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An Evaluation of the Wider Horizons Program in Pittsburgh form 1989 to 2002

Breandan Gearard Magee

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**An Evaluation of the Wider Horizons Program in Pittsburgh
from 1989 to 2002**

A Thesis

Presented to the

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

by

Breandán G. Magee

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Introduction

Britain and Ireland share a common history that bears witness to their present. Successive British policies of colonization and economic suffocation have left an enduring legacy in Ireland. The Irish landscape has been plagued by war and division for centuries, which today has resulted in a partitioned island and a divided people.

Southern Ireland ceded from the union with Great Britain after the Anglo-Irish war of 1921, but Northern Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom. Ireland was partitioned in two to reflect the two opposing communities of the island, namely the mostly Catholic Nationalists in the south who campaigned for independence and the mainly Protestant Unionists in the north who sought to remain part of the British Empire. The boundary that politically divided the land into Northern Ireland and the then Free State of Ireland (now the Republic of Ireland) remains to this day and is testament to the failure of Ireland's people to agree to live harmoniously side by side.

One could be forgiven for assuming that this partitionist solution could have solved the age old "Irish Question", but a sizable Catholic/Nationalist minority was included in the state of Northern Ireland. In 1921 that minority numbered one third of the population of Northern Ireland. The 2001 census reveals that higher birth rates, lower death rates, and lower rates of emigration for the Catholic community have resulted in the growth of that minority to 44% of the population.

The state of Northern Ireland was devised from the outset as an undemocratic state that would have a permanent Protestant/Unionist majority. Northern Catholics were duly apprehensive at the creation of the Northern state, as they were forced to endure the pogroms of the 1920's perpetrated by the forces of the state, the Royal Ulster

Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Special Constabulary (B Specials). The notorious B Specials were a much more militaristic reserve corps of the RUC who were involved in many controversial killings of Catholics. Lord James Craig, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and an architect of the newly formed state roused the newly formed Northern Ireland Parliament in 1933 by boasting, “We are a Protestant parliament and a Protestant State.” Catholics were left under no illusion as to their place and status within this part of the United Kingdom (Coogan 1996).

The following decades witnessed the gerrymandering of political boundaries in favor of Protestants, the abuse of access to education and public housing and discrimination in the workforce. The intent was to stabilize the state by undermining any opposition from within whilst stifling reform or any shift in power. The ruling Protestant hegemony feared that any concessions or reform would weaken their position, sending them down the road to a unified Ireland (Hume 1996).

The manifestation of their fears of being engulfed in a Gaelic Roman Catholic State, where they would constitute the minority, fueled the growing sense of Catholic grievance. The status quo exploded during the 1960’s with the emergence of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement, which demanded equal rights for Catholics. A storm of discontent that had been brewing for decades erupted into civil strife and violence. The state, in response, attempted to quell the insurrection and assuage Protestant fears that their ascendancy would remain intact (Brown 1985).

History attests that the maelstrom of protest versus subversion resulted not in peace but rather a bloody and turbulent 30 years known as “The Troubles.” Paramilitary groups from both traditions fought savage campaigns against one another, the security

forces, the British army and the unsuspecting public. The result was over 3000 dead (an equivalent to 600,000 U.S. deaths per capita), many more injured and the largest displacement of people in Western Europe since World War II. The two communities further polarized their neighborhoods by a series of forced evictions, house burnings and voluntary relocations (Coogan 1996).

The people of Northern Ireland today remain one of the most divided and suspicious populations after their thirty year ordeal of terrorism and strife. Until recent years inward investment was the lowest of any region in the UK and unemployment was the highest. Foreign companies were understandably reluctant to locate in an unstable and volatile environment, and the tourism industry that flourished in the Republic never materialized north of the border.

In an attempt to redress the inequities and grievances of the past, the British and Irish governments, backed strongly by an ever growing Irish American lobby, encouraged various political initiatives from the 1980's aimed at bringing peace and prosperity to this blighted corner of Ireland.

Their attempts at peace building included a two-pronged approach, encouraging peace and reconciliation on small and large scales, involving all the political representatives of Northern Ireland. Away from the corridors of power in London, Dublin and Washington, the three governments allocated money and resources to fund local community based initiatives aimed at reconciling the two traditions of Northern Ireland and the peoples of northern and southern Ireland. They believed that inter-community projects directed at the most traumatized and economically disadvantaged

communities would promote understanding and economic revitalization in regions plagued by unemployment and deprivation (Arthur 1991).

It was through this movement and with political good will that the International Fund for Ireland was founded in 1986 by the British and Irish governments to “promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland” (www.internationalfundforireland.com).

The operating budget ran to \$30 million USD in 2001. The Fund receives its aid from the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with the US being responsible for over 50% of its donations in 2001. (www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2003/ee/ie).

Specific Problem

Among the functions of the International Fund for Ireland, Community Capacity Building plays a major role.

This is the most people orientated component of the Fund’s work and is designed to provide people, particularly those in the most disadvantaged areas, with the skills, resources and self-confidence to undertake the social and economic regeneration of their areas. It also encourages local groups to reach out to other communities and through training and work experience helps young people to enter the labor market or further education.

(www.internationalfundforireland.com/html/community.htm)

The Wider Horizons Program is one of six distinct elements of Community Capacity Building. This program offers young unemployed adults, aged 18 to 28, from the two traditions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland the opportunity to work and train abroad for a period of six to eight weeks. The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh has

worked closely with this program since 1989 and has brought over 1500 young adults to western Pennsylvania since their initial involvement with the International Fund for Ireland.

The goal of the Wider Horizons program is to encourage participants to become more tolerant of the opposing tradition. It is hoped that participation in the program will enhance job skills and enable the candidate to secure employment or seek further education upon return home.

During the six to eight week stay in the USA, participants undergo an intensive program of work experience and conflict resolution training. The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh manages a database of over 100 local Pittsburgh companies who offer internships in industries as diverse as landscaping and telemarketing. The Ireland Institute finances the participants with a stipend and provides their hotel accommodation for the duration of their stay.

If a participant decides that his/her job choice was not a good fit, he/she has the opportunity to try a new field. The companies do not pay any money to the participants but rather offer them the chance to learn new skills and develop their self-confidence. The actual experience of working for many of these unemployed young adults should encourage them to seek employment upon their return home. Working imbues an individual with a sense of pride and accomplishment, but many of the participants lack the motivation or self-confidence that working provides.

An obligatory component of the Wider Horizons program is participation in a weekly conflict resolution seminar at Duquesne University. During this class the participants are invited to interact and fully immerse themselves in the educational

experience. They are divided into smaller groups to practice their conflict resolution skills through role-plays. The class challenges many of their beliefs and attempts to show the roots of conflict and methods of managing it. The aim of the class is to deconstruct stereotypes and increase the participant's tolerance of opinions and traditions that differ from his/hers.

The concern of the proposed study is to determine whether the Wider Horizons program has increased the participants' chances of employment, encouraged educational advancement or increased religious tolerance.

Rationale

The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh is a not for profit organization, and funding from the International Fund for Ireland to promote the Wider Horizons program has proven essential to its survival. The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh is not the only organization that vies for the funds to operate this program, as it is in competition with organizations across North America and Europe. This study will be significant to the Ireland Institute's policy-making decisions as the findings may show the effectiveness and failings of how the program has been operated in Pittsburgh. If it is proven to be a successful venture in Pittsburgh, the Ireland Institute can use this information as leverage in securing further funding. Further funding from this source is vital to the future existence of the Ireland Institute.

However, if this proposed study shows ineffectiveness or a failure to meet the program's goals, the Ireland Institute could respond in a manner that would improve its implementation. This study will examine theories of social conflict and will draw from the existing canon of literature. The study will also add to the existing literature and theories pertaining to educational advancement, social distance, and employability after participation in such government schemes.

Research Question and Hypothesis

This evaluative study will determine the success or failure to meet the Wider Horizons program's stated goals.

Does participation of a young unemployed Irish or Northern Irish adult in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh increase one's tolerance of the opposing tradition, and is one more likely to return to school to secure a job upon completion of the course?

HYPOTHESIS:

The participation of an unemployed young Irish or Northern Irish adult in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh positively correlates to:

- a) One securing employment.
- b) One continuing with further education.
- c) One's increased tolerance of the opposing community.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 recognizes and affirms the diversity and identities of the two traditions of Northern Ireland, categorizing them into two mutually exclusive groups, Unionists and Nationalists. This internationally recognized declaration is an attempt to heal old wounds and build a brighter future but its very existence is a reflection of the deep divisions that blight Northern Irish and Irish society (Cassidy and Trew 1998).

Surveys conducted show unambiguously that long-standing and deep ethno-religious divisions permeate all aspects of Northern Irish and Irish society, impacting heavily on national, political and social identities (Trew 1998).

Existing research aimed at explaining this phenomenon has been dominated by social identity theory. This theory argues that identity is a by-product of social categorization and comparison with other groups (Cairns 1982).

This theory purports that groups bolster self-esteem by comparing themselves with other groups, highlighting differences that result in feelings of supremacy and superiority. It is believed that these increased levels of self-esteem result in inter-group discrimination (Stringer and Cairns 1983).

Identity is a complex issue and Social Identity Theory alone cannot explain wholly the identities of Northern Ireland and Ireland. Jackson (1971) argues that given both traditions in Northern Ireland can be considered a minority, Catholics in a Northern Ireland context and Protestants in an all-Ireland situation, both groups may feel threatened and will evaluate their identities negatively (Cassidy and Trew 1998).

However, given that both traditions tend to possess positive identities, Cairns (1987) puts forward a double majority model to explain the complex social interactions. He argues that northern Catholics feel themselves a majority population when they consider their position in an all Ireland context where they constitute three quarters of the total population. Protestants, however, view themselves as the majority when they reflect on their status in a Northern Ireland context where they account for just over half of the entire population.

The nature of Northern Ireland politics and its tragic history of violent atrocities has fomented and hardened attitudes and identities. Group differentiation and comparison during times of augmented tension further alienates and divides. Darby (1995) states that,

In a society divided by nationalist and ethnic tensions identities are partly determined by the need to mark out the differences from one's ethnic opponents. Energies are devoted to emphasizing the distinctions between groups rather than the features they hold in common. When tensions run high the simple test is: are you with us or against us? There is little space for those caught in the middle. (P. 24)

Issues of identity are compounded by socio-historical factors unique to Northern Ireland. Civil unrest and policies of local and national government have given rise to disproportionate unemployment levels amongst Catholics. In 1991, unemployment was 21% for Catholics and 13% for Protestants. Sectarian violence deepened division and accelerated the process of urban segregation, which has resulted in 35 of Belfast's 51 electoral wards possessing 90% of one religion or the other. The same is true for schools,

which record 90% of students attending institutions that cater exclusively to their own community (Whyte 1998).

Whyte (1998) conducted a survey using working class Catholic and Protestant school children as a sample. The study explored their feelings of nationality, their envisioned future and their attitudes towards the equity of the Northern Ireland state. Whyte (1998) discovered that Catholics felt more alienated from the system of government than the Protestants surveyed. The latter identified more with and placed more confidence in the state. Perhaps predictably it was discovered that young people's perceptions of their own future were strongly correlated to their confidence in Northern Ireland's political system.

Whyte (1998) concluded that group identity is an important factor in determining both reactions and attitudes. One glimmer of hope drawn from the divisions that the research uncovered was that a majority of all the youth questioned favored a political framework instead of violent action as a means to achieving goals.

Participants in the Wider Horizons program are recruited heavily from communities such as those surveyed in this study. The study underlines the differences of these disadvantaged youth; but their rejection of violence as a means to political progress offers a starting point from which programs such as Wider Horizons can begin.

The Wider Horizons Program offers many of its participants a unique opportunity to interact with individuals from an opposing tradition. McClenaghan, Cairns, Dunne and Morgan (1996) indicate that Northern Ireland's Catholic and Protestant children from their pre-teens onwards find it more difficult to form mixed friendships. The segregated nature of residential and educational settings exacerbates and perhaps fuels this

phenomenon. The Wider Horizons initiative affords the opportunity and the medium for these divided youth to interact and deconstruct stereotypes.

Another important element of the Wider Horizons Program's stated goals is to train and motivate unemployed youth. Almost all European countries, including Ireland, have higher rates of unemployment for young people, defined as those under 25 years of age. According to the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (1994) the US rate is only 13.3% compared with Italy and Spain whose rates soar to 30% (Goede, Spruijt, Maas and Duindam 2000).

Youth unemployment is believed to have a negative impact on the growth and mental health of individuals as it denies the opportunity for showing initiative and developing independence (Warr, Banks and Ullah 1985). Goede et al (2000) have shown that this delay from school to full-time employment initiates a pattern of social exclusion with dire long-term consequences. In their study of youth unemployment they discovered that the intergenerational transmission of male unemployment and parental problems played a significant role in youth unemployment. They did not find the intergenerational transmission of female unemployment to be a significant variable.

Long-term unemployment blights many regions of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. Many unemployed youth are the offspring of unemployed parents. The Upper Springfield area of Nationalist West Belfast has an unemployment rate of over 60%. Youth account for 50% of the population and their unemployment rates are consequently very high (Harbor, Morris and McCormack 1996).

This neighborhood's social and economic woes have been compounded by the violence of "The Troubles," which produced internment without trial and large-scale

imprisonment. This cycle of marginalization and socio-political exclusion has resulted in the alienation of many of its residents, not least the youth.

The collapse of civil society during “The Troubles,” with families being destroyed by imprisonment or even death led to the rise of many single parent households in working class neighborhoods. Studies by Wallstein, Corbin and Lewis (1989) indicate that children of divorced or single parent families with low parental involvement are denied the interpersonal skills and socialization needed to develop communication skills. This in turn affects their future job prospects (Goede et al 2000).

The border region as a whole also displays high unemployment rates with figures reaching 20%, with as many as 39% of those being long term unemployed (Harbor et al 1996).

O’Connor (1991) offers a theory that he feels is at the crux of the social political and economics distress of Ireland. He refers to the destructive and hidden consequences of malignant shame, a cultural process that he theorizes is endemic in Ireland. O’Connor (1991) argues that low self-esteem, feelings of cultural inferiority and pathological dependency are all indicators at the national level of a country that has been colonized. He argues that this cultural phenomenon transmits through every national institution to the individual level.

Freud (1930) and other psychoanalysts believe that individuals reenact the apocalyptic themes of history in the collective unconscious. O’Connor (1991) thus argues that the Irish act out their degrading colonial history in their daily lives, with triumph through failure acting as a barrier to ambition. Their history has taught them that they will never break free from subservience and that their aspirations will always be

countered by the might of England. This legacy translates to an indignant resignation to the certitude of failure.

Lee (1989) believes that the postcolonial mindset stifles ambition and blocks progress by “shrivel[ing] Irish perspectives on Irish potential.” O’Connor (1991) argues that if peace and economic prosperity are to flourish in Ireland, this mindset must be identified and channeled in a positive manner.

Gleeson (1991) conducted an evaluation of one of the Ireland Institute’s first Wider Horizons ventures and noted that the participants’ primary goal on entering the program was finding a good job in Ireland. He discovered that participation in the Wider Horizon’s program increased the overall self-confidence of the participants. This newfound confidence translated into optimism for finding suitable employment upon their return to Ireland. He found that the experience of many of these young people, i.e. simply attending work daily, encouraged them to seek further employment at home. They found the self-validation they required to prove to themselves that they were capable of maintaining a job.

Gleeson (1991) also focused on the socio-religious divisions among the participants and, although they proved difficult to overcome, he noted they became gradually less divisive with time. Interestingly, the Catholic and Protestant participants from urban locations such as Belfast learned how much they had in common with one another when confronted with the rural participants from County Donegal.

In conclusion, one can see from the literature that the target population of the Wider Horizons program are victims of the failure of Irish and Northern Irish society to exist peacefully. The deep ethno-religious divisions formed over centuries of

discrimination and atrocities have resulted in social alienation and economic distress.

The Wider Horizons participants are recruited from neighborhoods where the effects of these malaises are most profoundly felt. Their neighborhoods are mostly mono-ethnic and experience the most entrenched patterns of unemployment and school drop out rates.

Preliminary studies on the Wider Horizons program have shown that participants' self-confidence increases throughout the six to eight week period. If the Wider Horizons program is to be successful it must harness this newfound assertiveness and confidence and transform it into real opportunity for the participants. The participants must have the motivation and courage to break down their stereotypes and to improve their lot by either returning to school or securing employment. This study will determine if the Wider Horizons program benefits its participants and achieves its stated goals.

Conceptual Definitions

Independent Variable: Participation of a young unemployed Irish or Northern Irish adult
in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh

Dependent Variables: a) Securing employment upon return to Ireland
b) Continuation of further education upon return to Ireland.
c) An increase in one's tolerance of the opposing tradition

The independent variable can conceptually be defined as an Irish/Northern Irish male or female between the ages of 18 to 28 who traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to participate in a Wider Horizons program between 1989-2002.

Dependent variable A: this can be conceptually defined as a Wider Horizon's participant in Pittsburgh from 1989-2002 securing full-time or part-time employment upon returning to Ireland.

Dependent variable B: this can be conceptually defined as a participant in Wider Horizon program in Pittsburgh from 1989-2002 enrolling in a full-time or part-time academic course upon returning to Ireland.

Dependent variable C: this can be conceptually be defined as the change in attitudes that an Irish/Northern Irish Catholic or Protestant will undergo upon participation in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh from 1989-2002. He/she will deconstruct stereotypes of the opposing tradition and become more accepting of the other ethno-religious group. He/she will understand more fully the other group's positions, resulting in less animosity and increased tolerance.

It is believed that participation in a Wider Horizons program will increase the ethno-religious tolerance of its participants for several reasons. In the Northern Ireland context many Catholics and Protestants reside in segregated neighborhoods and are educated in segregated schools. Oftentimes their only interaction with one another is acrimonious and is accompanied by tension and violence.

The majority of Wider Horizons participants come from socially and economically disadvantaged communities where tolerance for the opposing traditions is low. When these young adults come to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania they are meeting in a neutral environment that allows them to break free from the stigma and negative connotations associated with inter-community interaction in Ireland. They are not antagonizing one another but rather learning from and about one another.

The participants are forced to confront the negative stereotypes they have constructed, and they may learn that they have much more in common with one another than they had previously thought. As foreigners in the USA they may discover that their experiences and culture are much more similar to each other than they are to members of their host country. It is envisaged that this exchange will promote unity rather than division.

One may argue that participation in a Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh may encourage participants to pursue further education upon returning to Ireland. Many of the individuals that participate in this program have few educational qualifications and many have terminated their scholastic careers prematurely.

It is envisaged that a sojourn in the USA may alter this path by exposing the participant to a culture that actively promotes education as a means to personal and

professional development. The program itself is designed to promote self-confidence and encourage the awareness that everyone has the capacity to succeed through determination and effort. The participant who lacks self-worth, direction or motivation may be spurred on toward self-improvement by receiving the necessary focus while in the USA.

Oftentimes many participants are unaware that education in the USA is a costly enterprise, as they are accustomed to a welfare state in Ireland where education for the most part is free. This realization and the awareness that to become competitive in the job market nowadays requires more qualifications encourages participants to further their studies upon return to Ireland.

Participation in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh may also increase one's prospects of securing gainful employment upon return to Ireland. As noted by Gleeson (1991), many of the Wider Horizons participants have simply traversed from one training scheme to another, amassing skills that never translate into meaningful employment. When they arrive in Pittsburgh they are greeted with a flexible internship program where they can change career paths and determine which jobs they prefer. Many of the participants have become despondent after years of unemployment, and actually working on a daily basis awakens a lost sense of pride and confidence.

The experience of working again may encourage many participants and imbue them with a desire to be more proactive in seeking employment in Ireland. It is also no mean feat to add American work experience to one's resume, as Irish employers are aware of the strict American work principles in effect. They may be more successful in interviews at home because of this added advantage of US employment experience.

Participants may also be positively affected by exposure to the American disdain for idleness and unemployment, which may encourage them never to be without a job again.

Hypothesis:

The participation of an unemployed young Irish or Northern Irish adult in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh is positively correlated with:

- a) One securing employment.
- b) One continuing further education.
- c) One's increased tolerance of the opposing tradition.

Operational Definitions and Research Design

I. Operational Definitions

Independent Variable: Participation of a young unemployed Irish/Northern Irish in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh.

The intention of this study is to determine by qualitative research, in the form of in-depth telephone interviews, the interaction between the independent and dependent variables. The research material has been gathered by asking a series of open-ended questions during a 30-minute interview.

Indicators for independent variable;

- The subject must have been a participant in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh between the years 1989-2002.
- He/she would have been a resident of the border counties of the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland.
- He/she will have been unemployed before participation in the Wider Horizons program.

Indicators for the Dependent Variables;

A) Securing employment upon return to Ireland

- Did he/she gain employment upon return to Ireland?
- Is he/she currently employed?
- Was work experience with an American firm helpful in securing employment in Ireland?

- Was he/she willing to remain unemployed in Ireland after completion of the Wider Horizons program?
- Did he/she discover a career path that interested them whilst in Pittsburgh and did he/she pursue that career path?
- Did he/she have more self-confidence after the Wider Horizons program that translated into securing a job?

B) Continuation of further education upon return to Ireland

- Did he/she enroll in a technical institute in Ireland after completion of the Wider Horizons program, and did he/she complete a certified course?
- Did he/she enroll in a college/university after completion of the Wider Horizons program, and did he/she complete a certified course?
- Were they encouraged by participation in the Wider Horizons program to pursue further education?
- Did the knowledge that education in Ireland is almost free and in the USA it is expensive encourage them to pursue further education?

C: An increase in one's tolerance for the opposing tradition in Ireland.

- One's willingness to befriend a fellow Wider Horizons participant who is a member of the opposing tradition.
- One's willingness to befriend a member of the opposing tradition who is not a Wider Horizon participant upon return to Ireland.
- Do they use derogatory language against members of the opposing tradition?

- Are they willing to visit a member of the other community in their respective home and neighborhood?
- Are they willing to accept that the other community has a right to consider themselves British or Irish respectively?
- Would they be willing to live in a mixed neighborhood where Catholics and Protestants live side-by-side?
- Would they be willing to educate their children in integrated schools with both Catholic and Protestant students?
- Would they be willing to celebrate culturally significant holidays, such as July 12th for Protestants or St. Patrick's Day for Catholics?
- Do they associate positively or negatively with symbols of the other traditions such as flags, emblems etc.
- Do they believe in the negative stereotypes of the other tradition?
- Would they support a sports team affiliated with the opposing tradition?
- Have their overall attitudes towards the opposing tradition changed since participation in the Wider Horizons program?

II. Research Design

This study is evaluative in nature. Between 1989-2002, 1500 Irish and Northern Irish adults between aged between 18-28 have participated in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh. I have randomly selected a sample of 44 participants for the purpose of in-depth telephone interviews. The research is qualitative and open-ended. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The responses were annotated using short hand techniques and the transcripts were typed for later analysis. The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh maintains a database of all 1500 participants from 1989-2002 with contact information and telephone numbers. This database provided the sample.

III. Population and Sample

There was no control group to assess whether participation in the Wider Horizons program has an effect on the dependent variable and therefore this study will not be generalizable. The sample consisted of forty-four randomly selected participants from the database of 1500 individuals who have participated in the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh. Initially fifty randomly selected participants were to be the sample population but that number had to be reduced to forty-four. Difficulties arose given that the database had not been updated in a few years and in many instances the telephone numbers provided were no longer in use. One also found that the participants had moved on from the addresses and telephone numbers that they had given years ago.

To randomly select the forty-four participants the 30th individual on a comprised list was selected and telephoned. The sampling interval was calculated by dividing the total population of 1500 by the initial sample population of 50. The first selection was

made randomly within the first interval i.e. the first 30 names. A table of random numbers was used to make that selection.

IV. Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using a telephone, pen, and paper. Each participant was called in Ireland and asked a series of open-ended questions from a number of questionnaire sheets. The participants' answers were recorded in short hand. The short hand responses of the participants were later converted into long hand written script and typed script using a computer.

V. Data Analysis

Questionnaires were administered to forty-four participants via telephone interviews. A subsequent breakdown of the sample (Figure 1- Appendix) showed that twenty-four were male and twenty were female. As Figure 2 (Appendix) demonstrates, fourteen of the participants came from the Republic of Ireland and thirty resided in Northern Ireland. As one can see from Figure 3, a majority of twenty-seven, or 61%, of the respondents took part in the Wider Horizons program between 1997-2000.

Over half of the participants were aged between nineteen and twenty-one. This age bracket is a time of transition where many individuals independently decide the course of their life. This is especially true for young adults who do not attend college or university. It is therefore not surprising to see that the majority of participants fall into this age category, as many are unemployed and have not attended university. The Wider Horizons program is an opportunity for them to gain work experience and explore different career paths.

The proportion of participants aged twenty-two and older declines sharply. Generally from this age onwards individuals are more mature and focused on a particular career path. This may account for the smaller percentage of participants in their mid to late twenties on the program.

Employment

The aim of the Wider Horizons program is to encourage young unemployed adults from Ireland and Northern Ireland to seek employment upon their return home. Figure 4 depicts the number of months it took for participants to secure employment upon their return home.

Ten participants, or 22% of the sample, did not officially work in Ireland upon their return from the USA. When one examines these figures more closely one finds that five left Ireland and traveled to Britain to find employment. One of the five also attended university in England and is now a fully trained nurse. Of the five who remained in Ireland, one is a mother of three children who became pregnant shortly after her return to Ireland. She consciously decided not to work outside the home in favor of raising a family.

The remaining four participants who did not secure employment are current Walsh Visa participants. The Walsh Visa program is a similar program to the Wider Horizons initiative in that it affords young unemployed Irish and Northern Irish adults the opportunity to come to the USA to gain work experience and deepen their understanding of different cultures. The Walsh Visa program lasts for three years instead of the six to eight weeks offered by Wider Horizons. Pittsburgh is one of five US hub cities that implements the Walsh Visa program. The Wider Horizons participants would have learned of the Walsh Visa and how to apply for it whilst in Pittsburgh. A total of six respondents are currently Walsh visa participants in Pittsburgh.

To qualify for the Walsh Visa program one has to be unemployed for a period of no less than three months. This would account for four of the six current Walsh visa participants not securing employment upon their return home. They were keen to return to Pittsburgh as soon as possible, and they enrolled in the Walsh Visa training program after three months of continued unemployment that began as soon as they returned.

The returning Wider Horizons participants who secured employment did so in a wide variety of sectors, ranging from laboratory technicians to genealogists. However,

there were four sectors which featured prominently in the job choices of the participants. Seven individuals began work in sales and retail; four gained employment in factories; six found themselves working in the construction industry, and seven secured clerical and administrative positions.

The aim of the Wider Horizons program is to eliminate long term as well as short term unemployment. The participants were asked if they were still in full time employment, and the results showed that the program has been a success in this regard. Figure 5 shows that thirty-nine of the participants are currently employed and five are unemployed. One of those listed as unemployed is a housewife. In total 89% of the participants of the Wider Horizons program in Pittsburgh from 1989-2002 are currently employed.

To gauge the influence of the Wider Horizons program on these rates of employment, the participants were asked how their American work experience had affected their employability at home.

Twenty-six of the respondents felt that their Wider Horizons experience had had a positive influence on their employment prospects at home. Their most common response to this line of questioning was that the Wider Horizons program increased their self-confidence, which ultimately translated into increased job prospects. Several participants even expressed the view that their Pittsburgh experience had inspired them to move to Britain in search of employment upon their return. One individual noted that after witnessing how Americans travel across state lines in search of employment, he was more open to the idea of emigrating in search of a job. He readily accepted that his exposure to this practice in the US was an influencing factor in his emigration. He also

added that he would not have been able to do so were it not for the increased self-confidence he gained whilst in Pittsburgh.

There were several participants who directly linked their Wider Horizons experience with the specific jobs they secured in Ireland. They claimed that their practical work experience accompanied with simply having worked in the US impressed employers enough to offer them jobs.

There were others who claimed that the overall experience rather than the work experience itself helped them in their job search. They believed that they had become more mature individuals as a result of the life skills they had learned and experienced in Pittsburgh.

The most common negative comment regarding employability at home was centered on the issue of the lack of employment opportunities in Ireland. Five participants complained that the work experience they gained in Pittsburgh was of no use given that there were no outlets in Ireland for them to develop their skills. Others argued that the course was too short to gain any real experience. Perhaps not surprisingly the majority of participants who voiced this concern are currently Walsh Visa participants who have three year long visas to work in Pittsburgh. In both these instances, especially the former, one can see the limitations of the Wider Horizon program. In short, opportunities must exist in Ireland for these participants if the US training and work experience is to be of any value.

Three participants claimed that the Wider Horizons program was not beneficial to them, as they were still currently unemployed and claiming welfare. Such individuals

may be victims of long term unemployment and may require more concerted efforts from authorities to assimilate them into the working population.

Overall though, a majority of twenty-six participants felt that working for an American company was beneficial and in many occasions instrumental in securing employment at home.

In order to gauge the impact of the Wider Horizons program on career development, the participants were asked if they had discovered a career path of interest to them whilst in Pittsburgh. Twenty-eight responded positively and expressed the view that their Wider Horizons experience was beneficial to their career. They all found jobs and industry sectors in Pittsburgh that offered them possible career routes. Some participants also argued that their experience was invaluable not because it helped them to discover a career that they really liked, but rather that it showed them that certain chosen career paths were not best suited to their abilities. The experience helped them to realize that their chosen sector was not something to pursue.

Sixteen participants did not feel that the Wider Horizons experience helped them to discover a career path. However this still remains a ratio of almost two to one in favor of those participants who found the program beneficial to their career development.

Of the participants who felt the experience was positive in this regard, one individual recounted how he had worked for PNC bank as a teller. He had considered a career in the banking industry before his Wider Horizons participation but his experience cemented his resolve. He also added that the experience forced him to accept the fact that he had to return to school for further qualifications if he wanted a career in finance. He resumed his studies and is now employed in the financial services industry in Ireland.

Another participant recalled how he had worked at a music store during his stay in Pittsburgh as he had a great love of music. The experience afforded him the opportunity to learn sales and customer service skills whilst working in an environment that he enjoyed. He is currently the successful site manager of a music store in the Republic of Ireland and he accredited his Wider Horizons participation as instrumental in his current success.

A current community development worker from the Republic of Ireland recounted how her time in Pittsburgh had reinforced her desire to return to Ireland and begin a career in this field. She felt that the structure of the program rather than her work experience at an information technology company motivated her to pursue her dream career.

For many participants, Pittsburgh was a time of focus and an opportunity to set realistic goals. The example of a once aspiring model who secured an internship as an administrative assistant highlights this point. She now works in an administrative capacity in the healthcare industry, using and developing the skills she first acquired in Pittsburgh. She no longer wishes to model, and she expressed the belief that her Wider Horizons participation focused her energies on attainable goals.

Almost one third of participants felt that they did not discover a career path whilst in Pittsburgh, and their reasons for this failure were varied. The overriding reason seemed to be an inherent dissatisfaction with their internship experience. A female participant described her unrest at working for a travel agency. She disliked the job as she felt that it did not challenge her to the best of her abilities. Another female participant also currently works for a disabled persons action group. She is interested in

issues such as wheelchair access in public buildings, but could not find an internship specifically suited to her. This is a very specialized area of interest and there was no opportunity for her to gain such experience in the Wider Horizons program. The Wider Horizons program seeks jobs and internships from an array of general sectors given the nature and size of the population. The demand for such specialized opportunities is quite low.

An important factor in the success of any individual, either in work or in life, is one's level of self-confidence. The Wider Horizons program aims to encourage self-confidence in its participants to enable them to succeed in life. Participants were asked directly whether working for an American employer had affected their self-confidence either on or off the job. A majority of thirty participants felt that the experience had a positive influence on their self-confidence. Of the fourteen participants who did not feel their self-confidence increased, there was a sizable minority who experienced no change. It should be noted that many of these individuals expressed high levels of self-confidence before the Wider Horizons experience.

Questioning revealed that the assertive nature of the American character had an impact on the participants. One participant noted that he either had to 'sink or swim' in the American work environment. Others commented on the different managerial styles they witnessed in the Pittsburgh workplace. They felt that they received praise for their efforts and experienced constructive criticism from supervisors which contrasted from the more punitive approach adopted by their previous Irish employers. This fostered pride in their work and, more importantly, helped them to believe that they were capable of doing the tasks asked of them.

Many participants also felt that their self-confidence increased as a result of their overall US experience. One nineteen year old described his experience as 'priceless' as it was his first taste of independence. This opportunity was the first time that many of these individuals had lived away from home, and it broadened their horizons by increasing their life skills. This translated into increased self-confidence as summed up by one young man,

I proved to myself for the first time ever that I was able to fend for myself. I got up for work every morning and I cooked all my own meals. You mightn't believe me but I'd never done that before. Everything was done for me at home and I never even had to boil an egg before going to Pittsburgh.

Other participants commented on the interest shown to them by American coworkers and the general populous. They were treated with respect and people were genuinely interested in their culture and background. This was something that many of them had never experienced before, as one individual recounted.

My self-confidence came on in leaps and bounds when I was in America because people in Pittsburgh were genuinely interested in me and where I was from, and what I was all about. They just seemed to love the Irish over there.... I mean back home I was on the dole and it seemed that people didn't give you the time of day because of that and other stuff. But over there they really treated you with respect. It honestly changed me.... I mean it gave me the confidence to go 'hold on a minute, there is nothing wrong with me and people should treat me just how they'd want to be spoken to'.

Although the vast majority of respondents claimed increased levels of self-confidence, one individual claimed that the experience damaged her self-confidence. She claimed to be a shy and insecure person before leaving Ireland, and she found herself overwhelmed by the exuberance and confidence of the Americans she encountered. Her

inadequacies, imagined or otherwise, became heightened whilst she was in Pittsburgh, but this case was the exception rather than the rule.

The trend among most respondents indicates a success for the Wider Horizons program regarding employment. The majority of participants are currently working and most believe that the work experience they gained in Pittsburgh has increased their employability. Many more discovered career paths whilst in the US and a sizable majority felt that their work experience, combined with the life experience, increased their self- confidence. They learned to be self-sufficient, independent young adults with a purpose.

Education

Of the forty-four participants questioned, twenty-one, or almost half, enrolled in further education or training programs upon their return to Ireland. The remaining twenty-three did not.

The participants who did enroll supplied a variety of reasons for doing so, but the vast majority claimed that their Wider Horizons participation directly or partly influenced their decision. Two respondents claimed that they were intent on enrolling in further education before they had commenced the Wider Horizons course.

The participants agreed that the emphasis placed on self-improvement through education was an influencing factor in their return to further education. During their stay in Pittsburgh they attended a weekly class at Duquesne University which proved to be the first time that many had ever been inside an institution of higher learning.

The participants' responses indicate that the Wider Horizons program had provided increased self-confidence, which in turn became a catalyst for seeking further education. One individual spoke of how he lacked focus before joining the program and how the Wider Horizons program provided him the direction that he sought. He returned to Ireland hoping to improve his socioeconomic conditions. He enrolled in a computer science class to improve upon the information technology skills he had acquired in Pittsburgh. He was a mature student upon enrollment, and he credited the program for giving him the affirmation he needed for such a move.

Of those returning to education, computer science and nursing were the most popular choices. Ireland north and south has moved away from agriculture and manufacturing in recent decades and is now a primarily knowledge based economy. The

participants have reflected this economic reality by eliciting fields of study that are more likely to provide employment opportunities.

Specialized internships in Pittsburgh were also influential in certain participants' further education upon their return home. One female respondent described her work placement at a school for the deaf in the U.S. She enjoyed the experience so much that she enrolled in a sign language course in County Donegal and she now works in an Irish school for children with hearing difficulties. The Wider Horizons program was instrumental in helping this young woman to find her vocation in life. She believes that the Wider Horizons program was of great importance to her current profession as she attributes the course with helping her to realize her full potential. She claimed that until her Wider Horizons participation, she had not completed a single course. The Wider Horizons program was the first course that she had fully completed, and it inspired her to continue her education in pursuit of a career that truly fulfilled her.

Many of the twenty-three respondents who did not enroll in further education or training programs acknowledged the values and merits of education. They claimed, however, that they were eager to begin working as soon as possible, preferring to earn a salary rather than pursue their education. A number argued that although education was a means to improve one's condition, they felt that it required a degree of dedication and motivation that they could not offer. Another individual had completed an undergraduate degree before starting the program and did not pursue further education upon her return. She did however, admit to the prospect of graduate school in the future as a result of her Wider Horizons experience.

In the face of the program's attempts to encourage further education there were three participants who were adamant that they would never return to school. They complained of bad experiences in high school that resulted in their aversion to anything educational. Their common adage was 'school is just not for me'. Educational achievement may not be for everyone, but such individuals may be encouraged to improve their conditions by a concerted effort on the part of the program administrators.

During their stay in Pittsburgh the participants noticed differences in the Irish and American education systems. The differences that they witnessed played a part in both encouraging and discouraging them from furthering their education upon their return.

A number of respondents complained of the elitist and competitively selective nature of the Irish and Northern Irish education systems. In effect, students are streamlined in these systems from eleven years old through university entry level. Some participants argued that their failure on certain examinations left them feeling despondent and discouraged from seeking any academic goals. They claimed that their time in the U.S and the classes that they attended helped them to see matters in a different light. One participant declared,

I couldn't believe how many people my age were at college and university while I was there. I mean hardly any of my mates were able to get to university and neither was I for that matter. I always thought I was too stupid because I didn't go to one of the smart schools. But the experience of attending classes at Duquesne and also from simply talking to Americans my age helped me to see that there is such a difference in the education in the States compared to here. I mean the teachers were a lot more interactive over there and I noticed that they just taught differently. They were a lot less formal than over here. It actually helped me to see that there was nothing stopping me from continuing my education because I was just as smart as the next fellow.

So that's just what I did when I came home. I signed up for a computer class and Wider Horizons knocked me up a gear to go for it.

However, noticing this difference in the education systems had the reverse effect on one participant who developed a fatalistic outlook as a result. He argued that his time in America helped him to realize the uphill struggle that he was faced with to succeed academically in Ireland. He believed that it would be futile to attempt an education in Ireland as he felt that the cards were unfairly stacked against him. This opinion was isolated but it still highlights the fear of many disadvantaged youth who feel helpless in a system that streamlines the elite.

Opinions were varied on this topic, but it must be noted that this sample population is a cross section of a mostly disadvantaged part of Irish society. Of the forty-four participants interviewed, only two had undergraduate degrees, twenty-five had remained in high school until eighteen years old and seventeen had left school at sixteen years old. This high rate of school departure must therefore be taken into consideration when evaluating the sample's views on the Irish education system.

It stands to reason that if they have not achieved success in their academic careers, the same may be so for their school peers. Northern Ireland schools operate a two-tier high school system of grammar and secondary schools. The former prepares students for the prospect of university whereas the latter is more vocational in its outlook. To enroll in grammar school one must pass an examination at age eleven. The Republic of Ireland also has a competitive school system in which disadvantaged youth also suffer.

Overall the respondents were not pessimistic, rather they were encouraged and optimistic. It can be argued from their responses that their overall American experience rather than the Wider Horizons program itself could account for this.

Some of the participants noticed that the Americans they encountered placed a much higher emphasis on education than they had experienced at home. One young woman remarked,

America really is the land of dreams and the only way to achieve your dreams is to educate yourself. It's also every parent's dream to educate their children.

Many respondents realized that education could become the key to one's success in life. A repeated thread of commentaries focused on the confident and ambitious nature of the American character. The participants added that they were inspired by the goal setting Americans who emphasized high standards of education.

A disparity also arose in the responses of the university graduates compared with the rest of the sample. They felt that education was taken more seriously in Ireland than in the US, and they offered the number of university dropouts that they met as proof for this line of reasoning. One argued that the strict entry requirements and rigorous academic policies of Irish universities ensured that students were more erudite than their American counterparts.

She also believed that education was a prime motivating factor for Northern Ireland Catholics who had historically been discriminated against by the Protestant majority. She insisted that education was used as a tool of empowerment by Catholics to undermine the discriminatory practices they were facing. Her Wider Horizons participation and that of the other graduate was not a motivating factor in furthering their education. However, they did remark on the competitive nature of the US job market encouraging them to consider graduate school. This difference of opinion and the impact of the US experience on these individuals compared with the rest of the sample can be explained in terms of their relative success. The graduates were educated and had

benefited from the Irish education system, whereas the remaining participants felt somewhat disenfranchised from it.

There were also a small number of respondents who had been in their mid- to late twenties when they participated. Their views on education before and after the program are of interest. A female respondent discussed her attitudes saying,

I was twenty-seven when I went to Pittsburgh, and I hadn't been near a classroom in almost ten years. To be honest, I just thought I was too long in the tooth for school, and I just accepted the fact that my time had passed in that regard. But I came back from the States thinking a wee bit differently. When I was there I was able to sit down and talk with the trainer and the professors at Duquesne, and they basically told me to wise up and not let age stand in my way of anything, especially going back to school. They told me I would be a 'mature student' and they introduced me to the concept of lifelong learning. Well, to cut a long story short, I took their advice and I ended up going back to night classes.

From this example it is clear that as well as confidence building among the participants, the program opened up new avenues of possibility and encouraged education in those who had previously discounted it.

The financial merits of education in Ireland compared to the notoriously expensive US system were also discussed. A number of participants commented on their shock at how expensive it was to complete an education in the US. It is comparatively much cheaper to do so in Ireland, as classes are subsidized by the respective governments and awards are often made towards students' maintenance.

This realization was actually a motivating factor for a number of participants to return to education. Although the Wider Horizons program itself did not influence this decision directly, the American experience did. One participant acknowledged that she considered herself much more fortunate than some of her American peers, who owed vast

sums of money in student loans. For the first time she appreciated the opportunities available to her, and she was determined to avail of them upon her return home. Overall the findings have demonstrated that participation in the Wider Horizons program has a limited positive relationship with one continuing with education upon return to Ireland. It is clear that the general American experience is a strong if not equal influence in this regard.

Tolerance

The participants were asked a series of questions to determine whether or not their participation in the Wider Horizons program increased their tolerance of the opposing tradition. There was a mixed response, but overall there appeared to be increased tolerance for cultural differences amongst the participants. However, there were a significant number of participants who claimed to be open minded before their Wider Horizons participation.

They claimed that they had never been intolerant, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the Wider Horizons program gave them a deeper understanding of the other community. Almost one-third of the participants questioned believed themselves to be tolerant of the other community before participation. When questioned further one participant volunteered this response,

I was always open minded about the Catholic and Protestant issue, even before going to America. I mean if I hadn't have been there's no way I would have been on the program in the first place. Think about it, if I was a bigot how on earth could I have sat with Catholics on the program? I mean if you really hate the other side you're not going to go away with some of them for eight weeks.

This respondent raised a valid point about the tolerant types of individuals that may be attracted to the program. This may be a problem for the program given that the primary aim is to increase cultural tolerance among the intolerant members of Irish society. It appears that Wider Horizons may in a sense be preaching to the converted in that its participants are already predisposed to be tolerant.

An indication of this pre-existing tolerance can be gauged for the number of participants who claim to be the result of a marriage between Catholic and Protestant

parents. Religious and ethnic bigotry would have no place in such homes and the resulting offspring would be tolerant of both traditions. There were four participants who claimed to come from 'mixed marriage' parentage but significantly an equal number claimed to be currently in a relationship with someone from the other community.

The willingness of someone to date across the ethno-religious divide is also a strong indicator of tolerance and respect for difference. Participation in the Wider Horizons program for these individuals was a natural reflection of their tolerant beliefs and values. They all claimed to be tolerant of the other community as a result of their background, and they did not attribute the program itself to this mode of thought. A significant proportion, however, did add that the program reinforced their beliefs. One participant stated,

I was pretty open minded, way before Wider Horizons, but my time in Pittsburgh did cement my views. The program just confirmed what I already knew, and that's that people are people, whether Catholic or Protestant, north or south. There's very little that divides us in the end.

The Wider Horizons program was therefore successful if not in forming these sentiments of tolerance, then in encouraging their growth in these participants.

The goal of the program was to provide a neutral space where both communities in Ireland could meet and explore each other's traditions free from animosity. It appears from the participants' responses that success was achieved in this end. Several participants remarked that although they had acquaintances or contact with members of the other community in Ireland, there was a huge lack of communication on substantive issues.

One young Catholic male from Northern Ireland recounted how he had avoided all politically sensitive topics with his Protestant co-workers in a past job. He was afraid

to broach subjects with them that may have caused provoked confrontation. Communication is the key to resolving any dispute and the lack thereof is a recipe for misunderstanding and strife.

The Wider Horizons program provided a neutral forum for its participants to talk openly and freely, many for the first time in their lives, with all sections and shades of political opinion represented. This communication and willingness to involve themselves in debate was of monumental importance to the success of the program. The overwhelming majority of the respondents felt that they had learned something meaningful about the other community whilst there. This generally led to more tolerant attitudes even if it did not manage to change political beliefs. The participants discussed how they became more assertive in debates and began questioning their own long held beliefs when faced with convincing arguments. The experience was informative and transformative for many of those who partook.

There were a significant number of those questioned who had never met some one from the other community before. This may seem surprising to many but the insular and apartheid-style nature of certain sections of Irish and especially Northern Irish society makes this plausible. Those who had no previous contact with the other community claimed almost overwhelmingly that they had become more tolerant and understanding as a result. One individual claimed that as a result of meeting and interacting with Protestants for the first time, he was encouraged to emigrate to England in search of employment. He claimed that the affability that he had encountered in the Protestant participants caused him to re-evaluate his fears and prejudices. The result was his willingness to travel to England, leaving behind in a very real sense his old sectarian self.

One participant raised a point that was repeated several times. He claimed that the Wider Horizons experience increased his tolerance of the other community, but this new found respect was tested upon his return to Ireland. He was the most extreme case given that he lived in an interface area of Belfast along the infamous 'peace line' where sectarian tensions are often high and frequently result in violence. He found it difficult to remain open to Protestant and Unionist culture whilst Molotov cocktails and rocks were thrown at his house by Protestant rioters. He remarked,

When I was in Pittsburgh I met Protestants face to face for the first time in my life, even though just across the peace wall beside my house there's streets full of them. I got on great with them in Pittsburgh, and we talked the night through about what being Catholic and Protestant meant to us. I honestly learned a lot in Pittsburgh and I became more open minded. But how can you keep that going when you get home and the reality on the ground isn't about respecting each other's cultures? You tell that to my mum after she's cleaning the remains of a petrol bomb in the front garden. I know there's good Protestants out there too, I know because I met a lot of them in America, but it's just made harder for you to see that when you have to put up with things on the ground.

Of all forty-four participants questioned only one claimed to have a negative experience. He had considered himself an unbiased Protestant before going to Pittsburgh but the Wider Horizons experience has firmly entrenched and radicalized his views. He felt in the minority from the outset given that there were fewer Protestants than Catholics in his group. He witnessed what he claimed to be outward displays of Catholic/Nationalist triumphalism and sectarianism. He could not accept this behavior and he claims that he was victimized after confronting it. The Wider Horizons program may have failed this individual but it may also be plausible that he never really gave the program a chance from the beginning.

To a lesser degree another division developed among some of the groups. In this instance, the claim emanated from the Republic of Ireland participants. A number complained that they found it quite difficult to mix with the Northern Ireland participants. This was especially so for the female participants from the Republic of Ireland with the females from the north. They complained of the northerners being quite exclusive and deliberately alienating them from group activities. This could be the result of a clash of personalities, but it may also highlight another social phenomenon. Individuals in Northern Ireland have lived through thirty years of violence, and this may have had a social effect. Northerners may have developed a suspicion of strangers and a tendency to band together as a survival mechanism in times of strife.

The notion of a north south divide was also given some validity after analyzing the responses of some of the northern respondents. One young Catholic man from Northern Ireland stated that he was surprised that he actually had more in common with some Protestants from Northern Ireland than he did with some Catholics from the south. He had always assumed a cultural affinity with his countrymen in the south but he discovered that his shared experience with northern Protestants as citizens of Northern Ireland was stronger than his ethnic ties.

Northern and southern Ireland have been partitioned since 1921 and it is only natural that differences have arisen between the two states during the decades. Overall though, this was a minority opinion, especially on the part of the Northern Ireland participants. Most agreed that north and south got along without any problems. Ironically though, it did expose a common bond between the normally divided Catholics and Protestants of the north.

The majority of all southern participants were open minded before their participation and almost all claimed to be tolerant. However, on encountering Northern Ireland participants they confessed that they had little or no knowledge about the situation in the north. One individual remarked,

I was always open to other peoples' cultures as a rule of thumb and the north was no different to me. But being on the Wider Horizons program was a real educational experience for me. I only really knew about Northern Ireland from the news, but meeting those northern lads really opened my eyes. They were very keen to inform us about all the stuff going on up there and they really knew their stuff. They loved to discuss history, and I have to say I learned a lot from them.

This individual highlights the importance that discussion and communication played throughout the program in increasing awareness of others' experiences and deepening their understanding of important issues. This was the case between Catholic and Protestants and between northern and southern participants. Specific individuals with unexpected backgrounds that did not conform to the participants' preconceived beliefs also encouraged the process of furthering understanding.

One example was that of a female participant who was Protestant and from the Republic of Ireland. Her ancestors were the same British colonials whose descendants now form the Protestant/Unionist majority in Northern Ireland and who continue to affirm their succinctly British identity. It was challenging for the northern Protestant participants to discuss identity with her, as she saw no discrepancy in being both Protestant and Irish. The dichotomy of her Protestant Irish identity caused northern Catholics and Protestants to re-evaluate their beliefs in the exclusivity of their religious and national identities. This unassuming young woman became a focal point not only of

debate but also of unity. In a sense she became the bridge upon which different cultures crossed their respective ideological chasms.

The participants were asked about the friendships they had formed in the program and more specifically about the bonds that they had developed with members of the other community. There was only one individual out of the forty-four questioned that did not befriend a member of the other tradition. As mentioned before, this young Protestant was ostracized from the Catholics he encountered. Of the other forty-three, just under half claimed that they would not have befriended some one from the other tradition unless they had been on the program. Their reasons were varied, but most admitted that they would not have had the opportunity to meet such friends as they lived in primarily mono-ethnic neighborhoods. They believed strongly that the Wider Horizons program offered them an opportunity for cross community interaction that would not have been available to them at home. The true success of this interaction can be measured by the fact that the overwhelming majority, excluding a few weary individuals, are now willing to befriend some one from the other community. Two-thirds claimed that they were willing to do so before their participation but one-third directly accredited this desire to their experience on the program.

The participants formed strong cohesive bonds whilst in Pittsburgh and many participants continue to maintain the friendships they forged years ago. Over time certain cross community friendships have declined but the participants attributed this primarily to problems associated with distance and time. The majority did not feel that the sectarian tensions in Ireland were a barrier to their friendships upon their return.

One young Catholic living in a Belfast interface area, along with two other respondents, were the only participants who found the political situation at home destructive to their friendships. One claimed that he had to meet at neutral city center locations on the occasions that he wanted to socialize with his friend. He was reluctant to visit his friend at his home and vice versa as they both lived in exclusively Nationalist and Unionist neighborhoods respectively. In this case the fear of sectarian attack had a detrimental effect on their friendship, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

To examine further the participants' tolerance they were asked if they would consider educating their children in integrated schools. Such mediums of education account for only a small percentage of all schools in Northern Ireland and demand for them far outweighs supply. They are different from the State-run Protestant and the Catholic maintained schools in that they promote an even number of Catholic and Protestant students in each class. They are institutions that offer an alternative and actively promote peace and reconciliation between the two communities. No such distinction exists in the Republic of Ireland education system as most schools are State run and interdenominational. However, the majority of such schools have an overwhelmingly Catholic student intake and their ethos reflects this reality. Regardless of this, the Republic of Ireland participants were also asked their opinion of integrated education.

The results showed that a majority of thirty-eight participants were in favor of educating their children in integrated schools, and six were against. The respondents supported this initiative for a variety of reasons but most felt that such a medium of education would instill tolerance from an early age. Several participants lamented that

their Catholic education had been strict and dogmatic and had inadvertently fostered latent yet nonetheless divisive sectarianism.

Other participants echoed their concerns and argued that the segregated nature of their education led to an ignorance about Protestant and Catholic cultures that resulted in intolerant attitudes. The majority of respondents agreed with these sentiments, and many felt strongly that integrated education was the best if not the only means to eradicate sectarianism within a generation.

The majority of those who refused to educate their children in integrated schools applauded the merits of such education, but preferred their children to be educated in Catholic or Protestant doctrines due to their religious convictions. There was only one individual who was against such an initiative due to his Wider Horizons experience. He claimed that he had been victimized as a result of his religion, and he did not want his children to suffer what he had endured.

The results showed that a majority of the participants felt that their Wider Horizons experience had positively influenced their views on integrated education. Just over half of the thirty-eight respondents who supported integrated education alluded to their time in Pittsburgh as instrumental in their decision. The remaining participants claimed that they had supported integration before their participation. Nevertheless, several of these respondents commented on their Wider Horizons experience, reinforcing their already held beliefs.

To explore the participants' level of tolerance even further, they were asked if they would be willing to live in a mixed neighborhood, where both Catholics and Protestants reside. During the years of turmoil in Ireland such neighborhoods witnessed

conflict, forced evictions and voluntary relocation en masse. For reasons of security perceived or otherwise, many people today and in the recent past have decided to live in neighborhoods that reflect their ethnic and religious background. With this in mind, the respondents would have to be tolerant and trustful of their neighbors to live in a mixed area.

The results showed that twenty-nine participants would be willing to live in such neighborhoods, while fifteen were not prepared to do so. Nine fewer people were willing to live in a mixed neighborhood than those who were willing to send their children to an integrated school. This was still a majority of almost two-thirds to one-third in favor of such a living arrangement, but the residual fear in the current post conflict situation has resulted in a more hesitant attitude when compared to education.

Several of those who were willing to live in mixed neighborhoods admitted that they already did so. They argued that there was no danger to their home or personal safety as they lived peacefully with their neighbors. This was an important element of persuasion for many of the participants who lived in exclusively Protestant or Catholic neighborhoods. It appears that one can be tolerant of one's neighbor whilst still maintaining a latent fear or mistrust.

The years of 'The Troubles' have led to this situation, and those unwilling to live in mixed neighborhoods expressed their fears and apprehensions openly. The most common reservation stemmed from a fear about personal safety. A young Belfast resident expressed this most vociferously. He lives in a Catholic neighborhood that runs parallel to a Protestant neighborhood, otherwise known as an interface area. He has been witness to sectarian violence and thus prefers the security of being surrounded by his co-

religionists. This is a phenomenon that is prevalent in many parts of Ireland and it will require years of trust building to dismantle.

Overall a majority of participants are tolerant enough to live in a mixed neighborhood, and many attribute this to their Wider Horizons experience. Many spoke of the serious reservations they had about such a venture before meeting individuals from the other community whilst in Pittsburgh. One Protestant participant claimed that she could see no problem in living alongside a Catholic neighbor after sharing a room with two Catholic females for eight weeks. This was a commonly expressed sentiment for most, and it mirrors the barriers that so many participants overcame to arrive at this point.

Before their participation in the program, fourteen of the respondents claimed that they would have been willing to live in a mixed neighborhood. That figure rose to twenty-nine after the Wider Horizons experience. The program was therefore successful in convincing half of those who did not want to live in a mixed neighborhood to consider the prospect.

The participants were also specifically questioned on whether they held any negative stereotypes about the other community before their participation. Subsequently they were quizzed on whether their Wider Horizons experience affected these opinions.

The results showed that a majority felt that they did not harbor any negative stereotypes, although most accepted that they did have some preconceived ideas. They apportioned blame on the press and their peers for these beliefs, and most agreed that their Wider Horizons participation helped to change these views. The importance of open debate was again highlighted when the participants discussed confronting their preconceived opinions through dialogue. Many respondents felt that humor as well as

serious discussion was a crucial element in deconstructing their own and others' prejudices.

Interestingly, the participants who had claimed from the outset to be very tolerant individuals admitted to some form or another of subconscious stereotyping. They attributed specific class exercises to this discovery, and indicated that they were previously not even aware that they accepted and contributed to the stereotypes espoused by one community or another. The program allowed them to explore and analyze both themselves and this social phenomenon. One can assume from these responses that such stereotyping is endemic in Irish society.

The majority of participants relegated their prejudices to the past, but there was a small minority who claimed that their experience reinforced some of the negative stereotypes they had held. Most voices of discontent in this instance were raised from the Protestant participants from Northern Ireland. They complained that many of the Catholics on their course were in some way supporters of the paramilitary IRA. This is a view that can be found expressed by some radical Unionist politicians who claim that Catholics in general are little more than IRA apologists. There were a few Protestant participants who felt vindicated in this belief when they witnessed some Catholics on their course engaged in the singing of certain nationalistic rebel songs. However this was a minority view, and the vast majority felt that education and increased understanding erased their negative stereotypes and prejudices.

The crux of the Irish conflict can be found in the struggle between two competing sets of national identities, i.e., the British versus the Irish. The symbols and emblems of these identities have become the rallying points for ethnic pride, but they have also

served to divide and offend. The participants were questioned on the central themes of national identity and ethnic symbolism.

The findings demonstrated that participants became more respectful of national identity as a result of their Wider Horizons experience. There was a central core who claimed to be accepting before their participation, but a significant number commented on their changing views. In general, exposure to the American way of life and the program itself encouraged northern Protestants to re-examine their identity. Many had previously discounted the intrinsic Irish component to their British identity and often times rejected it. Their experience in Pittsburgh afforded them the opportunity to explore that part of their identity and many openly embraced it.

The same was true for many northern Catholics who confronted their sacrosanct views on nationhood and identity. The Wider Horizons experience exposed the differences between northern and southern Catholics and highlighted the similarities between Catholics and Protestants living in Northern Ireland. This resulted in a re-evaluation of identity by many, as one man recounted,

I always thought I knew exactly who I was and where I was from. I'm a Catholic from the north and from no age you're taught that you're one hundred percent Gaelic, Catholic and Irish. I never saw a difference from me and someone living in Cork, the different people to me were the Protestants who lived in Northern Ireland. But that all changed for me when I went to Pittsburgh. I'm still Irish and proud of that. Don't get me wrong...but hanging about with guys from the Republic made me realize that there's a big difference in the way north and south thinks sometimes. We have a lot in common, but there's just something there, or rather lacking after so many years of partition. As far as identity goes, I used to always say I was from Ireland, but now I describe myself as being from the north of Ireland. It's very subtle, I know, but it just helps me to define myself more. Being in Pittsburgh helped me to see that apart from the obvious differences

there's a lot we have in common with Protestants here in the north. I wasn't aware of that before Wider Horizons.

This young man focused on his own thoughts on identity but he gives an insight into the common experience of many participants. Their re-evaluation led to an increased awareness of their own, and more importantly other peoples' sense of self and identity. The result was an increased level of tolerance and respect among the participants.

The same tolerant attitude was prevalent when participants were questioned on symbolism and emblems. In this instance the general attitude was one of live and let live. While most participants insisted that they felt this before their Wider Horizons participation, there was a significant number who attributed their tolerance to their time in Pittsburgh.

Several participants countered this mood of tolerance by acknowledging that displays of identity and symbols ought to be measured and considerate. They alluded to the need for restraint when dealing with emblems and flags. They argued that toleration of such displays should be reciprocated by those wishing to express themselves doing so in a dignified and non-triumphant manner. Several of the respondents who advocated such moves indicated that prior to their Wider Horizons experience they were totally intolerant of flags and emblems of the other community. They believed that the process of understanding and mutual respect that they undertook in Pittsburgh led them to this more tolerant outlook. One young participant spoke for many when he described his feelings towards the display of the Irish and British flags in the Ireland Institute offices.

I'll never forget the feeling I had when I walked into the Ireland Institute for the first time and I saw the Union Jack and the Irish tricolor standing side by side in the foyer. I'm Catholic, and

when I saw the British flag it just evoked all these negative feelings. I was kind of upset that a place with the name Ireland Institute was flying the English flag. But compare that with how I felt at the end of the eight weeks, and it's like a different person. I surprised myself, but honestly seeing that flag on my last day in Pittsburgh didn't fill me with the same angry feelings. In fact I was quite happy to see it flying there because it summed up the experience I'd had with all the other group members, Catholic and Protestant. It was poignant, because it symbolized the equality that I'd seen and been a part of.

The Wider Horizons program was successful in its attempt to bridge the divides created by history and human tragedy. There was a significant number of respondents who claimed to be tolerant before their participation but the program was beneficial to them in that it reinforced their beliefs. The presence of such individuals on the course may also have been the catalyst required to foster mutual understanding and respect among those individuals who have been scarred by sectarianism. All sections of Irish society were represented in the program, and this served to increase the participants' tolerance and understanding of different traditions. There were a few individuals who did not benefit from the program in this regard, but they were small in number. Even some of these participants were willing to admit though that their experience was not all that detrimental, as they had learned some valuable lessons. Overall it appears that participation in the Wider Horizons program has a limited positive relationship with increasing one's tolerance of the other community.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between participation in the Wider Horizons program and three dependent variables. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between the independent variable and first dependent variable. Participation in the Wider Horizons program relates positively to increased chances of employment. The results demonstrate clearly that thirty-eight participants are currently employed and only six are unemployed. The results also showed that thirty-four participants secured employment within one year of their return to Ireland. Although ten participants never secured employment in Ireland, the in-depth qualitative interviews showed that motherhood, emigration and the similar styled Walsh Visa program accounted for further employment opportunities outside of Ireland.

The participants acknowledged that the Wider Horizons program increased their levels of self-confidence and empowered them with the necessary skills and experience to secure employment upon their return. There was a significant number of respondents who attributed their current professions and careers directly to the program. The experience was instrumental for many in discovering a career path and in enabling the participants to reach their full potential.

However, there was a small number of participants who were dissatisfied with their internship and who claimed that the experience was not beneficial to their careers. I recommend that the program administrators in Pittsburgh implement a strategy aimed at further diversifying the range of internships offered. The recruitment and replenishment of new employers is essential for the program's survival and continued success. If there are more choices for the participants to make, a better chance exists of matching the

participant with the most suitable work placement. Yet if the participant still manages to make a bad choice, I recommend that swift action be taken. To ensure that the participant and the employer benefit from the internship, the Ireland Institute staff should make its current system for changing internships more efficient. The participant must not languish in a position or an industry in which he/she does not feel compatible. I recommend that the participants and the employers be contacted at the end of each week, specifically to determine the success of their placement. If the administrators can be alerted to any problems at an early stage, action can then be taken to resolve the situation.

It also became clear during the interviews that some participants sought very specialized internships, and they were unable to find them within the program's database of employers. The young woman who wanted to work in the area of access issues for disabled people exemplified this. She may have been accommodated if a more detailed system was in place whereby the participants seeking such an internship were consulted whilst still in Ireland. Before arriving in Pittsburgh the administrators could actively seek to recruit employers who represent this or any other specialized interest. Evidently this could not be done for each individual participant, but specialized requests are rare enough that such a venture would be warranted and feasible.

It may also be prudent to monitor vulnerable individuals more intently to ensure the case of the young female whose self-confidence was damaged never occurs again. Although this was an exceptional case, provisions should be set in place to assist such individuals at the first signs of concern. Such participants would be identified as early as possible, even before they depart Ireland, so that the administrators can meet with them regularly to discuss their progress.

The findings also show that there is a limited positive relationship between participation in the Wider Horizons program and one's continued education. The results demonstrated that just over half of the participants enrolled in further education upon their return to Ireland. The majority of these participants attributed their enrollment to the Wider Horizons program. The participants recorded an increase in self-confidence, which encouraged them to improve their socioeconomic conditions. They acknowledged that the Wider Horizons program influenced their decision and outlook on education, and the overall American experience was also instrumental. The mature students who enrolled in further education were praiseworthy of the program, as they felt that it influenced their decision very strongly.

Although almost one-half of the participants did not enroll in further education, the findings show that these participants were influenced on their views on education. They acknowledged that education was often times the key to a person's success, but they admitted to a lack of motivation and dedication. There were also university graduates, who had not enrolled in any post-graduate courses. However, they too accepted that their American and Wider Horizons experience had made them more willing to explore that possibility at some time in the future.

During the course of this research it also became evident that the education systems in Ireland appeared to streamline the elite towards academic success to the detriment of many of the participants. I recommend that the education authorities in Ireland be made aware of the findings of this report that they might be alerted to the sentiments expressed. They may be able to use these results in conjunction with their own research for use in formulating future education policy.

The results also showed a large difference in the educational views of the participants who were high school dropouts and university graduates. I recommend that the Ireland Institute staff administer different approaches to these sets of individuals to compensate for their different outlooks.

The findings show that there is a limited positive relationship between one's participation in the Wider Horizons program and one's increased tolerance of the other community. The results demonstrated that the majority of the participants were tolerant of the other community after their Wider Horizons participation, but a significant proportion described themselves as being tolerant before their participation. Those who believed they were open minded before their Wider Horizons experience accepted that the program had reinforced their beliefs. Although these individuals may not be seen by many as ideal candidates given that the program aims to reason with intolerant individuals, their presence in the program proved invaluable. The findings conclude that the tolerant participants, in conjunction with the course structure, managed to break down the barriers and stereotypes of the intolerant participants. It was discovered that communication and open, honest discussion was a powerful tool in dismantling old prejudices and in confronting bigotry.

The interviews revealed that thirty-eight participants recognized the benefits of integrated education and over half of these participants attributed this belief to the Wider Horizons program. These findings may be of use to the education authorities and policy makers in Ireland where integrated education constitutes only a small percentage of all educational institutions.

Policy makers and city authorities might also take note of the smaller number of participants who are willing to live in mixed neighborhoods. Although a majority of respondents agreed with living in such areas, a latent fear for personal safety still exists. This reflects a more general societal malaise that can only be addressed by the provision of a stable, democratic and accountable society where citizens can feel safe alongside members of the other community.

It also became evident that some individuals experienced a decrease in their levels of tolerance upon their return home. These participants attributed this to inter-communal tensions and conflict in their neighborhoods. I recommend that provisions and structures be implemented in interface areas whereby returning Wider Horizons participants can interact with the intolerant members of their own and the other community. They can explore their newfound tolerance and educate others in a public forum or through a form of community interaction on a smaller scale. Perhaps a youth club that attracts both sections of society could be established to help overcome tensions and animosities.

It would also be prudent to monitor the Wider Horizons groups closely in Pittsburgh to ensure the case of the young Protestant male who felt marginalized by his Catholic co-participants does not happen again. The program failed this young man and he returned to Ireland more intolerant than he had left. This was a unique case, but it nevertheless raises serious concerns about the validity of the program.

The findings also demonstrated that there was a limited yet marked division among some of the northern and southern participants. I recommend that group activities be structured in such a way as to ensure the complete interaction of these factions.

There were other problems and limitations that arose during the course of this research. To begin with no control group existed and therefore the results of these findings are not generalizable.

The interviews were conducted via telephone and the participants' responses were recorded using pen and paper. This produced some difficulties in that it was not easy to record everything that was said with speed or efficiency. This resulted in the conversation between participant and researcher not being as fluid as it could have been. I would recommend that any further qualitative research be conducted with an audio recorder.

Problems also arose during the selection of the sample from the total population. Initially fifty participants were to be randomly selected from the population at the thirtieth interval. However during the selection of the sample it became evident that some of the participants did not supply telephone numbers with their personal details. It also emerged when contacting the participants in Ireland that many of the telephone numbers were no longer in service. In addition many of the participants no longer lived at the addresses that they had supplied. Consequently I had to return to the total population to randomly select other participants for the sample. In the end I was only able to secure forty-four participants in lieu of the original fifty that was anticipated.

An unforeseen problem may also have arisen during the interviews, but this can be neither proved nor disproved. A significant number of participants claimed to be tolerant before and after their Wider Horizons participation but this may be attributed to something else. I questioned the participants on sensitive issue relating to bigotry and intolerance, and I did so with an Irish accent. I suspect that not only were they reluctant

to reveal their true feelings, but they may have responded with the real fear of perhaps offending me in some way. I would recommend that someone with a neutral or an American accent should conduct the interviews of any such future research in order to minimize the effects of such variables.

This research was also conducted years after some of the respondents had participated in the Wider Horizons program and their memories of events and sentiments had often faded with time. In this case the participants may have simply recounted what they thought the researcher wanted to hear.

The findings of this research have uncovered some areas that may require further research. For example, some participants reported a decrease in their tolerance upon return to Ireland as a result of provocation from the other community. I recommend that a further study be undertaken to determine the impact of the daily political and sectarian tension experienced by the Wider Horizons participants. The results of such research may influence the program's policy makers in establishing follow up forums and structures that allow the participants to explore and develop the new ideas that they acquired in Pittsburgh. I would also recommend that similar research be conducted in other cities where the Wider Horizons program has been implemented by other non-governmental organizations.

Appendix

Figure 1 below demonstrates the male to female ratio of the sample population. There are twenty-four males compared to twenty females. The figure 1 in the key corresponds to the male proportion and the figure 2 corresponds to the female.

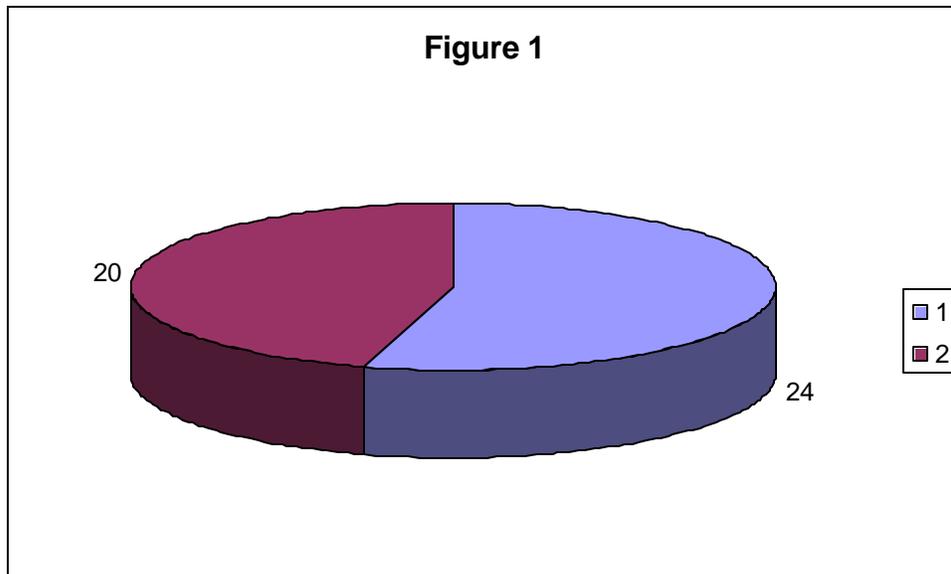


Figure 2 below demonstrates that fourteen of the participants come from the Republic of Ireland and thirty are residents of Northern Ireland. On the key Northern Ireland is represented by the number 1 and the Republic of Ireland is represented by the number 2.

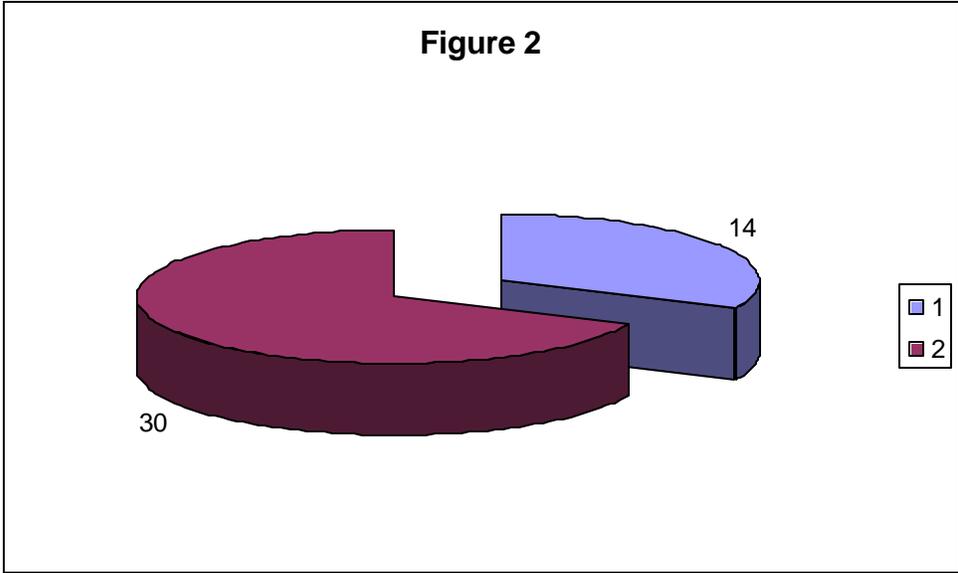


Figure 3 below charts the years in which the participants partook in the Wider Horizons program. As one can see from the bar chart the majority of respondents participated during the years 1997-2000. Series 1 represents the year 1993, series 2 1994, series 3 1995, series 4 1996, series 5 1997, series 6 1998, series 7 1999 and series 8 the year 2000.

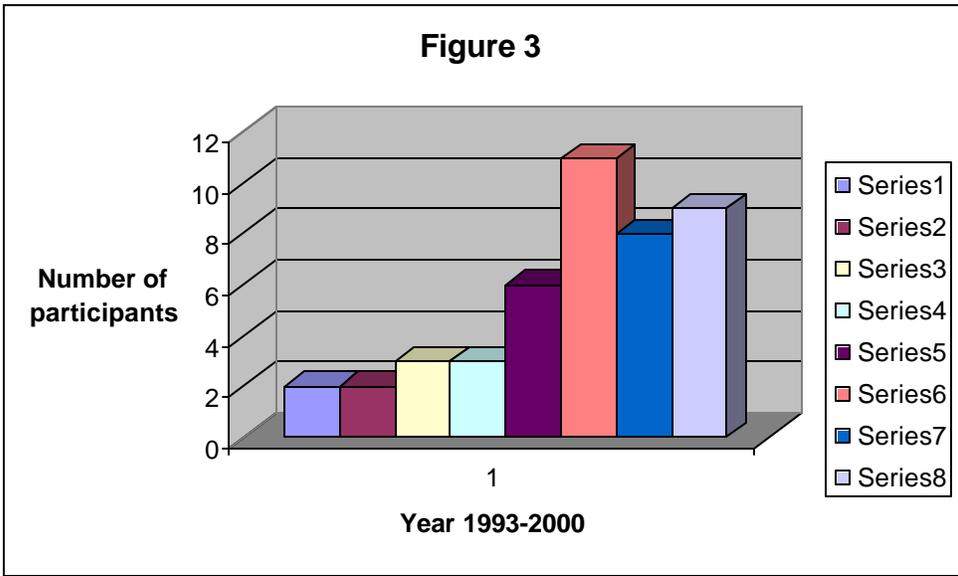


Figure 4 shows the number of months it took for the participants to secure employment upon their return to Ireland. Ten of the participants never secured employment and they are not registered on the graph.

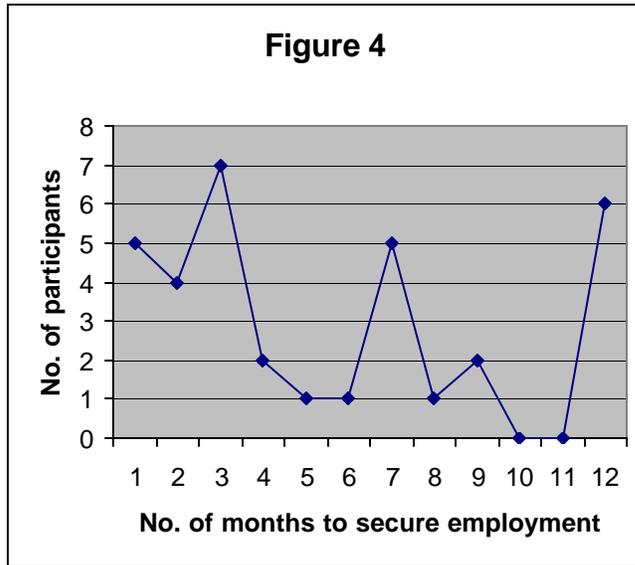
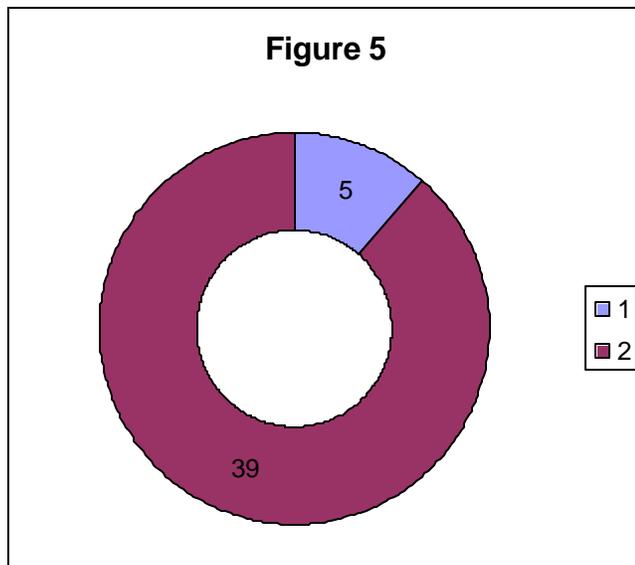


Figure 5 demonstrates the ratio of currently employed to unemployed participants. In the key the number 1 represents the unemployed and the number 2 represents the employed.



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