPENDIX A

EMPOWERMENT SURVEY

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Age:
Program of study:
Faculty:
Current Year of Enrolment (e.g. BEd UI):
Previous University Degrees or Diplomas:
Male_____ Female_____
What was your GPA last semester? _____

EMPOWERMENT is: the belief that one is competent and capable so as to be effective in one's actions.

Given the above definition of empowerment, do you feel empowered as a student?

YES_____   NO_____

If YES, please give specific examples of situations where you feel empowered as a student, and explain *why* you feel empowered in these situations.

If <u>NO</u>, please give specific examples of situations where you do not feel empowered as a student, and explain *why* you do not feel empowered in these situations.

Thank you very much for your participation.

APPENDIX B

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL-MULTIATTRIBUTIONAL CAUSALITY SCALE-MMCS

This questionnaire consists of 48 statements followed by a scale on which you can express how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Please do not skip any items. It is very important that you respond to all of the statements.

1. When I receive a poor grade, I usually feel that the main reason is that I haven't studied enough for that course.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

2. My enjoyment of a social occasion is almost entirely dependent on the personalities of the other people who are there.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

3. If I were to receive low marks it would cause me to question my academic ability.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

4. Making friends is a funny business; sometimes I have to chalk up my successes to luck.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

5. If I did not get along with others, it would tell me that I hadn't put too much effort into the pursuit of social goals.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

6. Some of the times that I have gotten a good grade in a course, it was due to the teacher's easy grading scheme.

0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE   AGREE

7. It seems to me that failure to have people like me would show my ignorance in interpersonal relationships.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

8. Sometimes my success on exams depends on some luck.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

9. In my case the good grades I receive are always the direct results of my efforts.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

10. No matter what I do, some people just don't like me.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

11. The most important ingredient in getting good grades is my academic ability.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

12. Often chance events can play a large parts in causing rifts between friends.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

13. Maintaining friendships requires real effort to make them work.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE        .
```

14. In my experience, once a professor gets the idea you're a poor student, your work is much more likely to receive poor grades than if someone else handed it in.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

15. It seems to me that getting along with people is a skill.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

16. Some of my lower grades have seemed to be partially due to bad breaks.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

17. When I fail to do as well as expected in school, it is often due to a lack of effort on my part.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

18. Some people can make me have a good time even when I don't feel sociable.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

19. If I were to fail a course it would probably be that I lacked skill in that area.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

20. In my experience, making friends is largely a matter of having the right breaks.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

21. When I hear of a divorce, I suspect that the couple probably did not try enough to make their marriage work.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

22. Some of my good grades may simply reflect that these were easier courses than most.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

23. I feel that people who are often lonely are lacking in social competence.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

24. I feel that some of my good grades depend to a considerable extent on chance factors such as having the right questions show up on exam.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

25. Whenever I receive good grades, it is always because I have studied hard for that course.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

26. Some people just seem predisposed to dislike me.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

27. I feel that my good grades reflect directly on my academic ability.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

28. I find that the absence of friendships is often a matter of not being lucky enough to meet the right people.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

29. In my case, success at making friends depends on how hard I work at it.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

30. Often my poorer grades are obtained in courses that the professor has failed to make interesting.

```
0   1   2   3   4
DISAGREE          AGREE
```

31. Having good friends is simply a matter of one's social skill.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

32. My academic low points sometimes makes me think I was just unlucky.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

33. Poor grades inform that I haven't worked hard enough.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

34. To enjoy myself at a party I have to be surrounded by others who know how to have a good time.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

35. If I were to get poor grades I would assume that I lacked ability to succeed in those courses.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

36. If my marriage were a long happy one, I'd say that I must just be very lucky.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

37. In my experience, loneliness comes from not trying to be friendly.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

38. Sometimes I get good grades only because the course material was easy to learn.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

39. In my experience, there is a direct connection between the absence of friendship and being socially inept.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

40. Sometimes I feel that I have to consider myself lucky for the good grades that I get.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

41. I can overcome all obstacles in the path of academic success if I work hard enough.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

42. It is almost impossible to figure out how I've displeased some people.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

43. When I get good grades, it is because of my academic competence.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

44. Difficulties with my friends often start with chance remarks.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

45. If my marriage were to succeed, it would be because I worked at it.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

46. Some low grades I've received seem to me to reflect the fact that some teachers are just stingy with marks.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

47. It is impossible for me to obtain close relations with people without my tact and patience.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

48. Some of my bad grades may have been a function of bad luck, being in the wrong course at the wrong time.

```
0    1    2    3    4
DISAGREE              AGREE
```

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