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IN DIALOGUE WITH A LARGER WORLD:
LITERACY AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO SOCIAL SELF-CONCEPT

A Dissertation Presented

By

DAVID WILLIAM KAHLER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1983

Education

IN DIALOGUE WITH A LARGER WORLD:

LITERACY AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO SOCIAL SELF-CONCEPT

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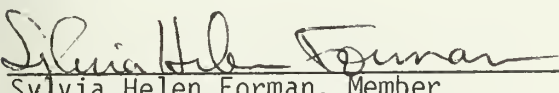
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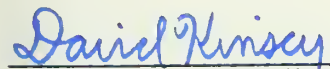
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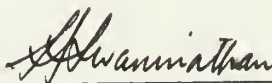
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yo no vengo a resolver nada
yo vine aqui para cantar
y para que cantes
conmigo.....

Neruda

ABSTRACT

IN DIALOGUE WITH A LARGER WORLD:
LITERACY AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO SOCIAL SELF-CONCEPT

Although substantial research involving quantitative measurement of the literacy phenomenon and the achievement of adults in literacy programs has been undertaken, few past research studies have attempted to measure changes stemming from personal growth and the development of social self-concept (self-esteem). This study, which is exploratory in nature, examines life history data collected from in-depth interviews with seven new literates on their experiences in U.S.-based urban adult literacy programs to ascertain how the literacy experience (learning to read and write) served, and continues to serve, as a contributing factor to the development and evolution of individual social self-concept.

The study first examines definitions of literacy in international and U.S.-based literacy work in the past two decades. Three emerging issues highlighted in this analysis which are present in the definitions given to literacy by those interviewed in the study are: a language component figures in any definition of literacy; a definition must reflect the changing demands of a world prone to change; and freedom from social, economic and political impotence is a major objective of literacy. Self-concept is then discussed as an area of legitimate concern for adult educators and pertinent linkages between self-concept theory and adult learning are described.

Data from structured in-depth interviews with new literates are presented around organizing themes of: motivation for participation; sustaining the learning experience and adjustments to the new role of learner; the uses of literacy; and social identity and perceived self in the world. In this analysis, particular attention is given to personal identity, and the match between a new social fact (literacy) and personal facts (self-concept and self-esteem).

In conclusion, the study suggests a number of hypotheses which might serve as points of departure for future research on the literacy experience and its influence on enhanced self-concept among adult learners. Literacy planners and practitioners are encouraged to look to prospective learners and new literates for assistance in answering the question of "Literacy for what?" and to explore teaching/learning strategies which may contribute to the development and evolution of self-concept in adult learners enrolled in literacy and adult basic education courses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous individuals deserve acknowledgement for the part which they have played in the development of this study.

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Mary Beth and John-jan: For your tolerance of a husband and father as a mid-life learner, I thank you. Now let's get on with life!

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In memory of Askar Lolegar and
his quiet, inquiring nature.

C H A P T E R O N E

LITERACY AND PERCEIVED SELF: DIALOGUE WITH A LARGER WORLD

When a human being becomes suddenly conscious of the tremendous powers lying latent within him, when from the puzzled contemplation of the half-known self, he rises to the powerful assertion of a self, conscious in its might, then there is loosed upon the world the possibilities of good or evil that make me pause.

W.E.B. DuBois
The Education of Black People, 1906.

Introduction

One of the most important economic, social, political and psychological forces in the modern world is thought to be literacy. This statement is substantiated by an increasingly large body of research literature and documentation. For the most part, past literacy research has been oriented toward the study of the literacy phenomenon in the context of the developing world. Only in recent years has the study of literacy and illiteracy, as well as the social, economic and psychological factors associated with them, become a "legitimate" field of research in the United States.

The current estimated number of illiterates in the United States varies from two to fifty million. This variance in the estimate depends upon which measures are used and which sometimes vastly different theoretical positions about the definition of literacy are taken. Even though a twenty percent figure is low in comparison with literacy statistics from other countries, the reality remains: a substantial portion of the adult population of one of the world's most economically and socially advanced nations experiences difficulty in reading and coping with the everyday demands made upon them by their "literate" society.

One in five adults in the United States has trouble with occupational knowledge, and the basics of finding, getting, holding and advancing in a job because of their limited reading, writing, comprehension and computational skills (Northcutt et al., 1975). One third of the adult population in the United States has trouble buying life insurance, using credit and handling other consumer problems because of their low levels of literacy skills. One fourth of all Americans do not understand their rights and obligations under our system of law. By and far the greatest cause of this "incompetency," a term used in the Adult Performance Levels (APL) Study noted above, appears to be the lack of schooling of the millions of Americans who have not attended or finished school.

While research efforts to date in the United States have been largely concerned with measuring, through quantitative approaches, both the numbers of illiterates and the degree of their illiteracy, these efforts have had limited impact on the quality of literacy training which was

planned or made available in the past ten years (Hunter and Harman, 1979). The impact of past U.S. literacy research on the quantity of programs made available cannot be denied. Nor, for that matter, can the effect of what is often called the "obsession with quantitative analysis" be refuted. For, from that research orientation and preoccupation has come, in response, or in reaction perhaps, a new interest in assessing the qualitative aspects of the literacy experience. This research approach is characterized by an emphasis on letting new literates speak for themselves rather than having numbers, graphs and charts speak in their stead.

Literacy and Added Meaning to People's Lives

It would be difficult to not accept the statement that literacy gives new meaning to peoples' lives. In turn, one could hypothesize, those people contribute more productively to the societies to which they belong. There is speculation and a small, but growing, body of research which points out that new literates speak with profound conviction about the qualitative and fundamental changes which they see as resulting from achieving literacy and which propel them to fuller and more satisfying participation in their own social, cultural and economic environment. In becoming convinced that they can shape their own social reality through new-found literacy skills, and in realizing that they are no longer isolated and powerless in their ability to use the "word," new literates

begin to participate more fully in a dialogue with a larger world. This they first do orally and then through writing, reading and other coping skills.

When I was told that so and so is educated, the word 'educated' depressed my spirits and I would ask myself 'How did that person become so educated?'

People would say that he got educated by studying, and I would ask, 'Does that mean that those of us who have not studied are not educated?'

People of course would say, 'No, you are not educated.' Really speaking, in those days, we were very ignorant and didn't know what to do. But today, if someone tells me that so and so is educated, I know that that person has liberated himself from the oppression of illiteracy and now has become literate (Kassam, 1979: 22).

With those words, a newly literate Tanzanian mill-worker reveals his perceptions of what it means to be "educated," that is to read and write --- to not only understand the words, but also to grasp the implications of literacy in the larger sense. As Kassam notes in his analysis, the mill worker's words contain an explicit awareness of perceived self, elements of self-confidence, of efficacy, of political and social consciousness, and of manifestations of the ability to demystify the social realities of the immediate environment and begin a dialogue with the larger world. To some, the expression of emotion and power contained in the millworker's words may appear overly dramatic. But, for a large portion of the Third World, and a surprisingly large number of adults in our own

more "developed" country, the mill-worker's words may well be a shared reality, perhaps as yet unexpressed.

Self-perceptions similar to those of Kassam's mill-worker are evident in the words of one of Studs Terkel's interviewees, a black businessman from Chicago, in American Dreams: Lost and Found:

I learned early on that reading people were ruling people. I started to buy books to educate myself. I was reading everything that I could get my hands on. When you don't know, you gotta read. I didn't read for entertainment. I was seeking understanding. I found in America, in 1912, that there were 3,043 millionaires. Only 89 had high school educations. Some didn't even finish grammar school. So, I found myself in good company. This was the greatest motivation I ever received, when I knew that there were these white men in America who had made it good without a formal education (Terkel, 1980: 22).

Terkel's businessman and Kassam's mill-worker live in widely disparate geographic worlds. Yet, their immediate worlds contain certain similarities, especially with respect to their perceptions of the learning experience and what "being educated" could mean. Their words, coupled with reactions to past conjecture as to what the literacy experience means to an individual, provide the stimuli for the formulation of an increasingly important set of research questions on the meaning of literacy, its effects on the development of self-concept and the dialogue which literacy skills permit with the larger world.

These questions can be expressed as follows: Does the literacy experience indeed have a substantial effect on the more qualitative

aspects of the lives of adult learners? More specifically, how does the literacy experience contribute to the development of social self-concept, or perceived self, of adults who have recently participated in literacy programs? And, how do enhanced perceptions of self affect the individual's interaction with and contribution to the world in which he or she lives and works? In short, does the literacy experience, from the vantage point of the newly literate individual, permit an ever increasing dialogue with a larger world?

Answers to the foregoing questions provide a basis for informing both researchers and practitioners who are concerned with the qualitative results of literacy programs and their hoped-for contributions to society.

Purpose of the Study

A gap does exist in our knowledge. In the past two decades, substantial research has been devoted to the quantitative measurement of the "literacy phenomenon" and the achievement of adult learners in literacy programs. Although data gathered in that research have served decision makers and planners, the data have often failed to meet the needs of program facilitators, teachers or participants. During the same period, there were few studies which attempted to measure changes in terms of personal growth and the development of social-self concept (self-esteem), both probable and necessary antecedents for the fuller participation of newly literate adults in the world around them.

This study examines the relationship between the literacy experience and the development and evolution of new literates' social self-concept (self-esteem). More precisely, the research represents an exploratory study of the literacy experiences of recent participants in U.S.-based urban adult literacy programs to ascertain how the literacy experience served, and continues to serve, as a contributing factor to the development of individual social self-concept.

The importance of the relationship between the acquisition of literacy skills and the development of social self-concept has only lately been studied by U.S.-based researchers (Rockhill in progress; Halstead, 1981). The strength and nature of such a relationship has been implied by researchers in international settings (Barndt, 1980; Freire, 1970, 1975, 1978; Kassam, 1979; Lerner, 1958) and by researchers working in the fields of socio-linguistics, modernization and change, and psychology. Major contributions from domestic and international research in literacy and the psychology of self-concept are reviewed briefly below to identify major gaps in our knowledge based on the literacy experience and its relation to self-concept. A fuller review of these themes is contained in subsequent chapters of the study.

Examining the Gap in Our Knowledge

One of the major contradictions of modernity would appear to be the large numbers of functionally illiterate individuals, those without the basic reading and computational skills to cope with the demands of every-

day life, in societies which have placed great importance on the role of education and literacy in modernization. This contradiction is more easily understood in countries where the widespread expansion of education and literacy opportunities have been relatively recent. In countries like the United States, where there is a long history of educational endeavors, the contradiction is more perplexing. Two separate studies conducted during the 1970's indicate that there are upwards of 40 million (Northcutt et al., 1976) or perhaps as many as 60 million (Hunter and Harman, 1979) functionally illiterate adults living in the United States.

Contributions from Literacy Research

In the field of adult basic education and literacy much has been said about assisting individuals with what has been thought to be one of the essential needs of human beings--the need to make sense of the world around them. In doing so, many programs were seen as helping individuals make the best of the life chances available to them (Cook, 1977; Kidd, 1959; Knowles, 1970). Programs sought to create an awareness on the part of the learner of both the options and choices offered by society while demonstrating that education (literacy) was one means of accessing those alternatives (Hunter and Harman, 1979; Northcutt et al., 1976; Sticht, 1975; Unesco, 1976, 1975a).

Whether the rubric of literacy in the past has been that of conscientizacao (Freire, 1978, 1970), functional literacy (Unesco, 1975a, 1971,

1965a), consciousness for group organization (Clark, 1978), adult basic education (Nafziger et al., 1975), fundamental education for community development (Harman, 1974), "each one teach one" (Laubach and Laubach, 1960), "reading the world instead of the word" (Rahnema, 1975), or literacy as an essential instrument of social change (Declaration of Persepolis, 1975), there seems to have been a concern, and a general interest, for the provision of choices, options and alternatives on the part of those supposedly most directly affected by the literacy experience: the learners.

Although concern and interest is apparent in each of the above approaches to literacy, the degree to which that concern and interest have affected learners' responses to the "literacy phenomenon" is in question (Hunter and Harman, 1979). A recent review of major literacy activities and research in both the developed and developing world (International Council for Adult Education/ International Development Research Centre, 1979) has underscored the need for greater attention to the point of view and perceptions of both illiterates and new literates in literacy program planning issues. Crone, (King, 1979) in a paper presented at the Bellagio IV Workshop on Literacy Research, proposed that the failures of literacy programs and adult education offerings in the past were perhaps not the fault of program structures, materials and/or teaching methods. Rather, she suggested, such problems might lie in the assumptions made by planners that illiterate adults would place the same high priority on achieving literacy as planners do.

Several points clearly emerge from the studies reviewed briefly above and contribute to the rationale for this study. They are:

- (1) Literacy program designers recognize the centrality of providing options in people's lives options which can emerge as a result of literacy instruction.
- (2) Research on literacy has not given full attention to the learner as the unit of study; the importance of literacy in his/her life and society is assumed but not fully understood.
- (3) Literacy research has focused on economic impact and other development outcomes that may have ignored other effects on the learner.
- (4) Qualitative data on literacy program participants would augment available data bases significantly.

Contributions from Studies of Self-Concept and Modernization

The interest in the study of self-concept (self-esteem) and the perception of self is, as noted earlier, relatively new to the field of literacy education and literacy research. Interest in the study of modernization as a result of literacy acquisition dates from the 1950s.

Self-concept

The use of the concept of self as a construct in the behavioral sciences is comparatively recent. Yet, it has served as the source of much experimentation. Many researchers believe that the self serves as the core around which all other perceptions are organized. It is also the self which is thought to give consistency and continuity to the persona-

lity. An understanding of the self is felt to be fundamental to the understanding of diverse and often complicated behaviors of individuals--literate and illiterate alike.

Cultural and social factors play an extensive role in the development of the self-concept as does the psychological environment (Allport, 1961; Erikson, 1975; 1959/1980, 1968; Fromm, 1941; Horney, 1950; Mead, 1934; and Rogers, 1961). Much of the application of the aforementioned theory on the development of self and self-concept has been carried out with youthful subjects (the child in the school environment and with older youth in educational settings of one type or another), with the mentally or physically handicapped, or with ethnic or linguistic minorities. Conspicuously absent from Wylie's massive review of the self-concept literature (1961/1974) is any mention of research on the self-concept of educationally disadvantaged adults with low levels of literacy skills.

There is agreement that the self-concept develops out of a social definition of an individual's relationship with the world around him or her, both in terms of individual self-evaluation and the evaluations made by others of the individual. A point of importance, especially in the context of adult education and literacy programs, would appear to be the need for greater awareness among educators of the social definition of self, the ways in which it comes to be expressed, and the effect of past and present educational offerings upon the self-concept of the adult learner in literacy settings.

Within the broad area of self-concept, there are a number of components which would appear to be of immediate relevancy to the development and

evaluation of self-concept in the adult illiterate and neo-literate. One such component is that of self-esteem. Self-esteem has been characterized as the process involved in the evaluative, judgemental or affect aspect of the person's self-conceptualization (Wells and Marwell, 1976). Gergen (1971) noted that a person's evaluation or esteem for himself or herself plays a major role in determining behavior. Indeed, much of what a person chooses to do, and the manner in which he or she does it, is presumed to be dependent upon his self-esteem.

Three principle senses of the term self-esteem as identified by Wells and Marwell (1976) appear crucial in examining self-concept among adult learners. They are: (1) self-love; (2) self-acceptance; and (3) a sense of competence. The primary distinctions in each of these senses is thought to lie in the way in which they treat the elements of affection and evaluation, with affection playing a greater role in self-love and self-acceptance and evaluation being of predominant importance in sense of competence where the stress is on abilities and capacities associated with self-confidence.

As a result of the two underlying processes, affection and evaluation, the self-esteem literature has been one of either humanistic conceptualization and presentation or one which stresses instrumentality--the assignment of some judgement of good-bad on the basis of usefulness of an object or event. In the case of the latter, things have value to the extent to which they enable a person to gain rewards or goals and help to avoid failure or punishment.

Gergen (1971) related the development of self-esteem to social learning via the mechanism of secondary reinforcement. He posited that some object, including one's personal characteristics, is instrumental in reaching some goal which brings reward or which is rewarded. As a result, this object comes to have value (it is sought, approached or utilized) because it is associated with this reward mediating its attainment.

Since self-esteem is a function of experience, what happens to the adult learner during the literacy experience must in some way be of importance to the development of the conscious self (the phenomenal self). Early research on the development of self-concept among more youthful subjects conducted by Combs and Snygg (1959) proposed that there was probably no more profound influence on the development of the self-concept outside of the family than that of the school. Although inconclusive, the findings of Bazany, Kaufmann and Safavi (1970) in their studies of participants and non-participants in the Unesco Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) suggest that those exposed to the literacy environment exhibited positive self-esteem characterized by increased motivation to participate in further literacy programs.

The schooling experience of children is, in general, much longer in duration than most literacy or adult education programs. Yet, a number of speculative questions arise. Does the literacy experience have an effect upon the development of self-esteem in adult learners? Is the experience of adults of the "profound" nature which Combs and Syngg reported for children?

Modernization

The writings of the sociologists and psychologists noted in the foregoing section have interesting parallels in the modernization literature of the past two decades. The element of efficacy is central to the work of Inkeles and Smith (1974), as is openness to new experience and social change. Both of the latter are viewed as being related to self-acceptance and a sense of competence. Mastery over the environment is central to Kindervatter's research (1979) although she has chosen to use the term empowerment. Competence motivation is a dominant theme in the research of McClelland (1961). In his study of the passing of traditional societies in the Middle East, Lerner (1958) identified empathy, or the ability to perceive of oneself in someone else's position, as central to the development of competence and self-confidence in dealing with new structures and social institutions being introduced by modernization into an ever-changing environment.

In each of the studies noted above, the role and value of education are underscored as contributing factors to the modernization process. In the case of Smith, Lerner and Inkeles, education is spoken of specifically in terms of literacy.

A number of salient points dominate the brief reviews of the self-concept and modernization literature discussed above. Each of these points is related to any further examination of linkages between the literacy experience and the development or evolution of enhanced self-concept in new literates.

- (1) Understanding the self is fundamental to the comprehension of individual behavior; the examination of the self-concept of newly literate adults should provide a first-hand explanation of individual interactions with a complex environment.
- (2) Self-concept develops out of a social definition of an individual's relationship with the environment; a more thorough understanding of that social definition, as expressed by newly literate adults, will emerge through allowing for individual self-evaluation.
- (3) Significant parallels exist between the self-concept and modernization literature; in the latter, the role of education is underscored in each instance.
- (4) Secondary reinforcement appears to play a role in the development of self-esteem; adult educators could benefit from a more thorough knowledge of the impact of educational programs on the self-concept of adult learners.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the study stems from the previous lack of attention given in past assessments of the impact of literacy on the more qualitative aspects of the lives of adult learners. Literacy has traditionally been viewed as external to the learner and the subject of the literacy experience, the learner, has often been lost in the quantitative explanations of projects, programs and campaigns. As the foregoing reviews have illustrated, there is inadequate knowledge and understanding of the literacy experience as a possible contributing factor to the development of the adult learner's self-esteem and the role that enhanced self-esteem, or perhaps "literacy self-concept," might play in the individual's motiva-

tion to improve his or her literacy skills and to use that literacy to enter into a dialogue with a larger world. The implications and uses of the information gained from this study by those responsible for curriculum development and program planning for literacy and adult basic education programs could be both far-reaching and beneficial.

The Research Question and Organization of the Study

The major question to be addressed in the remaining chapters of this exploratory study is the following:

What can we learn from recent literacy program participants about the influence of the literacy experience on the development of their social self-concept (self-esteem)?

The discussion in Chapter Two examines a variety of definitions of literacy which have evolved in the past two decades. The objective of the chapter is to review past definitions given to literacy so as to arrive at what Cook (1977) has termed a discussion of the term literacy which is demanding enough to allow a person to function comfortably in today's society and yet be realistic enough to be achieved by most people. Chapter Three presents the construct of self-concept as an area of legitimate concern and study for the adult educator, especially those working in the field of literacy education. In doing so, the discussion includes pertinent linkages extracted from the literature on self-concept, modernization, adult education and literacy which contribute to a greater understanding of the hypothesized relationship between the literacy experience and the self-esteem of adult learners. Chapter Four

describes the research setting, participants and procedures used in field research undertaken in conjunction with this study. Chapter Five presents informants' views on the literacy experience and the uses to which they have put their literacy skills. The discussion compares that information with data from other relevant studies of adult learning among similar populations. The chapter seeks to show how new literates express their self-esteem (increased self-confidence, competence, efficacy, self-worth, empathy and sense of empowerment) through the optic of the literacy experience. Chapter Six presents a number of hypotheses derived from the study which might serve as the basis for future research on the impact of the literacy experience on the social self-concept of adult new literates. The study concludes with a discussion of possible implications of this study of self-concept among new literates on literacy planning and programming in U.S. urban settings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERACY AND THE DEFINITIONAL ISSUE: ONE PERSON'S FACT AS ANOTHER'S FICTION

I struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble bush, getting considerably worried and scratched by every letter.

Charles Dickens,
Great Expectations

Literacy: A Coming of Age

The "Bramble Bush of Literacy"¹ has worried and scratched more than one researcher, educational planner and politician. The decades of the 1960's and 1970's marked a time unlike others for the high levels of attention paid to literacy, basic education and nonformal education. This attention came not only from private individuals and organizations,

¹ This is also the title of a 1976 issue of Ideas and Action published by the Food and Agriculture Organization's Freedom for Hunger Programme.

international assistance agencies and individual governments, but also from "legitimizing" sources such as the World Bank and Unesco. In many instances, this recognition had, and continues to have, a profound effect upon the attitudes, actions and aspirations of many governments with respect to the definition of literacy and establishment of subsequent literacy policy.

International concern was paralleled in the United States by a time in which educators, politicians and the general public became increasingly more aware of the growing numbers of "Americans" who could not read or write at a functional level. Along with our international "counterparts," we, too, came to realize that literacy education, when developed and offered in isolation from other social and economic programs, was ineffective. And, we became aware, perhaps by default, that "despite all the money and time which have been spent on literacy programs, it may be somewhat discouraging to have to admit that there is no universally acceptable definition of key concepts in the field" (Griffith, 1970: 1).

During the past twenty years, literacy has moved from its former place as a "subject" of speeches into a place of centrality, and in some cases even into a place of national priority. This has been more true in the international realm than in the United States. The specific role of literacy in social and economic development, and the preconditions for their success, were outlined as follows by Moctar M'Bow of Senegal, Director General of Unesco:

It would be naive indeed to think that all education necessarily requires the mastery of reading and writing but it is nonetheless true that illiteracy is one of the major problems of our times in so far as millions of human beings are unable to go directly to the source of knowledge of their choice or to exercise to the full certain of their rights, these being in modern societies beyond the reach of those who do not have the minimum of education. Although external aid is vital...victory over illiteracy can only come from the political resolve of the government and the country concerned. There is clear evidence that whenever a government has tackled the problem because it was a precondition to other social change, the results have been favourable.²

M'Bow's statement characterizes a period in international development activities when change was in order. These changes involved not only those doing the talking, i.e., Third World representatives in technical positions in international and national educational assistance and planning organizations, but also the subjects under discussion. M'Bow addresses the much overdue need to redefine literacy, and in seeking redefinition he suggests an awareness of the need for re-orientation. He affirms the role to be played by international or external assistance, but at the same time he asserts that the problem of illiteracy must first be seen as a national problem with national, as well as international or

² Quoted in Literacy Work, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1978): 81.

external, solutions. Implicit in his concern over national responses to the problem, this author feels, is an awareness of the need to encourage national and local responses which will give definition to literacy and shape attempts at re-orienting literacy work.

The situation in the international arena has interesting parallels in the evolution of literacy policy in the United States during the period of the 1960's and 1970's. In a 1969 planning document (Texas Education Authority), then President Richard Nixon is quoted as saying:

"What is required of the area of continuing education, especially basic education, is that it must be far more extensive than at present; it must be varied; it must be specific, yet, it must be concerned with the whole person; i.e., the total development of the individual. Merely to train a person to perform a routine or even skilled task without consideration for his total growth is giving him short term help which must be repeated continually as his job changes. This is not quality education and if we want people of quality, we must educate them accordingly. The education of adults must have long-range goals just as does the education of children and youth ..." (Texas Education Authority, 1969).

In the United States, the period of the 1960's and 1970's was characterized by critical appraisal and social criticism, by a revolution among minorities and an active interest in the problem of illiteracy unrivaled by any period in the past history of the country. For the first time, this concern expressed itself in the form of legislation, albeit fraught with initial failures (Cook, 1977). And, it is during this same period in the United States that the term "illiterate" was referred to more infrequently in research literature with greater emphasis being placed on the concept of functional literacy.

There was a tendency in the past two decades, and it persists today, to view illiteracy and the problems of illiterates, as well as the general problems of social and economic development, from the vantage point and the values of those charged with the planning, implementing and evaluation of literacy and adult education programs: many of whom simply did not or do not have the personal experience of literacy as a chronic national problem of the society of which they are a product (Unesco, 1976). With few exceptions, literacy programs were developed in periods of national "stress" and measured in terms of behavioral changes related to socio-economic growth. Little, if any, attention was given to the more qualitative, personal aspects of life when assessing the impact of literacy instruction. Literacy has traditionally viewed as being external to the learner, and the subject of literacy work itself, the learner, has been lost in the quantitative explanations of projects, programs and campaigns. It is as if, as one Tanzanian researcher noted, "the appraisal of the whole problem has been focussed on the song, as it were, rather than the singer" (Kassam, 1979: 40).

In Quest of Definition

This chapter first discusses literacy in terms of definitions, uses and outcomes as presented in the literature surrounding international and U.S.-based literacy activities and research of the 1960's and 1970's. An examination of definitions is felt to be crucial, for it is the definition given to literacy which has governed that which was ultimately delivered,

or for that matter left undelivered. Definitions generated by Unesco, the major international body working in literacy education between 1960 and 1980, are compared and contrasted with those which evolved in the United States and elsewhere through the work of smaller, less vocal, and perhaps less politically motivated groups. The influence of the former on international norms, national aspirations and eventual practices cannot be underestimated. The influence of the latter has been substantial. Yet despite this international interest, neither the United States as a nation nor few of its individual states have established clearly articulated adult education policies or practices with regards to literacy education.

The goal of this chapter is not to arrive at one definition for literacy. Rather, the concern is to discuss, however briefly, programmatic and research efforts which have opened the dialogue on the definition of literacy for further consideration. The reader will note that literacy is often discussed in terms of what it is not, that is, what constitutes illiteracy; that literacy performance has often been, and continues to be discussed in terms of schooling for children; and that literacy has been discussed in terms of competencies, both cognitive and social, needed to perform in the immediate social, political and economic environment. It is particularly the latter which figure heavily in the research data presented in Chapter Five in this study.

All readers will have an intuitive grasp of what constitutes literacy, and will react to the following presentation on the basis of what the term means to them. This writer accepts that literacy includes a basic ability to read, to write and to compute "something." That literacy is and should

be functional is also accepted. And, perhaps most importantly, this writer accepts that literacy should not be limited only to an acquaintance with the above mentioned skills nor functionality, but rather that it be taken to include the individual's abilities to "read the world" and his or her environment, both natural and man-made, in the context of being able to report on and cope with that environment. This focus will become more apparent to the reader in the research data presented in Chapters Four and Five of this study.

Literacy: From a Literate's Vantage Point

The excerpts from the speeches cited in the introductory section of this chapter are, in many ways, quite different from those issued by the predecessors of the two individuals. In the case of the Unesco Director General, his predecessors' views of literacy were much narrower in conception, and there was a lack of awareness that there might also be preconditions for the success of literacy programs. M'Bow's predecessors were, of course, speaking out of another epoch, one which had heralded the First Development Decade with fanfare, grandiloquent international declarations and hopes which now seem as naive as they seemed lofty and progressive (Kidd, 1975: 2). In almost stark contrast, the Second Development Decade crept, as it were, onto the international stage without fanfare and almost without overture. Talk shifted to minimum objectives. Modest proposals were in order, as was the change in the personages doing the talking. And, as the decade moved along, there was a gradual and refreshing change

in the tenor of the speech: a movement from those formerly 'developed' to those formerly 'being developed.' Or, to continue the metaphor, the understudies in the international ring in the 1960's, were stage center during the 1970's.

The Need for Definition

Much of the discussion about the role of literacy in social and economic development is based upon the assumption that illiteracy and literacy are clearly definable and widely understood terms. To the contrary, a review of the literature underscores the existence of ample confusion as to the meanings of the two terms, and one person's fact is most definitely another's fiction.

The need for definition of what is meant by literacy is testimony to both a field which is not widely understood and to one which has undergone considerable change in the past twenty years. In some instances, this change has involved a progression from traditional literacy instruction with its emphasis on form and its applications to mass campaigns; to functional literacy with its concern for content, functionality and integration; to forms of literacy which are viewed as consciousness raising, liberating and capable of bringing about an understanding of the fundamental issues which characterize a society and which precipitate relevant social change.

Definitions of literacy in development related literature have been discussed from a number of points of view: from an ideological vantage

point, from the perspective of economic theory, from a linguistic orientation as well as from the vantage point of motivational theory, among others. Definitions appear to exist at two levels as well: the operational and the conceptual, with an abundance of the former and a paucity of the latter.

The Official Line: Unesco, 1950-1980

A 1951 definition of literacy proposed by the United Nations (Unesco, 1952) considered a person literate who could read and write a simple sentence with understanding. A 1962 definition was slightly more stringent (Unesco, 1962) as it related literacy to a set number of years in school--four to be exact--and brought attention to the notion of functioning effectively in the community. The next year, Unesco presented yet another definition, one which was to figure heavily in the documentation prepared for the 1965 Teheran Conference of Ministers of Education for the Eradication of Illiteracy:

A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development and to play an active part in the life of the community (Unesco, 1963).

In order to not leave any uncertainties about what it was attempting to do, Unesco included a quantitative addendum to the above definition which read as follows:

In quantitative terms, the standard attainment in functional literacy may be equated with the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic achieved after a set number of years of primary or elementary schooling (Unesco, 1963).

In effect, the addendum adopted primary school levels as norms of performance for functional literacy. In so doing, the element of determining what were functional literacy skills was taken from individual societies and was placed in the international sphere. Thus, in establishing the first quantitative definition of functional literacy and endorsing it, Unesco ignored the differences between and within different cultures and placed national and society-specific needs in a position secondary to the need for international standardization.

By today's standards, some of the literacy documentation of the 1960's demonstrated a rather paternalistic, even warped view of the illiterate and what literacy, not the individual, was to accomplish once "literate souls" existed. Among the documentation prepared for the Teheran Congress was a paper which declared that literacy work:

... enables the individual to fit into his occupational and social environment and ... increases his value as a person ... It is inextricably linked with ... needs inherent in the construction of the national community (Unesco, 1976: 118).

The implication here seems to be that the life of the individual illiterate is somewhat less human than that of the literate. And, more remote in the passage is a hint that literacy in the national language is also in order for the construction of the "national community."

In its conclusions and recommendations, the Teheran Congress overwhelmingly supported a movement toward functional literacy. The definitional changes are expressed in the following passage:

Rather than an end in itself, (functional) literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting of the teaching of reading and writing. The very process of learning to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can be immediately used to improve living standards; reading and writing should not only lead to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life and a better understanding of the surrounding world and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture (Unesco, 1976: 10).

In response to the concerns, decisions and recommendations of the Teheran Congress, Unesco and the United Nations Development Programme embarked on a ten year experiment in a number of select countries. The object of this experiment was to integrate the concept of functional literacy into development projects, to be run either by the literacy project itself or to be managed by other development-oriented institutions.

As mentioned earlier, traditional literacy is seen as being primarily concerned with form. By contrast, functional literacy was seen to be less a new type of literacy work, but rather a training process in which the goals were inferred or borrowed from extrinsic objectives or from development projects and programs which provide the framework for the action of the illiterate adults concerned: farmers, craftspeople, factory and mill workers, peasants and urban dwellers.

The process of functional literacy sought to facilitate the acquisition of an integrated store of knowledge, skills and know-how leading to a "genuine" recasting of the modes of being and functioning (Unesco, 1971). Much of this recasting was to be done with expertise delivered by individuals from the Occident, few of whom had ever experienced the effects of illiteracy in their countries of origin.

By definition then, functional literacy gave precedent to content. It claimed (Unesco, 1975b: 8) to be a method of improving the productive capacities of participants as workers, enabling them to acquire, through learning to read and write, the theoretical, technical and practical knowledge needed for their participation in development projects, or better yet for industrialization. This participation was, however, unevenly translated into rhetoric and action. In what appears to be one of Unesco's most myopic publications on functional literacy, Practical Guide to Functional Literacy, one finds the following:

Accustomed in their villages to work to the rhythm of natural phenomena--sun, rain, the moon's phases, the seasons--they suddenly have to adapt to the rhythm of the machine, to exigencies of precision, exactness, punctuality and discipline which industrial production implies (Unesco, 1975c: 10).

The conduct of the global evaluation of the EWLP and the appearance in 1976 of The Experimental World Literacy Programs: A Critical Assessment prompted Unesco and its member states, especially those which had been involved in the EWLP, to rethink and re-assess functional literacy activities of the past decade. The assessment attempted an honest presentation of the program and offered what may have been Unesco's one

and only effort at a qualitative approach to the interpretation of the large body of data, by some estimates over 70,000 pages, and rich experience generated by the eight-year program.

According to the Teheran Congress, the EWLP was to have been a "reflection of world solidarity based on common interest" (Unesco, 1975b: 117). But, as the 1976 assessment points out, the interests of illiterates were defined and interpreted by literates. One point which the assessment clearly underscores, and a point which is central to the message of this chapter, is that the image of the adult illiterate did emerge from the EWLP enriched, albeit by process of trial and error. The assessment signaled the need for greater efforts to understand illiterates in their own terms and the need to proceed with more care than in the past when determining, and for that matter judging why illiterates act the way they do with regard to literacy.

The Impact of Unesco Efforts

The impact of Unesco's past efforts and current undertakings in the field of literacy cannot be denied. The EWLP represented the first, and perhaps at the same time, the last internationally co-ordinated undertaking in the field of literacy. As such, it contributed to raising an awareness of the magnitude of illiteracy as well as signalling areas of concern for future, and one would hope, less restrictive action.

Unesco's influence on the definitional issue is most obvious. The last of the definitions presented in the foregoing paragraphs was one of the first to incorporate the conceptual with the operational: literacy,

that is reading and writing, constitute not an end, but a means--one which is thought to be of fundamental importance--to the "intellectualization of technical knowledge, the mastery of thought-language relationships which facilitate the transition from thinking in concrete terms, when explanations tend to be sought in magic, to thinking in abstract terms, when the mind is receptive to scientific interpretation of phenomena" (Goody, 1968: 1).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Unesco, especially in the context of the EWLP, has been that many more questions were raised than were answered; questions which will, without a doubt, generate the testing grounds for literacy work in the 1980's. Prime among these questions is that of why should we choose technical solutions for problems which are not necessarily technical in origin? Another question centers on society specific definitions of literacy and what constitutes literacy skills in a given context.

With this latter question in mind, it is instructive to end this discussion of Unesco-related definitions of literacy and a review of Unesco contributions in literacy programming with an examination of the most recent definition to emerge from international, and Unesco-sponsored, declarations on literacy. The Declaration of Persepolis, issued at the close of the International Symposium for Literacy, held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 1965 Teheran Congress of Ministers of Education for the Eradication of Illiteracy, considered literacy:

to be not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man

and his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting on the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of authentic development. It should open the way to a mastery of techniques and human relations. Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental right (International Secretariat for Literacy Coordination, 1975).

Forceful as it may seem, and with appropriate syntax, the Declaration of Persepolis is for many, yet another example, another restaging, of the same past performances which open the door wide to semantical differences. What perhaps differentiated this production from those of the past was that there was less overt Unesco "expert" participation and greater Third World participation ... yet all in the guise of eloquent literates. What remains clear, at least to this author who watched from the wings, is that once again, the problems of social and economic development and of those being developed were being approached from the vantage point and the values of those long literate.

The Semi-Official Line: The United States, 1950-1980

In this section of the study, discussion centers on the development of a semi-official definition of literacy as it evolved in the United States between the years of 1950 and 1980. At the same time, attention is given to the less than official policy which the Federal Government developed in relation to the illiteracy phenomenon. What becomes evident in this review is that there was no policy because illiteracy was

perceived as a problem which could be isolated and quickly treated without the development of a national policy. Until recently in the United States, literacy was considered an automatic result of education (Copperman, 1980) as demonstrated by the Bureau of the Census past calculation of the functional literacy rate as the percentage of the U.S. population fourteen and over who have completed five years of school or more.

U.S. Interest in Literacy Policy

In the 1950's the stimuli for interest in literacy in the United States were to be found in four major areas. A growing awareness of the need for a basic education in an expanding industrial society motivated many groups to action. Issues of civil rights and unequal opportunities between races highlighted existing disparities. At the same time, the "continuing threat of communism" necessitated informed and educated citizens. And the illiterate soldier during the Korean conflict was a problem for the military: as war became more mechanized, the demands for literacy increased.

In the 1950 Census, illiteracy was defined as "the inability to read and write either in English or in any other language" (Department of Commerce, 1960) with the question only being asked of those twenty and over. Although that census provided information concerning grade completion, it did not attempt to define the term functional literacy. By this definition, over 25 percent of the population of several states were illiterate with the numbers being the greatest among rural populations and in the South.

In 1959, the Federal government conducted a population survey on literacy and educational attainment. The definition given to illiteracy in that survey contained the first variation since the existing definition was established in 1950, "the inability to read and write a sensible message in English or in any other language" (Department of Commerce, 1960). When it was found that only 2.2 percent of the people over fourteen were estimated to be illiterate, the Census Bureau announced that there was an historic decline in the inability to read and write.

There was considerable material attention to literacy during the 1960's. At least two major federal agencies were authorized by some thirty laws to offer instruction in reading to adults (Greenleigh Associates, 1968) and more than 600 private nongovernmental groups were engaged in basic education (Cortright and Brice, 1970). Yet, a national comprehensive program to provide literacy instruction never materialized.

Major U.S. Studies on Functional Competencies: 1970-1980

The period between 1970 and 1980 spawned a renewed interest in adult learning with a number of studies being completed. In her study on Adult Illiteracy in the United States, Weber (1977) notes that the Office of Economic Opportunity's Adult Education Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-750, Title III) and subsequent amendments (P.L. 91-230, Title III) represented the Federal Government's commitment to literacy education. Literacy, the Amendment proposed, would enable individuals with low level literacy skills "to eliminate their inability to get or retain

employment." In addition, it would make them less dependent on others and would help them improve their abilities "to benefit from occupational training (Title III, Public Law 91-230, Amendment to the Adult Education Act, Section 303).

The program, which ended in 1973, fell far short of its goal of raising the reading proficiency of large numbers of Americans. This failure, Weber (1977) contends, stemmed from a number of causes. Programs were short-term in nature. Most programs were unable to reach a large population. Insufficient funding and the philosophical orientations of programs served as additional constraints. In only a few instances did literacy programs depart in any significant way from objectives and curricula of children's reading programs.

Research in adult education and literacy in the 1960-1970 period focused on adult performance levels or adult competencies. This interest grew out of the 1970 Conference on Strategies for Generating a Nationwide Adult Right to Read Effort which stressed "the functional competence needed for meeting the requirements of adult living (U.S. Office of Education, 1970).

In 1970, the Survival Literacy Study, conducted by the National Reading Council approached the assessment of literacy by presenting simulated real-life situations to test adult reading competency. The study defined literacy as the ability to respond to practical tasks of daily life. It tested the ability of a national sample of adult Americans to respond to questions based on long-distance dialing directions, on classified advertisements for employment, on housing advertisements

and on the completion of a number of different application forms. The study estimated that 4 percent of the population over age 16 had a substantial deficiency in functional reading ability.

The findings of the Survival Literacy Study were questioned by Caughran and Lindlof (1972) who maintained that some of the conclusions were erroneous. Data which was believed to be particularly questionable was that on the application form completion task in the survey. Caughran and Lindlof noted that the percentages used to derive general tendencies of the population were inaccurate and misleading and that the survey did not have sound data bases. This criticism and the need to examine results before their blanket acceptance are problems common to such literacy surveys.

In 1971, and as a direct result of the North Carolina Conference and the new focus on literacy education, the U.S. Office of Education's Division of Adult Education sponsored a study to identify the competencies needed by adult Americans. The study, the Adult Performance Level Project (APL), identified some 65 objectives or requirements for adult living grouped under five general knowledge areas. Through extensive studies, the APL Team identified three general levels of functional competence within each category (Northcutt et al, 1975) and then tested a sample.

The APL researchers estimated that over twenty million adult Americans, about 20 percent of the 1975 population, were functionally incompetent. This percentage of the population could not perform simple, societally required tasks such as reading a want ad or a W-2 form,

addressing an envelope, or calculating the change due on a simple supermarket transaction. In addition, another 39 million adults were found to be borderline functional in these basic skills.

Reactions to the APL study were mixed. Those supporting the underlying APL premises contended that the project results offered an improvement over previously held notions of adult literacy, especially as the criteria for identifying levels of literacy were contained within the definitions rather than in external criteria (Northcutt et al, 1975b). Critics such as Griffith and Cerbero (1977) were quick to point out that the APL objectives were "a summation of value-laden opinions" and that the APL-defining group was composed mainly of academics, administrators and teachers from adult education programs and a very small number of adult participants in basic education courses.

Movement Toward Other Definitions of Literacy Skills

These last criticisms offer an interesting parallel to the interaction noted in an early section of this chapter: those most affected by the literacy programs are rarely involved in defining what they understand as being the necessary literary skills. Once again, in the case of the APL study, the requirements of society, i.e., success in economic terms and external functional skills, obscured the less quantifiable more qualitative objectives related to growth in areas providing personal satisfaction: stimulation of imagination, sharpening and extending memory, questioning and reflecting on one's place in the world, undertaking change in oneself and in one's environment, and cultivating skills in interpersonal relationships (Hunter and Harman, 1979: 18).

Questions related to the interaction between self-defined needs and the requirements of society will probably always render the measurement of functional literacy elusive. Can any one but the individuals involved in the learning group define what constitutes "effective functioning in one's own group?" As Scribner and Cole note in their research among the Vai of Liberia (1978: 25), as well as in their more recent U.S.-based research, that although attempts to establish overall measures of literacy competencies may be useful for certain comparative purposes, "the representation of literacy as a fixed inventory of skills which can be assessed outside of their contexts of application has little utility for educational policies."

Research in adult learning during the period under consideration demonstrated little interest in the perceptual and cognitive effects of the reading process on adult participants in literacy and basic education programs. Instead, research focused on more general aspects of adult learning. For example, the work of Botwinick (1967) and Williams (1973) reviewed theories of learning to read, most of which found their inspiration in the reading processes of children. Neither kind of research offered new understanding of the reading processes of the adult. In fact, the assumption that adults learn to read the same way as children was hardly questioned.

Sticht (1975) and his colleagues at Human Resources Research Organization (HUMRO) are well known for their work on a developmental model of literacy involving two independent learning strands suggested as major factors in achieving literacy. These were 1) learning to understand

language by eye (reading) as skillfully as understanding language by ear (auding) and 2) learning to use the printed medium for literacy task performance. The model proposed by Sticht asserts that "literacy uses skills to utilize the same conceptual base (cognitive content; conceptualizing ability; knowledge) as it is used in speaking, and utilizes the same signs and rules for sequencing those signs as are used in the oral language skills" (Sticht 1975: 8). That is, literacy skills are a second way of utilizing the same language system the individual uses in speaking and listening.

Learning style was studied by Brazziel (1969) who reported on the "craftsman concept" of deliberate care which he found adults bringing to the learning situation. Karlsen (1970), in his study of risk taking in adult learners, found that adult tendencies toward reluctance in taking risks did show up on achievement tests.

While the period under discussion provided little in the way of resolution on the definitional issue or research on adult learning which contributed significantly to our understanding of how adults learn, a number of annotated bibliographies and guides on adult literacy were compiled to provide counsel for administrators and teachers. Teaching materials proliferated but almost all remained silent on the theory of reading acquisition on which they rested (Weber, 1977: 245).

Copperman (1980) notes that the decline in literacy skills relevant across sectors of American society may mean that we as a society will have to support an ever increasing number of dysfunctional or only marginally functional fellow citizens. The primary skills needed to reduce

this dysfunctionality are reading, writing, and computing. Thus, for Copperman, a definition of literacy is as follows.

"When an individual is sufficiently developed in these skills so that he can successfully apply them to socially required tasks associated with securing and maintaining employment, maintaining his health, taking advantage of the various services available in his community, and meeting his obligations of citizenship, he has reached a state of functional literacy (1980: 22).

One of the most recent studies of illiteracy in the United States (Hunter and Harman, 1979) provides an overview of what is now known about adult illiteracy (not literacy) in the United States and some of the issues that the condition raises. The study examines data in three different areas:

1. Changing concepts of literacy and illiteracy and the interaction between the demands placed on persons in an increasingly complex society and their aspirations in that society.
2. The groups within U.S. society for whom present educational arrangements have been least effective, that is, those groups in which the largest number of persons with literacy difficulties are found.
3. The programs and services offered to adults who seek to remedy deficiencies in their earlier education (Hunter and Harman, 1979: 4-5).

In defining literacy and illiteracy, Hunter and Harman tie the term(s) to social aspirations and functional criteria and place the "burden of describing levels and needed skills on the individuals concerned and on the social groups to which they belong."

They suggest the following distinctions between conventional literacy and functional literacy:

conventional literacy: the ability to read, write and comprehend texts on familiar subjects and to understand whatever signs, labels, instructions and directions are necessary to get along within one's environment.

functional literacy: the possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job holders, and members of social, religious, or other associations of their choosing. This includes the ability to obtain information they want and to use that information for their own and other's well-being: the ability to read and write adequately to satisfy the requirements they set for themselves as being important for their own lives; the ability to deal positively with demands made on them by society; and the ability to solve the problems which they face in their daily lives (Hunter and Harman, 1979: 7-8).

After two decades of albeit quiet interest, the Federal Government has neither a literacy policy nor has it any current (1982) extensively funded federally initiated programs. But, there is a growing interest in examining more than the quantitative results of literacy programs. As part of its 1980-81 program, the National Institute of Education supported several research projects examining the cognitive and social aspects of adult learning. The U.S. military, most notably the U.S. Army, has widened its research interests past job-related literacy to the cognitive processes. Despite these emergent efforts, literacy remains the domain of private organizations and individual researchers who have yet to convince U.S. government policy makers of the need for more concerted efforts, or for closer scrutiny of what is meant by the term literacy.

The Private Line: Independent Research 1950-1980

Literacy campaigns are conducted much like anti-smallpox or anti-malarial campaigns: illiteracy has to be eradicated so that the country can claim that the territory is free from the plague. However, the alternative to smallpox is no smallpox. It is not clear what the alternative to illiteracy may be (Galtung, 1975: 14).

In this section of Chapter Two, a third set of definitions of literacy are examined. In this discussion, two elements emerge. First, the definitions tend, on the whole, to be more conceptual in nature, perhaps the luxury of private individuals engaged in meaningful research. Second, the definitions tend to be those which have evolved from concrete, situation-specific experiences which were more personal rather than impersonal in nature. Many of the definitions discussed in this section of the chapter were developed parallel to, rather than in concert with, those of Unesco or U.S. government activities. In some instances, they were developed in direct reaction to the work of both.

Illiteracy has commonly been described as a state "of being cut off from the written word, that is being unable to read and write" (Chabaud, 1970: 105). One could surmise, therefore, that literacy, as the opposite state, implies the ability to read and write. But, in the work of numerous individual researchers one can find that the definition of literacy goes far beyond this assumption.

Unesco cites Jean Paul Sartre as viewing literacy as "a rite of promotion and initiation conferring on man the abstract power of acceding to knowledge mechanisms for deciphering the symbolic code of writing" (Unesco: 1975: 8). Gray also spoke in broad terms of the effects of

learning to read in enlarging one's outlook, deepening one's understanding, changing one's behavior and stimulating one's emotional and intellectual growth:

Reading is a highly complex activity including various important aspects such as recognizing symbols quickly and accurately, apprehending clearly and with discrimination the meanings implied by the author, reacting to ... ideas ... and integrating them into definite thought and action patterns (Gray, 1940: 30-31).

It is widely held that Gray was close to the basic meaning of literacy when he referred to the skills in recognizing, reacting to and integrating symbols. Gates (1949) enlarged upon Gray's definition of reading to include judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving among the effects of reading.

Linguists, who had grown skeptical of both Gray and Gates, were quick to point out (e.g., Fries, 1963) that the collection of actions noted by Gates in particular were all abilities which could be developed by people who could not read. In part, the linguists were suggesting that there were cultures which were easily ignored by official definitions of literacy, as is all too apparent if one is to use the Unesco definitions as a basis for literacy. These pass-over cultures, the linguists in question noted, were those where literacy plays no role whatsoever in communication patterns.

In keeping with the view that literacy is something more than the ability to read and write, Lerner (1958) asserted that:

with literacy, people acquire more than the simple skills of reading ... the very act of

achieving distance and control over a formal language gives people access to the world of vicarious experience and trains them to use the complicated mechanism of empathy which is needed to cope with the world (1958: 64).

There appears to be a direct linkage between the concerns of Galtung (1975) and Schofield (1968) in their critique of the reading and writing processes as separate processes and those which have motivated Ashton-Warner and Freire in their use of words from the immediate environment as words critical to the literacy process, and ultimately to the definition given to literacy. In the case of Ashton-Warner (Gunter, 1973), the literacy process is built on words which are elicited from the participants, encoded and become the physical property of the learner in their written form. The words are then used for meaningful written expression as well as serving as the basis for the reading experience.

One finds this emphasis on literacy as providing tangible experiences in Goody's work (1968: 1) where he maintains that the importance of writing lies in its creating a new medium of communication between men, "its essential service is to objectify speech, to provide language a material correlative, a set of visible signs."

An underlying theme in much of the foregoing discussion is that literacy can alter the learner's perception of the symbol-referent relationships. Herzog (1967: 21) argues that the effect of literacy "is to liberate the symbol from the thing--the referent." He maintains that only when the symbol is liberated from the referent do possibilities arise for the manipulation of the symbol independent from its referent. Thought then precedes action, thus enabling the literate to manipulate

the environment symbolically, to conceive of the possibilities for new relationships and to be better prepared to develop new relationships which modernization brings.

Much of Herzog's work and that which he did in collaboration with Rogers (Rogers and Herzog, 1966) has been devoted to an attempt to establish a conceptual definition of literacy, that of "literacy as a mastery over symbols in their written form," thus facilitating the process of modernization and individuals' control over their lives. Four main hypotheses have dominated their literacy research:

- o With the development of reading skills, the learner expands the scope of his/her experience through the printed media. The media tends to promote change and therefore the literate who is exposed to these messages tends to have a favorable attitude toward change.
- o Literacy permits the individual receivers control over the rate at which messages are received, stored and interpreted.
- o Literacy also provides individuals with a means of delayed retrieval and use of printed information.
- o Literacy unlocks more complex mental abilities --the ability to generalize through symbolization, the faculty of restructuring reality via manipulation of symbols and the ability to empathise with/project oneself into new roles (Herzog, 1967).

Literacy as a factor contributing to the individual's control over his/her life dominated much of the definitional work of the late 1960's and early 1970's. Prime among the proponents of this conscientization was Paulo Freire, whose work in Brazil, Chile and the former Portuguese colonies is well documented (Freire, 1978; IDAC, 1976; Vidal y Vilellas,

1978). But, by and far the more interesting applications of his work, in this author's estimation, are those individual adaptations, such as the following by Rahnema. "To become literate, in my mind, is not to acquire the technical skills of reading and writing, but to start the journey from primary to critical consciousness" (Rahnema, 1975).

The literacy process, according to Rahnema, begins whenever the learner becomes aware of the nature of his situation, his inability to address the world and to relate to those around him.

His literacy is measured by his capacity to perceive the world without illusions or fear and is exercised through naming the world. At the moment in which an individual breaks his silence and recognizes his potentialities, he ceases to be an illiterate--regardless of his capacities to handle the three R's. Literacy is defined by one's ability to read the world--rather than reading the word--and to relate to it, to question it, to make free choices and to commit oneself to the consequences of these choices (Rahnema, 1975: 3).

There is a keen awareness of the distinction between the factual and the potential which has been stressed by so many as being at the heart of a meaningful definition of literacy, "with ideas about why the factual falls short of the potential and what could make the potential one day become empirical reality" (Galtung, 1975: 16-17). This interest in the discrepancies between the factual and the potential moves any definition away from quantification of results and more directly into a Freirian viewpoint of literacy. As Verne (1975: 2) notes,

"We are in the habit of only accepting as literacy the product of the tools of literacy training much in the same way as we

only treat the product of schooling as education. By refusing to examine the positive mentality and the dynamism of the illiterate who learns how to master his environment and to decide for himself how he wants to live in an open and balanced environment, we betray just how thoroughly we have internalized ... the characteristics of dependence and alienation which are the essential features of the school system.

Verne suggests that the assessors of current literacy programs have:

" ... never taken into account the internalization of the curriculum implicit in all educational programmes and contained within the concept--as in that of schooling--that 'teaches' an illiterate Mexican peasant woman whose son is attending school that the reason she herself cannot read is not because she is poor, but because she has never received any education. Education has been transformed into a quantifiable commodity. One accumulates shares--levels of quantities of this knowledge stock (Verne, 1975: 16).

This interest in the discrepancies between the factual and the potential most definitely brings the learner/participant to the center of any definition of literacy. As Hammiche has commented,

It must be granted that the individual in society is both the point of departure and the point of arrival of any educational process which seeks to satisfy the needs of the developing personality (Hammiche, 1975: 3).

Throughout this section on definitions from the "private line," both in the early applications and in the more recent, literacy is seen as a three stage process which includes:

- o the conceptualization of literacy as a tool of communication;

- o the technical aspects of skill acquisition; and
- o the transformation of literacy into a functional tool through the application of those skills to actual communication tasks.

One finds that the latter definitions, particularly those stimulated by Freire's work, come the closest to the inclusion of all three of the stages into a "working" definition.

A process such as the one outlined immediately above does not speak to "essential knowledge and skills" as do some of the earlier definitions presented in this paper. There are some researchers, Stanley (1972: 401) among them, who note that an individual can never be regarded as literate for "it can never be objectively clear at any given moment what essential knowledge and skills really are..." Harman, (1974: 13) in Community Fundamental Education, voices a similar concern. He notes that the treatment of levels of literacy has not been included in the discussion on literacy. As societies become more complex, he argues, especially with respect to economic growth and urbanization, the level of literacy necessary to exist in those situations also becomes more complex. He suggests that the level of literacy necessary at the beginning of the growth process, a level which he calls the "critical minimum," is indeed different from that needed at later stages of development, or the "critical maximum." In such situations, literacy moves from being a static factor to a dynamic one. Harman concludes that the establishment of universal literacy levels applicable to large populations at varying stages of development is not acceptable: for instance, levels of literacy necessary for urban areas will usually, if not always, exceed those for rural areas.

Summary

The purpose of the preceding sections on definitions has not been that of seeking solutions to a problem, but rather that of raising both questions and awareness about a problem, that of the definition of what is meant by literacy.

Three major points have emerged from this discussion of definitions of literacy and programmatic efforts during the past two to three decades. These points coincide with those proposed by Dauzat and Dauzat (1977).

1. The language component definitely figures in any definition of literacy. The ability to read and write are a given need. Ability in these two language areas alone is probably not sufficient. Thus, the language component should include levels of proficiency to use all aspects of language for communicating ideas, influencing environments, coping with change and contributing to future independence.
2. Literacy should not be viewed as an all or none proposition. Many levels of literacy exist and the tasks involved require varied literacy skills. A definition of literacy may be in the developmental stages for long periods of time and may never be complete. In short, a definition given to literacy must be flexible and be shaped by the changing demands of a world prone to change.
3. Literacy has as one of its major objectives freedom from social, economic and political impotence.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

SELF-CONCEPT, THE ADULT LEARNER AND CONTINUITY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

The use of any self-referent concept is beset with problems as the notion of self is deceptive. Intuitively, one would say the meaning is obvious. Yet, on closer examination, the meaning is indeed more illusive and there seems to be no one, easily accessible core (Wells and Marwell, 1976: 39).

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to present self-concept as an area of legitimate concern for adult educators, especially those working in the field of literacy education. The objective is not to establish that literacy acquisition is the sole determining force on individual self-concept but rather to speculate that the literacy experience may have a significant impact on formulation and reformulation of self-concept or self-esteem of newly literate adults. The basis for such speculation can be found in a review of literature on self-concept and adult learning theory and research.

Discussion in this chapter is organized in four parts. In the first, on self-concept as an area of inquiry, the historical context and specification of terms are considered. The second section presents the theoretical foundations or conceptual framework for examining the development of self-concept of educationally disadvantaged adults. In the third section, the linkages between the theoretical framework and current research on self-concept and literacy and adult education are examined. A fourth section offers a series of questions which are designed to guide the reader to a discussion of the research methodology used in this study (Chapter Four) and findings of the study (Chapter Five).

Self-Concept as an Area of Study

As noted in Chapter One, the use of the concept of self as a construct in the behavioral sciences is comparatively recent. Yet, it has served as a source of much experimentation for researchers who believe that the self serves as the core around which all other perceptions are organized. The self is also thought to give consistency and continuity to the personality. In addition, an understanding of the self is believed to be fundamental to the understanding of diverse and often complicated behaviors of individuals -- young and old, literate and illiterate alike.

This section first provides a short overview of self-concept as an area of study and relates past efforts of psychologists and sociologists to areas of concern to adult educators today. In doing so, the histori-

cal context of the study of the self is presented and identification of terms is attempted.

Recurring Themes From the Historical Context

Six frequently mentioned characteristics of the self are discussed here. They are:

- o the self as a conscious phenomenon with self-evaluations;
- o the continuity of the self with the social milieu;
- o the person as an object unto himself;
- o the self and realistic adaptation to the world;
- o the self as a perceived object in the phenomenal field; and
- o the self as a multifaceted phenomenon.

Self as a Conscious Phenomenon with Self-Evaluations

Contemporary study of self has its origins in the writings of William James and his insistence on the self as a conscious phenomenon with self-evaluations being dependent upon individual aspirations. James' concern with the "Me" led him to divide the history of the "Me" into three parts (1890):

- o its constituents; the material me, the social me and the spiritual me;
- o the feelings and emotions the constituents arouse, e.g. self-appreciation; and
- o the acts which they prompt, that is, self-seeking and self-preservation.

James' discussion of the constituents of the self -- the material, social and spiritual me's has served as a point of departure for much research on the self. In his writings, James described "the material Me" as comprised of the body as its innermost part, one's clothing, immediate family, home and collected property make up the rest.

"The social Me" is that "recognition one gets from mates," that "inate ability to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind" (James, 1968: 42). James noted that

A man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize and carry an image of him in their minds (1890: 294).

This multiplicity of selves can cause what James referred to as discordant splitting, that is, the way we show ourselves to particular groups as opposed to other groups. There are times, James wrote, "where one is afraid to let one set of acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere" (1890: 294).

For James, "the spiritual Me" was comprised of the "entire collection of states of consciousness" and constituted the "object of one's thought" capable of awakening emotions. "Active-feeling states of consciousnesses" were, for James, the more central parts of "the spiritual Me."

According to James, these three constituents arouse a number of feelings and emotions, most importantly those of self-appreciation. Both self-complacency and self-dissatisfaction are included in self-appreciation. For James, the "normal provocative" of self-feeling is one's actual success or failure and the good and bad actual position one holds in the world.

In discussing the actions which self-feeling prompts, James discussed self-seeking and self-preservation behaviors, both of which he classed as fundamental instinctive impulses (1968: 44). These impulses give rise to self-esteem and the Jamesian formulation "our self-feeling is in our power" (1968: 45).

Our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do. It is determined by our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator of our success. Thus

$$\text{self esteem} = \frac{\text{success}}{\text{pretensions}}$$

James contended that the "self-esteem" fraction could be increased by diminishing the denominator or by increasing the numerator. "To give up pretensions is as blessed a relief as to get them gratified; and where disappointment is incessant and the struggle unending, this is what men will always do" (1968: 45). All men, James believed, aspired to a potential social Me or an ideal social self. It was at that stage in the development of the self that "the thoughts themselves are the thinkers" (1968: 49).

Continuity of Self with the Social Milieu

Cooley (1902) approached the study of the self from a sociological vantage point and concentrated on what James had called "the social Me." His interest was with the individual's continuity or connectedness with society as he believed that the self could not be disassociated from the social milieu, including those individuals with whom a person interacts.

Cooley is best known for his "looking glass self," a theory which contends that an individual's self-conception is determined by his perceptions of other people's reactions to him. "A self idea," Cooley wrote (1902: 151-152) "of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling." Thus, a sense of self so defined involves other people.

"Self appropriation" is another idea for which Cooley is well known. In self appropriation the self includes, over time, all that which is identified with, or possessed by the person. That is, individuals come to view aspects of themselves as objects of their own cognitions and actions.

Although Cooley's work is regarded as providing the seeds of a developmental theory for self-concept and self-esteem, he did not elaborate any theory in great detail. He avoided defining the concept of self in a rigorous manner noting that

A formal definition of self feeling, or indeed any feeling, must be as hollow as a formal definition of the taste of salt, or the color red - we can expect to know what it is only by experiencing it (1902: 40).

The Person as an Object Unto Himself

Mead's work (1934) offers perhaps the most convincing statement on the development of the self. Mead agreed with James that the essence of the self was contained in the I - Me distinction. And, like Cooley, he viewed the self as a social phenomenon. Mead's contribution to the

study of self centers on the self as a symbol using or symbol dependent process. In their analysis of Mead's work, Wells and Marwell (1976) note

Through the use of language and over the course of experience and maturation the person develops the ability to take the role not only of a specific other person with respect to himself, but of a group of others - real or inferred - which corresponds to society's representation within the individual (1976: 17).

This ability to take the role of the other has been described as taking the attitude of the other with respect to the individual himself. If one takes this stance, the self can then be viewed as a set of reflexive actions emerging from a specific social situation. Wells and Marwell (1976: 18) link this conception of self to a more general discussion of two issues critical to self esteem: multiple selves and the global self can be viewed as complementary rather than opposing phenomena, and self-esteem can be considered as an aspect of self attitudes in general.

For Coopersmith (1967) self-esteem is the range of attitudes and beliefs that each individual brings with him when dealing with the world. Included in self-esteem are beliefs about success and failure, on how much effort to expend, whether failure will hurt or whether one will become more capable as a result of the experience. Self-esteem "provides the mental set that prepares the person to respond according to expectations of success, acceptance, and personal strength" (1981: 1).

Self-esteem refers to the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself or herself. Self-esteem expresses an attitude of approval or dis-

approval and indicates the extent to which a person believes him or herself capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, a person's self-esteem is a judgment of worthiness that is expressed by the attitudes he or she holds toward the self. It is a subjective experience conveyed to others by verbal report and other overt expressive behavior (1981: 5).

Coopersmith states that three features of his definition require elaboration. First, the definition centers on the relatively enduring estimate of general self-esteem instead of on specific or temporary changes in evaluation. Secondly, although self-esteem may vary across different areas of experience, the individual's overall appraisal allows him to arrive at a general level of self-esteem. Lastly, the term self-evaluation refers to a judgmental process in which the individual examines his performance, competencies and attributes according to personal standards and values, and arrives at a decision on his worthiness.

The Self and Realistic Adaptation to the World

Psychoanalytic theories have had an impact on the study of the self beginning with the work of Freud but more explicitly with later efforts, Adler, Horney, and Fromm among them. This latter group dealt more directly with self-conception and self-esteem as a reflexive structure. The role which innate self-drives play in motivating behavior is central to the work of all three.

Adler's (1935) description of "superiority striving" stressed the biological, that is, physical properties or defects, which were the basis for striving. For Horney (1950), an individual's wish to value himself and be valued by others resulted in "self-realization" and precipitated either self-esteem or self-alienation. Fromm's (1941) orientation toward "self fulfillment" examines the relation between an individual's regard for himself and the manner(s) in which he deals with other persons. For Fromm, self-love must be present before an individual can love others.

The Self as Perceived Object in the Phenomenal Field

Self Actualization

Maslow's (1954) work in the study of self, self-concept and self-esteem focuses on self-actualization. He posited that each individual had a variety of needs which could be arranged hierarchically in five groups from the most basic to the highest: (1) physiological needs, (2) safety or security needs, (3) needs for love or belonging, (4) esteem needs, and (5) need for self-actualization. According to Maslow's hierarchy, basic needs take priority and must be met before higher needs become important. For this reason, Maslow's conception of self-esteem as a higher level need has been identified with "dominance feeling," that is, sureness, sense of mastery, pride, or feelings of superiority in dealing with objects and other people.

Self-Acceptance

For Rogers (1950), a person's perceptions and cognitions of his abilities, actions and interactions with his social milieu constitute self-regarding attitudes. The element of evaluation which Rogers introduced into the discussion of self-regarding attitudes appears to be a central issue. A self-regarding attitude has three major components: the content of the attitude which Rogers explains as a cognitive dimension; a judgment about that content relative to some standards (an evaluative dimension); and some resultant feeling attached to that judgment (an affective dimension). It is this last dimension, the affective, to which self-acceptance applies.

For Rogers, the self-structure is an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness" (1950: 379). A consistent self-structure or "organized picture" is achievable through an honest and flexible self-appraisal or the use of defensive behaviors.

Patterson (1961) summarizes The central ideas in Roger's theory of self have been summarized as follows:

1. The theory of the self, as part of the general personality theory, is phenomenological. The essence of phenomenology is that "man lives essentially in his own personal and subjective world".
2. The self becomes differentiated from the environment through transactions, particularly with the social environment. The process is not detailed by Rogers and presumably takes place along lines described by Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934).
3. The self-concept is the organization of the perceptions of the self. It is the self-concept, rather than any "real" self, which is of signi-

ficance in personality and behavior. As Combs and Snygg note, the existence of a "real" self is a philosophical question, since it cannot be observed directly (1959: 123).

4. The self-concept becomes the most significant determinant of response to the environment. It governs the perceptions or meanings attributed to the environment.
5. Whether learned or inherent, a need for positive regard from others develops or emerges with the self-concept. While Rogers leans toward attributing this need to learning, others include it as an element of the self-actualizing tendency.
6. A need for positive self-regard, or self-esteem, according to Rogers, likewise is learned through internalization or introjection of experiences of positive regard by others. But, alternatively, it may be an aspect of the self-actualizing tendency.
7. When positive self-regard depends on evaluations by others, discrepancies may develop between the needs of the organism and the needs of the self-concept for positive self-regard. Thus there is incongruence between the self and experience, or psychological maladjustment. Maladjustment is the result of attempting to preserve the existing self-concept from the threat of experiences which are inconsistent with it, leading to selective perception and distortion or denial of experience (Patterson, 1961: 7-8).

Theoretical Foundations for Examining the Self-Concept

The foregoing discussion has touched only on the main western historical perspectives on the study of the self. In this section, the basic ideas reviewed in the previous section will be analyzed to achieve two objectives. The first objective is to discuss a variety of definitions

or ways of looking at the self. The second objective is to develop an operational meaning for self-concept prior to moving to a discussion of self-concept and the adult learner.

Toward a Definition

As was demonstrated by the historical perspectives on the concept of self, there are many ways of approaching a definition of the self. For the present discussion, six viewpoints (Soares and Soares, 1981) will be contrasted. They are:

- o the self as fact or artifact?
- o the self as subject or object?
- o the self as structure or process?
- o the self as single or multiple?
- o the self as resource or value?, and
- o the self as figure or ground?

The Self as Fact or Artifact?

As the self cannot be directly observed, its essence or existence must be inferred from observable behaviors or from individual self-report. The self-concept is thus a construct.

The Self as Subject or Object?

Is the self I or Me? The self-concept is both. The organism perceives the self and is at the same time perceived. The concept of self also determines how the organism sees the self. For these reasons, the self-concept influences the organism's choices while being influenced by those choices.

Identity, according to Parsons (1968: 13), is the problem of "locating oneself in the system, which is particularly difficult because location in this sense is not merely a matter of cognitive recognition of fact and its interpretation but of commitment to alternatives within a broad range of choice." According to Parsons there are three primary subsystems for action: the individual personality, the social system and the cultural system. There are two crucial general points in his theory of action. First, every individual in "any system of human cultural level social interaction" might be treated as an "actor who is motivated," that is, someone who has wants, goals, value-commitments and effects or feelings, "as an object of orientation, not only for the other across in the system but also for himself" (1968: 14). Second, Parsons believed that "every individual is involved in multiple interactive systems, so that part of his motivational system which is "engaged" will vary from one interaction to another, just as his significance as object will vary.

The Self as Structure or Process?

The self-concept is viewed as both. The parts of the self which constitute the whole must be considered along with the dynamics of the self-concept as the organism is experiencing. The self-concept can be described at any moment, but remains resistant to change. The self-concept is elastic and durable, though neither permanent nor ephemeral. Goffman (1968: 320) notes that the "self as an image is pieced together from the expressive implications of the full flow of events in an under-

taking." He likens the self to a player in a game who copes "honorably or dishonorably, diplomatically or undiplomatically with the judgmental contingencies of the game." The individual, he believes, appears to have "a special license to accept mistreatment at his own hands that he does not have the right to accept from others."

The Self as Single or Multiple?

Consistency is the one quality which forms the basis of self-concept formulations. There may well be variations in the description of self deriving from the variety of roles the individual fulfills -- student, sibling, laborer, mother, teacher. These variations may also evolve from the activities in which the individual engages. Thus, the self-concept has many dimensions.

Erikson (1950) noted that the specific contents of the experience were not so important in furnishing the person with an identity or a sense of self. What was of greater importance was the individual's ability or capacity to recognize continuity. The fact that separate experiences belong to the same being, he believed, is central to self definition.

Communication among individuals is, as Gergen (Gordon and Gergen, 1968: 25) noted, greatly increased through the availability of self-concepts. "An individual who does not possess a sizeable number of labels for himself has truly a difficult time in contemporary society."

The Self as Resource or Value?

The self is both means and ends. Individual abilities are involved in seeking goals which bring success and failure. The self is an instrument of evaluation and assessment used in many situations. Through use, it becomes a resource and as a result, a prized object of worth.

As Turner (1968: 97) explains, "the self-conception is subject to recurring empirical test." Particular conceptions of self lose their "essential attribute of reality" unless they "can be implemented to produce a supporting self-image on appropriate occasions." "The self-conception," he continues, "is more extensively shaped by what the person would like to be or is trying to be."

The Self as Figure or Ground?

The self alternates between the two as it cannot be both at the same time. It is figure when the individual is preserving or enhancing it. It becomes a frame of reference for evaluations, or ground, when the organism is experiencing reality.

The human agent is seen, Tiryakian (1968: 76) notes, as an emotional being who seeks to find meaning in his transactions with reality, "... he is a being who fundamentally seeks meaning and a sense to life which cannot be reduced to biological gratification."

The self is a set of possibilities which become realized in time, with their actualization being a function of the subject's volition and acts of choice. Tiryakian points out that in an existential model of the self, the primary movement is "forward striving, future-oriented unfolding."

Becoming is not random or due to chance factors solely, but the resultant of a) the self's possibilities ... and b) objective environmental circumstances (1968: 79).

Openness of the personality structure is inherent in the existential model of the self, being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world means to participate in social time and thus in history.

"I am today what I am in part because of my historical past and in part because of what I anticipate to be my historical future" (Tiryakian 1968: 80).

When thus viewed, self-awareness is not just cognitive awareness of one's boundaries and limitations but also an awareness of one's historical transcendence, which includes oneness with one's peers.

Toward an Operational Meaning

How does one go about defining self-concept operationally if it is all of the things mentioned in the foregoing section? Theorists and practitioners alike have used the term self-concept synonymously with self-image, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-appraisal and self-regard.

Wylie (1974) uses the term self-regard as an inclusive descriptor under which she subsumes the more particularistic terms of self-love,

self-confidence, self-satisfaction, self-worth, sense of adequacy, personal efficacy or sense of competence. She considers self-regard more neutral in tone, less bound in theory and less specific than the term self-esteem.

As Combs and Soper have noted (1957), the self-concept may be operationally defined as the individual's statement about himself. These statements do not always correspond to the individual's perception of self, and may be inaccurate for several reasons, unwillingness or inability to give an accurate report among them. As Patterson (1961) notes, there are no other approaches to determining the self-concept, since by definition it is the perception of the self by the individual, and no other person can report on or describe it adequately.

Soares and Soares (1980: 9) suggest that the term self-perception seems most workable. As the self is determined by the interaction of the individual with significant others, and the way he views their feelings toward him, perceptions of self seem not only more feasible but also more measurable. They posit that the self-concept is the system of perceptions which the individual formulates of himself in awareness of his distinctive existence. As the following section points out, educational experiences in adulthood tend to heighten the learner's awareness of his or her distinctive existence.

Self-Concept, The Adult Learner and Continuity with the Environment

Almost two decades ago, the editors of Basic Education for the Disadvantaged Adult (Lanning and Many, 1966) noted that existing research dealing with the psychological and social factors of adult literacy had been limited. Much inference, at that time, was made from related research in the areas of psychology, sociology and social psychology. Today, one could say that the same conditions prevail. This section of the chapter presents a discussion of several social and psychological implications of literacy and illiteracy and how they interface with the literature on self-concept. The combination of factors from the two bodies of literature are then used to formulate a series of questions which guide the discussion in Chapters Four and Five.

Specific themes treated in this section are:

- o contributions to adult learning theory;
- o psychological characteristics thought to affect adult learning; and
- o motivations to learn and social and personal expectations.

Contributions to Adult Learning Theory

Beginning with the appearance of Adult Learning (1928), Thorndike pioneered an effort to determine how and how much adults learn. His work, and that of Kidd (1973), Knowles (1971), Knox (1977), and Lorge (19), have provided the scientific basis for the development of adult pedagogy, or andragogy which Knowles describes as the art and science of

helping adults learn. For all of the foregoing, and especially for Knowles, ego involvement is the key to successful adult learning.

In her 1977 review of nonformal adult learning, Srinivasan highlights recent influences on adult learning theory. Her analysis contrasts the work of educators, psychologists and sociologists who have contributed toward the concept of adult learning as a process. She cites the work of Illich and Freire and their attack on traditional education and their concern for the dignity and worth of the individual. Both educators expressed major concern for the traditional role of teachers and how teacher-dominated education impacts on the learners' self-respect. For both, and as for Dewey (1906), education must contribute to a new sense of self-hood and cause the learner to initially examine his social situation before attempting change.

Srinivasan notes that the work of Freire and Illich was preceded by several decades by the efforts of Rogers and Maslow who stressed not only non-directive learning but also self-awareness, self-actualization and the right to self-direction. Both psychologists prescribed that the way to a better life was possible when learners became capable of perceiving of themselves in new ways. As Srinivasan notes, "positive action is ... an expression of positive perceptions and feelings, and in this sense, self-actualizing behavior is expressive, rather than just coping behavior" (1977: 10).

In the last part of her analysis of contributions to adult learning theory, Srinivasan contrasts the humanistic stance of Bruner with the behavioristic orientation of Skinner to highlight the need for an adult's

development of both self-actualizing, expressive behaviors with coping, problem-solving behaviors. An underlying assumption of Bruner's work is that cognitive learning takes place best when inquiry is prompted by the learner's own motivations. This theme is also present in the work of Piaget (1950) and Dewey (1961). Skinner, on the other hand, advocates for a technology of behavior in which the responsibility for achievement is shifted from the learner to the environment.

Psychological Characteristics Thought to Affect Adult Learning

Self-Concept

The self-concept of a child is that of a dependent person. As the individual moves toward adulthood, not only does he become aware of being capable of making decisions but he also develops a need for others to see him as being capable of self-direction. By the time an individual has matured, he has come to regard himself as a certain type of person with specific strengths and weaknesses. His or her self concept is multi-faceted and more complex.

As noted in the earlier review of literature, an individual's self-concept influences most of what he does. Adults tend to be more realistic in the learning activities which they chose than do children. That is to say, adults recognize those tasks which are beyond their grasp or ability. Because of this mature view, adults tend to resent being placed in learning situations which do not respect their self-concept of maturity.

Many adults underestimate their abilities to excel as learners and in undertaking new learning. This tendency is what McClusky (1972) refers to as the adult self-concept as a nonlearner. Typically, the adult perceives of himself as a nonlearner, as does society in general. An adult's self-image as a worker and as an individual with family responsibilities is clear and well-established. At the same time, the self-image and that which others have stress that young people, more than adults, are learners.

Failure to internalize the learner role, inability to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses and lack of respect for the individual's self-concept of maturity can all restrain the adult's learning potential. Although the growth potential is present for all, not all adult learners will be guided into that crucial realm of discovery.

Need Fulfillment

Fay (1966) notes that a second psychological characteristic of adult learners is their orientation toward need fulfillment. Adults develop a highly socialized set of needs including community and economic status, vocational and occupational achievement and success as a parent, for example. Needs such as these serve as strong motivating factors in adult learning, which as a result tends to be goal oriented, with goals being rooted in the not-too-distant future.

Social psychology research has approached the problem of need fulfillment (motivation) by means of the concept of level of aspiration. The major premise is that the individual will raise or lower his goals within certain frames of reference relevant to those goals. The psychological rationale for the operation of social frames of reference is that goals are picked in terms of preservation of one's self-image and the level of ego-involvement in any particular decision. Both motivation for learning and the social determinants or anchoring points effecting an individual's level of aspiration are discussed later in this section.

Conformity and Inhibition

The values, morals and standards of the particular culture and social milieu are assimilated by the individual as he matures in age and gains experience. One learns what is expected and what is considered normal. As an individual continues to act out his roles, an increasing level of conformity is achieved. Much of this role acting is linked directly to what the individual feels is expected of him. As a result, he often subordinates his natural impulses and desires.

Adults tend to be more inhibited as learners than do children. While the child reacts candidly, the adult tends to react within the prescribed boundaries of his role. Learning involves taking risks. As learning involves change and change in turn involves risks, adults may not be willing to deviate from the known and approach the uncertainties of what the new may bring.

Murphy (1954), in commenting on adult learning and "socially learned possibilities" and the restriction of personal drives through social controls, noted that the adult has not fewer but more emotional associations with factual information (than do children) although we usually assume that he has less, because the devices of control are more elaborate and better covered in the adult. Kirchner (1966: 92) cites a major motivational factor in this process as being the fear of not having the right, socially approved feelings, tastes and values.

Specialized Interests

As an individual matures in age, his range of interests and activities narrow and become much more specialized. An adult learner voluntarily participating in a learning activity will be motivated because the activity is one of his choice and one for which he sees an immediate application. Often, the adult learner will be more specialized or knowledgeable about a subject than a teacher and respect for that knowledge will have substantial influence on the adults participation and achievement.

Adult Anxieties

As a person ages, generalized anxiety increases. If learning situations contain too much emotional stress for the adult, both motivation and participation will be affected.

Motivation to Learn

Sources of Motivation

A central question in adult education is that of "what initiates and sustains behavior." For purposes of this discussion we shall assume that motivation to learn is what Etheridge (1974) has referred to as a "complex blend" of different interests, values, attitudes, environments, aspirations, and self-concepts. The psychological characteristics described in the foregoing section often impact on individual motivation to participate in adult learning settings. In this section, generalizations on motivation drawn from the foregoing discussion and additional material are presented.

Recent research on motivation emphasizes the importance of cognitive categories or attributes people apply to themselves (Weiner, 1974). When people view themselves as inadequate and thus responsible for their own failure, for example, they may respond quite differently in an achievement situation than if they view the environment as the barrier to success.

Motivation has been characterized by many researchers in terms of 1) drives or sources of behavior, which are thought to be unlearned; 2) stimulation, or the need for sensory input from the environment in order to activate behavior; 3) needs systems which influence actual levels of achievement; 4) levels of aspiration which reflect degrees of success or failure; 5) goal setting which is a determinant of achievement; 6) developmental tasks which have their origins in the social, psychological and

physiological development and which are a source of behavior, and 7) crises which are a source and direction of behavior, i.e., behavior is directed toward crises resolution.

Developmental Tasks

Developmental tasks (Havinghurst, 1961) are comprised of a set of skills and competencies that the individual acquires as he gains mastery over the environment. Specific tasks may reflect gains in motor skills, intellectual or social skills, and emotional skills. Mastery of tasks of later stages of development is often dependent on the successful acquisition of earlier and simpler skills. A person's orientation or stance toward the world at any one time depends on the ability to utilize and integrate intellectual, emotional and social skills.

Developmental tasks of particular interest to the age groups under consideration in this study include:

<u>Life Stage</u>	<u>Developmental Tasks</u>
Later adolescence (18-22)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Autonomy from parents 2. Sex role identity 3. Internalized morality 4. Career choice
Early Adulthood (23-30)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marriage 2. Childbearing 3. Work 4. Lifestyle
Middle Adulthood (30-50)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management of the household 2. Childrearing 3. Management of Career

Crises

Erikson (1950) discusses psychological crises or a person's psychological efforts to adjust to the demands of the social environment at each stage of development. Crises in this context refer to a normal set of stresses and strains rather than extraordinary events. Erikson postulates that at each stage of development society makes demands on the individual. These demands differ from stage to stage. The individual experiences the demands as mild guidelines and expectations for behavior. Generally, as an individual nears the end of a specific stage of development he is forced to seek some type of resolution to the demand. He then adjusts himself to the demand while translating societal demands into personal terms and action.

Erikson's developmental stages and respective psychosocial crises impacting on adult learners are as follows:

<u>Life Stage</u>	<u>Developmental Tasks</u>
Early School Age (5-7)	Initiative versus guilt
Middle School Age (8-12)	Industry versus inferiority
Early Adolescence (13-17)	Group identity versus alienation
Later Adolescence (18-22)	Individual identify versus role diffusion
Young Adulthood (23-30)	Intimacy versus isolation
Middle Adulthood (31-50)	Generativity versus stagnation

Erikson proposed that every psychosocial crisis reflected some discrepancy between the developmental competencies of the individual at the beginning of the stage and the societal resources for more effective, integrated functioning. Certain kinds of psychological work and social interactions appear to be necessary in order for a person to continue to

grow at each life stage. The central processes for resolution of psychosocial conflict for the life stages listed above are:

<u>Life Stage</u>	<u>Central Process</u>
Early School Age (5-7)	Identification
Middle School Age (8-12)	Education
Early Adolescence (13-17)	Peer pressure
Later Adolescence (18-22)	Role experimentation
Young Adulthood (23-30)	Mutuality among peers
Middle Adulthood (31-50)	Person-environment fit and creativity

The processes listed above lead to the acquisition of new sets of psychosocial skills, to the resolution of psychosocial crises, and to successful coping at each life stage. Coping behavior refers to active efforts to resolve stress and to create new solutions to the challenges of the various developmental stages. According to White (1974), there are three components to the coping process: a) the ability to gain and process new information; b) the ability to maintain control over one's emotional state; and 3) the ability to move freely in one's environment.

Readiness

Closely related to motivation and the discussion of developmental tasks and crisis is readiness. As Etheridge (1974: 29) notes, readiness is a developmental state in the life of the learner that results from physiological growth and decline, psychological conditioning, and from experiences in living and learning. It is a stage of time in the life of the individual when learning comes easily, effectively, and without emotional disturbances or interference. Readiness is not a separate and disparate characteristic of the learner. It is a condition brought about

by many factors such as physiological maturation, cultural background and pressure, mental capacity, personal values and aspirations, verbal acuity and emotional and social adjustments.

Havinghurst (1961) relates learning readiness to developmental tasks and the teachable moment when the physical condition is fully prepared and societal expectations are understood. It is hypothesized that a specific level of awareness or readiness must be obtained before individuals can determine what is to their benefit and act upon it. In reading research on adult learners, Gudschinsky (1965) noted that it is crucial for teachers of adults to be able to recognize that the adult is ready to learn and move toward accomplishing the reading task. Similar observations can be found in vocational research among adults. Gibbons and Lohnes (1968) identified eight variables which indicate "readiness for vocational planning." They are:

- Variable 1. Awareness of personal characteristics -- abilities, interests, values -- in relation to curricular choices as well as the relationships of different curricula choices to occupational choices.
- Variable 2. Awareness of personal characteristics and educational requirements in relation to occupational choice.
- Variable 3. Ability to accurately identify personal strengths and weaknesses relating to educational and vocational choices.
- Variable 4. The accuracy of one's self-estimates of ability in comparison to levels of actual achievement.
- Variable 5. The evidence used by a person for self-appraisal.

- Variable 6. Awareness of interests and their relation to choice options.
- Variable 7. Awareness of values and their relation to occupational choices.
- Variable 8. Willingness to take responsibility for one's choice.

Thus, a combination of factors interact to determine the adult learner's readiness. Although the physiological requirements may be in place and the social moment ripe, the learner may lack the motivation to acquire an adequate level of proficiency and optimal learning will not take place. Or, the motivation may be present as may the physical maturity but without the capabilities required to master the skill, learning will not progress rapidly.

And, as noted earlier, willingness to accept new learning or changes in behavior patterns also is connected with readiness. Distrust, fear and insecurity are often manifested behaviors when new learning is introduced. Accepting new behaviors and abandoning old ones is serious work. The perceived-self is identified with the old behaviors and values; success with new behaviors will depend heavily on their valorization by the individual and their integration into his perception of self.

Self-Concept Theory of Motivation and Learning

In examining self-concept literature, adult learning theory and characteristics of adult learners in the same chapter, the goal has been to draw attention to the affect and affective behavior of adults and move

toward a conceptual framework for examining the affective behavior associated with the acquisition of new levels of literacy among adults. For the purposes of this discussion, the idea of affect is very simple; affect is the experiencing of positive or negative feelings. This experience has motivational properties. Affective behavior is then those actions which an individual learns as expressions of feelings or emotions. Terms such as interests, attitudes and values are used to indicate some affective disposition and they are the indicators that cognitive matter has motivational affects associated with it.

In 1965, Educational Leadership devoted an issue to affective learning. The editorial for this issue noted:

"It could well come about that this is one of the most important issues in the history of this publication. The reason for this statement is that it has now become abundantly clear from research and from reason, that how a person feels is more important than what he knows. This seems true because how one feels controls behavior, while what one knows does not. What one knows is used in behavior, to be sure, but the way it is used depends upon positive or negative feelings. It is possible to be a saint or a demon with similar knowledge" (Kelly: 1965, p. 455).

This interest in the idea that a person's feelings are important in the learning process is central to the current study. As the next section demonstrates, the affective domain is central to an individual's perceptions of self in the world, or understanding of his or her distinctive existence. As Chapter Five will show, the literacy experience has a definite impact on one's understanding of that distinctive existence.

Perceived Self in the World

Beatty (1976) presents a self-concept model which provides a useful optic for examining adult learner self-concept. He bases his model on the hypothesis that an individual organizes his experiences around a picture of himself functioning in the world. The individual's perception of self in the world develops as one is reacted to by others. These reactions are as complex as the number of roles the individual plays are numerous. The individual is appraised in sex roles, cultural roles, and occupational roles. This part of the self which emerges, Beatty calls the perceived self in the world. To the individual, this perception is who he is and it determines how he relates to other people in the world. In short, it is the individual's own picture of himself.

The perceived self, according to Beatty, changes as behaviors formerly identified with the self cease to be reinforced, and a new image, which is the object of reinforcement, replaces the old one. This process happens as the individual moves from one part of his world to another, changes roles or anticipates role changes. Beatty posits that at any one time the individual's behavior will be consistent with the picture he holds of himself.

Concept of Adequacy

Concurrent with the development of the perceived self in the world, Beatty suggests that another important part of the self concept emerges or evolves: the concept of adequacy. Not only does the individual experience appraisals or evaluations, but he is appraised in terms of

what he should or could be like. The individual has models for his behavior, the significant others of our earlier discussion in this chapter. Through identification and imitation the individual develops what Beatty calls the concept of adequacy which is a model of what one should be like in order to satisfy one's needs and function effectively.

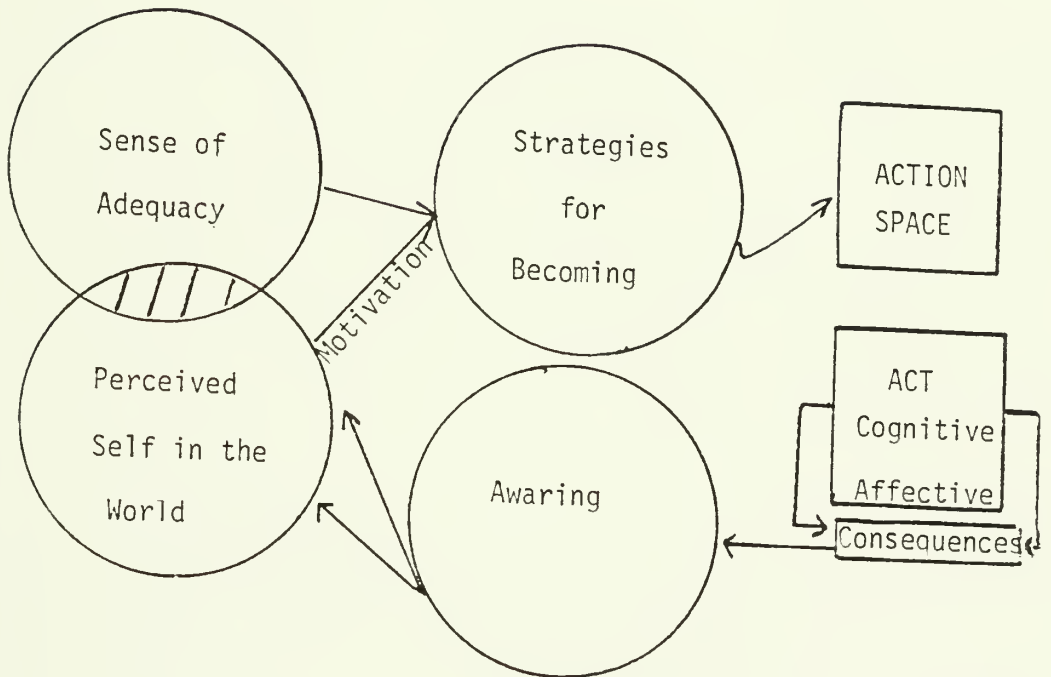
The diagram on the next page (Beatty and Clark, 1968) illustrates Beatty's model of self-concept. As can be seen, the perceived self in the world and the concept of adequacy overlap. As the individual matures, he sees himself as being adequate in some ways, perhaps not in others. For example, the way the individual lives his life, eats and dresses or earns his living may all be adequate and there is little motivation to change them. But, discrepancies exist in the portion where the two parts of the self-concept do not overlap. These discrepancies are the major source of motivation for change, learning and growth as the individual moves toward the ideal self or adequate self.

Organizing Centers of Self-Concept

Beatty suggests that all behavior is related to one or more of four organizing centers in the self concept:

- o personal worth
- o coping
- o ability to express
- o autonomy (ability to make choices)

FIGURE 3.1
 ORGANIZING CENTERS OF SELF-CONCEPT (FEELINGS/COGNITIONS)



Source: Gephart et al. Evaluation in the Affective Domain, 1976, p. 128.

Worth

Feelings and cognitions of personal worth constitutes the first organizing center. Not only does each person have feelings about how worthy he is, but also has a concept of what "perfect worthiness" would be. Individuals are motivated to behave in ways which increase feelings of personal worth. Although feelings of personal worth develop early in a person's life, those feelings are affected by a wide range of success or failure situations in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Coping

Feelings and cognitions related to coping with the world constitute a second organizing center for the self-concept. Increased confidence comes from positive experiences with the world -- mastery of new skills, acquisition of new knowledge, gaining and holding employment. The abilities of significant others set a standard for coping and a desired goal for the individual.

Learning to cope is a complex process and requires the intervention not only of family, but usually of organizations and institutions within society. If the discrepancy between an individual's perceived ability to cope and his concept of adequacy is small, the individual feels motivated, challenged and confident as he learns. If the discrepancy is large or begins to increase, the individual usually will exhibit negative feelings about learning. The most effective learning will be that which develops a feeling that the individual is increasing his ability to cope with the world.

Expressing

For Beatty, the third organizing center of the self-concept is the need to express or have expressive experiences in which strong positive emotions can emerge. Given the constraints of our educational systems and modes of familial interaction, many individuals do not learn appropriate ways of expressing emotions or for being with someone else who is expressing emotions. If the discrepancy is great between how an individual perceives himself handling emotion producing situations and the way one sees an adequate person handling the situation, the individual will tend to cap his feelings, hide them or become passive. This kind of behavior, over time, can develop into a severe impediment for adolescents and young adults.

Autonomy

Autonomy, Beatty's fourth organizational center for the self-concept, comprises those feelings that one has about individual abilities to make choices which have a significant effect on one's life. The individual begins life highly dependent upon others. As the individual develops feelings of worth, abilities to cope and express, he learns that there are alternative courses of behavior. An individual often feels that he has no choice in a particular matter and feels that he has no control over aspects of his life. The person who perceives himself differently from his picture of adequacy may complain, perhaps is docile with authority, or feels controlled and helpless to change many aspects of his

life. When the discrepancy is small, the person appears to be independent and optimistic that he can better his situation.

Motivation and Behavior

At the heart of Beatty's model is motivation and behavior. These two issues provide the basis for looking at the components of the learning environment or action space in the diagram, which influences the affect and affective development of the learner.

As Beatty notes (1976: 133), "motivation to maintain the self, and when the opportunity presents itself, to reduce the discrepancies between the perceived self in the world and the concept of adequacy, are present at all times." An individual's actions will bring into play the motivations inherent in whichever is the appropriate organizing center of the self. When the individual is working on learning some skill, his actions are energized by the motivation to cope more adequately.

The individual learns, over time, how to maintain and enhance the self. These "strategies for becoming" (Rogers, 1950) may include an orientation toward either dependency or independence given the nature of the goal. In any case, these strategies or goals are incorporated into the self to offer opportunities for greater adequacy.

Once in the action space, or learning environment, the individual assesses that space and acts in ways calculated to either maintain the perceived self or gain new feelings of adequacy. Each act has both cognitive and affective content.

Aware-ing

Aware-ing is Beatty's term for the process in which the consequences of the individual's actions in the action space are evaluated in terms of consistency with the self-concept. If the individual perceives the action as being consistent, then it is accepted and evaluated in relation to adequacy. If the consequence proves to be inconsistent with the self-concept, it is rationalized or denied. The kinds of consequences which are provided to learners should contribute to a gradual building of feelings of confidence in coping or of personal worth, ability to make decisions or successes in expressing.

Although the aware-ing process is thought to be gradual in nature, Rogers (1961) notes the possibility of a more rapid change. By changing a minor item in the gestalt of the person, it is possible to alter the whole pattern of organization.

Our speculations here are two-fold. The first is that acquisition of literacy skills in early adulthood might precipitate change in the whole pattern of the organization. The second is that the learning environment has an impact on the cognitive-affective elements which make up the self-concept; these are the factors which have a significant effect on the individual's feelings about himself.

Guiding Questions

These speculations generate a number of questions which guide our attention in the remainder of this study. They are:

1. What factors lead an individual to seek his goals in educational settings? To do so, one needs to have an awareness of education as a positive value for solving problems in a general sense. Does the widely held assumption that education equates success and happiness hold true for those who have always been outside the formal school setting?
2. What is the role of education (literacy) in bringing about a broader view of what is relevant to the individual?
3. How does the adult learner explain the cognitive-affective elements of the literacy experience? That is, how does the new literate express his literacy self-concept?
4. What are the sources of perceived self-concept among new-literates? Do significant others play a major role?
5. When social needs are viewed as developmental tasks, how can one isolate the teachable moments when a particular role must be filled? For example, how important are vocational motives in determining educational participation? Does the developmental task of career choice and work motivate non-schooled adults to seek out educational or training experiences?

C H A P T E R F O U R

RESEARCH METHODS AND APPROACH: FINDING OUT IF ONE PERSON'S FACT IS ANOTHER'S FICTION

Armando: How hast thou purchased this experience?

Moth: By my penny of observation.

Love's Labor Lost

Introduction

The field research portion of this study was qualitative in nature. The data collected consisted of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviors. It included direct quotations from individuals about their experiences, attitudes and beliefs and thoughts. The data was collected without attempting to fit either program activities or people's experiences into predetermined, standardized categories. Above all, the data provided depth and detail.

The field study, which dealt with the experiences of seven individuals who had been recent participants in urban-based literacy programs, was based on two important assumptions. First, the literacy experience is intensely personal. Secondly, the best way to gain an understanding

of the personal nature of that experience is through the intimate and qualitative realm of the participants' own thinking, feelings and perceptions about the changes which they see as having occurred in themselves and their immediate environment as a result of their literacy experience.

The perspective of the study is thus a phenomenological one. The concern is with how individual respondents actually progressed through the literacy experience and what actions each took as a result of their participation. Equally important to the discussion are the individuals' explanations and self-report of the consequences of those actions and the resultant changes which they perceived in their lives and in their self-concept.

The choice of the qualitative approach was not a difficult one. Orthodox measurement of the self-concept or self-esteem calls for the use of standardized procedures, objective administration of the instruments and quantification of results. As explained in Chapter One, the impetus for this study comes from the previous lack of attention to the qualitative impact of literacy on people's lives and the past obsession with measurement of the quantifiable outputs of literacy activities. As Wylie (1964/71) notes, most self-concept and self-esteem measures have been derived for a particular study or set of studies, used in those instances and then forgotten without much effort to assess or verify the adequacy of the measurement. Of those which were reviewed for consideration in this study, none were judged appropriate.

The Research Strategy

The research strategy was one which combined ethnographic field research methods with life history interviewing of recent literacy program participants in urban settings. The research setting for this study was the Route 1 corridor as it leaves Washington, D.C. and proceeds south through Alexandria into the Virginia countryside. Also known as the "Queen of the Franchise Strips," this section of Route 1 has experienced a high incidence of recurring social and welfare problems over the past ten years. Between the major shopping centers and discount department stores, the highway is lined with abandoned buildings, a series of low-income housing developments, motels, thrift shops, trailer courts and fast-food outlets. Substantial portions of the Route 1 corridor area are characterized by poverty, high unemployment, high crime, low school attendance and high demand for both governmental and non-governmental social services ranging from store-front literacy and job counseling centers, to emergency services for victims of family violence, to distribution points for free clothing, food and other forms of immediate assistance. In many instances the clients for these services are a highly transient population.

Through social agencies and government-funded organizations in the immediate area, the researcher was able to assess the magnitude of the population and identify educational sites with on-going programs from which prospective interviewees might be recruited. These programs ranged from store-front literacy and adult basic education operations, to church

sponsored learning groups, to job counselling centers to crises intervention agencies. Through contacts with four literacy organizations and job counseling sites, a number of possible interviewees were identified. The researcher made initial contacts with each prospective interviewee personally to explain the reason for the contact and inquire of the person's willingness to be interviewed. Once an informant indicated he or she was willing to be interviewed, the researcher proceeded with structured interviews at a place and time chosen by the interviewee. All interviews were conducted without financial incentives or other compensation. A total of 62 perspective interviewees were contacted before arriving at a universe of seven as presented in this chapter and in Chapter Five.

The Structured Interviews

The objective of the structured interviews was to permit the researcher to see and understand the immediate world as seen by the informants and to ascertain how the literacy experience had impacted on each individual's life. The purpose of gathering the data in open-ended questions was to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people about their literacy experience without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories. Lofland (1971) has explained that

In order to capture participants "in their own terms" one must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality. That, indeed, is the first principle of qualitative analysis.

Direct quotation is the basic source of raw data in this study. It reveals respondents' levels of emotion about the literacy experience, the way in which they organize their public and private worlds, their thoughts about what is happening and what has happened to them and around them as a result of the literacy experience, as well as their experiences and basic perceptions about being able to read and write. The task for this researcher was that of providing a framework over time within which people could respond in a way that would adequately represent their points of view about the literacy experience.

Kassam (1979), in his qualitative assessment of the impact of literacy on new literates in Tanzania, used eight major themes in structuring the "dialogues" with the new literates he interviewed. The themes were:

1. General self perceptions about being literate;
2. Status in the family neighborhood, work place and the community at large;
3. Economic well being;
4. Relationships with family members, fellow-workers, friends, neighbors and citizens;
5. Motivation for literacy;
6. Views about education and knowledge;
7. Practical uses of literacy skills in daily life;
8. Further and continuing education.

Kassam notes that each of the dialogues was stimulated and kept going through asking non-directed questions, none of which were ordered ahead of time. A conscious attempt was made to encourage and develop a dialogue as naturally and as openly as possible.

The researcher developed an open-ended interview schedule for this research along the themes suggested by the work of Kassam (1979) and additional topics drawn from modernization literature (Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Kindervatter, 1979; Lerner, 1958) as well as the work of Freire and educators influenced by him (Barndt, 1980; Smith, 1970; and Rahnema, 1975.) The themes included the following:

1. General perceptions of self
 - status in family
 - in neighborhood
 - in work place
 - in community
 - economic well being
2. General perceptions about being literate
 - relationships with family members
 - with fellow workers
 - with friends
 - with neighbors
 - motivation for literacy
 - uses of literacy in daily life
 - use of media
 - views about education
3. Self-reported abilities in dealing with existing social institutions
 - government
 - community
 - religious
4. General perceptions of current "realities"
 - change
 - youth
 - women
5. Educational and occupational aspirations
 - views on continuing and further education for self
 - occupational aspirations for self
 - views on children's education
 - occupational aspirations for children

6. Perceptions about the literacy experience
 - getting started, overcoming past frustrations
 - dealing with the new role of learner
 - maintaining interest/sustaining motivation
 - getting there and sustaining skills levels
 - using literacy skills
 - literacy for what?
 - literacy with what consequences

Through the use of an open-ended, yet structured instrument, the opportunity existed for divergence if the responses of informants did not fall "neatly" into the existing framework. Greater examination of each individual case was facilitated through the use of the interview schedule. In addition, it provided freer access to personal meanings and interpretations of the literacy experience.

The researcher conducted interviews four times with each of the seven informants, with all seven being contacted at basically the same time, i.e., within the same two to three week period. The first interviews were held in October-November, 1981. The second in January-February, 1982; the third in July-August, 1982; and the last in November, 1982. The first three sets of interviews were all in person and were structured in the same way using the interview protocol. The fourth set were done over the telephone, were shorter in nature and served mainly as an opportunity to check-up on each person's current status.

Informants chose the place of the interviews, with the choice often being a neutral one. For the two women in the study, both of whom had children, the choice was their home, and in the kitchen. Each interview was taped and transcribed verbatim. From the transcription, a "written picture" of each informant was prepared using the interview schedule as

the basic system for a preliminary organization of the material. These aspects of the self-presentation were then analyzed for content under the headings of increased self-confidence, self-acceptance, sense of competency, feelings of personal worth, efficacy, and mastery over the environment, all aspects of the self-concept.

The decision to rely on qualitative research methodologies in this study was based on only partial knowledge of the pitfalls involved. The interviews were time consuming and produced voluminous amounts of data. On a preliminary pass-through of the tapes, the researcher came to realize that some sort of inter-rater reliability measures would be necessary. A second person listened to lengthy portions of three sets of the tapes and coded or rated them by self-concept themes to see if certain themes and nuances detected by this researcher were apparent to a second party. Once this researcher was assured that his rating and classification of the data was shared or agreed upon by another listener, he proceeded with extrapolations from the complete tapes.

Interviewees were at various stages in the literacy experience when the interviewing began. Four of the seven had just finished the second cycle of a program. Three were working with individual tutors. Thus, the initial interviewing coincided with both completion and continuation of an organized learning experience. This was true for the second set of interviews. All seven were finished with courses by the time of the third and fourth interviews. This explanation is offered so that the reader can better understand where interviewees were in the learning experience.

This research was guided by a strong belief that each person constructs their own social reality and that an understanding of that reality comes best through the individual's expression of that reality. This faith sustained the use of the methods. As Rockhill has noted in her work on the use of qualitative research methods in adult education

... qualitative research allows us to preserve individual uniqueness, the integrity of individual meanings, and to view the individual as interacting with a complex reality. This is critical. As an applied field, ultimately in adult education we work with individual people, institutions, and communities, not abstractions and aggregates (1976, p. 7).

The Universe

The study was limited in scope to in-depth interviews with seven individuals, two of whom were women and five of whom were men. All respondents were white and all were born in the United States. All spoke English as their home language with only one individual reporting a knowledge of a second language. The characteristics of the sample are as follows:

Age: All respondents were between the ages of 23 and 37, well within Erikson's Early and Middle Adulthood stages.

Educational Level: Of the seven, three had attended primary school, none of them past grade six. One had attended through grades three and four, but in a class for the emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded.

One had attended through grade six when she was withdrawn by her parents because she could not read. The third had attended only through grade two due to family travel.

Four had not participated in any sort of educational program until they enrolled in their first literacy class. All seven had made multiple attempts to enrol in literacy or adult education programs prior to completing one and attaining basic literacy skills. Each person had tried at least two different programs. Four of the seven returned to the first program they had tried and completed it successfully.

All seven attended literacy courses organized by private groups and religious organizations. In three cases, the respondents had worked in one-on-one tutoring situations. The other four were in small groups of 7-10 learners. All materials were traditional, i.e., initial primers and/or skill books, with very few situation-specific materials used.

Marital Status: Of the seven, only the two women were currently married, with only one of them living with her spouse at the time of the interviews. Both had children living with them.

Living Arrangements: One of the seven still lived at home and contributed financially to the upkeep of the living arrangement. Two lived in group houses with other individuals. Two lived in one room motel apartments and the two women lived in detached houses, both of which were rented.

Employment: Only two had what they would call long term employment, one as a waitress (five years at the same restaurant) and one as a stock boy in a discount store. Three were employed as day laborers, all working in the building trades. One was unemployed and had been for six months. The remaining individual was a housewife and was self-

employed as a palmist working out of her living room.

Use of Social Services: Two of the seven claimed to have never been on welfare or unemployment benefits (the waitress and the stocker). The remaining five had, at one time or the other, received food stamps, welfare or unemployment benefits or free medical care. All seven had availed themselves of free job counseling, job referral or educational programs provided by community or governmental groups.

Profiles of The Informants

Preliminary to the discussion of findings in Chapter Five, short profiles of each of the seven participants in the field research are presented.

Mary: Married, age 34, mother of three, self-employed as a palmist. Mary and her husband Steve had come off the carnival circuit a year and a half before the interview. She had never attended school or learned to read or write anything other than her first name. Once they were settled into their rented house, Mary came to realize the consequences of her more settled life - her children needed to be in school, the rent needed to be paid regularly and new demands were placed on her limited communication skills. Learning to read became imperative after her first frustrating experience at her children's school. Mary refused to enrol in a literacy course and preferred working one-on-one with a tutor in the privacy and security of her home. Although she initially viewed learning to read and write as her major objectives, she quickly learned that becoming literate had numerous payoffs to her as a mother, in her interactions with her family and her husband, and in contacts with her business clients.

Brian: Single, age 23, stocker in large discount store. Before first grade, Brian had been diagnosed as mentally retarded and was placed in a class for the emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded. For discipline reasons he was removed from school during fourth grade. He never learned to read. At age 13, his parents found a place for him in a private home for the retarded. At age 20, he returned home to live with his mother and began to work in a sheltered workshop stapling buttons to cards. His decision to learn to read was prompted by a desire to find a different job and to show his family that he was capable of taking care of himself. When the interviews began with Brian he was well settled into what he found to be a meaningful job, one in which he used his literacy skills on a daily basis. Brian found great satisfaction in being his own boss and often related his new-found control over his environment to learning to read and write.

Leroy: Single, age 33, day laborer in building trades. One of eleven children, Leroy had not attended school in his youth. From age six he worked with his father in the family's saw mill in western North Carolina. He tried to enlist in the Army during Viet Nam only to be turned down because he couldn't read or write. He had arrived in the area from North Carolina a year before the interview. He had come looking for work and an opportunity to start over. Leroy had learned personally how not being able to read and write can impact on one's private life and sought literacy skills to make sure certain situations did not repeat themselves.

Scott: Single, 27, construction worker. Scott had come from West Virginia to look for work, which he had found easily. He had never stayed in school long enough to finish a school year and had worked as his father's helper (carpentry) from the age of 8. Eighteen months before the interview Scott had lost a promotion (and subsequently quit his job) when his foreman found out that he

could not read. His frustrations with himself were strong motivating factors in seeking help in a literacy course. Fear of failing a second time caused him to seek out special assistance in learning technical information about his trade.

Maxine: Single parent, 29, waitress, two children. Maxine had attended school through grade six but had never learned to read. Her parents removed her from school and she stayed at home to take care of younger siblings while her mother worked. Her marriage had ended in divorce. She had two children, both in school, and had held the same job for five years as a waitress. Her reasons for learning to read and write were economic. As the restaurant where she worked got larger, she could no longer "yell" her orders in. She had to learn how to read and write. Her strong sense of independence sustained her motivation to learn. Despite long hours on her feet and the demands of raising two children, she was determined to find the time for self-improvement.

Gerald: Single, 31, construction worker. Gerald was the only native of the area. As a youth, he lived on a farm outside Alexandria and attended two years of primary school. Then his father lost his job as a farm hand and the family began to travel the Florida to Connecticut migrant farm labor circuit. When Gerald came back to the area in the late 1960's he got a good job in construction work and progressed to a supervisory position. He realized that he needed to learn to read and write but put off doing it until he was confronted by a surprised yet sympathetic boss.

Gary: Single, age 29, day laborer. Gary "had drifted along Route 1" as he put it, in search of a place where he could find and keep a job. He had grown up in the hills of northern North Carolina, had never been to school or learned to read and write before enrolling in literacy classes. He enrolled in classes only after having been repeatedly

turned down for jobs because he could not fill out application forms. He had had his share of jobs where you were not asked to fill out forms (and often times did not get paid). His dream of an assured job once he could read was not fulfilled. Yet, he continued to work on developing his reading and writing skills until a job did come along.

CHAPTER FIVE

IN DIALOGUE WITH A LARGER WORLD:

NEW LITERATES TALK ABOUT THE LITERACY EXPERIENCE

Literates were significantly more likely than illiterates to have adopted such innovative practices as using toothbrushes, (.01 level). (Wright reporting on literacy research among Guatemalan villagers, in Beirn, 1969: 5).

The illiterates today are aware of being unused and unusable material; rejected, ignored and involuntary allies of those anonymous forces which expel them from civilized society ... these are the people who seldom dare ask for help, but who need it most of all. (Burnet, as quoted in Bowren and Zintz, 1978: 38).

The alienated man is every man and no man, drifting in a world that has little meaning for him and over which he exercises no power, a stranger to himself and others (Josephson and Josephson, 1962: 5).

Introduction

The field research reported on in this chapter is yet another example of an increasing number of verbal and printed messages currently being presented to the American public on literacy or illiteracy and related social economic and cultural issues. Each of the messages serve in their

own way to highlight one or more aspects of the situation. Each contrasts sharply with past research views of the literacy phenomenon and views of new literates.

News articles report on the fact that the reading and writing gap are widening as needs outdistance skills in the United States. A weekly news magazine devotes a cover story to the growing problems of illiteracy in America. A story in a large metropolitan newspaper reports on numerous cases of chemical ingestion due to low reading skills. A syndicated columnist takes a jab at federal cuts in education. The daily batch of "junk mail" includes pleas for dollars from a school for native Americans and a national literacy organization. What is the media all telling us?

Three examples follow:

"Several Are Made Ill By Drinking Detergent" read the heading on an August, 1981 article in the Washington Post. Poison control centers in Maryland and the District of Columbia reported nearly 100 cases of chemical ingestion after consumers had accidentally drunk a new lemon-scented dishwashing liquid called "Sunlight." Local residents had received free samples of the detergent, packaged in a yellow bottle featuring a picture of a juicy sliced lemon sandwiched between green letters advertising "real lemon juice" and a red strip warning "dishwashing liquid." On the bottom of the label were large letters which read, "Caution: Harmful if Swallowed."

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"Illiteracy, It Makes Us All Losers," announces a recent fundraising brochure from Laubach Literacy Action. "Twenty-five million American adults are functionally

illiterate. Thousands right in your community can't even fill out a job application. We all lose. We pay for illiteracy in many ways, including programs that treat the symptoms, but hardly ever the cause." The brochure, in bold white letters on a black background, lists the areas of "our" losses:

LOST: Dollars

An illiterate adult earns 42% less than a high school graduate. That adds up to \$8 billion a year in lost tax revenues. And \$5 billion of your taxes support welfare recipients who are unemployable due to illiteracy.

LOST: Productivity

At the same time that unemployment edges toward all time highs, American industry can't find enough employees with basic literacy skills to fill empty positions

LOST: Human Rights

20% of American adults can't make informed decisions because they can't read. They can't understand a contract or shop for a bargain. And, illiteracy among blacks and Hispanics is two and three times greater than the national average, insuring racial inequities in employment and income.

LOST: Safety

Crime - Most crimes are committed out of economic need. Since it guarantees economic need, illiteracy translates into billion dollar, crime-related destruction.

National Security - National Defense depends on sophisticated weaponry. But 27% of Army enlistees can't read training manuals written at the 7th grade level.

LOST: The Future

The number of illiterate Americans is swelled by nearly one million school dropouts each year. The U.S. News forecasts that the decline in reading skills

will lead in two decades to an elite, literate class of no more than 30% of the population.

Adults are wage earners, consumers, voters, policy makers, parents. We run the nation. And while 1/5 of us are illiterate, we can't run the nation very well.

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A Fall, 1982 syndicated column by Art Buchwald, "Bless This Mess," highlights the illiteracy problem in citing statements by Barbara Bush, the Vice President's wife, on the current illiteracy epidemic in the United States. Buchwald's offering centers on a hypothetical conversation with an Administration official. "What are we going to do if we have a nation of dummies, and your people keep cutting back on education in the federal budget?" The response offered "We have to make some hard choices We can either afford smart weapons and dumb kids or dumb weapons and smart kids." "But how can a dumb kid fire a smart weapon?" "Because they are built so anyone can fire them." After considerable discussion, the Administration official offers a final solution. "You don't solve illiteracy problems by just throwing money at them. Once we put God back into the schools, we're going to see a tremendous improvement in the education of our children, and it won't cost the taxpayer a dime. We know we are right. A nation under God is the only kind that can afford to cut its education budget to ribbons."

The messages are quite clear; there is a problem. What few seem to realize is that no action will be successful until the approaches used address the cause of the problem and not just the symptoms.

The purpose of this chapter of the study is to look closely at the self-reported literacy experiences of seven individuals. As part of this

analysis, the individual descriptions of their motivations for literacy, the dynamics of the learning experience and the consequences of the literacy experience are discussed. Each of these themes is presented from the point of view of individuals who have lived the experience rather than from the researcher's interpretative stance.

This approach, letting new literates speak for themselves in describing, assessing and evaluating the literacy experience, addresses past failures to measure the effect of the literacy experience on the qualitative aspects of the lives of formerly illiterate adults. The data, gathered from extensive in-depth interviews, provides the reader with a poignant rendering of the frustrations, fears, successes and joys involved in seven individuals' attempts to use their literacy skills to read the world while reading the word.

The chapter is organized in four sections. The first, *Initiating the Experience*, discusses motivation for participation in literacy training and treats motivational orientations, marker events, barriers to participation and expectations. In the second section, *Getting Started and Maintaining the Momentum*, respondents describe experiences during the initial sessions of the literacy programs, their frustrations with their new role as learners, and the eventual demystification of the learning process. The third section, *Getting There and Staying There*, highlights respondents' descriptions of how they use newly learned skills, their awareness of increased control over personal situations and their economic conditions. In the last section of the chapter, *Perceived Self in the World*, respondents describe how their social identify or their per-

ceived self in the world changed during the literacy experience, that is learning how to read and write and entering into dialogue with a larger world. In doing so, the analysis gives special attention to personal identity and the match between a new social fact (literacy) and changing person facts (self-esteem and self-concept).

Initiating the Experience

"Coming out," revealing one's illiteracy, is as Coles and Coppel (1982: 209) note, not something which is easily done. Individuals may have kept the problem a secret for years. This is not just because of the shame and self-blame often associated with not being able to read and write but because taking a step forward, and identifying oneself as being in need of help or remediation, means entering or re-entering the world of "school." For many who are functionally illiterate, school was the world in which illiteracy was produced and the one with which failure and damaged pride are often associated.

In this section, interviewees' descriptions of why they enrolled, how they enrolled, the barriers they had to overcome, and their expectations of the literacy program in which they enrolled are presented.

Motivation for Participation in Literacy Training

Past discussion of motivations for participation in literacy training have often been varied, but yet are classifiable. For some, the motiva-

tion is reported as vocational in orientation and usually has taken two directions: job seeking or job improvement. For others the motivational force was one of self improvement: to improve their parent image, to maintain or improve their social status, or to find a social outlet. And for a growing number of participants in U.S. literacy settings, the motivation is for the acquisition of citizenship requirements or to pass the GED (General Educational Development) examination.

The 1979 Lifelong Learning in America Study (Peterson and Associates, 1979: 112) reported that the "single most important area to understand in planning programs for adult learners is their motives for engaging in learning activities." The report notes that the majority of those who responded to survey questions about motivation for learning did so with socially acceptable responses such as "to be better informed" or "for personal satisfaction."

Motivational Orientations

Informants in the present research dispensed with the socially acceptable and spoke directly to two motivational orientations for learning which Houle's (1961) has discussed extensively goal orientations (to learn to accomplish specific objectives) and activity orientations (to learn to develop social contacts and relationships with others). None made open reference to a third orientation which Houle refers to as learning orientations (to learn for the sheer pleasure of acquiring knowledge for knowledge's sake).

In explaining why adult learners come to be motivated with one or more of the three orientations cited above, Houle (1961: 57) notes the following requirements: "the recognition of a need or interest, the will to do something about it, and the opportunity to do so." Although Houle places importance on the need or interest, he admits that there should be greater significance placed on "the external process which makes the event when it occurs, crucial in changing the pattern of life."

The work of other researchers tends to confirm Houle's classification of motivational orientations. In Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Adult Learning (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980: 13), the authors review several factor analytic studies which verify and expand Houle's classification. Related to Houle's analysis is that of Morstain and Smart (1977) in which they identify five distinct types of adult learners:

- 1) nondirected learners having no specific goals;
- 2) social learners wanting to improve their social interests and personal associations;
- 3) stimulation-seeking learners learning to escape from routine or boredom;
- 4) career-oriented learners learning because of occupational interests; and
- 5) life change learners learning to improve multiple facets of their lives - career, intellectual and social.

This classification of motivational orientations and typology of adult learners were both characteristic of those interviewed during this study.

Goal Orientations of Participants in the Study

Among goal orientations expressed by interviewees were the following:

Gerald: I did it to get the paper. That's what my boss said he had to see. If I didn't get it, I was out! Who wants to be out when it takes so long to get in? Not me! Would you?

Maxine: I wanted something I never had. The satisfaction was important for me. I was tired of my family reminding me all the time about how bad I had done or what I couldn't do.

Mary: Someday I want to know that I have the answer. It's bad to have to always ask for help ... or not know. Grandma told me that those who knows reads more than palms. That's why I'm doing this.

Brian: I did the classes because I wanted to be my own boss ... my own boss in my head. (He points to his head.) D'ya know what it's like to be a retard for twenty years?

Activity Orientations of Participants in the Study

Activity orientations cited by respondents included:

Brian: You get awful tired of hitting those buttons with the gun (stapler) all day. Know what that's like? Betch'a don't. Try it, yu'd want to change too.

Gary: I enrolled in the classes to learn how to read. It was embarassing not to be able to fill those application blanks ... always taking somebody along with you to do it for you. I took a form along with me to the first class. When the teacher asked my why I was there and what I wanted to learn, I showed him the form. He understood.

Leroy: You ain't never been faced with not readin'. It's no pretty situation to be in. I can tell you. I just wanted to be able to read something without lookin' dumb all the time.

Mary: When we stopped moving 'round, Steve and me took the kids to a school after the social worker come and told

us they had to go. When we got there, they asked us all these questions. Steve and me couldn't answer the questions. I told the lady that I can't read. She looked at Steve and he left the room. He don't know how to read yet. That's when I decided that I was going to learn how to read with the kids.

All seven interviewees fell into the category of career oriented learners who were learning because of occupational interests. It would also be easy to describe several as life change learners who had multiple improvements in mind.

Marker Events, Transformations, Passages

Of the responses noted above, several touch on the internal process which Houle cites as important in making the learning event crucial to the pattern of life. Houle's "events" have interesting parallels in "life structure" and marker events (Levinson, 1978), transformations (Gould, 1978), and passages (Sheehy, 1976).

Levinson used the concept of "life structure" as the basic design of a person's life at a given time. The evolution of the life structure during the adult years (all informants were in the age grouping which parallels Levinson's early adulthood grouping, age 17-45) involves the triple interaction between the individual's sociocultural world, his participation in the world (role prescriptions) and the conscious and unconscious aspects of the self. The examination of the individual's life structure reveals "the interrelations of self and world--to see how the self is in the world, and how the world is in the self" (1978: 42). During transitional periods, the life structure is reappraised, revised

or recreated through the choices the individual makes and the way in which he deals with the consequences of his choices.

In characterizing each choice, however, it is necessary to understand the nature of man's relationship with it, to place it within the life structure, and to see how it is connected with the self and the world (Levinson, 1978: 44).

The term "marker event" was used by Levinson to describe happenings such as birth, marriage, death, or occupational successes or failures. Adaptation to these events are made within the context of the current developmental task the individual is mastering. Three of the seven informants, who were between the ages of 22 and 28, were in a phase which Gould (1978) and Levinson (1978) characterized by development of independence, commitment to career and children. The other four were in older age groups, 29-34 and 35-43, characterized by questioning of self, marriage and career, and urgency to attain life's goals.

For Gould (1978) and Sheehy (1976) adult problems are rooted in the unfinished business of childhood. "Transformations" and "passages" represent an individual's attempts to cope with the crises and challenges of adult life through the development of an "adult consciousness" which must replace the "childhood consciousness."

The interviews with the adults in this study produced discussion of an interesting array of marker events, passages, and transformations which were related to their motivation to participate in literacy classes.

Marker Events Prompting Interviewees' Participation in Literacy Programs

Mary: I was born in a camp trailer ... don't know where. Papa don't know because the carnival was moving. Steve's the same way, only he was born in Florida. We got married and did the same thing. Two years ago, we made up our minds to stay off the road. We decided that we would just stay someplace and that would be it. It was hard ... not moving on. We had to rent a house. Then the social worker came to see why the kids wasn't in school. We took them to fill out the papers. The lady asked me to spell Angie's name. I told her that I thought it was A-n-g-y. ... She asked if I brought the birth certificates. We didn't have none to show her. She asked about John and Tony's names. I could spell John's but not Tony's. It seemed like hours ... it was making me so nervous. Steve got mad and left me with the lady to finish getting the kids in school. That's when I decided I needed to learn how to read and write something more than my name.

Brian: I was in a ABE course. I applied for this job and got turned down. They said it was because I couldn't read or write good enough (fill out the forms properly). I came back and showed the guy my certificate. (He) said it must be some kind of fake cause nobody could hang around no school without learning something. I got real upset and wanted to hit him ... and left to cool off. That night I argued with my ma and she told me to go to my room, "that everything would be all right." I heard that so many times. Even my ma treats me like a retard.

Scott: The foreman came around and told me I was getting a promotion ... and have two men working under me. He told me my work was real good and that I had what it takes to get the other guys to do their work. I was tickled. ... I was finally making it. The next day I went to work and clocked in. The foreman came around to talk to me. He said he wanted to see if something he heard was true. I asked what. He gave me a piece of paper with something written on it ... and asked me to read it. I didn't even try ... and just wadded it up and walked away. Somebody else got the new job.

Leroy: Shirley and I was engaged and the wedding date was set. She knew I didn't read much, but she didn't know how little. Some friends gave us a party with gifts and all. After they'd left, I asked Shirley to read me the cards. She blew up at me because I couldn't even read the cards. Then she cooled off and said she was going to teach me to read. Each time we tried, it got worse ... I couldn't learn nothing from her. Then she gave me back the ring with no explanation ... but I knew.

Barriers to Participation

Barriers to participation in adult learning activities have been studied by Cross (1970) who examined the results of a number of surveys which discussed non-learning adults' responses to lists of possible barriers which might have stopped them from learning. She classified their responses under three categories: situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers.

- o Situational barriers are those which arise from one's situation in life at a given time. These include lack of time due to home or job responsibilities, lack of transportation, lack of child-care or geographic isolation.
- o Dispositional barriers refer to attitudes about learning and perceptions of oneself as a learner. These include feelings that one is too old to learn, lack of confidence and boredom with past educational offerings.
- o Institutional barriers are those inherent in learning institutions or agencies which discourage particular groups from participation through location of the learning site, inconvenient schedules, fees, and part-time nature of study.

Cross questioned the reliability of the data on the three sets of barriers mentioned above while stressing the need for more information on those which are real and those which are "convenient rationalizations."

The three categories used in Cross' analysis are frequently mentioned by other researchers. McClusky (1971) cites dispositional barriers as being the most difficult for adult educators to overcome. He notes that adults typically perceive of themselves as nonlearners, as does society. The adult's self-image as a worker with responsibilities is not only clear but is accepted and well established. He contends that the failure to internalize the learner role as a central feature of the self-image is in itself a restraining factor in the achievement of adult potential.

The role which self-discovery plays is central to overcoming dispositional barriers to adult learning. For adults, maintenance expands as discovery recedes. McClusky believes that all adults possess a potential for both experience and achievement well above that which they typically exhibit. For this potential to be realized, more emphasis should be placed on the adult's experience base.

The effects of situational barriers on motivation for participation have been described by Kirchner (1966). She examined a number of factors which might affect motivations: racial origin, the influence of mode of transportation to class and length of time needed to arrive at class. She found that black students appeared to have greater persistence than did white students. Those students who used public transportation and took a longer time to get to class had an equally high persistence as those who lived nearby.

Institutional barriers to participation in literacy programs have also been the subject of considerable study. Barnes (1966: 18) notes that "at least 95 percent of the illiterate population lacks literacy skills because of some school-oriented problem, whether or not they ever spent time in any school." Allen (1972) discusses the low self-concept and attempts to hide guilt associated with failure to achieve the U.S. cultural minimum standard of a high school education. As Allen notes, the adult who has failed academically comes to think of himself as unacceptable as a learner and carefully avoids discussion of his education or past experiences.

In their work in educational therapy in community health centers, Coles (1980) and his colleagues have diagnosed educational-psychosocial problems related to institutional barriers. They suggest that psychosocial problems are closely connected with educational problems and past educational experiences. These psychosocial problems include low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, fear and anger. The authors note that each of these problems affects family relationships, occupational functioning, daily living activities, role identification, child-rearing and physical health (1980: 82).

Respondents in the current research identified dispositional barriers and institutional barriers as having impacted or impeded their motivation to participate in literacy training in the past. Although situational barriers were cited as having had an impact on nonparticipation in educational opportunities in the past, they were not frequently cited as having an impact on participation in the most recent programs attended.

Dispositional Barriers Reported by Interviewees

Six of the seven respondents identified very clear dispositional barriers which they had to overcome when they began their most recent literacy courses.

Mary: When you are called a dummy all your life, you begin to think you are one. When I just started with the tutor I waited for him to call me a dummy, but he never did. You've heard Steve, he calls everybody a dummy, even the kids. He say's we're all in it together.

Brian: Even my ma treats me like a retard. Of course she's the one who let that teacher convince her. It's been hard to show her anything else.

Leroy: I felt I was too old to go to school. I felt like I was making a news broadcast. 'Hey look at me. I'm stupid. I never learned how to read.' Nobody else in the class could read either. We were in it together.

Maxine: I didn't have the courage to go the first two times the classes were held. It made me nervous to walk in there and meet somebody who knew me. It's hard to let your friends and neighbors know you are stupid and haven't learned to read.

Gerald: After I didn't get the promotion I felt bad about myself. I went to the first class and left during the break. I went out and got drunk ... and was pissed at myself for never having learned how to read. When I got home I looked for something to read. There weren't no papers or maga- zines ... I was just looking for something with writing on it. After another beer I decided to change all that.

Gary: Like I said, I was upset with myself for being so stupid to not be able to fill out an application blank.

Scott, a construction worker, combined all three - situational, dispositional and institutional barriers in his response.

Scott: Do you know who Jett Rinks was? (No response on my part.) He was a guy who made it rich in the oil-

fields. Jimmy Dean played him in an old movie (Giant). There was this one scene that I remember where they guy is making a speech about how he couldn't read or write but that he had still made it good. It was crazy. He was talking to an empty room. Only the janitors heard him. As I watched it, it hit me. That could be me some day ... getting somewhere and not knowing what I needed to know. Each time the movie's on someplace I go see it. Each time I cry for the man. Me, I don't want to be no Jett Rinks!

Institutional Barriers Reported by Interviewees

Four of the respondents had very distinct views on institutional barriers with which they had to deal in initiating the literacy experience. Three of the four made direct reference to their earlier educational experiences in primary school.

Maxine: I spent six years in school and never learnt to read. I don't know who's fault it was. My parents took me out of school ... and every time my dad got sore with me he would throw it all up to me. He blamed the school and me. The teachers was good to me but ignored me instead of working with me. Everybody knew at school that I couldn't read.

Brian: I can't remember what we did in school. I know the teacher had to deal with the real retards before she had time for us. I just remember sitting there a lot, waiting for the day to be over. I was afraid other classes would be the same ... me just sitting there listening and hoping

Scott: When I was little, I never understood that I was supposed to finish the school year. Daddy would tell me I wasn't going any more and I didn't go. When the work was done, he'd say I could go back. Daddy and the teachers used to fight alot. I was 12 and it was too late before I learned how wrong he was. They (the school) wouldn't let me come back anymore 'cause I was too far behind. I hated that teacher and the school.

Gary: Things got so bad when I was lokin' for a job 'cause I couldn't fill the forms. So I just looked for other

kinds of jobs that didn't have forms. Twice I got burned I worked for the whole week and didn't get paid. When I argued with the boss he told me that there wasn't any record of my working there 'cause I didn't fill out any papers. It was no good arguing with him.

Expectations

Education, in general, is seen by many participants in literacy or adult education courses as offering mobility. For some, this expectation is realistic, for others, it may only be what Olson (1975) has called the literacy myth, "that mistaken faith in the power of literacy to eliminate the social and personal consequences of a myriad of related problems and deprivations."

For many researchers and educators, illiteracy is symptomatic of an underlying problem in American society: the impotence of persons to affect their lives in meaningful ways and their inability to act on their own behalf. Ziegler (1977) claims that dependency has become an accepted norm in a "client society." To illustrate his point, he uses examples from the health care field, noting that Americans have been made to feel incompetent (illiterate) about their health due to the high specialization of medicine. He contends that if illiterates or semi-literates acquire conventional competence in reading and writing, it is because they believe that the actions will have beneficial consequences for them. This, of course, can not be guaranteed.

Sheehan (1976) examined powerlessness in her study of welfare clients and urban poverty and found that most of her informants' lives showed how

the cycle of poverty was perpetuated from generation to generation, especially among women. Her informants tended to stay on welfare not so much because they were unwilling to go to work as because they had no access to information and no knowledge of their options. Thus, without information and knowledge of options, their expectations of the "system" remained low.

Although Rubin (1977) dealt only with working-class Americans, her subjects' frustrations were quite similar to those expressed by informants in this study. Those who went to school became victims of the tracking system that made them ineligible for other forms of education. Many lacked information on sex and contraception, and as a result married and had children while they are too young to cope fully with adult responsibilities. Moreover, parents whose lives had been educationally, emotionally and financially restricted tended to rear their children in the same way.

Yet, Rubin notes, for those who thought of themselves as "upwardly mobile," there were still numerous questions which remained. Granted, they "had made it." But whether they were ready to bear the resentment of those they had left behind or the approval of new-found peers, the messages the "successful ones" got reinforced was that their self-image was not just different but better." That difference in self-concept after having made it - "that sense that they have climbed not just up but out - is a profoundly important difference in subjective experience" (1977: 9).

Data on informants' expectations of the literacy classes were gathered after they had completed the courses. Their self-reported expectations might thus be colored by what they actually had gained from living the experience. Comments by five of the seven are presented here and show their optimism and pessimism.

Maxine: I wanted to learn to read and write. I tried not to expect too much because I had a long ways to go. It's frustrating when your kids have to read to you and for you.

Leroy: I'd had lots of disappointments and decided not to expect too much. But, after the first class I saw I wasn't so dumb as I thought.

Scott: I expected to be treated like some poor thing and was ready to walk out if it happened.

Brian: I wanted to be treated like a normal person but I thought I was going to be treated like a retard. I didn't want to start out that way again.

Mary: I wanted to think it was going to be easy but inside I knowed that was wrong. Nothing is easy when you ain't never done it before, I guess.

The foregoing responses demonstrate the pessimism and caution with which the respondents approached the literacy experience. Their hopes were tentative at best. Past disappointments were accepted as fact. Expectations were all self-centered; there was no mention of expectations of the group. And, anxieties were apparent as to how much progress would be achieved. Charnofsky (1971: iv) suggests in his study of educating the powerless, before success in education can be experienced, children of diversity must begin to feel the power that comes from self-confidence, self-worth, a sense of security and place, the uplifting quality of group identification and the salutary effects of becoming aware of

the value of one's own ideas and feelings. As British researchers Charnley and Jones (1979) found, wanting to learn meant wanting to change. Wanting to change in turn implied a process of chosen adaptation to a new habitat. The fear of failure and of being defined by others as a failure is a suspected concern widely held by individuals with low level literacy skills, even when the fear is overtly denied. Thus, when an illiterate enrolls for instruction, he is deliberately shedding the protective covering of the former self and seeking adaptation for the new one.

Getting Started and Maintaining the Momentum

"Coming out" and announcing one's lack of reading and writing skills is only the tip of the iceberg for many illiterates. Actually getting started in a program can be a substantial undertaking as participation is governed by the elements of work schedules, getting information about the course, fulfilling entrance procedures, distance to courses, type of course and relevancy of the course to the individual's perceived needs. Among the informants in this study, getting started involved overcoming the barriers mentioned in the previous section, learning to be learners, doing homework as well as sustaining their motivation and interest when the going was rough.

In his recent book, Prisoners of Silence: Breaking the Bonds of Adult Illiteracy in the Limited States (1981), Kozol states that the

dropout rate from literacy courses ranges from 70-75% because many prospective students "no longer buy the American dream," and "because there is no immediate payoff for them, no passion or vision inherent in the program" (Holt, 1981: 18).

In this section, respondents describe their initial experiences as learners, their frustrations with the new and often uncomfortable role of learner, the gradual demystification of the learning process and how they began to put new skills to use.

The New Role: Learner

An earlier discussion has highlighted the stages of the life cycle, particularly that of adults. That review stressed the roles that accompany change events. In early adulthood, most significant change events are related to the worker role while later emphasis tends to be on family roles. Knox (1977) proposes that adults deal with these change events in at least six ways: frantic activity, action, educative activity, seeking assistance, contemplation and withdrawal. His attention to the educative activity stance is of particular interest to the current discussion of the adult illiterate in the new role of learner.

When a change event occurs, the need for some adaptation produces, for some adults at least, a heightened readiness to engage in educative activity. The resulting educative activity may be directly or indirectly related to the change event, and the relation may or may not be recognized by the individual ... The educative activity may

include all types of informal information seeking such as reading or talking with others, as well as more formal participation in part-time, externally sponsored educational programs (1977: 539).

In early 1981, CBS ran a two hour movie, "The Pride of Jesse Hallam," which brought the subject of illiteracy to the television screen. Hallam, a middle-aged coal miner, moves his family from rural Kentucky to Cincinnati. This move, prompted by the need for an expensive spine operation for his daughter, unleashes his confrontation with his handicap. In registering his son for school, he is given forms but throws them back. He skips over signing the surgical release, saying the doctor explained the procedure. When he inquires about a factory job, he notices a card of instructions by the complicated machinery. It takes the discovery of his illiteracy by his new boss to provide the right level of shame for Hallam to seek help. As Hallam begins the literacy experience he realizes that the roles are new and at times uncomfortable. As he learns to read, compliance and concealment are no longer necessary. Substitution or use of alternative behaviors is not needed. It is at this point that Hallam deals with his handicap in terms of his self-worth rather than the practicality of the job. And, he is genuinely gleeful when he is able to read a passage from The Wizard of Oz, no matter how poorly, to his hospitalized daughter.

Accepting the New Role

Accepting the new role of learner was not easy for any of the respondents in this study. For some, the return to a classroom learning setting brought back unpleasant memories of past attempts at learning. For others, the new role brought out anger which was sometimes self-directed or directed toward family members, particularly parents. For others, special attempts were made to conceal the activity from parents, family, friends or fellow employees. The following are excerpts from all seven interviews.

- Brian: When I started the class I realized I wasn't so dumb as everybody thought. The first class, I named all the letters and even read some words - 'stop,' 'in,' 'out' - really easy ones ... but I did it. I wanted to go home and tell my ma but didn't. She thought I was dumb so I decided to leave it that way.
- Scott: As I sat in the first class I got more angrier all the time I wouldn't have been there had my pa let me go to school ... It was his fault that I couldn't read then ... The second class was easy ... and by the third, the teacher was real pleased with what I could do ... It didn't have a lot to do with construction but I was learning how to read.
- Leroy: I thought about Shirley that first day and wondered what she would say if she knew what I was doing. Too bad the spirit didn't move me earlier.
- Mary: I was ready to quit. The tutor came to my house and the kids was all over the place, loud and talking. We started on letters. I couldn't read them all. I got so nervous. Then, he started on Lesson 1, ... with the pictures and the letters together. I just sat there ... too much. Then we talked, I felt so much better off then.
- Maxine: Know it's funny. My mind was everywhere at once - my parents, my ex (husband), my kids, the cafe. All at the same time. I wanted everybody to see me and what

I was doin', and at the same time I wanted to hide it. I daydreamed about reading to my kids ... and about writing to my old man and my ex to tell them to go to hell - signed, Maxine.

Gerald: I smoked my way through the first classes. I didn't say nothing at the first one, just listened. Then I went home with the workbook and read the lesson. Know what it said? 'b' 'bird' 'This is a bird.' I read it over and over. Then I started laughin' my ass off. (He held up his third finger, left hand and flashed me the sign). 'This is a bird.' I knew that much already.

Gary: I went to the first class with the application form. The teacher asked me to stay after and we read the form together. He helped me fill it out, too. When I got ready to go, he asked me if there was something else I wanted to learn to do. I told him I wanted to find out more about verbal contracts. I still had a score to settle with one of my old bosses.

Frustrations with the Role

Major frustrations with the new role of learner had their origins in the issue of concealment, that is, not wanting people to know they were in classes (and as a result that they could not read) and in finding time to devote both to the classes and practice-reading before classes. In the case of the two women whose families knew that they were in classes, lack of familial support, especially from Mary's husband who was also illiterate, provided considerable "pain."

Mary: Steve was real bothered because I was learning how to read. When I was working with the tutor he could say things like 'Hey dummy, that's not how you say that word.' or "Here let me read to you." and he would try to take the book away from me. Or, he would tell me how stupid I looked trying to figure out the letters and all. I finally asked the tutor not to come any-more 'cause of Steve's talkin' the way he was. One day, the tutor called and Steve answered. Steve told

him not to come back because I dind't want to learn to read anymore and that I was leaving for Florida. When the social worker come the next time she said she heard I was finished with the classes. I tried to explain to her. She said she understood ... When the tutor called again, I told him that Steve didn't want me to learn to read 'cause it would show him up. It took time for the tutor to get Steve to let him come back.

Maxine: My kids would bug me everytime they saw me pick up something to read. Judy told me it looked 'weird' for me to read 'cause she had never seen me do it before. So, I would wait until after they left for school and work on the assignments. At work, I spent time reading the menu that I had memorized by heart. Everyone in a while I would point at the customer's menu with my pen just to show them where something was ... and to show off.

Both Brian and Scott found it difficult to stop using former compensatory behaviors and use their new skills on the job. Scott, a construction worker wanted to show his peers that he could read. He had found new interest in basic carpentry books. Although he knew most of the procedures involved in many of the operations illustrated in the books, he was frustrated in not being able to decipher some of the more technical words. He finally went to the kids' book section of a department store for help:

Scott: It felt strange standing there in the kid's book section and not being able to read what ten year olds are able to read. Then I saw the book, Carpentry for Kids, and looked through it. The saleslady come around and saw me reading the book. 'Nice book' she said, 'My boy who's eight just loved reading it.' All I could think of was this boy (points at self) who's 27 is goin'a learn to read this one.

Brian, who worked as a stocker, had learned to recognize products by their shapes, color of the package and design of the labels. When he

needed to fill a shelf, he often took an item from the shelf with him to the stock room - just in case. He could also read numbers, which helped as most cases were number coded. Being able to read, no matter how poorly, took time away from other things and created a new and fascinating diversion.

Brian: I would stand and try to read the box before I marked the price on it - or read the breakfast cereal box in the morning. One day, my ma caught me reading the cereal box. She started laughing and said, 'Don't waste your time, there's nothing important there.' Maybe not for her, but there was for me.

Maintaining Momentum

All seven of the respondents had attempted literacy classes at some time in the past. None reported having progressed any further than the initial session. Each felt that the initial experience had been too discouraging or too frustrating for them to have continued with the course. Perhaps they were not at their teachable moment as was inferred in an earlier discussion on motivation and readiness. What does appear to have made the difference in their most recent attempts was their ability to sustain their interest and motivation while overcoming certain social and psychological barriers. These included their feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness which stemmed in part from their rural origins, their low employment status, their low levels of literacy skills, and their poverty in general.

All seven informants were in lower economic groups with three of the seven near the poverty level. Most people who live in poverty, Charnofsky (1971: 43) notes, just don't think very much about themselves. It is not that they do not see what the rest of the world has; it is out of their reach, at least in the short run. The poor are managed, manipulated, chastised for not knowing and criticized for not being industrious. If they avoid the bureaucracy they are accused of breaking the law. If they confront it, they are often exploited.

As Moore (1976: 92) suggests in his anthropological view of urban education, "to maneuver in an impersonal world (urban society), a great deal of impersonal knowledge is needed." This presents a dilemma for a bureaucracy which has difficulty working with individuals who do not understand the ways and workings of "organized," impersonal life. Not knowing is often mistaken for stupidity and the supposedly stupid, when treated so, may well retreat further into not knowing and never attempt learning the ins and outs of the larger society with which they must deal. Moore's concern is that much of the attention that the information poor get concentrates on their imputed deficiencies, not on their actual situation. Likewise, attention tends to be directed toward their "stupidity," not their justifiable ignorance.

Respondents felt that they had, in general, been criticized for their limited view of the outside world (when it could be that they had little knowledge of the outside world) and their slowness to take on new roles. As one respondent noted, it was hard to take on a new role when you had always been told that there was no way for you to advance. In addition,

respondents who had used welfare services reported that they had been told that they lacked the motivation to improve themselves through planning and saving for the future.

These criticisms served as further motivation to some of the respondents. To others, they were a discouraging setback. What seems to have evolved early in the learning experiences of the respondents was a series of mechanisms and processes which helped sustain their motivation and the momentum of the literacy experience. Tutors or teachers were depicted as "shoulders to lean on," "people to talk to" or "people who understood."

Demystifying the Learning Process

Through their learning experiences, informants reported that they had come to view "learning" (reading and writing) to be something quite different than what they had thought it to be in the past. For most, learning to read opened new doors as well as new roles. Although the process had been a slow one, each described changes in how they approached the learning tasks, especially after realizing that the tasks at hand, reading and writing, were within their grasp and that those two skills opened other possibilities. Slowly the original meaning of literacy as reading and writing evolved into a more comprehensive learning experience. For many, the realization was much like that of Terkel's businessman referred to in Chapter One who was quoted as saying, "Early on I realized that reading people were ruling people" (1980: 22). Respondents saw power in the word and that power offered some feeling of control over their personal world.

Brian: Do you know ... no, you've been reading all your life ... do you know what it's like to finally be able to read, to pick up almost anything and be able to sort out a few words. When I realized it was happening to me I decided to read for my ma. Was she surprised!

Maxine: I always thought that books was reserved for just those who could read. I can remember reading the pictures to my girls and making the story up as I went along. As I progressed in my classes, I saw things happening real fast. It wasn't like one day I couldn't and the next I could ... but in six months I was getting somewhere.

Leroy: Once I got goin' with the books, I wanted to read other stuff - magazines, even a newspaper. I would listen to the news and feel connected. All that stuff that was around me was more important. The teacher made us talk about it ... and read about it.

Interest and motivation, were not always high. Low points came for respondents when situations would arise where their limited literacy skills would be called into question, where situations forced them back into previous behaviors of concealment and substitution, and where conflict with the system was inevitable. As the purposes or uses of reading and writing became more evident to them, they saw how those skills could be used in coping with the demands of their environment (knowing) and in solving some of the problems which they faced (doing). These issues are discussed more fully in the next section.

Getting There and Staying There

For the informants in this research, the literacy journey or experience was far from smooth - and far from short. All participated in at least two four-to-six month cycles. Two worked with an individual tutor

twice a week for more than a year. All achieved limited proficiency, with two reading at roughly fourth grade level by the end of the courses. But, as with most literacy measures, the reading levels meant little to the informants unless the information and skills they had been exposed to were of use to them in their personal, social and economic lives.

This section highlights respondents descriptions of how they used newly learned skills, of their realization that they did have control over aspects of their lives which they felt were previously beyond their control and of improvements which they noticed in their work and social settings.

Learning to Cope with Institutional Structures

An ability to deal effectively with the bureaucracies which touch one's life is a frequently cited survival level need for literacy. Literacy skills are in particular demand when it comes to dealing with bureaucratic forms. Families with low incomes, which includes a high percentage of the marginally literate, can gain access to benefits only through procedures requiring literacy skills: filling out forms, documenting eligibility, understanding brochures and complying with written regulations.

Bendick and Cantu (1978) address a number of questions regarding the functions and effects of literacy in meeting the needs of welfare clients. Four of the seven interviewees in this research had been on welfare at one time or the other in the two years immediately prior to

participating in literacy classes. The problems and frustrations they faced were much the same as those Bendick and Cantu report on: the forms were incomprehensible from the reading point of view and respondents' low level of skills in filling out the forms and providing the necessary documentation jeopardized their eligibility. In addition, clients felt they were unnecessarily intimidated by a system they did not understand nor which understood their needs.

A recent Florida State Department of Education poster treats the illiterate welfare client theme as well and leaves the reader with yet another example of the "system" as it deals with the symptoms and not with the real problems. The photograph on the poster is of a young white woman and child waiting in a line with numerous other women. The accompanying text reads:

"Julie left school. Her husband left her. Now she's left to you. You buy Julie's food stamps every week. Her welfare check every month. You pay her child's visits to the doctor. The dentist. Immunization shots. Corrective lenses. Lunch and breakfast at school.

Your tax dollars support Julie because she can't support herself. And she isn't the only one in Florida. 71% of women receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children do not have a high school diploma. And over one third of these mothers are functionally illiterate. An illiterate woman's earnings can't meet her child's needs. So we do.

If you think this is expensive, you're right. Because of Julie doesn't learn to read and write, chances are very good that her daughter won't learn either. She could stand in a welfare line all her life."

The image which the poster perpetuates is one which informants felt was often inflicted on them by welfare workers.

Five of the seven respondents had dealings with government sponsored social services agencies prior to and during the time they were enrolled in literacy classes. Here, they describe their experiences and how they thought literacy skills helped them in dealing with the welfare bureaucracy.

Mary: The social worker comes once a month, except when the kids miss school. Then she's here right away. She's o.k. but she will never understand us. You just don't take somebody like us and think they will stay put ... Anyway, she was happy when I started classes. She said reading would help. She left me some stuff to read on a program but I couldn't do it. I put it in the drawer with everything else to read. The next time she came, we talked about the paper she'd left. She read it to me, line by line. 'Did I understand?' 'Yes, I understood' but I didn't. I was afraid to say I didn't. When my tutor came, I asked him to read it with me. He did. But it still didn't make sense. So, he showed me how to read it - read the dark letters first to get an idea, then go back ... real organized like, he was. He showed me how to read a magazine the same way.

Scott, Leroy, Gerald and Gary had all been on unemployment benefits. Each had had similar experiences with the applications. Although someone else filled the forms out for them, the bureaucrat's reactions to them had not been positive. In two cases, speaking out in response to the comments which they felt unwarranted cost them time in getting the forms processed. In the other two cases, former employers were blunt in their explanations of why the two had left - because they couldn't read or write, i.e., they couldn't comply with the demands of the job, and their

eligibility for benefits was questioned. Only Gary continued to be unemployed after his literacy course.

On talking about how they had learned to work within the system, they said:

- Gary: My teacher was a cool head. He was patient with us and tried extra hard to make us think the situation through before we opened our mouths. I think that's the most important thing I learned. Yeah, learning to read was important but learning to think was even better. Now, when I have to go in and let them know I'm looking, I take what I need to prove it.
- Leroy: Getting off the dole is as important as knowing how to get on it. Our class spent lots of time with the want ads. That's the most important part of the newspaper when you need work. I learned to say 'I read in the newspaper that you are looking for workers.' Sure makes a difference to let them know you can read.
- Scott: I went on unemployment and started literacy class at the same time. What a shock to me. I had never done either before. Believe me, I'd take the literacy class anyday to the treatment you get in those lines. I'd like just once to be on the other side with the clerk on the standing (unemployed) side.
- Gerald: I used my class teacher as a big brother when I was out of work. He showed me how to deal with the lines, how to have all the information organized ahead of time. When you know what's needed ... what information they want, things are much easier. Problem is, not everybody knows.

Using New Skills: Relevancy

A recent Reader's Digest anecdote sums up the issue of relevancy of literacy training to real-life concerns.

When, at age 19, my mother immigrated to the United States from Greece, she desperately

wanted to go to school, but her father vetoed the idea. A marriage was arranged, and again plans for an education were vetoed - this time by her husband.

At age 65, with the encouragement of her four children, my widowed mother finally attended her first class, "English as a Second Language." After several sessions she telephoned me, boasting of her expanding English vocabulary. I encouraged her to use the new words in her next letter to me, as her previous letters had been written in Greek. She hesitated for a moment and asked, "Why should I write you that the weasel ate the chicken?"

The skills being taught to participants in U.S.-based literacy programs are by and large reading and writing with some work on computation. Most programs approach literacy instruction as though illiteracy were a problem that could be dealt with separately from other social problems. The skills taught in adult literacy centers, evening school programs and volunteer programs are thus sometimes difficult to apply to the larger social context in which the individual lives.

None of the seven informants in this study were enrolled in an employment related literacy programs such as CETA which have traditionally attracted large numbers of individuals with low-level literacy skills. The major objective for all seven informants was initially to learn to read and write, as situations in which they had not been able to read and write had prompted their enrollment. From their responses it would appear that the issue of relevancy emerged after initial involvement in training programs. This is not to say that the individuals concerned had not thought about how they wanted or planned to use literacy

skills. It is rather a reflection of their lack of information ahead of time about program content and teaching methods.

Maxine: Now, I see that those beginning lessons were so simple ... but necessary. I remember how happy I was though - letters, syllables, words and their new words on my own without any help. I needed that pace and the time to prove to myself that I could do it ... Let's face it, I should have started reading from a menu the first night.

Brian: Getting started was the important part ... knowing what to do and not do when you look at a new word ... and learning where that new word can take you. I wish that I had known ahead of time what I needed to know. I guess some people do it like that.

Leroy: I needed a send-off. I always thought I was ready but never knew I was that close to it. Learning to read about real things was important to me. It's one thing to hear it, another to see it, but to read it is so important. I read something everyday, not just for work but away, too ... It makes me think about all kinds of things I'd never thought of before ... like how other people live and work, about old friends from when I was a kid, about my folks and what they've missed by not reading.

Mary: When I got my certificate I bought a frame for it at Woolco. Steve said it was just like a doctor's office only he wanted to know what it said. Then my cousin said I should get a business card so that customers could call me anytime. The kids were so proud of me they went to school and told their class that their mom had just learned to read. I still need their help at times but it does make a difference.

What respondents appear to say is that they needed to be what O'Neil (1977) has called properly literate. Proper literacy involves being able to bring your knowledge and your experience to bear on what passes before you, while improper literacy means simply being able to read, to decipher words on a page, without much comprehension. Proper literacy, O'Neil points, should extend an individual's control over his life and environ-

ment, and allow him to deal rationally, and in words, with his life and decisions.

Knowing What to Do or Where to Go for Information

Knowing that what one is doing is the result of one's own free choice was suggested in several comments made by respondents. Learning how to reach goals through their own efforts was also cited as important. De Charms' (1968) work in the area of personal causation is of particular interest here in examining respondents descriptions of how the learning experience contributed both to greater self-control and to self-confidence.

In De Charms' Model of Origins and Pawns, an origin is a person who is the director of his life. Action taken is based on the individual's free choice. He does it because he wants to and he views the consequences of the action as valuable to him. Origins are self confident people who determine how to reach goals through their own efforts.

A "Pawn" is the converse; he feels that someone else or something else controls his fate. "He feels that what he is doing has been imposed by others, that he is doing it because he is forced to and the consequences of his activity will not be a source of pride to him" (Brennan, 1982: 53).

The figure on the next page demonstrates the interrelatedness of the components of the model and their dependence. According to De Charms there are two major ways to increase the likelihood of origin behavior:

1. People have to be helped to think like origins and feel confident in themselves.
2. People have to be helped to act like origins, that is, to act in ways that are successful.

Although none of the seven participants were in courses organized on consciousness raising principles or those specifically encouraging problem solving behaviors per se, four of the respondents had tutors or teachers who incorporated more than just reading and writing into program offerings. Their instructors provided them with a variety of experiences which contributed to greater self-control and self-confidence and eventually to taking responsibility for their actions, all examples of "origin" behavior according to De Charms.

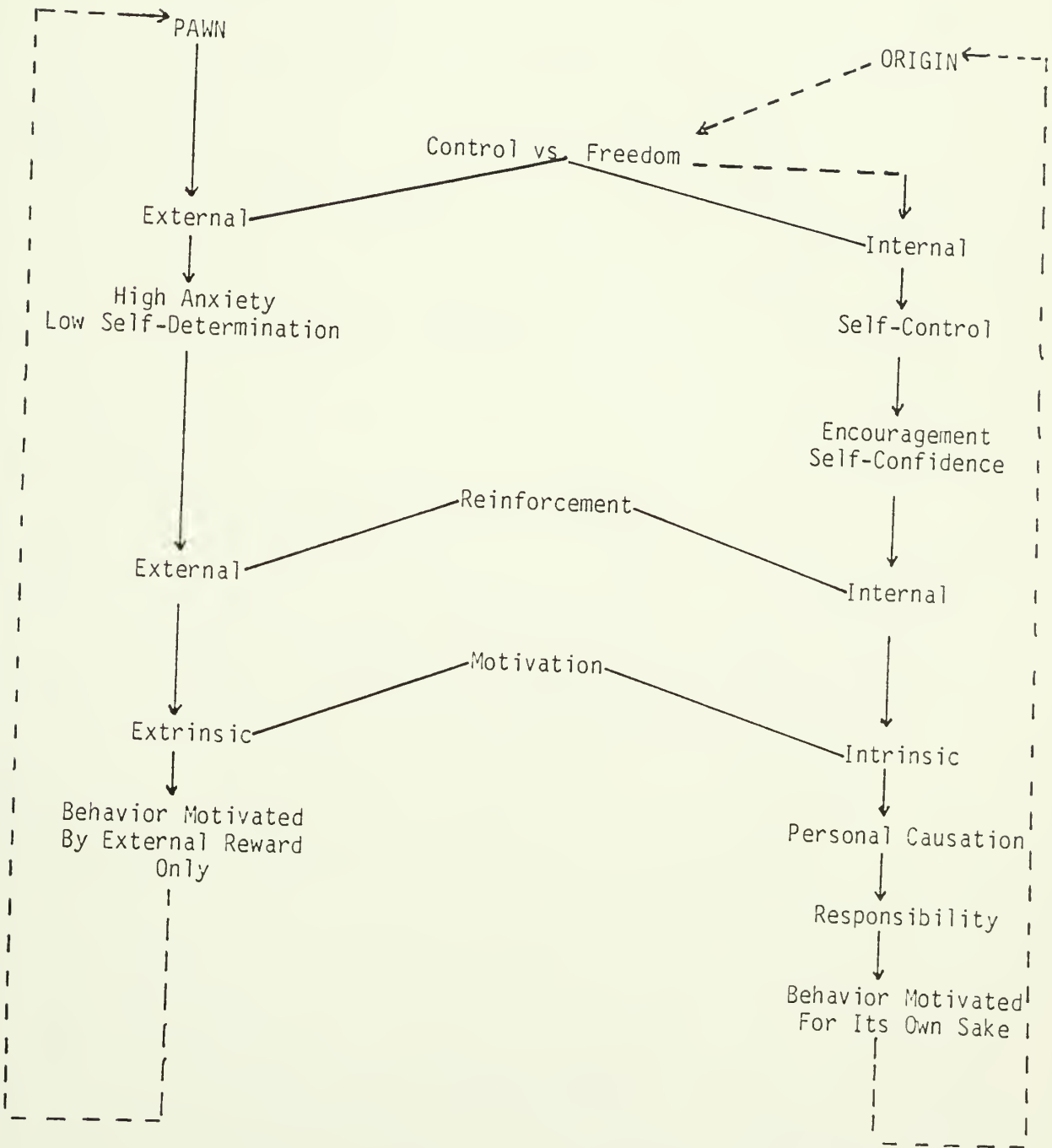
Gerald: Ron (the teacher) knew what we needed ... more than learning to read. That was only part of it. He talked to us about learning to take control and be in charge of ourselves. He wasn't telling us to do nothing wrong. He was helping us do what any person should be able to do. It was the first time I had heard anybody say those things out loud. As we went through the problem solving process he'd stop us at each step, ask us to explain what we were doing, why we were doing it and what we expected to happen. It was all taking place right here (points to his head).

Gary: Learning to read was important but learning to think things through was even more important. I'm working on it, but I obviously ain't made it yet. I'm still looking for a job.

Leroy: We learned to ask and look for answers instead of waiting for them. Learning how to ask was important but learning where to look was even better. Lot's a folks that you ask don't know anyway.

Maxine: My teacher was a great help to me. Here I sat with two kids, no husband, loosing my job and someone said 'Hey, stop, let's talk about it. How's what you're

FIGURE 4.1
 GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF DE CHARMS' MODEL OF ORIGINS AND PAWNS



Source: Brennan, 1982, p. 53.

doing here going to help you get where you want to be? How happy are you going to be when you get there?' At each step of the way we stopped and sized up the situation. 'Was I ready to take the consequences? How would I deal with my new needs?'

Brian: I set out to be my own boss in my head. My tutor helped me a lot, not by just teaching to read, but by talking with me about what I wanted to do with myself, with my future. 'Had I thought about what would happen when ma wasn't there? What kind of skills did I need to keep myself going?' We drew up a plan together - wrote it down. I read it everyday and thank God for giving me this chance.

Perceived Self in the World

The every day experiences of most people involve movement through various social situations where differing value sets affect their social and personal identities. It is important therefore to identify variables influencing social identity, personal identity and the match between social facts (for example level of education) and personal facts (self-esteem). Many, like Hughes (1958) have perhaps overstressed occupational choices or jobs (since all may not be termed "choices") as the major or master role. At the opposite end of the scale, that is among those with low status jobs, the jobs might be viewed as more of an external and relatively unimportant aspect of a person's identity for most of his or her common social situations.

Walsh (1975), in his study of garbage men in Ann Arbor, raises the larger question about primary and secondary stigmatization, i.e., the distinction between social and personal facts. Both his field work and this survey data suggest that low status of one's occupational role is

not automatically internalized as an authentic or essential evaluation of oneself: it is almost a challenge to separate the social fact from the personal fact.

Literacy and illiteracy are social facts which researchers suggest are difficult to separate from some of the accompanying issues like poverty and unemployment. Freire (1970) notes that illiterates know they are "concrete men" who know that they do things. "What they don't know in the culture of silence - in which they are ambiguous dual beings - is that men's actions as such are transforming, creative and re-creative (1970: 213)." They are overcome by the myth of their own natural inferiority and do not know that their action on the world is transforming.

In an earlier discussion (see Chapter Three), the analysis included Beatty's (1976) model of self-concept which has as its center perceived self in the world, the "knowing" part of the individual. Beatty suggested that this perception of one's self in the world develops as one is reacted to by others. In this section, interview data dealing with perceived self in the world is presented. As the remarks show, the respondents viewed themselves as "concrete" men and women, for whom learning to read and write was an opportunity, as Freire (1970) notes, "to know what speaking the word really means: a human act implying reflection and action" (212).

Maxine: Did you see the movie about Jesse Hallam last year? That was beautiful. Only wish it was possible in two hours though. I saw myself on the tube several times. Getting mad with him, and at him. Crying with him. The song he sung was nice too I hummed it for days "I may be a rough piece of coal but some day they'll make

a diamond out of me." (I asked who they was). Hum. Guess it could have been Brenda Vaccaro for him. What he should've sang was "some day I'll make a diamond out of me." Know why? (she points at herself) The answer is in here. You have to want to make the change first. Then anything can happen.

Leroy: I'd like for the person I disappointed next to the most to see me ... reading. She'd be proud. (I asked whom he had disappointed the most then). I already showed myself what I can do. That disappointment won't happen again. Some people might think what I've done is pretty elementary school-like. But, when you don't know - you don't know. Being able to do something about it is really important.

Brian: Little by little I feel like I'm collecting things - lots of things that had got away from me. That's real important 'cause nobody can take them away from me. Sure, I could forget but I'd know what do to to find out. You don't have to not know.

Mary: When I wrote my name on Angie's report card last week, I stayed on the line. She picked it up and look at it. She smiled and said "Gee mom, that's neat." Two words - my name is all, but being able to write it, not just print it, makes me proud of myself ... Grandma still laughs at me when she sees me reading something. She's always sticking out her hand in front'a my face and saying 'This is what you should be reading. There's money in it. Where's the money in that?' My answer is always the same - 'there's some-things that money don't buy.'

Scott: I had a friend at work who always hung around me. One day at lunch we were talking about what we were going to do over the weekend. I mentioned a gun show I was goin' to. He was interested too so I invited him. We was supposed to meet early on Saturday. He was late. Finally the bus got there and we left in my truck. He was frustrated about something so I asked him what was wrong. He got on the wrong bus and went quite aways before he realized it was the wrong one. I asked him how anybody could that. 'It's easy when you can't read and only memorized your regular bus.' I told him that I had just gone to classes. He nearly died 'You, you didn't know how to read?' We spent the rest of the time on the way talking about the classes, what I

done and what I learned. For the first time in a long time I didn't feel bad about myself.

Gerald: I used to have a friend who could do my letters to my ma for me, when I sent money. The first time I sent money after them classes, I wrote the letter myself. It was two lines long. 'Here's \$20.00. Love, your son Gerald.' My sister wrote back to me saying mama was happier with the letter than with the \$20. She spent the \$20 but put my letter by an old picture of me. I guess she connected the two of me together. It's hard to see yourself doing certain things when there hasn't been much practice.

Just as informants saw improvements in their "selves," they also had to deal with numerous discrepancies which would occur. New literacy skills were often inadequate to accomplish some tasks which were begun. Caution sometimes turned into swagger as self-confidence ebbed and flowed. Situations which had been previously avoided were attempted, and when they were successful they were cause for celebration.

Mary: When Steve's uncle died the family came from all over. Grandma said it was probably the biggest collection of dummies between Florida and New York. All us women was in one room talking when Grandma mentioned that I was getting more like a gajo (an outsider to the gypsies) every day. I wanted to say something back but she was right. Not many of us women know how to read and write yet. It was hard enough convincing Steve to let me keep up the classes. I didn't want to play lawyer and present my case to my family.

Gary: There was times that I thought the classes was a waste of my time. I really thought if I could read and write a job would be mine. But so far, that ain't the way it's been. I think that I need is to get into a class where I can learn a trade or do a job. Maybe I could find a job if there's any left then.

Scott: My foreman called me in for a talk. I was afraid I was in for a repeat (his previous dismissal had been because he couldn't read). He told me he wanted me to take responsibility for a new piece of equipment and

handed me the instruction book. My first thought was that I couldn't do it 'cause I still can't read that well. I must have been real shaky 'cause he told me there was nothing to worry about, there was a free training course that came with the equipment and he had confidence in me that I could do it ... I knew I could do it, too.

Maxine: There are days when nothing goes right and those days I feel the weakest, I make more mistakes, ... have more problems sorting out the letters on the page. I try to be positive and think about how far I come. But, still it ain't always easy ... Maybe someday it'll be easier. I have to decide for myself how to keep plugging away to make it easier.

Being viewed by others as capable of self-direction thus constituted an important part of the perceived self in the world. Self-direction resulted in need fulfillment. Aspirations changed and new needs arose. Fulfilling those new needs was related directly to the preservation of the emerging self-image of one capable of operating, however limited the case might be, as a literate individual in a world where literacy skills permitted an ever increasing dialogue with a larger world.

Maxine: You know, I just never thought about the difference that being able to read would make. I thought about being able to read, but not about the difference it would make. Do you understand what I mean? Knowing how to read means I can read to know more.

Brian: There's something really nice about knowing that I can read. It's real reassuring, but I know I ain't never goin' to set the world on fire. But I got my corner lighted.

Mary: The way I see it, I'm started now and I know where to go and ask for help if I need it ... and ask for it in a proud way!

Leroy: You see, what I think I done was to break the sound barrier. In those two classes I moved faster than in all the time before that. Now it's turtle speed as I

sort it all out. I'll need help, sure ... but it won't bother me none to ask for it.

Gerald: Like I told you earlier, it weren't easy and it won't be either. But with what I got now I think I can keep going. Help is close by if I need it. Learning is not just reading ... but learning that others really did care about me learning.

CHAPTER SIX

SORTING FACT FROM FICTION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is a highly personal document, written primarily for myself, to clarify an issue which has become increasingly puzzling. It will be of interest to others only to the extent that the issue exists for them (Rogers, 1961: 200).

Introduction

In this country, a literate person has been defined as having the ability to read at a sixth grade level. Anyone with a basic (first or second grade level) knowledge of reading is said to be illiterate. Of the seven informants whose experiences were shared in Chapter Five, all except two are illiterate by the foregoing definition. Yet, through their own expression, we have come to know that they perceive of themselves as something quite different. They see themselves as capable, functioning adults with new skills which will help them better cope with their environment.

The concerns which gave impetus to this study were neither whether the act of learning to read is useful or useless nor whether being able to read is a necessary part of being civilized or uncivilized. Rather,

the concern centered on whether individuals with newly acquired literacy skills perceived of themselves differently during and after the literacy experience than they did prior to the learning experiences. Did they perceive that they have greater self-confidence? Did they feel that they were more competent, more efficient or better able to cope with the demands of a world prone to change? Did they feel that learning to read and write made them more adequate or did skills which were still in the developmental stages cause more problems than they solved?

The phenomenon under study has been the transformation of sociolinguistic reality. That is, when people are convinced that they can shape their own social reality and are no longer isolated and/or powerless, they begin to participate in a dialogue with a larger world, first orally then through reading and writing.

As can be seen from the data in Chapter Five, this development is not linear. It involves multiple transformations. One transformation brings a growing sense of control as new literates change from objects into subjects. A second transformation reflects the consequences of those newly altered relationships that are significant in peoples' cognitive and motivational approaches. A third transformation involves a desire and need for educationally transmitted knowledge as it becomes more important as a result of social and personal change.

In this final chapter, attention centers on the question of "literacy for what?" A set of hypotheses emerging from the analysis offered in Chapter Five are presented as a stimulus for further research. The chapter concludes with a series of suggestions for building self-concept

in adult learners so that the literacy tool which they develop is one capable of enabling, enlightening and enobling.

Literacy for What

The discussion in Chapter Two reviewed what literacy meant to a wide variety of researchers, planners and practitioners. What that discussion highlighted was that the learner has often been extraneous to the act of defining or describing what the literacy experience means to him or her. As was noted, literacy is often defined by its opposite, an option which appears unsatisfactory. Literacy is also defined by its properties or values; the economic, the social and the political. A third set of definitions stressed three components of an abstract definition. First, literacy has a language component, the ability to read and write, as well as proficiency in using language as a tool of learning and coping with change. Second, literacy is not an all or none situation; there are a variety of levels of literacy skills which are shaped by an ever changing world. Third, a major objective of literacy is freedom from social, economic and political impotence (Dauzat and Dauzat, 1977).

For the seven informants, accessing the language component, especially reading and writing, was a major objective in the learning experience. The reading process had to first be demystified and made their "own" before the interviewees progressed to a point where the language component could and did become a tool for learning and coping with change. It is, as one respondent noted, difficult to do something

when you have always been told and shown that it is beyond your ability. Learning to read, to turn printed words into sound and meaning, was important for each interviewee. Yet, the uses to which each put the reading skill and the meanings it first held as well as the evolutionary meanings reading was to take were quite different for each.

Literacy held economic value for almost all of the informants. For most of the interviewees, the initial motivation to participate in literacy training had been economic. Individuals were after the piece of paper which attested to their participation, but which unfortunately did not evaluate their attainment. They believed that the "paper" would make it less likely that they would encounter difficulties in applying for and getting jobs. After all, as one interviewee noted, the application blank only asked how long you had been in school, not how well you did. There was a general feeling that literacy would facilitate each person's general economic independence while reducing their dependence on the larger society, especially the welfare structure. The slow rate at which this was sometimes translated into reality was a frustration for many. For others it served as a motivation to push past the idea that literacy meant only reading to an evolutionary definition of what being literate meant.

Above all, literacy had social and personal value for each of the seven respondents. Interviewees found that as they learned to read and subsequently used their literacy skills in interaction with "the larger world," they relied less and less on former compensatory behaviors. They

had nothing to hide from fellow workers, family members or friends; literacy skills had an equalizing effect. They were quick to note that inequalities still remained, but they felt better able to address those inequalities as they needed to deal with them.

As individuals discussed their perceptions of self, there were strong indications of self-confidence, self-worth and efficacy. Things which they had formerly viewed as being beyond their reach were now becoming possible; literacy had increased their potential for more active involvement. On the most personal level, all respondents felt that the image they had of themselves was more positive, more constructive, and more in line with their ideal self; literacy skills helped them feel more adequate in dealing with the demands of daily life. For some this took the form of something as basic as signing their names on their childrens' report cards. For others it meant feeling more connected with the world, more "in tune" and less out of step with what was expected of them by others.

In general, the new literates in this study did tend to blame themselves for part of their problems. They all were a part of what Freire has characterized as the "culture of poverty" but several saw their situation related to larger social issues. They were not totally lacking in the structural perception that Freire (1970: 36) talks about. Although they often attributed the sources of their situation mainly to themselves, they demonstrated a grasp of objective reality and saw the origins of several of their problems residing in it.

It might be said that several interviewees' responses indicated that they were at the point Freire calls emergent consciousness which is characterized by historical understanding, clear insight into essential cause-effect relationships and overcoming a false consciousness. For some this consciousness may have preceded their involvement in the literacy courses. Others reported that it precipitated their participation. Still others were involved, at the end of the interviews, in sorting out life. They were in general articulate, self-directed and self-oriented individuals eager to bring about change in their lives.

Although each of the seven explained that they had a narrow conception of what being literate meant when they began literacy courses, their views on what constituted literacy at the time of the interviews had expanded. Responses clearly show that all initially viewed literacy as meaning learning how to read and write. The interviews over time showed that this meaning began to change slowly, yet firmly, in each individual's mind and outward actions. By the end of the interview cycle, each thought that literacy ought to be an opening or a beginning, that it should be a means for getting them where they wanted to go, and that it was a continuing process. One learns to read so that one can then read to learn. All felt that fundamental skills were a prerequisite for getting to a point where they could begin to teach themselves to continue to cope with change and to respond positively. Several cited the link between literacy skills and thinking, between literacy skills and logical processes, and between literacy skills and mental structures in their varied explanations and descriptions of their literacy experience.

Learning to read and write was always linked to subsequent action by the respondents. This action involved seeking change, coping with new roles and change and seeking new information and knowledge. Taking initiative, trying out what had been learned from rote, and acting on new competencies were new behaviors described by respondents. These were often compared with past shortcomings, disinterest and failures. In short, the notion of literacy which respondents described might best be characterized as a notion of process, of becoming.

Few people live much of their lives consciously. Instead their lives contain what Virginia Woolf called "a large portion of cotton wool." She wrote about "exceptional moments," perhaps more eloquently than these respondents spoke about them. Yet, one cannot deny that for people who by their own account have had lives filled with considerable quantities of "cotton wool," their descriptions of the literacy experience constitute "exceptional moments." These moments contain the significance of discovery, personal growth and the development of special skills as well as concerns which engage them in a dialogue with the larger world. The success of their dialogue and the intensity of it will depend in large part on how they continue to sustain their motivation to use their sometimes weak and inadequate literacy skills in dealing with the every day demands of a literacy society.

Suggested Hypotheses for Further Study

Four hypotheses are suggested which the researcher hopes will stimulate others to examine some of the issues touched upon in this study in an effort to better understand possible linkages between the social self-concept of new literates and their literacy experiences. Each hypothesis is a direct outgrowth of the data presented in Chapter Five and the analysis and discussion presented in the foregoing section of this Chapter:

1. The social self-concept of adult illiterates changes substantially during and as a result of positive literacy/learning experiences.
2. Sustained development of the literacy skills of new literates is accompanied by modifications in the goals motivating their participation in literacy or adult education programs.
3. The consequences of acquiring literacy skills differ significantly from the initial motivations for acquiring literacy skills.
4. Economic motivations for acquiring literacy skills are replaced/displaced by motivating factors of an affective nature once an initial literacy threshold is reached.

Building Self-Esteem in Adult Learners

The foregoing discussion has stressed the social and personal value which respondents in this study associated with learning to first read

and write and then to apply those skills to other communications and learning tasks. Self-confidence, self-worth and a sense of competency were inferred as areas of personal growth attributable to learning to read and write. If the acquisition of literacy skills does impact on adult self-concept and provide the impetus for what was speculated to be a major change in the organization of new literates' perceptions of self, then adult educators need to place greater emphasis on learning arrangements which foster the development of self-esteem in adult learners.

Such a process could include steps like those advanced by Reasoner (1982). They include the development of:

- o a sense of security;
- o a sense of identity or self-concept;
- o a sense of belonging;
- o a sense of purpose; and
- o a sense of personal competence.

Developing a sense of security is the first prerequisite to positive self-esteem. Not only is a sense of security necessary for looking at oneself realistically but it must be present before an adult learner will risk the possibility of failure. A sense of security means understanding the parameters of the learning situation, knowing what to expect and feeling comfortable and safe.

Adult educators can help develop a sense of security in adult learners by working with them to set realistic limits; by encouraging learning activities which develop self-respect and responsibility; and by building trust.

Building a sense of identity or self-concept is important as this identity serves as the basis for the development and evolution of self-esteem and motivation. This includes maintaining a realistic assessment of one's strengths and shortcomings as well as how one appears to others. For adult learners, positive feelings about their self-image are a prerequisite to successful learning experiences.

Developing a sense of purpose is also important for adult learners, many of whom may have previously experienced unsuccessful learning experiences. There is the need to set goals for oneself, as a sense of purpose is central to self-motivation. Adult learners will move toward self-motivation when educators convey expectations, build confidence and faith and assist them, where necessary, in setting goals for the learning experience.

Educators working with adult learners in literacy programs need to provide a variety of activities which help learners build realistic expectations while providing challenge. Risks will need to be analyzed, opportunity contexts identified, and skills developed for attaining both short and long term goals. An important ingredient in this process is the learner's faith in himself, a component of self-motivation.

As the self-concept develops and is maintained through interaction with others and those viewed as models, educators need to aid adult learners in assessing their strengths and shortcomings, to provide them with positive feedback on both and to demonstrate acceptance, especially of shortcomings. An integral part of this process should be the identification of the skills needed to change or improve. Educators need to be

aware of the impact they have on adult learners and how that impact contributes to both positive and negative self-concept.

Creating a sense of belonging among adult learners is important as all are, in one way or the other, seeking peer acceptance. They need to be a part of the "group," to be liked by others and to be like others.

Those working with adults with low level literacy skills will want to pay special attention to creating an environment in which learners will feel at ease, both with themselves and with others in the group. Each learner should be recognized as unique and treated accordingly. Risks are high for adults learning to read and write and acceptance and positive reinforcement are important to their success.

Achieving a sense of personal competence comes through repeated successful, practical learning experiences. It involves decision-making on the utilization of available resources and implies learning to cope as part of the process.

Adult learners may need assistance with initial decision making and educators will need to be ready to provide necessary encouragement and support as well as information on specific resources which may be brought to bear on the decision making process. Educators will also need to provide learners with ample opportunity to develop self-evaluation abilities so that they can determine the degree to which they have accomplished their goals. Self-evaluation must be realistic so that adult learners become their own source of feedback and praise.

The ultimate objective of the foregoing process is to orient adult learners toward becoming self-actualizing and self-motivated individuals. As Rogers (1961) notes

The mainspring of creativity appears to be ... man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities ... This tendency may be deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be hidden under elaborate facades which deny its existence; it is my belief ... that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed (350-351).

A Postscript

Since the time during which interviews were conducted (August 1981 - March 1982), Mary has progressed through the third skill book while her husband still refuses to "get rid of dummy in him." Brian continues working as a stocker and is enrolled in a two semester continuing education course on furniture upholstery. He hopes to open his own shop. Leroy, Scott and Gerald have kept their jobs, no mean feat given the current state of the construction industry. Maxine can often be heard yelling her order back to the kitchen. She admits that "things are slow to change." Gary found a job with a fast food chain and is studying for his drivers license exam so that he can apply for a delivery job with the chain. "Look at it this way," he said, "I'll still be drifting along Route 1, but this book is goin' to help me put wheels under me."

The researcher was assured when he picked up the Thursday, November 25 issue of The Washington Post and saw a front page story with the headline "The Secret Handicap: Millions of Americans Can't Read." Not only was the article the "first in a series," but one person's fact can no longer be another's fiction.

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