

Comparative Evaluation of the Job Club Program with Welfare Recipients

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About 1000 WIN welfare clients were selected in five cities: Harlem, New Brunswick, Milwaukee, Wichita, and Tacoma, and half were randomly assigned to the Job Club program. Of the continuing clients, 87% of the Job Club sample obtained jobs vs 59.1 of the Control sample in the 12 month follow-up and 80 vs 48% at 6 months. The Job Club was more effective in each of the five cities, for men and women, for high school graduates or dropouts, for blacks, whites, and Spanish, for handicapped or nonhandicapped, veterans or nonveterans, the young and the older, and for those required to participate as well as those who volunteered. The jobs obtained by the Job Club clients were comparable to the Control clients' jobs in terms of mean salary, full-time status, and type of job, and were more likely to be enduring, nonsubsidized, and obtained by the job-seeker's own efforts. Job Club members obtained employment in a median of six sessions (mean of 11); 90% obtained jobs within 23 sessions. Follow-up questionnaire data indicated comparable job retention in the two samples but slightly greater advancement and job satisfaction for the Job Club clients. The method appears to assure employment to virtually all participating welfare clients.

The Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) Program of the U.S. Government is the principal welfare agency for providing support for the dependents of unemployed persons and included 3.5 million families in 1977 (Dept. of Labor, 1978) and paid about 10 billion dollars, one of the largest welfare programs in this country. Some of these welfare recipients are judged unable to work because of such reasons as a medical impairment, or the need to care for their preschool children. Otherwise, they

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must register for the WIN (Work Incentive) program which attempts to find employment for them by counseling them regarding job-seeking and employment, subsidizing their training as students in a new vocation, and very recently by subsidizing their employment by the CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) program. In 1976 2,117,000 persons were enrolled in the WIN job-placement program (Dept. of Labor, 1977) and 1,541,000 in 1977 (Dept. of Labor, 1978). The WIN program may include an IMS (Intensive Manpower Service) program designed to provide intensive job-seeking assistance. The specific details of this IMS counseling were usually left unspecified except for such details as providing \$1.50 per session plus transportation expenses.

The need in the IMS component of the WIN program for an effective job-finding program was one example of the general societal need. Yet, as noted earlier (Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975), virtually no controlled research with an adequate control group has demonstrated the effectiveness of any standardized job-finding assistance program in spite of the large variety of existing programs. One such controlled evaluation (McClure, 1972) provided few procedural details and an apparently nonstandardized format, but nevertheless stands almost alone in its use of a statistically comparable control group.

One type of job-seeking program, the Job Club method (Azrin et al., 1975), which is standardized, has been shown to be effective in a controlled experimental evaluation. The method is based on a behavioral analysis of job-seeking as a social interaction (Jones & Azrin, 1973) in which obtaining job lead information is the initial response of a chain of behaviors. The method utilizes motivational procedures, materials, facilities, and intensive daily instruction of a small group of job-seekers. In the initial evaluation of the Job Club with a sample of general job-seekers (Azrin et al., 1975), 93% obtained full-time employment within three months vs. 60% for randomly assigned job-seekers not utilizing the method. Jobs were obtained more quickly by the Job Club clients and paid a higher median salary. A second evaluation of the Job Club method (Azrin & Philip, in press) counselled only clients with severe job-finding handicaps such as persons having physical disabilities, mental problems, police or prison record, alcohol or drug problems, former mental hospital patients, and welfare recipients, almost all of whom were clients of other helping agencies. The 154 handicapped clients were randomly assigned either to the Job Club method or to a fairly standard type of counseling involving lectures, discussion, and role-playing. The 6-month follow-up showed that 95% of the Job Club clients obtained jobs vs 28% of the comparison group and their jobs had a higher median salary, were obtained sooner, and generally were retained as well as the jobs of the Control clients.

The encouraging results obtained with the Job Club method indicated

that the Job Club might serve as the suitable standardized method of counseling job-seekers needed for the IMS job-search program for the AFDC welfare clients. A proposal was made to the U. S. Department of Labor to establish a test program in several cities and provide a controlled experimental comparison with the existing WIN Agency Program in each city. The present report briefly describes the study which has been only recently completed and is described in greater detail in the report to the Labor Department (Azrin, Philip, Thienes-Hontos, & Besalel, 1978).

METHOD

Study period and location. One WIN office was selected by the Department of Labor in each of the following five cities: Harlem, New York; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Tacoma, Washington; Wichita, Kansas; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The program was initiated in these cities in the sequence indicated above from October 1976 for Harlem to October 1977 for Milwaukee. The national unemployment rate was unusually high during that period, 6.6-7.4%, and the unemployment rates for four of the cities were above the national level, 15% for Harlem, 9.6% for New Brunswick, 9% for Tacoma, and 6.9% for Milwaukee. Wichita had a lower than average unemployment rate of 4.6%.

Subjects. Nine hundred seventy-nine clients were blindly selected by their Social Security number and randomly assigned to either the Job Club or the existing counseling program at each site (Control group). Because of the sequence in which the different sites were initiated and the varying client availability at each site, the number of clients counseled at each site varied at the time of this report: 211 clients for Harlem; 227 for New Brunswick; 265 for Tacoma; 176 for Wichita; and 100 for Milwaukee. Of the total sample, 54% were female, 48% had not completed high school, 35% were blacks, 15% were Spanish, 22% were veterans, 11% were handicapped, 17% were not required to participate in the WIN job-search (voluntary), 10% were 21 years of age or less, 18% were over 45 years, the mean age being 35, with a median of three dependents. The Job Club and Control samples were not significantly different according to statistical analysis for any of the above demographic dimensions except for a greater percentage of Spanish clients in the Control condition than in the Job Club (18 vs 11%).

The initial pool from which clients were selected varied across sites. One site, considered only "job-ready" clients formally designated for an intensive job-search program (IMS Component); one site included all WIN clients; and three sites included all clients except those designated for formal education, counseling, or on-the-job training.

Counselor selection and training. One counselor served as the Job Club leader in each city, that person being an existing staff member selected by that agency. Two were men, three were women, and one was black

(Harlem site). The first Job Club group was specified beforehand as a counselor training group, the data for which were not intended or used in the outcome analysis. The agency counselor was responsible for all clients thereafter and was observed by the experimenter for the first few sessions of each of the initial groups in order to assure general adherence to the program, but phasing out entirely by the later groups.

Data retrieval. Information regarding client characteristics and job status was based on the data routinely maintained by the agency so that the present results would be more meaningful to the agency. An apparently random omission occurred of demographic data regarding sex, race, disability status, etc. for individual clients, this omission being less than 1% for most categories. A questionnaire was sent to the clients in two sites to obtain an independent estimate of employment status as well as data regarding job satisfaction and pay raises.

Job Club program. A description of the Job Club program has been given in previous studies (Azrin et al., 1975; Azrin & Philip, in press; Azrin, Philip, Thienes-Hontos, & Besalel, 1978) and in a recent guide to the job-seeker and counselor (Azrin & Besalel, in 1980). Therefore, only a brief description is given here. The clients met in a group of about 10 clients each day, in a structured meeting supervised by a counselor using a "lesson-plan" schedule of daily activities. A new group was started about every 2 weeks. Half a day was used in obtaining job leads and interviews in the office; the other half day was spent in going out to these interviews. The counselor closely observed and supervised as the client was engaged in obtaining leads from the telephone directory (yellow pages), examining want ads, calling employers and friends, and writing letters. The emphasis was on the yellow pages, friends, present and past Job Club members, and former employers as sources of job leads. The counseling used standardized and prepared scripts, self-recording guides, charts, and reminder forms for the activities of the client and counselor.

Control method. The clients in the Control group received the usual type of job counseling and services provided by their agency and could include direct referral to agency listings, counseling for job-seeking or special problems, vocational evaluation, subsidized job placement, and job development. These services were often provided by several staff members for a specific client unlike the Job Club clients who were served exclusively by the Job Club leader.

Follow-up duration. Since the five sites were initiated successively over a one year period, the duration of follow-up data available at the time of this writing varied for different clients and sites. Measured from the starting date of counseling, a 3-month follow-up was available for 860 clients, 6 months for 574 clients, 9 months for 266 clients, and 12 months for 138 clients. (A subsequent report is planned which should include a 6-month follow-up for all sites.)

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the job-finding success of the Job Club and the Control clients. The data is based on the entire sample for which data was available at all sites and regardless of the follow-up duration available. Job-finding success is also presented separately for several demographic variables relevant to employability. Job-finding success was defined by the WIN criterion of a job held for at least 30 days, either part-time or full-time.

For the overall sample, 33% of the Control clients obtained a job vs 62% of the Job Club clients. Greater success of the Job Club clients was seen for all of the job-relevant demographic variables: men or women, high school graduates or dropouts, black or whites or Spanish, all age brackets, each of the five sites, the handicapped, veterans, and mandatory or voluntary enrollees. Two by two ² tests showed a greater proportion of

TABLE 1
Job-finding Success of the Job Club and Control Sample for Several Job-relevant Client Characteristics*

	Job club clients			Control clients		
	N of clients	N of jobs	Percentage of job success	N of clients	N of jobs	Percentage of job success
All clients*	487	300	62	490	163	33
Men*	215	146	68	229	73	32
Women*	266	154	58	260	90	35
Completed high school*	254	170	57	247	76	31
Did not complete high school*	224	128	43	234	86	37
Blacks*	168	99	59	170	54	32
Whites*	291	188	65	197	102	34
Spanish	53	31	60	79	36	46
Other (Oriental* and Indian)	19	12	63	22	7	32
Mandatory (WIN)*	388	260	67	363	135	37
Volunteers (WIN)*	74	28	38	80	17	21
Veterans*	88	59	67	93	35	38
Handicapped*	19	14	74	26	10	38
Selected age brackets						
21 years and under*	46	22	48	48	12	25
22 to 44 years*	350	226	65	339	109	32
45 years and older*	80	48	60	95	40	42

*Only jobs lasting at least 30 days are included. Follow-up varied from 1 to 17 months.
*p < .05.

successful Job Club clients for each of the subgroups ($p < .05$) except for the Spanish clients. For both programs, 89% of the jobs were full-time, i.e., 20 hr or more per week. The occupational category of the jobs were about the same: 4% of the Job Club jobs were professional-managerial vs 3% for the Control jobs. Similarly, the Job Club jobs paid as well as those of the Control jobs: a mean starting salary of \$137 per week (median \$120).

The two programs differed in that 21% of the Control jobs were temporary vs only 10% of the Job Club jobs ($p < .05$). These temporary jobs had not been included in Table 1. The jobs obtained by the Control clients were more likely ($p < .05$) to have resulted from a job lead supplied by the WIN agency listing, 14%, than the jobs obtained by the Job Club clients, 8%. Also, 25% of the jobs of the Control clients were subsidized vs 16% for the Job Club jobs.

The above results included all clients initially selected for inclusion in the two counseling programs, but not all participated. In the Job Club program, for example, 19% of the clients were "no shows," failing to attend even the intake session. Similarly, 10% of the Job Club clients reported that they were working prior to the date of their first scheduled session vs 5% of the Control clients on the equivalent date, the clients in both programs having been selected at the same time. These clients did not participate further, of course. The WIN program permitted clients to be "exempt" from required participation in WIN for many authorized reasons such as medical disability, having preschool children at home, lack of child-care facilities if children were at home, or lack of reasonable transportation to the WIN office, and yet to continue receiving AFDC welfare payments. Except for such cases of authorized "exemption," nonparticipation was often accompanied by procedures known as "sanctions" for terminating the client's AFDC welfare status. Clients also could lose their AFDC welfare status when their dependent children achieved adulthood and, of course, when they obtained satisfactory employment. The data were examined to ascertain the extent and basis for this nonparticipation by analyzing the number of jobless clients "deregistered" (terminated) from the WIN job-seeking program. Seven percent (7%) were excused because they were formally exempted, this percentage being the same for both programs. Another 7% of the clients received sanctions for nonparticipation, the percentage being slightly higher for the Controls (8 vs 6%). In all, 31% of the Controls and 22% of the Job Club clients did not attend, or discontinued attendance, without having found a job. In addition to the formal deregistration, the Job Club records showed that 5% of the clients were informally excused from attendance because of such reasons as temporary medical problems, or lack of child-care, etc.

A more valid evaluation of the two programs would be to consider the job-finding success only for those clients who were not deregistered, i.e.,

who continued to be formally enrolled in the WIN program. Eighty percent of these continuing Job Club clients obtained jobs vs 46% of the Controls, the percentage of successful continuing clients in the Job Club being as high as 93% in Tacoma and 86% in Harlem, but only 37% for Milwaukee, probably because of the very short follow-up at that site.

Figure 1 shows the job-finding success for the continuing clients at various follow-up durations to control for the above-noted variations in duration. At all follow-up durations, a greater percentage of Job Club clients obtained jobs. At 12 months follow-up, 87% of the Job Club clients obtained jobs vs 59% of the Controls.

Even if clients were formally registered in the WIN program, they might have attended the sessions irregularly, or been excused informally from any attendance requirement. Figure 2 shows the relationship between Job Club session attendance and job-finding. Data regarding session attendance was not available for the Control clients. Job-finding success continued to increase for as long as the clients continued attending the sessions. Ninety percent of the clients obtained jobs by the 23rd session. The maximum number attended, by one client, was 35 sessions, by which number 95% of the clients had obtained jobs. The median number of sessions was 6 (50% point in Fig. 2), and the mean number was 11 sessions.

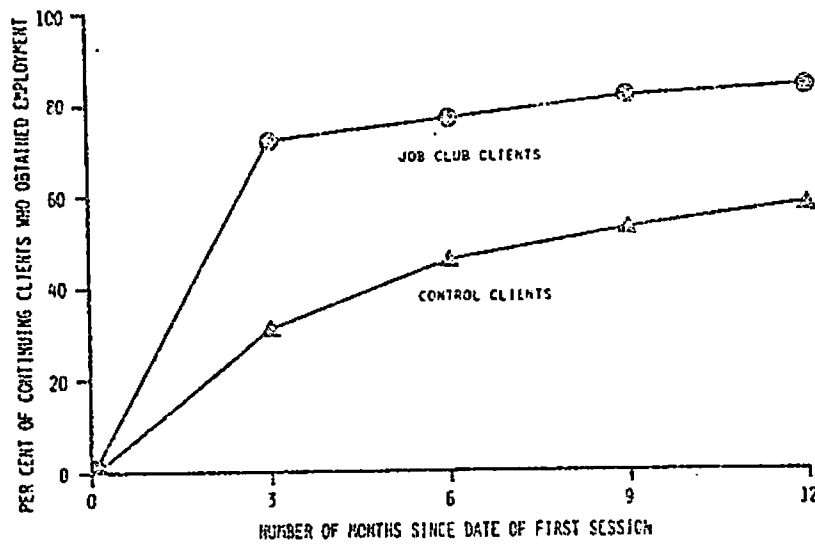


FIG. 1. Comparison of the job-finding success of the continuing clients in the Job Club and Control samples at various time periods since the date of the first session. Each data point is based on clients who had been enrolled in the WIN program for the designated time period and designates the percentage of those clients who obtained employment on or before the specified date. The 3-month point is based on 648 clients, the 6 months on 216 clients, 9 months on 185 clients, and 12 months on 108 clients.

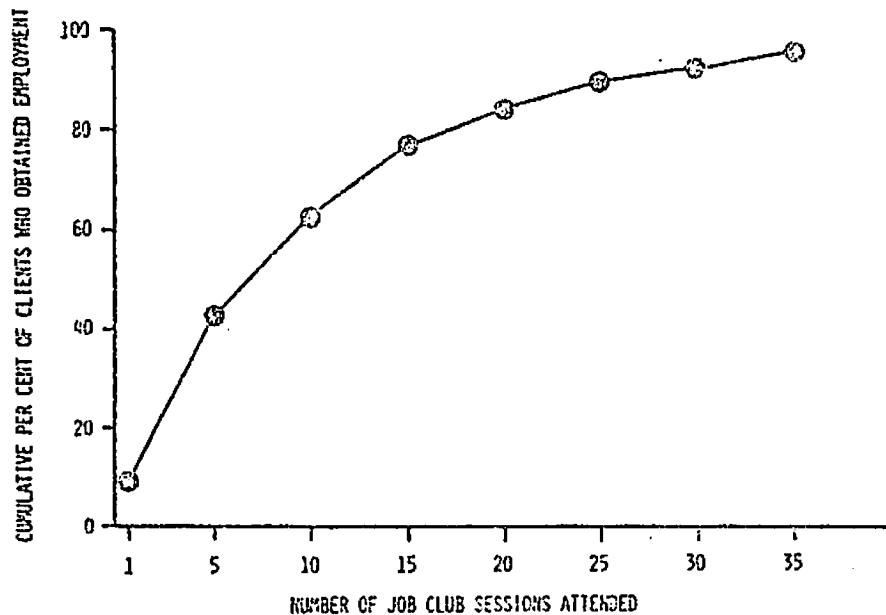


FIG. 2. The relationship between session attendance and job-finding success by the Job Club clients. Each datum point designates the number of clients who obtained employment by the specified number of sessions expressed as a percentage of the clients who attended at least that number of sessions or found a job after fewer sessions. Sessions were scheduled each weekday.

Questionnaire data. The questionnaire mailed to the client in two sites was returned by 24% of the clients, a return rate low enough to make general conclusions based solely on the questionnaire somewhat hazardous. Yet, the results can serve as corollary data regarding conclusions supported by the other data. Fifty-seven percent of the Job Club clients vs 27% of the Controls reported they were working after 3 months and 62% vs 28% after 6 months. For those clients who had obtained a job, about the same percentage of Job Club clients reported a pay raise after 3 months as did Control clients (20 vs 19%); but after 6 months, 30% of the Job Club clients reported a raise vs 23% of the Controls. Slightly more Job Club clients reported that they were "satisfied" with their jobs than did the Control clients (84 vs 78%).

Costs. The cost of the Job Club was tabulated from actual expenditures at the three sites where the client load was great enough for the counselor to be assigned full-time to the Job Club. The cost per placement was \$54, including all supplies and services such as the phones, photocopying, newspaper subscriptions, refreshments, postage and office supplies, and the standard WIN payment to clients of \$1.50 per session. Including the salaries of the full-time counselor and one-eighth time typist, the cost per placement was \$167. Stated in program terms, the cost of the Job Club

was \$7100 per year for supplies and services and \$22,000 per year if the salaries were included with 252 new clients served per year. The above costs do not include the cost of office rental or furniture.

DISCUSSION

The Job Club was more effective than the alternative methods in obtaining jobs for every dimension measured of the job-seeking context. Job Club clients were more successful in each of the five cities, at all follow-up durations up to 12 months, in high and low unemployment locales, and for each subgroup of clients such as high school dropouts or graduates, blacks or whites, men or women, handicapped or nonhandicapped, Spanish or non-Spanish, young or old, and volunteer participants as well as mandatory participants. These results extend the findings of the two previous Job Club evaluations which also found greater effectiveness but with voluntary participants, and in the one locale that was a small college town in Southern Illinois.

The Job Club clients seemed to maintain, as well as obtain, jobs to a greater extent than did the Control clients. A slightly greater percentage of Job Club jobs lasted at least 30 days than did Control jobs, and at the questionnaire follow-up, more Job Club clients were working than were the Control clients.

The quality of the jobs in the Job Club seemed as great, or greater, than the Control jobs. The starting salaries were equal and the same proportion were professional or managerial and of full-time status. More Job Club employees reported being satisfied with their job and having received a pay raise after 6 months, and a smaller proportion were subsidized.

The results indicate that virtually all welfare clients who participated actively in the Job Club program were successful in obtaining employment. For example, when the analysis included those who continued to be registered for the program, the two sites with the longest follow-up had success rates of 93 and 86%, respectively.

Actual attendance at the sessions appears to be the most meaningful dimension for specifying whether a client was an actual and active participant. The results were that 95% of those who attended for 35 sessions were successful, and 90% for 23 sessions attended. One might speculate that the Control clients would have been similarly successful under such special analysis, but the results suggest otherwise. For example, only 50% of continuing Control clients were successful by the 12-month follow-up vs 87% of the corresponding Job Club clients. Accordingly, the results suggest that virtually all welfare clients who continue their required participation in the Job Club will be successful and to an extent substantially greater than the success achieved by continuing clients in other programs.

Since the job status data was not complete, one should consider what effect these omissions could have regarding the observed differences

between programs. The job status data were obtained primarily from the WIN agency records which were very complete so long as the clients were registered with only 3% omission. When clients were deregistered without having a job, the data was not normally maintained. The difference in deregistrations between the two programs was found to be 9% (31% for Controls vs 22% for Job Club), which is less than one-third the observed difference in job status found between the two programs and, therefore, cannot account for the greater success of the Job Club. Also, the questionnaire data which was not based on WIN agency records and did include deregistered clients, showed a superiority of the Job Club comparable to the agency data.

The results obtained here and in the previous Job Club studies may be more meaningful if expressed in terms of the more usual designation of rate of unemployment rather than of employment. In the present study, with welfare clients, the "unemployment rate" was 13% for the Job Club program after 12 months vs 41% for the Control program. Similarly, in Azrin et al. (1975) the unemployment rate was 7 vs 40% after 3 months; and in Azrin and Philip (in press), the unemployment rate after 6 months was 5% for the Job Club vs 62% for the comparison program. In these three studies the Job Club clients had unemployment rates of about one-third, one-sixth, and one-tenth, respectively, of the Control clients.

The results indicate that the Job Club program is feasible and applicable in a variety of settings. The cities selected were in diverse parts of the country and were selected by the Labor Department, not by the experimenters. One was a ghetto area of substantial unemployment (Harlem) whereas another (Wichita) was predominantly white and had below average unemployment. The counselors were selected primarily by the agency, not by the experimenters, and had no previous familiarity with the Job Club methods. All appeared very capable of conducting the Job Club in the positive and supportive style required, except for one counselor who seemed to have great difficulty in reinforcing the clients for their every effort and relied excessively instead on instructions and criticism. This incidental observation suggests that additional training for counselors might be desirable.

The Job Club method appears to be fairly economical relative to the alternatives. Subsidized employment such as in the CETA program and tax benefit programs to employers require several thousands, or tens of thousands, of dollars per client as does also a vocational training program. Supplementary professional testing and counseling services require professional persons whereas the Job Club program did not require these services. The actual costs of the program were \$167 per placement, including salaries, which is a small fraction of the costs for the alternative programs.

The success of the Job Club program has been evidenced by its continuing utilization and expansion in some of the states where it was tested. In addition, the WIN program has recently initiated steps for extensive adoption of this type of program in WIN agencies (personal communication).

A great concern at the start of this study was that the required daily attendance might lead to great resistance and hardship of the clients. An objective indicator of such resistance was the need for "sanctions," the method of disqualifying clients for nonattendance. The results showed that such concerns were apparently groundless: sanctions were in fact initiated for a slightly smaller proportion of the Job Club clients than for the Control clients (6 vs 8%). In general, the clients seemed to accept the legitimacy of daily attendance requirement, after a few sessions, as a condition for the welfare payments, although some did object initially, largely it seemed because of their knowledge that other clients had no such requirement. Similarly, an initial concern was that second- or third-generation welfare clients would be unable and unmotivated to obtain employment. Again, this expectation was fairly groundless in that almost all clients, even in the ghetto community of Harlem, obtained employment. Apparently, the clients had the potential for employment but had lacked the continuing assistance necessary to maintain a job-search.

Of the Job Club clients who were initially selected, 10% reported that they had been working prior to the first session vs 5% of the Control clients on the corresponding date. Such employment should have been reported by the client. This greater "discovery" of the Job Club clients' employment may be attributable to the incompatibility of maintaining employment while attending the Job Club sessions every day. If so, the Job Club program provides greater assurance that the welfare recipients are not concurrently maintaining unreported full-time employment. Similarly, the attendance requirement by all welfare agencies would preclude unauthorized aid from more than one agency.

To what extent can the present method be considered a general solution to the problem of welfare? Certainly upper limits to its success are imposed by the state of the economy and by deficiencies of the job-seekers, but such obstacles may well have been overemphasized. The previous study with job-handicapped clients (Azrin & Philip, in press) found that 95% of such clients were successful and the present finding of about 90% success in Harlem with a 15% unemployment rate indicates that both obstacles can be overcome. Many of the AFDC clients were excused from the job-search requirement inherent in the WIN program because of factors which seemed to preclude employment, such as medical or psychological problem, transportation problem, and inadequate child-care facilities. To what extent might the Job Club program be

applicable to all welfare recipients, including those exempted under current regulations? The present results showed that the Job Club was about twice as effective as the Control procedure in obtaining employment for the "voluntary" clients who did have this formal basis for exemption. Similarly, the previous study with job-handicapped clients (Azrin & Philip, in press) found that jobs were obtained for 95% of the clients who were handicapped because of physical, emotional, and other reasons. These two findings support the conclusion that all persons might well be considered employable, given that they are provided the means, such as transportation and child-care, of participating in the Job Club. This view suggests that all persons, except those having extreme disabilities such as being bedridden or severely retarded or psychotic, are employable and might reasonably be required to engage in the Job Club intensive-type of job-search as a condition for receiving unemployment or welfare benefits. Perhaps the job-finding difficulty has been with the nature of the job-finding assistance offered and not with the job-seeker. If so, a remedy for the welfare problem would be to intensify the job-finding assistance, transportation and child-care programs and to discontinue the characterization of persons as disabled or not job-ready and requiring subsidized positions, tax exemption programs, or indefinite welfare.

Perhaps the present method achieved success for its clients at the expense of other clients competing for the same positions. Only large scale application can provide definitive evidence but some evidence exists that this "displacement" perspective is not entirely valid. In Jones and Azrin (1973), it was found that only 45% of the jobs held by the respondents had been publicly advertised; similarly, the present results showed that the Job Club clients relied only slightly on agency-supplied listings. Rather, many of the jobs seemed to have been created, or made available sooner by the intensive job-search. Even if no jobs were available locally, the present method assisted clients in relocating to areas where positions were not being filled even in the present period of extensive employment.

Although the present method did not utilize existing types of assistance such as subsidizing positions (as in CETA or tax benefits to employers), these expensive programs might usefully be combined with the Job Club method in future applications. Since funds are never sufficient to provide such subsidization for all job-seekers, a reasonable plan might be to make the subsidized positions available only to those job-seekers who have attended a specified number of sessions without success. This type of strategy would provide intensive assistance to all job-seekers in obtaining employment largely by their own efforts, but systematically provide such additional assistance as subsidies, tax exemptions, job development, general psychological counseling, testing, etc. to those who have been unsuccessful and evidenced genuine need of such services.

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