

THE IDENTIFICATION AND COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES-  
TOWARD-EDUCATION BY ADULT BASIC EDUCATION  
STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND (ABE)  
ADMINISTRATORS

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MISSISSIPPI MODULE  
(FINAL REPORT)

APPALACHIAN ADULT BASIC  
EDUCATION DEMONSTRATION CENTER

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

The present Mississippi Module of the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center was officially funded in March, 1969, for the period of time, February 1 to August 15, 1969. The original proposal, plus the two addendums, are presented below so that the reader will be able to discern the basis upon which the need for the project was founded, the project objectives, and the plan of operation for reaching the stated objectives.

(ORIGINAL PROPOSAL)

The Mississippi Module proposal to the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center was submitted in May, 1968. The module was developed as a result of much concern about the high drop-out rate of Adult Basic Education students in Mississippi. With this problem as a basis, the proposed study was based upon the belief that if the "holding power" of ABE teachers (defined as retention rate of students) could be improved, the overall achievement level of the target population could be increased. The study was based upon the following assumptions which were derived from related studies and past experiences of authorities in the field of adult education:

1. Relevant differences exist between the training experiences of elementary and secondary teachers, and these are related to ABE "holding power".
2. The number of years of experience in teaching is a factor. More specifically, the number of years of relevant experience is a factor in increasing a teacher's ABE "holding power".
3. The amount of teaching experience with adults will have a definite impact upon the effectiveness of an ABE teacher.
4. Specialized training in adult education improves the ABE teacher's effectiveness (holding power).

(PLANNING PHASE)

The module was divided into two major phases--a pre-operational or planning phase, and an operational phase. The planning phase was designed to test the assumptions stated above. This procedure would also determine the direction to be taken by the operational phase of the module.

The planning phase was conducted from June through September, 1968, with the final report being submitted in October, 1968. Teachers considered in this study were those whose records contained completed forms of both the personal questionnaire forms and the individual class progress records. On the basis of the findings in the planning phase of the study, it was concluded that:

More sensitive instruments are needed in order to determine the differences between high and low retention ABE teachers. Presently used record-keeping procedures are not adequate to provide the identification of assumed differences.

Until more carefully designed and sophisticated studies are undertaken, it was concluded that:

Differences between high retention and low retention teachers based upon educational background, professional experience, adult education training, and related phenomena do not exist. Although definite trends were identified, the anticipated significant differences were not forthcoming in this phase of the investigative study.

#### (OPERATIONAL PHASE)

A tentative outline of the operational phase of the Mississippi module was prepared before the initiation of the planning phase. The outline was based upon anticipated outcomes of the planning phase, outcomes which were related to the assumptions underlying that part of the study.

However, the conclusions of the planning phase had the following implications for further study:

1. There is a need for the testing and/or development of more sensitive instruments to identify significant differences between high and low retention teachers;
2. Differences between high and low retention teachers may not be determined through the study of cognitive data alone;
3. Some consideration should be given to influences which ABE students may have upon high or low retention by teachers.

(MODULE ADDENDUM I)

After the final report of the planning phase had been completed, an addendum to the Mississippi Module was prepared and submitted to the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center. The addendum presented the new direction which the operational phase of the module would take, as follows:

Phase I

The purpose of Phase I was to survey and determine attitudes of ABE students which contribute to the success or failure of their ability to fulfill (1) their personal goals, and (2) goals of the ABE program.

It was felt that any disparity which existed between ABE teachers' conceptions of their students' attitudes and the students' attitudes themselves would contribute to low retention of students in the learning situation. Identification and elimination of this disparity would be essential to the increasing of a teachers' retention power of students.

However, preliminary work in this area of attitude identification and assessment caused the investigators to submit a second addendum to the project proposal before the project was initially approved by the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center. This second addendum is found on the following pages.

(MODULE ADDENDUM II)

The Identification and Comparison of Attitudes Toward  
Education by Adult Basic Education Students,  
Teachers and (ABE) Administrators

The objectives of this project are:

1. To develop a procedure for measuring attitudes toward education by students in Adult Basic Education.
2. To determine attitudes-toward-education by Adult Basic Education teachers, students, and dropouts. Special emphasis will be given to identification of attitude patterns.
3. To develop curriculum content, based upon attitudes and attitude patterns identified, for the training of ABE teachers.

Because of the nature of the project, two phases will be planned and implemented.

(Phase I)

The procedures for Phase I are as follows:

- a. Review of relevant research and literature pertaining to identification and determination of attitudes.
- b. Selection of procedures or instruments (semantic differential, etc.) to be developed and tested. This activity will possibly include a vocabulary test to determine word changes or revisions needed in instrumentation.
- c. Identification of population sample.
- d. Selection and training of personnel to administer the instruments. Personnel selected will be familiar with the population sample and ABE programs.
- e. Initial revision or development and testing of instrument(s).
- f. Analysis of data.
- g. Further revision and testing as needed (to be determined by project staff).
- h. Analysis of data.

- i. Report of results.
- j. Utilize appropriate information as a basis for planning and implementing Phase II of the project.

(Phase II)

Phase II will be devoted to determining existing differences in attitudes toward education by participants in Adult Basic Education. Particular emphasis will be given to identifying differences between (1) administrators and teachers, (2) teachers and students, (3) teachers and dropouts, and (4) students and dropouts.

Phase II will be deferred until completion of Phase I in order that the procedure(s) developed in Phase I may be utilized. It is hoped that the combined information obtained from the two concurrent phases can be utilized in teacher training in Adult Basic Education to help teachers eliminate the disparity which may exist between their own feelings and attitudes and those of their students. Such procedures should strengthen recruitment and retention in Adult Basic Education programs not only in Appalachian regions, but throughout the country as well.

Calendar:

Phase I: February 1, 1969 to August 15, 1969

(a) Interim report due - May 31, 1969

(b) Final report due - August 15, 1969

Phase II: September 2, 1969 to May 31, 1970

METHODOLOGY

A. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

In the review of research and literature related to this study, the following categories were devised: (1) vocabulary of the semi-literate, (2) vocabulary measurement, (3) attitudes of ABE students toward education, and (4) attitudes of ABE teachers and administrators.

Vocabulary of the semi-literate. In developing procedures or instruments for measuring attitudes, the range and limitations of the vocabulary of the semi-literate must be kept in mind. A number of studies regarding the language patterns and the dialect of Negro children were reviewed:

Baratz, Joan C., "Linguistic and Cultural Factors in Teaching Reading to Ghetto Children," Elementary English, February 1969.

Bereiter, Carl and Engelmann, Siegfried, Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool. 1966.

Ecroyd, Donald H., "Negro Children and Language Arts," Reading Teacher, 1968, 21, 624-629.

Botel, Morton, A Comparative Study of the Validity of the Botel Reading Inventory and Selected Standardized Tests. 1968.

Entwisle, Doris R. and Greenberger, Ellen, Differences in the Language of Negro and White Grade School Children 1, 2. 1968. Johns Hopkins University.

Goodman, K. S., "Dialect Barriers to Reading Comprehension," Elementary English, 1965, v. 42, 853-860.

Shuy, Roger W., Social Dialects and Language Learning, National Council of Teachers of English, 1964.

Stolz, W. S., Final Report on Head Start Evaluation and Research -- 1966-67 to the Institute for Educational Development. Section V. The Role of Dialect in the School. 1967. Texas University.

While these and many other similar studies give information useful to those who teach reading and English to disadvantaged students, they do not give a vocabulary word list, per se, of the semi-literate. Two other studies offer some help in this project: (1) "The Functional Reading



Word List for Adults," developed by M. Adele Mitzel (Adult Education Journal, 1966, 16, 67-68) attempts to identify 5000 basic words an adult needs to know; and (2) The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee (Williamson, Juanita V., USOE Contract No. 0E-6-10-207), primarily a study of grammatical structure, gives a very abbreviated list of adjectives, adverbs, and other words used by Negro students.

Vocabulary Measurement. In the absence of a vocabulary inventory of the semi-literate adult, the area of vocabulary measurement was canvassed. Recent literature regarding vocabulary measurement revealed no studies directed toward the adult semi-literate. Several studies relating to vocabulary tests were reviewed:

Berwick, Mildred, "The Semantic Method for Testing Vocabulary," Journal of Experimental Education, 1959, 28, 125-140.

Buros, Oscar. The Fifth Mental Measurements Yearbook, Graphon Press: New Jersey, 1959.

Dunn, Charleta, "The Characteristics and the Measured Language Art Abilities of Deprived Youth in the School Desegregation Institute," Elementary English, March 1969, 266-72.

Froelich, M., et al., "Success for Disadvantaged Children," Reading Teacher, 1967, 21, 24-33.

Kirby, Clara L., Using the Cloze Procedure as a Testing Technique, 1968, Northern Illinois University.

LaPray, Margaret and Ramon Ross, "The Graded Word List: Quick Gauge of Reading Ability," Journal of Reading, 1969, 12, 305-307.

Loban, W., Language Ability: Grades 7,8,9.

Monsees, Edna K., and Berman, Carol, "Speech and Language Screening in a Summer Headstart Program," Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 1968, 33, 121-26.

Schell, Leo M., "Informal Reading Skills Inventories," Education, 1968, 89, 117-20.

Sherman, Dorothy and Silverman, Franklin H., "Three Psychological Scaling Methods Applied to Language Development," Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 1968, 11, 837-41

The LaPray-Ross "Graded Word List . . ." technique was selected as a guide for developing a vocabulary measure as a preliminary step in developing

instrumentation for measuring attitudes.

Attitudes of Adult Basic Education Students Toward Education. Again, it was found that studies dealing with adult basic education students are limited, but much work has been done with disadvantaged children. Of particular interest were studies using the semantic differential technique and pictorial techniques for measuring attitudes.

Two studies using the semantic differential technique consisting of school-related concepts are:

Greenberg, Judith W., et al., "Attitudes of Children From a Deprived Environment Toward Achievement-Related Concepts," Journal of Educational Research, 1965, 59, 57-62.

Neale, D. C. and Proshek, J. M., "School-Related Attitudes of Culturally Disadvantaged Elementary School Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, 1967, 58, 238-44.

Pictorial attitude measurement studies being examined are:

Olsen, LeRoy C., Development and Standardization of a Projective Occupational Attitude Test, 1966, Washington State University.

\_\_\_\_\_, Development of a Projective Technique for Obtaining Educationally Useful Information Indicating Pupils' Attitudes Toward Work and Occupational Plans. Report No. 21. Final Report. 1968.

Karon, B. P.- "Chapter 4 - The Picture Arrangement Test" in The Negro Personality, 1958, Springer Publishing Co.

Tomkins, S. S., "The Picture Arrangement Test," Trans. N. Y. Academy of Sciences, Series II, 1952, 15, 46-50.

Numerous other studies have been investigated but are not included in this review. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the limited amount of research available to those who are actively involved in Adult Basic Education.

## B. INSTRUMENTATION

### Selection of Instruments

The project staff members realized that the unique characteristics (illiterate or functional illiterate, etc.) of the population to be sampled and tested required instruments which would be adaptable to this kind of learning situation. Pencil-and-paper tests or questionnaires, commonly used in these kinds of studies, were not applicable, and personal interviews were not feasible due to the limitations of time and money. Therefore, instruments were needed through which responses could be acquired from groups of students who were non-readers or who had limited reading ability. With this in mind, efforts were made to identify and select appropriate data-gathering instruments for this study.

#### Semantic Differential Technique

The semantic differential technique was investigated because it seemed to possess the characteristics needed by an instrument which could be utilized in this study. In the past, this technique has been used to measure attitudes of children from a deprived environment toward achievement related concepts (1), to examine the semantic distance between students and teachers and its effect upon learning (6), to identify school-related attitudes of culturally disadvantaged elementary school children (2) and to investigate the relationship between the self-acceptance of teachers and their acceptance of their students (5).

The semantic differential cannot be referred to as a kind of test or scale, having a set of items. It is a highly generalizable technique of measurement which must be adapted to the requirement of each research problem to which it is applied. The concepts and bipolar scales used in a study depend upon the purposes of the research (4).

Although this technique seemed applicable to this study, a pre-test of the instrument was conducted to determine if ABE students could respond to this type

of instrument, what kinds of concepts are most meaningful to these respondents, and how reliable this technique would be in this type of learning situation.

The pre-test was conducted in the following manner:

1. Concept Selection:

For this initial thrust the staff decided to attempt to determine the reliability of selected Scales when used to describe certain concepts. These concepts were chosen to be (1) related to the school and to the school environment, and (2) to avoid controversy or undue distress. Five concepts were selected. They were: (1) Television, (2) School, (3) Education, (4) Reading, and (5) Myself.

2. Scale Selection:

The scales were selected from those recommended by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (4). These authors, who developed this technique, advocated the use of certain kinds of bipolar scales in order to yield specific kinds of information. To assess attitudes, the use of evaluative scales, e.g., good-bad, worthless-valuable, awful-nice, fair-unfair, etc., is essential, but the use of other scales is also advised in order to increase the possibility of acquiring meaningful data while to some extent, obscure the purpose of the instrument.

Ten bipolar scales were selected for this study. They were: (1) Unfair/Fair, (2) Awful/Nice, (3) Fast/Slow, (4) Worthless/Valuable, (5) Hard/Soft, (6) Good/Bad, (7) Cold/Hot, (8) Small/Large, (9) Sharp/Dull, and (10) Strong/Weak. Using a random procedure, the ten scales were assigned positions in relation to the concepts. The direction of the scales was also determined in a random fashion to eliminate a tendency to have scales always presented in a positive direction.

3. Booklet Construction:

Since two booklets were required in the test-retest design, the order of presentation of concepts was random within each booklet. Booklet 1 presented Television, School, Education, Reading, Myself in that order. In the second booklet Education was first, followed by Myself, Television, Reading, and School.

4. Test Administration:

The subjects of this reliability study were twenty-eight persons at one attendance center. There were five people at ABE Level I. There were eight people at Level II. And there were fifteen people at Level III. Three classrooms were utilized for the administration, and one administrator and one proctor to each classroom. Booklet 1 was presented first, and the test administrator read the instructions aloud while illustrating each page with an overhead projector. He proceeded in turn from concept to concept reading each scale in turn and indicating the method of response. The proctor circulated throughout the room during the testing period to provide assistance if needed and to make certain students were scoring the correct concept.

5. Analysis of Data

The analysis was simple correlation between first and second administration, and these results appear in Table 1. These are Pearson Product-Moment correlations based on twenty-eight subjects.

TABLE 1. - Test-Retest Correlation of the Semantic Differential Technique  
Pre-Test with ABE Students

Test-Retest Correlation	T.V.	School	Education	Reading	Myself
Unfair/Fair	.1068	.0364	.2165	.0240	.6725
Awful/Nice	.3096	.6527	.5185	.1839	.2582
Fast/Slow	.1091	.0114	.5371	.4182	.5602
Worthless/Valuable	.8769	-.0580	-.0572	.7456	.6212
Hard/Soft	.3124	.3866	.1147	.7372	.1166
Good/Bad	.3220	.0993	-.0374	.7812	.3082
Cold/Hot	.3867	.7770	.4833	.2248	.5602
Small/Large	.2088	.4191	.3015	.6154	.4954
Sharp/Dull	.4620	.2598	.3346	.5569	.7568
Strong/Weak	.4289	.5264	.5287	.7387	.6182

6. Report of Results

At this point the full meaning of these results is unclear. Apparently there is an interaction between scale reliability and the concept under consideration. The exact nature of this interaction is not yet known. Apparently many of the scales possess sufficient reliability to be used with Adult Basic Education students. However, further inquiry into the reliability of these scales for each level of ABE student is needed. If our further inquiry and trials indicate that the semantic differential approach is appropriate, these studies will be mandatory.

VOCABULARY TESTS

The pre-test of the semantic differential indicated a need for a vocabulary check with Adult Basic Education students in order to determine what kinds of words or concepts can be utilized effectively with these students. Two tests were selected to determine, to the extent possible, the vocabulary level(s) of ABE students. These tests--the "Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), subtest 1," (vocabulary), and the "Quick Gauge of Reading Ability"--were administered to a random sample of 175 ABE students in Mississippi, a portion of which were located in the Appalachian region of the state.

The analysis chosen was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Correlation of Scores on the Adult Basic Learning Examination and the Quick Gauge of Reading Ability

Name of Test	1	2	3	4
1. ABLE - Subtest "1"	1.000			
2. Q.G.R.A. - Independent Level	.328	1.000		
3. Q.G.R.A. - Instructional Level	.328	.863	1.000	
4. Q.G.R.A. - Ceiling Level	.426	.786	.957	1.000

The low positive correlations between the two tests indicate that they do not necessarily measure the same thing. Because of the amount of usage of the ABLE series in Mississippi, it was decided that this test should be used as a guide for judgments in selecting the remaining research instruments for this study.

#### NEED HIERARCHY

It was felt that in order to select meaningful concepts for future research with the semantic differential technique, staff members should explore the possibility of selecting concepts which would be not only educationally related, but which would also relate to basic human needs. However, after searching the literature to determine what various authors and researchers felt to be the basic needs of human beings, it was decided that a congruency of thought was lacking, not to mention the apparent absence of research data to substantially support the various theoretical points of view.

## PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE

In a recent study conducted pursuant to a contract with the U.S. Office of Education, a projective technique for obtaining educationally useful information indicating pupils' attitudes toward work and occupational plans was developed. Drawings depicting various kinds of activities in work situations were utilized to obtain responses to selected questions which related to the drawings. Job Corps enrollees and high school students, Negro and Caucasian, were the respondents for this study.

Results indicated that this technique yields evidence of respondents' attitudes toward tasks and the authors suggested that this technique be extended and tested as a means of evoking responses related to attitudes of other phenomena. However, after much research and review of this project and related studies, it was decided that the time available eliminated this type of project from being considered by the project staff.

## ALIENATION

### Theoretical Background

The concept, "Alienation," can be traced back to the works of Hegel and Marx in their discussions of a worker's separation from effective control over his economic destiny (2). Alienation is regarded as an individual's feeling of uneasiness or discomfort reflecting exclusion or self-exclusion from certain social or cultural participation--usually an expression of non-belonging or non-sharing (2). Recently, this concept has enjoyed a new wave of



popularity and numerous social scientists have attempted to measure this complex phenomenon.

One of the more recent attempts to measure alienation was by Dwight Dean, Professor of Sociology, University of Iowa. Dean found that theorists have suggested many possible correlates of alienation--apathy, conformity, cynicism, prejudice, regression--but that in the many attempts to isolate this concept, three elements seem to stand out more than any others (1). These elements--powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation--can, to a great extent, describe the situation in which many of our adult basic education students are found today.

#### Implications for Adult Basic Education

Powerlessness--separation of one from effective control over his destiny--is a common characteristic of this segment of the population. With little or no education, no discernible employment skills, and limited opportunity for self-improvement, these individuals are, in reality, "powerless" to greatly influence their future.

Normlessness--the absence of standards or norms--is most apparent in the lives of ABE students through the ever-changing standards of morals, acceptable work skills, and other phenomena which produce the feeling that no stable goals or expectations exist any more. What was once sacred, patriotic, or generally acceptable to most people now ceases to be so, and these conflicts and behavioral changes are disturbing to everyone, particularly the under-educated adult.

Social isolation is not new to these students. Characteristics of this element include limited spatial mobility, small numbers who

vote, low social participation, few, if any, memberships in fraternal or civic organizations, and other related phenomena.

### Alienation Scale

Through repeated efforts of testing, analyzing, and retesting, Dean was able to isolate the three concepts of powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation in a 24-item scale called, A Scale for Measuring Alienation (1). Of the 24 statements in the scale, nine pertain to powerlessness, six pertain to normlessness, and the remaining nine pertain to social isolation. Respondents are able to judge their feelings about each statement on a five-point scale, as follows:

23. The future looks very dismal.

.A -- (strongly agree)

a -- (agree)

U -- (uncertain)

d -- (disagree)

D -- (strongly disagree)

The statement above pertains to the powerlessness element--the power or ability of a person to influence his future. Agreement with the statement indicates a lack of power to do anything about the future, whereas disagreement indicates an ability or power to do something about one's future.

For this project, it was felt that those students who score higher on the Alienation Scale would be less likely to remain in the adult basic education program than those who score lower. This was based upon the following assumptions:

1. Individuals who feel they cannot improve their future (powerlessness) will not be as likely to participate in a program designed for their self-improvement as those who feel they can improve their future.

2. Persons who feel socially isolated will not be as likely to attend classes as those who do not feel socially isolated because of the socialization factor associated with individuals in a group situation.

3. Persons who feel there are no existing norms or standards will not be likely to remain in a program where standards and goals play an important part.

Based upon these assumptions, it was felt that those students who feel more alienated (those who score higher on the Alienation Scale) will be more likely to "drop out" or discontinue in the ABE program than students who feel less alienated.

#### Data Collection

The Alienation Scale was administered to 256 ABE students in the "Appalachian" region of Mississippi. In addition to the Scale, certain biographical data was obtained from the cumulative record folders of the students. Classes were selected from various geographic areas of the region, but no random selection was utilized in acquiring the sample.

In every case, the local classroom teacher administered the scale after some instructions from the project staff. This was done in order to avoid any influences which an "outsider" may have exerted upon the students' reactions to the questions.

Initial pre-testing for item clarity indicated that four of the questions were somewhat unclear to the students, e.g., "The end often justifies the means." For those statements, standard explanations were utilized when the scale was administered.

For this project, the five-point scale was reduced to a three-point scale, e.g., agree, uncertain, disagree. This was done because:

1. The sample would include students of all levels and it was felt that those on the lower grade levels would find the five-point scale more difficult for responding than a three-point scale.
2. It was felt that for the purposes of this project, a three-point scale would yield sufficient data for analysis.

#### Data Analysis

The Alienation Scale administered in this study consisted of 24 items. The scoring system allowed a minimum score of 24 and a maximum score of 72. The mean score achieved by the 256 respondents was 52.65 with a standard deviation of 7.56.

For the purposes of this study, "high" scorers were identified as those individuals scoring higher than one standard deviation above the mean, or above a score of 60. These were respondents who indicated a high amount of alienation, or those who are hypothesized to be most likely to drop out of the adult basic education program.

Table 1. Participant scores on Alienation Scale

Range of Scores	Number	Percent
High (61-72)	54	21
Middle (45-60)	167	65
Low (24-44)	<u>35</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	256	100

From the data in Table 1, it appears that slightly more than one-fifth of the participants scored "high" on the Alienation Scale. According to the theory of alienation, it is from this group that dropouts from the adult basic education program would most likely occur. This cannot be determined, however, until near the end of the program when the attendance patterns of the participants can be verified.

Table 2. Age range and "high" alienation score

Age Range	Number of High Scores	Percent
16-20	16	31.0
21-25	8	15.0
26-30	4	7.7
31-35	5	9.6
36-40	3	5.8
41-45	0	0.0
46-50	2	3.9
51-55	6	12.0
56+	<u>8</u>	<u>15.0</u>
Total	52	100.0

As shown in Table 2, over one-half of the high alienation scores occur in the participants under 30 years of age. This could indicate that the holding power of the adult basic education program is more limited with younger adults than older adults.

Table 3. Years since last schooling and "high" alienation score

Years Since Last Schooling	Number of "High" Scores	Percent
1-4	14	26.0
5-8	7	13.0
9-12	2	3.6
13-16	5	9.3
17-20	3	5.6
21-24	2	3.6
25-28	1	1.8
29-32	0	0.0
32+	7	13.0
Unknown	<u>13</u>	<u>24.1</u>
Total	54	100.0

It appears that number of years since last schooling has little effect upon alienation except in those who have recently left school. This tends to support the data in Table 2, where alienation was higher among younger students. It is felt by the investigators that those in the "unknown" category would tend to have been away from school for a large (over 16) number of years. Their usual response was, "It has been so long, I just cannot remember."<sup>11</sup>

Table 4. Sex of participants and "high" alienation scores

Sex	Number of "High" scores	Total Number of Students
Male	12	66
Female	41	182
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>
Total	53	256

The data in Table 4 shows that 18 percent of the males scored "high" on the Alienation Scale compared to 22 percent of the women. Thus, sex does not appear to be an important variable in regard to alienation in the sample of students in this project.

Table 5. Race of participants and "high" alienation scores

Race	Number of "High Scores	Total Number of Students
Black	36	134
White	16	119
Unknown	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	54	256

The data in Table 5 show that 27 percent of the blacks scored "high" on alienation compared to 13 percent of the whites. This may indicate that blacks will more likely drop out of the program than whites.

Table 6. Work status of participants and "high" alienation scores

Work Status	Number of "High" Scores	Total Number of Students
Full-time employed	28	152
Part-time employed	9	27
Unemployed	15	74
Unknown	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	54	256

It might be predicted that those who are unemployed would feel more alienated than those who have employment, but the data in Table 6 indicate that the sample students do not support this prediction. One-third of the part-time employed participants indicated "high" alienation whereas 18 percent of the full-time employed and 20 percent of the unemployed responded in the same manner. One possible reason for this would be the large percentage of the sample being female, to whom employment may not have the same importance as it would for males.



## INTERNAL-EXTERNAL SOCIAL LEARNING

### Theoretical Background

Most learning theories which attempt to predict changes in human behavior make use of the concept of reinforcement. Reinforcement can be broadly defined as any stimulus object or event which, upon numerous systematic pairings with a response, increases the rate of future occurrence of that response. A reinforcement can be pleasant (positive reinforcer) or unpleasant (negative reinforcer) to the organism. The effect of both is to increase the rate of response.

Behavioral learning theories maintain that reinforcement facilitates learning by strengthening a connection or association between a stimulus and a response. The effect of a given reinforcer in altering behavior is commonly attributed to a combination of such factors as the absolute magnitude of the reinforcer, the physical condition of the organism at the time of reinforcement, the schedule (frequency and time) of reinforcement, and the elapsed time between response and reinforcement.

J. B. Rotter's social learning theory brought a departure from this point of view. Rotter contends that reinforcement facilitates learning by strengthening an "expectancy" on the part of the learner that future occurrences of the reinforced behavior will also lead to reinforcement. The effect of a reinforcement in strengthening expectancies is attributed to, among other things,

the learner's perceptions of the cause and effect relationship between his own behavior and the ensuing reinforcement.

According to Rotter, expectancies are learned in specific situations. A reinforcement strengthens an expectancy that a specific response will be followed by a specific reward or success. However, expectancies learned in specific situations tend to generalize to other similar situations. Therefore, a series of specifically learned success expectancies, with their accompanying generalizations, lead to a generalized expectancy on the part of the learner that he will succeed in most of his undertakings. Conversely, a series of specifically learned failure expectancies, with their accompanying generalizations, lead to a generalized expectancy on the part of the learner that he will fail in most of his undertakings. In line with this notion, Rotter postulated a personality construct known as "internal-external control" of reinforcement.

Internal-external control refers to the perceptions of individual learners that any reinforcers following their behavior results from their own actions or from forces external to themselves. It appears logical that some individuals, usually those with generalized failure expectancies, would attribute what few successes they might have had in life to such things as fate, luck, or chance. They do not see their own actions as being instrumental in bringing success. Such individuals are said to believe in an external control of reinforcement. In contrast, other individuals, usually those with generalized success expectancies, feel that they can assure themselves of additional successes by their own actions. These individuals are said to believe in an internal control of reinforcement. The former group (external control) is expected to be

generally passive in any attempts to influence their future. The latter group (internal control) is expected to be generally active in attempts to better themselves, influence others, etc., as means of determining their future.

#### Implications for Adult Basic Education

Superficially it might be expected that most adult basic education students possess an internal-control orientation. This follows from the fact that they are participating in an effort that gives them no immediate remuneration. Presumably they have a long-term goal of remunerative rewards, or at least increased self-satisfaction, through the upgrading of their personal skills. Some adult basic education students are certainly enrolled for these reasons. This would suggest an internal-control orientation. However, it remains a fact that some adult basic education students are enrolled in programs because of other factors such as a subtle pressure placed upon them by their employers. This group possibly feels that they will gain nothing more from the ABE program than the retention of their jobs. Members of such a group might be expected to possess an external-control orientation. Furthermore, members of the latter group who do in fact fall toward the external end of the internal-external continuum might be expected to drop from the program after participating long enough to convince their employers that they "gave it a try." On the other hand, persons who are truly enrolled for self-improvement and fall toward the internal end of the continuum might be expected to complete the ABE program. To the extent that this is true, then, it would appear possible to

to identify prior to enrollment those individuals who would be likely dropouts by determining their relative positions on the internal-external control continuum. Other things being equal, individuals with an external-control orientation might be more likely to drop from the program than persons with an internal-control orientation.

#### Internal-External Scale

The concept of internal-external orientation believed held by adult basic education students was measured by the students' responses to statements contained in the I-E Scale developed by Rotter, et. al. (4). The I-E Scale is a forced-choice type measure offering interpretations of various statements which may be internally or externally related.

For example:

6. "Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it."
18. "Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time."

Statement number six is an internally-oriented statement. If a person agrees with this statement, he is described as an internally-oriented person, i.e., he believes that he can achieve self-improvement and/or success through his own efforts.

On the other hand, statement number eighteen is an externally-oriented statement. A person agreeing with this statement believes that external or "outside" forces will control his life more than his own efforts.

The twenty-four item I-E Scale is designed to aid the investigator to determine an individual's personal orientation. A lower score on Rotter's scale indicates a more external feeling.

Certain changes were made in the presentation of the I-E Scale. The original scale was a pencil and paper test designed for persons capable of reading and writing who could respond to a five-point set of responses, e.g., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. For this project, the questions were read to the students by the classroom teacher. This was done in case all of the student could not read well (particularly level I students) and to eliminate any influences an outsider might create in the classroom.

Also, the five-point scale was reduced to a three-point scale for the same reasons expressed previously with the Alienation Scale.

#### Analysis of Data

The Internal-External Scale administered in this study consisted of 24 items. The scoring system allowed a minimum score of 24 and a maximum score of 72. The mean score achieved by the 127 respondents was 51.28 with a standard deviation of 6.71.

For the purposes of this study, "external" scores were identified as those individuals scoring lower than one standard deviation below the mean, or below a score of 45. These were respondents who indicated a high amount of externalization, or who seem to believe that outside forces have a great influence upon their lives. Based upon the theory underlying the internal-external phenomenon, it is felt that these individuals are most likely to drop out of the adult basic education program.

Table 7. Participant scores on Internal-External Scale

Range of Scores	Number	Percent
High (over 58)	19	14.9
Middle (45-60)	93	73.2
Low (below 45)	<u>15</u>	<u>11.9</u>
Total	127	100.0

As indicated previously, a "low" score on the Internal-External Scale indicates that a person is externally oriented--he feels that external or outside forces have a great influence on his life. Twelve percent of the participants were in this category.

Table 8. Age-range of participants and external scores

Age Range	Number of "External" Scores	Percent
16-20	5	33.5
21-25	1	6.7
26-30	2	13.3
31-35	4	26.5
36-40	0	0.0
41-45	0	0.0
46-50	0	0.0
51-55	2	13.3
56+	0	0.0
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>6.7</u>
Total	15	100.0

Eighty percent of those respondents who were externally-oriented were below 35 years of age. This indicates that younger adult students seem to believe that external forces influence their lives more than do older adults. It would be interesting to speculate upon the reasons for this phenomenon.

Table 9. Sex of participants and external scores

Sex	Number of "Low" Participants	Total Number of Participants
Male	3	35
Female	11	91
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	15	127

The data in Table 9 show that 8.5 percent of the males and 12.1 percent of the females received external scores. This may indicate that sex of the individual would not be a factor of any great importance regarding how students feel about their lives and external forces.

Table 10. Race of participants and external scores

Race	Number of "Low" Participants	Total Number of Participants
Black	6	55
White	7	71
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	14	127

Eleven percent of the black students and nine percent of the white students received scores in the "externally-oriented" category. Race appears to be an unimportant variable regarding externalization.

Table 11. Years since last schooling and external scores

Years Since Last Schooling	Number of "Low" Scores	Percent
1-4	5	33.3
5-8	2	13.3
9-12	1	6.7
13-16	0	0.0
17-20	3	20.0
21-24	0	0.0
25-28	0	0.0
29-32	0	0.0
32+	0	0.0
Unknown	<u>4</u>	<u>26.7</u>
Total	15	100.0

Even though it appears that the more recent "dropouts" are more externally oriented, one cannot make this assumption because of the high percentage of "unknowns." It is quite possible that these would fall into the categories at the opposite end of the range.



Table 12. Work status and external scores

Work Status	Number of External Scores	Total Number of Participants
Full time	6	82
Part time	3	13
Unemployed	6	28
Unknown	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	15	127

Seven percent of the full-time employed students indicated "external" feelings compared to 23 percent of the part-time employed and 22 percent of the unemployed students. Employment status appears to be an important variable concerning how the sample students feel about the effects of external forces upon their lives.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The data acquired from the Alienation Scale and the Internal-External Scale seem to indicate the possibility of identifying certain factors which may be related to the "dropout" syndrome in adult basic education. When the attendance records of selected students are examined at the end of the present "cycle," more reliable data to support or negate this possibility will be forthcoming.

Even if the assumptions underlying this investigation are supported, this is not to say that the research efforts will be

concluded. Indeed, only a beginning will have been achieved, but this beginning will be sufficient to build upon through the testing and comparison of other related variables. The problem of retention in adult basic education must be continually attacked from all aspects and only through the mutual sharing of initial efforts, progress, and results can professional adult educators achieve any success in this endeavor.

Although for all practical purposes, the present investigation is ended, more information regarding the present efforts will be forthcoming during the coming months. As these data are analyzed and categorized, they will be forwarded to the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center for utilization and dissemination. Although certain aspects of a project may be deemed "completed," the project is never really completed until the initial problem is solved. From all indications, the problem of retention in adult basic education is far from being solved.

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