

Soft Skills and Hard Prejudices: Pathways to Improving the Life Chances of Recent Immigrant Women in Ottawa, Canada¹

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Abstract

The article is a case study of how a community-based organisation in Ottawa Canada, the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), has evolved in the ways it contributes to improving some immigrant women's life chances. In describing the evolving roles of CAWI, we hope to demonstrate the potential utility of a public sector strategy based on three interrelated aspects: meaningful employment and employment-related training; empowerment; and a capacity to measure outcomes. By situating this description within the context of recent immigration in Canada, the article explains how these three interrelated aspects have been increasingly addressed by the organisation, and how they might be generalised in policy terms. Illustrating the development of these three interrelated activities, we hope to show how this combination of activities came into place and how they work to achieve not only employment objectives, but also social and civic engagement goals.

Introduction

Our title, 'Soft Skills and Hard Prejudices', is meant to signal both a description of the current situation for immigrant women in Canada, and a way forward in policy terms. By using a case study of how a community-based organisation in Ottawa Canada, the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), has evolved in the ways it contributes to improving some immigrant women's life chances, we hope to demonstrate the potential utility of a public sector strategy that would be based on three interrelated aspects: meaningful employment and employment-related training; empowerment; and a capacity to measure out-

comes. Below, we describe the evolution of the activities of CAWI within the context of recent immigration in Canada, in order to explain how these three interrelated aspects have increasingly been addressed by this organisation, and how they might be generalised in policy terms.

CAWI is a community-based organisation in the City of Ottawa, Canada's national capital and one part of the National Capital Region (NCR). The NCR brings together the City of Ottawa situated in the Province of Ontario, and the City of Gatineau, located in the Province of Quebec. It is important to note that although Ottawa-Gatineau forms one region in terms of labour market and place of residence, the two cities are divided by important provincial jurisdictions that have great significance for immigration policies.

Canada's founding constitutional document, the British North America Act, allocates the issue of immigration as a shared jurisdiction between the federal and the provincial levels of government. Quebec has had, since 1978 and more

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formally since 1991, exclusive control over the reception and integration of immigrants to Quebec (Germain and Trinh 2011: 257). Ontario has in recent years demanded the same type of agreement, but this demand has been rejected by the federal government (Biles et al. 2011: 206). For this reason, the organisation and policy context of immigrant integration is very different within the two provincial components of the National Capital Region. Our story takes place within the City of Ottawa, on the Ontario side of the region.

Ottawa has a population of almost 900,000, which makes up approximately 75 per cent of the population of the National Capital Region (1.2 million in 2011). In contrast to Ottawa's much larger sister city in Ontario, Toronto, where the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Toronto had a foreign-born population of 45.7 per cent in 2006 (up from 43.7 per cent in 2001),² Ottawa has only recently begun to receive a sizeable immigrant population. Ottawa's population is now at about 22 per cent foreign-born, but this level of diversity is quite recent, in contrast to the historical divide of language as the predominant marker of diversity between the English and the French-speaking populations, a divide that continues to be an important dimension of the political context of the City of Ottawa.³ The foreign-born population of Ottawa is very diverse; the major sources of immigration in 2006 were Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. The two largest language groups are Arabic-speaking and Chinese, but in total, over 70 mother tongue languages are spoken in Ottawa.⁴

CAWI was established in 2004, and can be understood as the latest version on the part of

Ottawa-based feminists to make decision-making in the city more sensitive to, and inclusive of, gender. Earlier efforts were inspired by the Declaration on Women in Local Government of the International Union of Local Authorities (now called United Cities and Local Government), as well as the activities of the City of Montreal, where there was a unit of the city administration dedicated to gender equity that had been very active between 1992 and 2006.

In Ottawa, CAWI's mission was, at its inception, to bring together women from diverse communities, to work with municipal decision-makers to create a more inclusive city, and to promote gender equality. CAWI's activities started as offering training initiatives in civic participation to help women learn how to influence decision-making at City Hall, then working in partnership with City of Ottawa staff to create a management training tool called the Equity and Inclusion Lens (CAWI 2010), and still later creating 'women's action forum' meetings to examine the implications of important local decisions and policies, and advocating to the city on issues relevant to its mission. Recent immigrant women form an important part of CAWI's membership and this article will focus particularly on the recent immigrant members of CAWI (Klodawsky et al. 2012).⁵

Two of the authors (Andrew and Klodawsky) are members of CAWI's Steering Committee and have been active participants in CAWI since its creation in 2004, they therefore have an 'insider' perspective, whereas the third author (Siltanen) has an 'outsider' perspective on CAWI and became involved in this research project at the invitation of the other two authors because of her expertise in methodology and her experience in working reflexively in a team research project (Siltanen et al. 2008).⁶ All three authors favour post-positivist perspectives (Naples 2003;

² Census 2006 Analysis Series 97-557 XIE 2006001 Immigration in Canada.

³ For a description of the policy around immigration to minority Francophone communities outside Quebec, see Andrew and Abdourhamane Hima (2011). It is also important to indicate the dimension of the historical diversity as including the relations between the Aboriginal population living in the region and the settler population.

⁴ Demolinguistic Profile - 2001-2011, Census Metropolitan Area of Ottawa-Gatineau, Research Team, Official Language Support Programs Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage, 2012.

⁵ The Klodawsky et al article dealt with the early civic participation training of CAWI and in particular with a CAWI presentation to the Ottawa City Council. It has an entirely different focus from the present text. More information on CAWI can be obtained from its web site, www.cawi-ivtf.org.

⁶ This article deals with an entirely separate team research experience and therefore looks at a completely different research project.

Sprague 2005; May and Perry 2011), which reconfigure the experience of researchers as a resource – and not a problem – for enhancing the quality and rigour of analysis. We are also influenced by authors (Brannick and Coughlan 2007; Doucet and Mauthner 2003) who have articulated the possibilities of ‘insider’ research, including the values of access and pre-understanding (Brannick and Coughlan 2007) and more generally, the possibilities this position can offer to incorporating reflexivity into the research process. We have been very conscious of the need to be reflexive about the specificity of our individual perspectives, but see the overall value of our different situated knowledge providing the possibility of a more comprehensive and integrated account of the experiences we have researched.

Theorising the role of immigrant women’s community associations

There has been a very interesting debate in *Les Cahiers du genre* on the impact of immigrant women’s associations in helping to improve the lives of immigrant women. Erel (2011-2012: 151) argues that it is necessary to understand political activism more broadly and less specifically oriented to formal political participation, in order to understand the vitality of the associational practices of immigrant women. Not only do these associations give women a space to articulate political positions, but this form of associational activity has also allowed, according to Erel’s study, the women’s gendered and racialised identities to be integrated within their overall identities. There may be a number of stages, from the expression of identities to concrete socio-political action, but women’s associational activity at least forms an environment for the development of a less segmented identity than what they may be living in their individual lives, both at work and in the family.

In contrast, Campani (2011-2012) takes a slightly more pessimistic position in her research on immigrant women and their associational activities in Italy over the last 20 years. Although the context is quite different from that of Canada, the measurement of success in terms of significant socio-economic transformation of the lives

of immigrant women warrants serious consideration. Campani recognises the growth of the associations and the work they do to foster a desire for real socio-political participation on the part of the women, but she emphasises that the impact of these activities on the real, lived conditions of the immigrant women is negligible, given the socio-economic structure of Italian society. The associations have been active, but they have been unable to change the systemic trend in which female immigrants and Italian-born females work, essentially in the ‘care’ sector (Campani 2011-2012: 55), with immigrant women being heavily involved in domestic labour. Without an important transformation with regard to the status of women in Italian society – that is, more than simply replacing Italian-born women in their family responsibilities with immigrant women playing the same roles – the vibrancy of immigrant associational activity will continue to be limited in its impact.

Another variation in this debate is highlighted by King and Cruickshank (2012) in raising questions about forms of engagement and making the distinction between community engagement by governments and government engagement by communities. By focussing on developing the capacities of communities to engage governments, the result is the promotion of a longer term vision, a more holistic and systemic perspective, a better understanding of the complexity of communities, and more culturally and appropriately processed knowledge (King and Cruickshank 2012: 9-10).

It is interesting to look at these debates in terms of CAWI and its ability to promote meaningful change. Certainly it has not concentrated on formal politics and encouraging women to run for office, or being on formal advisory boards. CAWI has focussed broadly on socio-political participation, on articulating visions of alternate societies, and also on bringing the reality on diverse women’s lives to the attention of municipal decision-makers (Klodawsky et al. 2012). Much effort has been expended on developing community capacity to engage with municipal government through training activities, careful presentations to committees, arranging meet-

ings with elected officials, and the organisation of activities for women to learn about and organise themselves in relation to current community and municipal issues. There has been some activity related to developing the capacity of government to engage community, notably in the work done by CAWI to propose public engagement processes and policies to the City, but these have been relatively limited as compared to the much greater effort to develop the skills of community women to engage with government.

At the same time, Campani's analysis must be examined seriously in relation to CAWI, even while taking into account the very different contexts and scales of activity. The focus of CAWI's activities has been at the municipal level and therefore on dealing with issues at a local scale. But has CAWI changed the power dynamics in the City of Ottawa? Are women, and particularly immigrant women, regarded as having equal knowledge and expertise qualifying them to participate in and inform council decisions within the City of Ottawa? The pertinence of Campani's analysis is to shift the focus to the larger power relations at play, and to look beyond the level at which the associational activity is taking place. This is perhaps too global an approach for this particular text, but it is an approach that needs to be examined. The empowerment felt by members of CAWI is clear and not to be underestimated, but Campani does remind us that we also need to think on a larger and more structural scale.

Setting the context: The goal of meaningful employment

The immigrant women who have been the most involved in CAWI have been primarily well-educated women, many of whom held important positions in their home countries but who have found themselves underemployed or unemployed in Ottawa. Their experiences of underemployment and unemployment reflect a larger trend in immigrant integration in Canada: Over the last 10-15 years, the rate of integration of recent immigrants (measured primarily in income terms) has slowed down considerably (Sweetman and Warman 2008).

The situation in Ottawa has been exacerbated by the fact that, in the past few years, Western Canada has been a more attractive area for immigrant settlement, owing to a more vibrant, resource-based economy. In addition, federal government jobs, which represent the largest sector of employment in the region, require Canadian citizenship or a landed immigrant status and are therefore basically closed to recent immigrants. Some of the federal public sector jobs also require active English-French bilingualism, which is also a constraint for some of the recent immigrant population (Andrew et al. 2012).

But there is also a specifically gendered account of immigrant integration in Ontario, and it is this story that is particularly relevant to CAWI. Our information on the employment experiences of educated immigrant women in Canada is based on Toronto-area data; but the insights that it provides with regard to the analysis of interactions between educational attainment, age, gender and labour market outcomes are very revealing. The analysis is based on Canadian census data and provides comparisons of immigrant arrivals across three time periods: 1981-1990, 1991-2000, and 2001-2006. These cross-sectional comparisons help to illuminate the impacts of educational level changes of immigrants in relation to their employment outcomes over a 25 year time frame (Preston et al. 2011).

The educational levels of immigrants arriving in Toronto have increased considerably in the most recent period (2001-2006), with 40.1 per cent of female immigrants and 45.5 per cent of male immigrants holding university degrees (Preston et al. 2011: 5), as compared to the period of 1981 to 1990, when only 22.5 per cent of female immigrants and 24.9 per cent of male immigrants had achieved this level of education. This difference between female and male immigrants has remained relatively constant between the arrival period of 1991-2000 and that of 2001-2006.

The levels of university education for both immigrant women and men are higher than those for their Canadian-born peers, yet the immigrants' economic circumstances are con-

siderably lower when compared to the equivalently educated Canadian population. University-educated immigrant women do dramatically less well economically than do both their male immigrant peers and their university-educated, Canadian-born female peers. This disadvantage can be seen in Table 1 below, which shows data drawn from the Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative (TIEDI) and illustrates the differences in earnings of university-educated women and men, foreign and Canadian born, by period of immigration.

Unemployment levels also are indicative of the doubly disadvantaged position of educated female immigrants. Differences in unemployment rates are largest between Canadian-born

is well represented in CAWI. Their decision to participate in CAWI is articulated in terms of an interest to engage with local municipal and community issues and to have women's voices be more clearly present in local decision-making. Membership in CAWI is on an individual basis and is not related to membership in other organisations. Many of the women in CAWI do belong to other community associations, but this activity is not related to their membership in CAWI. CAWI's focus has been its engagement with municipal government, which has been relatively rare for women's organisations in Canada and equally rare for immigrant organisations in Canada. The municipal engagement has been a reason for women being attracted to CAWI and

	Canadian-Born	All Immigrants**	Immigrants 1981-1990	Immigrants 1991- 2000	Immigrants 2001 – 2006
Women	\$44,278.30	\$28,346.00	\$35,777.40	\$27,656.30	\$14,861.60
Men	\$81,416.10	\$44,908.00	\$49,609.70	\$41,782.00	\$25,417.30

Table 1: Average annual earnings (gross: 2005 dollars) for Canadian-born and immigrant university degree holders by period of immigration and gender, Toronto CMA.

** Includes immigrants who arrived before and after 1981

Source: Preston et al. 2010. Data is from Statistics Canada Census of Canada 2006

and immigrant adults with university degrees and, once again, the gap is twice as large for female immigrants with university degrees as it is for their male peers. For immigrant men with university education, the gap in unemployment levels is two per cent compared to Canadian-born men, whereas for similarly educated female immigrants and Canadian-born women, the gap in unemployment levels is almost four per cent (Preston et al. 2011: 12).

As we have said, these figures come from immigrants arriving in Toronto, but the reality of recent immigration in Ottawa is similar. There are an increasing number of well-educated female immigrants who are unemployed or underemployed, despite their considerable efforts to obtain employment consistent with their educational levels and work experience, acquired both in their countries of origin as well as following their arrival in Ottawa. This group

so too has been a more individual preoccupation to gain Canadian experience both volunteer and work-related, as a way of increasing contacts in the search for employment that relates to their work experience and education levels. A lack of Canadian experience has been clearly identified as one of the major barriers to successful immigrant integration in Canada (Sweetman and Warman 2008).

Decent employment is certainly a goal for immigrants of all educational levels, but the increasing number of highly educated immigrant women locked in jobs well below their capabilities, or without jobs at all, does call for new strategies. Immigrant women are more likely than Canadian-born women to have an advanced university degree (Mitra 2010) and they fare worse than either Canadian-born women or immigrant men. Credentials acquired in non-Canadian universities are systematically devalued and over-

looked. As a result, highly skilled immigrant women are more likely to work in low-skilled jobs than are non-immigrant women, while Canadian-born women are more likely than immigrant women to work in managerial, professional, and clerical (i.e., higher skilled) occupations (Tastsoglou and Miedema 2005). These differences are even more striking when comparing the situation in the three largest census metropolitan areas (Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal), where immigrant women earn an average of \$5,500 more than their counterparts in less populated cities and rural areas (Solovyeva 2011).

Human capital can be thought of as the knowledge, skills, and attributes that increase the productivity of a worker. Those with education and workplace experience have by this definition more human capital and therefore, according to human capital theory, should find themselves in better employment. If this is not the case, and as we have demonstrated above, this is clearly not the case for well-educated female recent immigrants, particular constraints are preventing the greater human capital of these well-educated female immigrants from being recognised. Our argument here is that these constraints are, on the one hand, the constraint of lack of Canadian experience and, on the other, the stereotyping of the qualifications of female recent immigrants (Grant and Nadin 2007).

Moving from a sense of empowerment to employment-related training

The evolution of CAWI's activities reflects a growing preoccupation with the issue of meaningful employment, especially for recent immigrant women. CAWI's original mandate emphasised above all else the need to influence decision-making within the City of Ottawa to become more gender-inclusive. However, in the very early period of CAWI's development, the organisation faced a City Hall that was preoccupied with other issues and not receptive to initiating activities aimed at greater participation in City decision-making processes.

In the course of conducting 'baseline' interviews with women in community-based groups, CAWI discovered that the level of knowledge

about, and comfort with, municipal government in Ottawa was extremely limited. This led CAWI to seek and obtain funds for a project to train women from community-based organisations to be involved, as politically engaged citizens, with the City of Ottawa. This orientation towards training was done with a focus on the empowerment of women, motivated by the goal of giving women a clearer sense of their rights as residents of Ottawa to have a voice in the decision-making process. It was also motivated by the goal of building capacity and concrete skills relevant to such an endeavour, including: meeting with elected representatives; making public presentations to council committees; interacting with media; and formulating positions for advocacy.

At a somewhat later stage, CAWI received 'fee for service' funds from the City of Ottawa to carry out public consultation activities in relation to the development of a new Recreation Master Plan. This endeavour involved the need to train CAWI members as animators and facilitators of focus groups with the aim of encouraging the participation of a wide variety of Ottawa residents from neighbourhoods across the City. The City was motivated to support this activity in order to hear from marginalised groups and for going well beyond simply listening to the well-organised sports and recreation groups. The initiative enabled CAWI to understand the significance of such training for CAWI's role as increasing citizen involvement in policy-making work with the City of Ottawa, but also the importance of this work for the women as individuals in terms of their acquisition of useful, and potentially marketable, skills. The earlier civic engagement training had been deemed highly successful largely on the basis of the enthusiasm of the graduates, but also because of the increasing interest of the City of Ottawa to work with CAWI, as illustrated in the example described above. The fact that the City was willing to pay for CAWI's training activity also led CAWI to see the interest of more skill-based training.

This led CAWI to develop a project to carry out community engagement facilitator training. The objectives of this project were both individual

and collective: to enable women to develop marketable skills as facilitators, and to empower them to realise the potential strength of collective action. The training was designed to rebuild the self-confidence they had often lost through the experience of being undervalued in the Canadian job market and, additionally, to give them tangible but difficult to articulate or measure 'soft' skills relevant in Canadian society. Although the training was a small project with a very limited budget, and only involved less than half a dozen trainees, it did allow those who participated in the training to gain specific experience in an area that was both a recognised occupation and one that was well regarded in Ottawa because of the need of the federal government and the NGO sector for facilitators. Without the requirement for specific credentials, facilitation is more accessible to a wide group of female immigrants than occupations stipulating the need for formal recognition of foreign credentials.

The training work of CAWI is regarded as being of value to both individual members and to CAWI as an organisation, but the skill sets being gained are increasingly tied to the opportunity to enhance individual employment outcomes. This has not reduced the collective enthusiasm of CAWI members for the sense they have that CAWI is a real presence in the City of Ottawa, bringing diverse women's voices to the table to be heard by local politicians and bureaucrats. Rather, it adds to the attraction of being an active participant of CAWI.

A recent group discussion with women involved in CAWI's strategic planning activities heard extremely clear statements, particularly by recently arrived immigrant women, about the feelings of collective strength, the sense of conviviality, and the very strong sense of the inclusiveness of CAWI – all characteristics that the organisation is committed to retain and foster. There was strong support not only for the collective aspects of CAWI's work, but also for the facilitator training where benefits accrue more to the specific women being trained. At the same time, the discussion on what should happen next with regard to CAWI-initiated training endeavours illustrates the organisation's vulnerability.

CAWI is entirely dependent on project funding and the weakness of this model is very well known. CAWI has been successful in obtaining funds from numerous public agencies – municipal, provincial and federal – from such places as: Status of Women Canada (federal), the Trillium Foundation (provincial), the Ottawa United Way, Ottawa Community Foundation, and the City of Ottawa. However, this situation means always having to be aware of donor priorities and strategising about how best to fit what one wants to do with the language and priorities of the donors. It also means a huge expenditure of time in the detailed preparation of proposals and often in prolonged negotiations around the details of the proposal. We will come back to this question in our section on measurement.

The vulnerability of CAWI in terms of the evolution of its training-related initiatives also relates to the fact that, as referred to above, 'soft skills' are real and important but difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. Some of them relate to culturally defined practices, such as the assumption in many cultures that it is inappropriate for women to look directly at a male boss when being questioned by him; whereas in other societies (such as Canada) the assumption by the male boss is that the female employee is not being forthright and perhaps even hiding something if she will not look at him directly. Whether or not this specific example is necessarily gender-based, the authors have heard this situation being described and interpreted as gender-based by the female employee remembering a specific situation she had experienced.

But making the more general case about soft skills, the Canadian literature is very thin and yet by the very nature of soft skills they must relate to a specific society and even specific contexts within that society. In general the Canadian literature puts considerable emphasis on the ability to work with others and to develop the complete collection of our social, communication, and self-management behaviours. These are the skills that enable us to work effectively and 'fit in' at the workplace. Examples of soft skills are: demonstrating integrity and ethical behaviour; being motivated and having a positive attitude; and

critically analyzing information (Ryerson University, Toronto. Chang School of Continuing Education. Definition of soft skills).

Another similar example comes from the magazine *Canadian Immigrant* and an article listing 'Nine soft skills no immigrant should be without' (Noorani 2011). The skills listed were: communication skills, local language skills, presentation skills, small talk, leadership and initiative, conflict resolution and negotiation, accepting constructive criticism, flexibility, and, finally, business etiquette. In the messages relating to this article, others added networking, interpretation and interaction skills, the skill 'to be liked', and a comment that,

in Canada people value praising (much more than in other places). What does a "great" really mean in a particular context? What are the messages behind phrases and body language? That's not written in any dictionary but it has to be observed. And it can be the difference of being accepted or not.

A final example comes from the Toronto newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, suggesting that increasing importance is being given to the development of soft skills.

In the aftermath of the global recession, Canada's corporations have asked the country's business schools to turn out graduates with more abstract leaderships skills – also known as soft skills – because they want leaders that can look beyond the spreadsheets and statistics.

Business schools are aware that it's no longer enough for graduates to say, 'I have an MBA.' Now, a future business leader needs to know how to demonstrate soft skills, such as communication, social awareness and a strong work ethic, to illustrate to prospective employers how and why a person will make a good employee (*Globe and Mail*, 18 January 2013).

Comparing Canadian lists of soft skills with those developed in other countries, Canadian lists do not seem to include as many references to making decisions, commitment to the job or creativity. Soft skills emphasised in the Canadian context seem to relate to communication skills and getting along with fellow workers.

Building the capacity to measure outcomes

The need for more systematic engagement of immigrant women in decision-making as advanced by Campani brings us to the question of measurement and the capacity to measure the outcomes of CAWI's activities. We need to first reflect on why we would want to measure the results of CAWI's activities. Is it not enough that the women come to the activities, enjoy getting together and by their presence indicate that the activities are worthwhile? One could take an even stronger position and ask if it is not counterproductive to ask CAWI to spend valuable time measuring its activities when this time could be more productively used in examining ways to organise future activities or developing messages to be conveyed to some particular committee meeting in the City of Ottawa. However, there are good reasons to measure the outcomes of CAWI's activities, and thinking about this issue allows us to better understand not only why we should measure impact, but also what outputs/outcomes to measure.

Most obviously, CAWI needs to measure outcomes in order to satisfy existing funders and, even more importantly, to find new ones. Being entirely financed by project funding, the need for CAWI to relate successfully to funders is a front and centre preoccupation. In addition, identifying what should be measured might provide an opportunity to think more broadly about what indicators should be measured and the potential benefits of such an evaluation; for example, having certain data could attract funders interested not only in training but in areas such as civic engagement, immigrant employment, and women's empowerment, among others. Activities such as those initiated by CAWI always have multiple outcomes, both in terms of process and content, but each measure can be tied to specific outcomes.

Evaluation is also necessary for policy innovation (Patton 2011; Cousins and Chouinard 2012). It is difficult to lobby effectively for special programming for immigrant women if one cannot demonstrate that the existing situation is producing inequitable results or, at the very least, less than optimal results. Measurement can indi-

cate that, not only would individual immigrant women gain from special programming, but that there would be collective community benefits. This is particularly important for our focus on highly educated immigrant women as it is necessary to highlight this relatively new pool of skilled labour. Accurate measurement of, for instance, the results of training programs, might be used in discussions with employers to encourage them to hire highly educated immigrant women who had successfully completed training, including learning 'soft skills' important for the Canadian labour market. This may help to break down the hard prejudices of Canadian employers who have tended to see female immigrants as uneducated and unskilled, and therefore low paid employees. Without quantitative evidence, these prejudices are harder to counter.

Even more importantly, measurement is valuable to the group itself. It allows the group to understand whether it is doing what it wants to do and to what extent it is achieving its objectives. An important additional dimension to evaluation is that it can reveal to all stakeholders involved that they are achieving objectives they might not otherwise be aware of. Measurement, both quantitative and qualitative, can offer a group insights that allows them to reflect on whether they are meeting their desired goals. For this to be useful, it is important that evaluation be a conscious choice by the group and not imposed from the outside. This certainly has been the case for CAWI, who has on a number of occasions conducted community-based evaluations of its own projects, working in partnership with the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services (CRECS) at the University of Ottawa. One such example is the 'Formative Evaluation of the Civic Participation Training of the City for All Women Initiative', completed in 2008. It was undertaken by a team of evaluators led by a professor of psychology from the University of Ottawa, who is a specialist in evaluation, one of his PhD students, and three community evaluators from CAWI. CAWI has learned that measurement is important for funders, both for attracting new funders and for establishing positive relationships with existing funders. These

positive relations include brainstorming possibilities for future projects once the competence and professionalism of the community group has been established.

An article by Gaye and Jha (2011) does a very thorough job in reviewing the literature and raising questions about the measurement of women's empowerment through migration. Gaye and Jha focus on quantitative measurement, but recognising the importance of context, they also introduce a space for qualitative measurements. Certainly qualitative measures are a necessary part of any evaluation of CAWI. Earlier in this article, we described the ways in which CAWI members experience a sense of collective inclusion and a sense of being recognised as part of CAWI. These qualitative dimensions of inclusion are important to measure, to better understand in what ways the feelings of inclusion are related to being recognised as an individual, as a member of some particular group, as a member of an intersectional combination of identities, and the ways that individual and group recognition are experienced as identical, overlapping or distinct. Another qualitative dimension relates to specific examples of feeling included or recognised and might include examples of the kinds of mutual recognition or civic conviviality described in the writings of Charles Tully and Paul Gilroy (Tully 2012; Gilroy 2004).

Yet another qualitative dimension that could be investigated relates to an interest in CAWI's prefigurative activities (Siltanen et al. 2011). This could take the form of exploring qualitative dimensions of CAWI's ability to live the values of the society they want to see established. It would be extremely interesting to try to get CAWI members to reflect on this question and on the challenges in trying to operate in this way in the here and now. One possible resource might come from a project on real utopias, currently being developed by Erik Olin Wright (Wright 2012). One example that Wright has given of a real utopia is the public library, where knowledge is free, easily accessible, and available to all. Thinking about real utopian spaces and discussing why they are seen as such might be a way to get glimpses of the pre-figurative aspects of CAWI's activities

and to understand the ways in which these activities have influenced its members.

The question of what should be measured also relates to the distinction between measuring process vs. measuring outcomes. In recent writings there have been increasing calls to give more importance to the measurement of process. Whitzman's article (2007) examines four feminist planning organisations based on four criteria for success that are basically related to outcomes. However, the article ends by according considerable importance to the longevity of the organisations and to the capacity for learning from other organisations as well as from their own successes and failures. As Whitzman states, these process issues become 'a challenge for researchers concerned with real life planning practice, and the theory deriving from that practice' (Whitzman 2007: 224). This interest in examining and theorising process can also be seen in Mizrahi (Mizrahi 2007: 51), with the emphasis on process as a way of highlighting the link between the individual and the collective, and in Bacchi and Eveline (2010), with the politics of 'doing' based on a greater attention 'to the practices, processes and procedures associated with developing these initiatives' (Bacchi and Eveline 2010: 314).

Conclusion

This article has outlined the evolution of the approaches that CAWI has put into place in its efforts to improve the situation of the numerous immigrant women who arrive in Ottawa with high levels of educational achievement, and often significant work experience, but who have found themselves under- employed if not unemployed. The question remains: Has CAWI's evolving strategy been successful, or more prudently, are there indications at the present time that this strategy of training, empowerment and measurement is leading to better outcomes for

at least some recent immigrant women? As we described earlier, the training component of CAWI's work has become increasingly focused on job-related training. The present facilitator training was set up to incorporate an element of enhancing employable skills, linked to the rationale that government departments and national NGOs in Ottawa require the use of facilitators in many circumstances. In addition there are CAWI members who have obtained employment through their engagement with CAWI.

While the goal of offering activities leading to meaningful employment is still in development, CAWI's work on empowerment has had a tangible impact. The coordinator of CAWI has done a great deal of capacity building on an individual basis with CAWI members. Capacity building activities have included carefully preparing members for chairing meetings, working with those selected to present CAWI reports to municipal council committee meetings, and helping members prepare for interviews with journalists. These efforts help to empower the women and rebuild their confidence, which has often been shaken from their early experiences of being undervalued in Ottawa. In addition to the individual work, CAWI group processes, as described earlier, have also increased members' sense of empowerment, both on a personal and collective basis.

We have described the vulnerability of CAWI, both in terms of its capacity to measure results in ways that funders are interested in financing and, even more difficult to influence, in terms of the changing priorities, and procedures, of the funding agencies. However, despite this vulnerability, the development of CAWI over time has shown the potential of a public sector strategy of training, empowerment and measurement to improve the economic, social and cultural lives of recent immigrant women in Canadian society.

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