

Research Report

Learning for Life

A Longitudinal Study of Pennsylvania's Adult Education Success Stories Recipients

by

Sherry Royce and Richard Gacka

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PROJECT STAFF:

Dr. Sherry Royce,
Project Director

Dr. Richard Gacka,
Data Analyst

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS:

Priscilla Carman

Kathy Gleockner

Peggy Greene

Samuel Gruber

Chris Kemp

Alice Redman

David Wolfe

Joy Zamierowski

This Executive Summary and the full Learning for Life report are available on the official Web site of the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, ABLEsite: paadulted.org Click on Find Documents > Reports

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Acknowledgements

Learning for Life owes its existence to the late Ethel Matthews, chief of Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE's) Division of Adult and Community Education. Matthews initiated the Success Stories project and presented the first Adult Education Students-of-the-Year awards on February 4, 1978 at Pennsylvania's 13th Annual Adult Education Midwinter Conference.

Some 20 years later, Cheryl Keenan, director of PDE's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE), recognized the research value inherent in the information about Pennsylvania's outstanding adult learners that the Success Stories project had collected over the years and funded this study. Ella Morin, Division Chief Special Programs, PDE's Bureau of ABLE, has been an ongoing source of encouragement and support for this study and its project director.

This study owes a debt of gratitude to research assistants, Pricilla Carman, Kathy Gleockner, Peggy Greene, Sam Gruber, Chris Kemp, Alice Redman, David Wolfe, and Joy Zamierowski who tracked down and contacted the 70 study participants, met with them wherever they chose, and encouraged their confidences.

As an adult education administrator, director, author, and professional development specialist for 35 years, my credentials are in practice rather than research. I bring to this project the trained eye of a journalist and a firm foundation in qualitative research gained from studying with Steven Brookfield and Jack Mezirow as a graduate of Teacher's College's AEGIS program. The excellent work in adult basic and literacy education by Hal Beder, Beth Bingham, and Juliet Merrifield inspired me in researching and preparing this document. My partner in this adventure, Dr. Richard Gacka, and my friends in the field, Paul Jurmo, Renee Sherman, and Tom Valentine who critiqued this report have been firm taskmasters. Any mistakes are my own.

The future of our field is in the hands of adult learners like those who gave life to this study as research assistants and as participants. It is their stories and their achievements over time that validate our endeavors as adult education tutors, teachers, trainers, counselors, supervisors, curriculum and professional development specialists, researchers, directors and administrators.

Executive Summary

As the national emphasis on adult learner performance accountability shifts from basic skills gained in the classroom to literacy functions exhibited in daily life, we need to establish meaningful benchmarks by which to measure participants' growth. What better yardstick to use than the life experiences of successful ABLE participants? *Learning for Life* provides this perspective by studying the life experiences and attitudes of 70 adult learners who participated in ABLE programs between 1968 and 2000 and were recognized as Pennsylvania's Outstanding Adult Students of the Year.

By studying this population, we can illuminate outcomes experienced by successful adult learners over time; outcomes such as attitudinal and life style changes that produced lasting impacts upon participants, their families and their communities. We can inform practitioners of program strategies, instructional methods and mentoring styles that appear effective. We can apprise stakeholders of appropriate standards and time intervals for measuring participant success. We can identify roadblocks that even the most successful participants have difficulty in surmounting. Furthermore, we can offer models of excellence for adult learners to relate to and emulate.

Research Instruments

Learning for Life employs four distinct research instruments. A *Review of Success Stories Booklets* dating from 1978 to the present imparts information about sample members' motives for participation, educational levels at program entrance and sponsors' descriptions of their nominees' attitudes and accomplishments. *Informal Interviews* supply participants' answers to broad open-ended questions that address life changes and attitude transformations without specifically focusing on ABLE participation, advanced education, employment, family and/or community activities. Thus, any comments offered on these specific subjects are a matter of participants' choice rather than researchers' direction.

The Impact Survey reveals participants' demographics, family status, current activities, employment and benefits, financial and economic factors, educational attainment, major life occurrences, results of exemplary student recognition and personal well being. The *Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI)*, a brief but comprehensive standardized test, measures respondents' level of satisfaction with their lives.

Data Analyses

The use of multiple instruments allowed researchers to gather data that could be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively and measured against a standardized instrument. The structure devised for reporting the qualitative findings was arrived at by the "grounded study" approach of identifying and classifying themes, topics and subtopics that emerged from the Informal Interviews. The *Statview* software program was used to complete the Impact Survey's statistical analyses. Much of the data available from the Impact Survey were descriptive rather than quantitative and there was considerable variability in data reporting due to participants' failure to make entries in all applicable areas. A thorough review of data available from the Informal Interviews and Success Stories Booklets succeeded in filling in sufficient past and present data to provide descriptive information about the study sample and quantitative

statistics in limited areas. These findings were then compared to participants' scores on the standardized QOLI and found to correlate.

Participant Demographics and Background

Sample members were similar (gender, ethnicity, entrance level, sponsoring agency and location) to adult learners enrolled in Pennsylvania's ABLE programs. The age of study participants (24 to 80 with the medium of 40-59) was the one atypical factor. This age span was consistent with the range of years between program enrollment and study participation; the shortest time period being two years; the longest, 32 years; with an average time span of 13 years.

However, participants carried far more "baggage" at enrollment than the average adult learner. In addition to the risk factors of learning differences, lack of schooling, an inability to speak English, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, prejudice and divorce, study participants had endured severe physical and mental handicaps, abuse, addiction, death of loved ones and even torture. Conversely, their achievements and degree of life satisfaction years after program completion were exceptional compared to the standard ABLE population. What happened?

Adult Literacy Findings:

1. Success begins with the individual learner.

Despite the "shame" of illiteracy, despite the fear of failure, despite the lack of self-esteem, these men and women selected adult education as the vehicle for changing their lives. They brought to adult education programs the resilience of survivors along with the resolve to improve their lives. Resilience and determination appear to be basic elements that respond to the yeast of adult education by enhancing self-confidence, increasing self-awareness, fostering self-determination and illuminating latent leadership.

Participants entering a tutoring or classroom situation were not yet successful adult learners but they had been tested in life's fire and not found wanting. Some had strong support systems, some stood alone and some battled spouses trying to bring them down. Nearly all had been wounded in their struggle for literacy and educational advancement. The scars they carried left them unsure of their ability to learn and thus build a better future for themselves and their families. Each participant approached adult education in his or her individual way.

2. Adult education is a catalyst for change.

Over two-thirds of the participants completed their program goals within a two-year time span. Ten of 20 Basic Literacy, six of seven ESL and all ABE and GED enrollees attained a GED, an Adult High School diploma or a higher education degree. What happened in the classroom that enabled them to emerge from the chrysalis of prior problems to the enlightenment of intentional change? Participants speak of a continuum that leads to empowerment. They describe a respectful, safe environment and offer examples of individualized curricula and collaborative learning strategies that address their weaknesses and encourage them to share their strengths.

Whatever participants' self-perceived flaws, practitioners and peers accept them as valuable individuals and provide socialization as well as instruction and support. Teachers and

tutors suggest alternative learning strategies and assure participants' they can accomplish their goals. Help is available. As participants succeed, what was once thought impossible becomes a comfortable reality. New students turn to them for assurance, advice and assistance. They reach out to help others. As role models, participants have reached the first step on a leadership ladder. Confidence in their new-found abilities grows. They discard old myths, begin to build positive self-images, question previous goals and open themselves to new possibilities. Leadership begets recognition. Success supplies satisfaction. Education offers opportunity. And nothing is ever the same again.

Participant Life Style Outcomes:

1. *“The GED is a beginning not an end.”*

With new attitudes toward life and new credentials, participants discuss their surprise and delight at being propelled into new “adventures” in careers and in community affairs. Despite the extent of their achievements after ABLE completion, successful adult learners regard the GED as the turning point in their lives. It was the first goal they set for themselves. It provided their first taste of success. From then on, they set out to reshape their lives in accordance with their dreams.

These dreams are not new to the American scene — the security of a home for their families and steady employment at more than minimum wage so their children will have the chance for “a better life” than they had experienced. With fulfillment of these dreams came satisfaction and a desire to “pay back” by helping others in their families, their schools, and their communities.

2. **Participants engage in continuing education as time and money permit.**

After ABLE program completion, 79 percent of participants engaged in formal or informal education or training. Informal education ranged from attending literacy conferences to computer and driver's education courses. Several participants selected continuing education as a less expensive, less time-consuming alternative to higher education.

Forty percent of the study sample enrolled in college and 20 percent completed a higher education degree. Ninety-three percent of higher education graduates entered college immediately after getting their GEDs. Half of all participants who enrolled in college but did not earn degrees are still taking credit after credit as time and money permit. Participants with learning differences and participants with funding difficulties may take ten years or more to complete college degrees. An interlocking web of obstacles including health, employment, family and finances compete for control of the participant's world which explains why so few GED graduates complete college degrees. All participants who earned degrees received financial assistance in the form of pensions, scholarships or internships or they belonged to families with two incomes.

3. **Employment changes reveal a drop in assistance and an increase in “helping” jobs.**

The Impact Survey reveals a dramatic drop (from 30 percent to three percent) in Welfare and Food Stamp usage after ABLE participation. A corresponding employment pattern suggests that working participants left part-time or minimum wage jobs to engage in ABLE programs with a subsequent 20 percent increase in salaried employment after program comple-

tion. Of 23 participants receiving public assistance prior to ABLE participation, 18 (78 percent) are now self-sufficient. Of these 18 former welfare recipients, eleven (61 percent) attended college. Of the 11 individuals who enrolled in college, four are still taking courses and four completed doctoral, masters, bachelors or associate degrees.

The qualitative study further delineates changes in the quality of employment pre- and post-program participation. Prior to ABLE enrollment, 22 participants (31 percent) were unemployed homemakers or students. Currently, 15 participants (21 percent) are not in the workforce; these include three college students; four individuals on employment disability, two homemakers and six retirees with an average age of 69. Of the 55 participants (79 percent of sample member) currently employed, five (nine percent) own or manage businesses; 37 (67 percent) hold professional or service positions in “helping” areas and 13 (24 percent) are working in blue collar or entry level jobs. The “helping” professions and service areas were participants’ overwhelming choice for new careers. Jobs were valued for the self-image and satisfaction they imparted as much as for the financial resources they provided. Regardless of current position or level of job satisfaction, participants under 50 years of age continue setting goals for future advancement; older participant set goals for future learning.

4. Participants’ children respond positively to the examples set by their parents.

Nearly 75 percent of participants own one or more homes and regard home ownership as a significant achievement. While indicative of “middle class” status, participants whose home life was largely dysfunctional value home ownership as an important symbol of family “safety” and “togetherness.” To guarantee that their children will not suffer from a lack of education, participants have set examples for their families and established rules about studies and school. The statistics for participants’ children suggest that their examples are viable: of 245 children, nine have advanced higher education credits or degrees; 31 have college degrees; 43 are in college or have taken college courses, and 76 are high school graduates. There are 12 GED graduates, 14 high school dropouts, 22 children in high school, 33 who are pre-high school and 5 for whom there is no information.

5. Self-esteem leads to community service and adult education advocacy.

When asked to rate how important self-esteem was to their happiness and how satisfied they were with this area of their lives, participants ranked it highest of the 16 life areas measured by the standardized Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI). Over the course of five, 10, 20 or more years from the time of participation to the follow-up study, participants report that the self-esteem they experienced as successful adult learners impelled them to improve themselves and to help others.

After a history of self-doubt, the joy of achievement and the recognition of their competence serve as a springboard for transference and lead participants to volunteer and advocacy roles in their families, communities and in the field of adult education. High QOLI satisfaction scores in the areas of “helping” and “children” are indicators of the fulfillment they receive from raising children, siblings, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and foster children.

Service to others which often begins with taking in needy relatives expands to include leadership in their churches and schools. Nearly 60 percent of participants are involved in church activities and 46 percent are active in education. In addition to serving on PTA and Salvation Army committees, retirement and community development associations, municipal

boards and cultural arts foundations, fully 33 percent of the participants in this study are involved in ABLE programs as volunteers, tutors, trainers, staff members and advocates. Their contributions to the community as responsible citizens are certainly as noteworthy as their contributions to the economy as taxpayers.

Critical Issues

1. ABLE Programs

ABLE participants identified three critical issues that present serious problems for adult learners. In spite of participants' new self-image, practitioners and programs must be sensitive to the use of the word "illiteracy," in the presence of adult learners who become distressed by the label "illiterate," even when indirectly applied.

After years of frustration, participants who experience success in learning are anxious to persist in their studies. Fifty-five percent of basic literacy participants and 14 percent of participants who enrolled at ESL, ABE or GED levels spent between three and 11 years in ABLE programs. At the same time, stakeholders are pressuring adult education programs to provide participants with educational upgrading in a minimal amount of time. Participants from literacy, ESL and GED programs pleaded for patience — patience on the part of tutors, teachers and stakeholders.

Participants identified problems inherent in the present push for professionalization. They were troubled by a persistent lack of counselors and the replacement of part-time experienced non-credentialed teachers with full time novices who had teaching degrees but little experience in adult education. Furthermore, one former student and current social worker expressed concerns regarding the need for specialization in order to provide more equitable education to all adult learners. Inherent in this line of reasoning is the concept that adult education should not be merely about diplomas and credentials. It should be learning for life.

2. The Problem with Higher Education:

ABLE participants also identified three critical issues inherent in higher education. First of all, it is not suitable for everyone. Yet, GED teachers often raise successful learners' expectations and encourage them to go on in the face of external pressures despite a lack of prevailing personal goals. Secondly, most entry level "helping" careers require higher education credentials. Participants who are highly successful in their jobs are often locked out of raises and even forfeit their positions without the validation of formal credentials. The major problem with higher education is that it's expensive and there are few financial resources available to participants. Federal and/or state funding designated for GED graduates who have shown the determination and the ability to do college work would make a big difference in their higher education participation and completion statistics not to mention their lives.

Conclusions and Implications

Learning for Life illuminates educational, employment and social outcomes over time that impact upon participants, their children, and their communities. Such outcomes cannot be assessed in the here and now by grade level measurements. While the acquisition of basic skills is a starting point for some participants, it represents the attainment of a lifelong goal for others. No two learners are alike and all learners are valuable.

Learning for Life places self-esteem in its proper perspective. It is not a mere by-product of adult basic and literacy education; it is the sparkplug that ignites self-efficacy and social action. Having acquired basic skills and self-esteem, participants strove for practical goals that included higher education and vocational training, secure employment and enhanced financial status. The educational attainments of participants' children as well as successful adult learners' satisfaction with their lives, social awareness and community involvement reflect personal impacts that have relevance for all of us as educators and as a nation. As Beder (1999) posits: "It may well be that the power of adult literacy education lies not in its function as an end that produces immediate gains but in its function as an enabling means to a wide range of other benefits that, when obtained, yield still more benefits."

Dr. Sherry Royce
December 15, 2001

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

To leave the anecdotes out of policy, which is about human affairs, is to leave out the small but cumulative celebrations that we all really do see every day. We should show exactly why teachers are teachers. It's not to count heads and fill out forms. An appeal to the heart is a human thing. Human beings are not natural science projects or statistical affairs. Each of us is "personal," and we should portray our field in the personal light that it is. We have been too long thinking the individual story is an unprofessional aspect of our profession. It's not. Rather, the personal story is the beating heart of the profession of teaching.

Catherine King (Private Correspondence)

Setting the Scene

The continuing education of adults is essential to maintaining America's heritage as "the land of opportunity." While the new global economy provides 30-year old information specialists with millions to retire, adults lacking the required skills and knowledge continue to struggle to provide for their families' future. To address this educational divide, The National Literacy Summit 2000 issued a call to action to "ensure that all Americans have access to literacy services and equal opportunities for success." In their summary report, *From the Margins to the Mainstream*, the steering committee of the National Literacy Summit 2000 called for a system of quality services for adult students, ease of access to these services, and sufficient resources to support both quality and access.

The first two significant issues identified by this report are student involvement and communication. Students are acknowledged as the field's primary stakeholders and customers. Communication is recognized as an indispensable component in adult education's latest crusade for recognition and resources. Those of us with long memories and a penchant for history have seen this battle waged again and again.

Today's struggle has taken on the mantle of systems development and the mace of performance accountability. Performance accountability is one means of measuring the benefits or outcomes learners accrue from participating in adult basic and literacy education. Outcome assessment can be an effective tool for measuring program performance, planning for systems improvement, and formulating state and national policy. Yet, as Beder (1999) notes in his comprehensive study of adult literacy education outcome research, "after more than 25 years, only nine credible state studies have been conducted, and all are limited in one way or another (p.77)."

The difficulty in producing meaningful outcome assessment is linked to multiple concepts of adult literacy and fluid definitions of its purpose as impacted by the power of funding sources and the temper of the times. The present drive for national accountability via a National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education compounds the problem. As Merrifield points out "what is counted usually becomes 'what counts. (1988, p.52)." She further maintains (1998, p. 7):

Adult education cannot be accountable to learners or to policymakers without the ability to track learning of individuals, to demonstrate what has been learned, to compare learning across programs, and to judge learning against external standards.

To address outcome based performance standards as required by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA —P.L. 105-220), the National Reporting System (NRS, 2000) mandates state collection of the core measurements of verified employment and education. Student demographics that comprise ethnicity, age and gender as well as status measures such as student employment, student disability, and the receipt of public assistance are also included. Furthermore, the NRS suggests conducting optional follow-up surveys in the areas of reduction in welfare benefits, completion of work-based learner projects, involvement in children's literacy or educational endeavors, and acquisition of citizenship skills including voting and participation in community affairs. The compulsory time period for the collection of these outcomes ranges from any time within the program year to one year after program completion. And therein lies the fallacy.

Adults do not learn or earn in isolation. Their dreams and goals are vulnerable to the everyday happenings that make up the fabric of life: a child is born, a parent dies, a promotion is earned, an illness occurs, a marriage is celebrated or terminated, a factory closes, a house is purchased, an income is lost, a scholarship is earned and on and on. As this study explores participants' basic and continuing education, employment, family and community involvement, we learn how each component impacts upon other slices of life. Participants do not travel a swift straight freeway to a foreseeable future. They meander along multiple pathways in pursuit of the American dream.

In requiring that ABE programs report learner progress in terms of scales or levels, the NRS is perpetuating the past. The "metaphor of levels" as critiqued by Sticht (11/14/99) is not merely inappropriate for adults; it represents the vestigial remains of a standardized industrial society. As we embark upon a new millennium, it is time to change the paradigm. In an age where information abounds, the acquisition of language and numerical competency must be taught hand-in-hand with the critical reasoning skills needed to select appropriate content and the power to transform learning into action.

Toward that end, the Equipped for the Future (EFF) project of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has taken a generative field-based approach to developing content standards that specify the knowledge and skills required to fulfill 21st century adults' responsibilities as workers, parents and family members, citizens and community members (Stein, January 2000). Examining this same issue from the converse side, The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) has funded longitudinal impact studies (Bingham, Reder) to explore the variety of "real-life" changes that occur in adult learners' lives when they participate in adult literacy programs and to ascertain how to effectively assess this impact. Beder (1999) reports the following implications for policy:

1. More and better outcome and impact research is needed.
2. Long-term benefits need to be investigated since it is estimated that cumulative gains in education and income would not begin to accrue until five or more years after completion of adult literacy education.
3. The definition of basic skills is crucial to accurate measurement.

4. We need to ascertain the relationship between enhanced self-image and the attainment of other benefits.
5. Long-term effects of parental involvement in adult education need to be demonstrated by examining children's more positive attitudes toward education, improved school performance, high secondary school graduations and enrollment in higher education.

Beder (1999, p. 81) concludes: "If there is 'pay-dirt' in our understanding of outcomes and impacts it probably lies in establishing the long-term intergenerational and cumulative effects of adult literacy education. The best way to do this would be through a longitudinal evaluation in which the same subjects were followed up for a period of no less than five years." He further suggests that by using a qualitative assessment, "we might be able to answer critical questions about impact that are difficult or impossible to answer quantitatively. Questions such as:

- What is the meaning of impact from the perspective of successful learners?
- Are there important impacts of adult literacy that learners recognize in themselves, but are not amenable to quantitative measurement?
- How and to what extent do increased self-confidence and self-efficacy enable other positive changes in successful learners' lives?"

Through a combination of fortuitous circumstances and painstaking research, *Learning for Life: A Longitudinal Study Of Pennsylvania's Adult Education Success Stories Recipients*, is uniquely prepared to answer these questions.

The Past as Prologue

In 1978, the Success Stories project was initiated by the late Ethel Matthews, chief of Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE's) Division of Adult and Community Education, to honor Pennsylvania's outstanding adult basic education students. For the past 22 years, this project has identified exemplary ABE students, honored them at the annual Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education's (PAACE's) Midwinter Conference and featured them in an annual booklet. Over the years, the life stories of the struggles, persistence, and long-term accomplishments of exemplary adult learners have proven to be one of the PDE Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education's (ABLE's) best awareness vehicles.

At a time when stakeholders focus upon preparing adult learners for the workforce, Success Stories award recipients confirm the impact of adult education in terms of training and higher education completed, jobs acquired and retained and promotions offered. At a time when adult literacy is linked to family literacy, award recipients cite as achievements children who stay in school and graduate with honors. At a time when citizenship and community service are esteemed as part of the EFF initiative, award recipients report their influence as community leaders and their role in helping others to achieve higher level skills.

In June 1998, to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Success Stories Project, *Partners for Progress*, a double issue of the Success Stories Booklet was published. In addition to the 1998 cohort of outstanding ABLE students, this booklet featured life stories of former award recipients under the heading, *Past Promise Fulfilled*. The local, state and national response to this Anniversary Booklet was so favorable that Cheryl Keenan, director of PDE Bureau of ABLE, suggested we publish another double issue. Before undertaking that task, project staff decided to track

down previous award recipients and to conduct a longitudinal study of the impact of ABLE participation upon their lives.

Purpose of the Study

Why Study Our Most Successful Students?

The participant sample in this study is not representative of Pennsylvania's or any other states' ABE population. This was the intent. By studying our most successful students, we expect to illuminate adult education outcomes these learners experienced over time; outcomes that cannot be measured in the here and now by grade level achievements. Furthermore, we hope to identify adult learner characteristics that lead to achievement. With further study, we may determine whether these attitudes and behaviors are inherent, instilled as a product of adult education programming or inculcated as a result of instructional modeling in an atmosphere of collaborative learning.

There are many cogent reasons for studying these successful students. First of all, long term data are available. Success Stories booklets which date from 1978 provide detailed information about adult learners who enrolled in ABE programs as early as 1968. We know the challenges they faced as youngsters, the reasons some dropped out of school and why others never attended school at all. We know when they enrolled in classes and why they chose to participate. We have information about their basic skills entry levels and how long it took them to achieve their goals. Furthermore, there is documentation regarding the personal, classroom and community accomplishments that entitled them to be considered outstanding adult learners.

The research undertaken in *Learning for Life* will provide a long term perspective that has been missing in adult basic education participant research. It will describe how these adult students applied skills and attitudes learned or inculcated in the classroom to their daily lives over a period of five, 10, 20 or 30 years. The literature informs us that ABE involvement raises participants' self-esteem and enables them to secure entry level jobs. *Learning for Life* will take this one step further. It will provide information on participants' long term benefits in regard to advanced training and education, high-level employment and perceived quality of life. It will demonstrate wider-ranging benefits that accrue in terms of children's school performance and graduation levels. It will examine enhanced self-image that engenders service to family, classmates and the community. It will also describe problems areas participants see as inherent in basic and higher education.

Learning for Life is not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of ABLE programs but to present participants' histories and reflections upon their backgrounds, program experiences and the consequences thereof. Its primary purpose is to inform practitioners and stakeholders as to the long-term influence of ABLE programs upon successful participants' attitudes and lifestyles. By selecting successful participants, we establish benchmarks toward which programs, practitioners and participants can strive. We also identify roadblocks that even the most successful have difficulty in surmounting.

The underlying principle guiding this research is respect for the validity of each participant's opinions. The prevailing presumption is that guiding principles for practice and policy can be subsumed from the commonalities that arise. Toward that end, the following questions will be explored:

Prior to and during ABLE program participation:

- Are there characteristics shared by study participants that make them receptive to success in ABLE classes?
- Are there common classroom and/or instructional attributes that contribute to participants' initial and ongoing success?
- Are there noteworthy changes in participants' skills and perspectives that they ascribe to their ABLE experiences?
- Are there problems inherent in ABLE programs and the ABE system that are obvious to participants?

After ABLE program participation:

- Do participants continue to seek informal and/or formal training or education?
- Do participants experience an increase in income and a decrease in welfare dependency?
- Do participants attain skilled employment and/or professional careers?
- Do participants' children complete high school and enroll in higher education?
- Do participants value their expertise and contribute to the welfare of others?
- What challenges face successful adult learners after completing ABLE programs?

This study also serves as a call to adult learners to “clearly articulate their own stance, name their own worlds, and tap the sources of their own creativity (Monette, 1970, 543-554).” The time has come for adult learners to have heroes — models of excellence that they can relate to and emulate. With the advent of VALUE (Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education), adult learners have an organized constituency that can speak to their interests. Adult education will never take its rightful place in the mainstream of American education until adult learners play a prominent role as consumer advocates for themselves and for their peers. This study provides numerous examples of adult learners who became ABLE tutors and teachers, volunteers and advocates for the field of adult literacy. It is these participant anecdotes that flesh out the dry, albeit important data and give *Learning for Life* its unique voice.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Faced with the unique opportunity of capturing the life stories, attitudes, and opinions of successful ABE students, project staff decided to include two Success Stories award recipients in the project as research assistants. The rationale behind this selection was that participants would be more inclined to be interviewed by their peers and would be willing to share freely with individuals whose experiences were similar to their own. Four different instruments (See Appendix A) were selected to collect data: a Review of Success Stories Booklets; an Informal Interview; an Impact Survey, and the Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI), a brief but comprehensive standardized test that measures respondents' satisfaction with their lives. This multiplicity of instruments allowed researchers to gather data that could be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively and compared with results from a standardized instrument. The chapter on methodology will describe study participants and research team members. It will delineate research strategies, detail instruments for data collection and analysis, and present study limitations.

Identification and Selection of Study Participants

Participants in this study were selected from a database of 229 ABLE students who were honored as Pennsylvania's Success Stories award recipients between the years 1978 and 1999. In reviewing this database, the project director found that 50 award recipients were identified only by the adult education programs they attended. No attempt was made to locate these individuals. Addresses and social security numbers were listed for 106 award recipients, and addresses alone were available for another 73 Success Stories winners.

Information on these 179 recipients was sent to PennDot, an arm of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Transportation. Clerks checked award recipients' names, social security numbers and addresses against Pennsylvania driver registration files. PennDot was able to match 124 award recipients with previous or new addresses. No telephone numbers were provided. Nine adult learners who were honored as Success Stories award recipients in February, 2000 were added to the database to bring the number of potential study participants to 133 individuals.

The project director contacted current and past program directors and teachers. These ABLE staff members were provided with the PennDot list of names and addresses and asked to supply working telephone numbers for adult learners previous enrolled in their programs or living in their general locality. Of the 22 years covered in this study, only award recipients from the years 1980 and 1985 are not represented.

No addresses or social security numbers were available for award recipients honored in 1980. Only three members of the 1985 cohort were identified by PennDot. Of these, one refused an interview, one was mentally ill and the third lived in a location that was inaccessible for interview purposes. Of the 133 award recipients identified by PennDot:

- 70 took part in the study

- 21 could not be located

- 12 were identified as dead

- Six were physically, mentally or emotionally unable to be interviewed

- Four had moved out of the state or country

- Three refused to take part in the study

- One did not show up for a scheduled interview

- Eight interviews could not be scheduled within the given time frame

Eight participants lived in locations unserviceable by research assistants

The 70 participants were nominated for their Success Stories award by 40 ABLE-funded agencies representing the following administrative entities:

Nine public school districts

Eight intermediate units (regional public school administrative entities)

Two vocational-technical schools

Two colleges

Eight literacy councils

Three community action agencies

Four private-sector training agencies (including a union and a rehabilitation facility)

Two community-based organizations (one of which is funded by a religious organization).

Participant location was well distributed throughout the Commonwealth: Philadelphia and surrounding counties accounted for 17 participants; Pittsburgh and the southwestern counties, 16 participants; Central Pennsylvania, 16 participants; Erie and the northwestern counties, 11 participants; and the northeastern tier, the remaining ten participants.

Participant Demographics

Of the 70 participants, there were more than twice as many female participants as male. The average age of participants at the time of their interview was 49.5 years with little difference between average participant age for both males and females. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 80 with the majority falling into the middle years (40 –59). That fact should be considered in interpreting the results of the study. In terms of racial distribution the majority of participants were White (58.5 percent), followed by Black (27.1 percent), and Asian and Hispanic (7.1 percent).

TABLE I

Age of Participants by Gender and Ethnicity

Average Age, Variability and Distribution by Gender and Ethnic Grouping							
	Total Group	Females	Males	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Average Age	49.5	50.1	48.1	42.8	52.3	41.6	49.9
Count	70	49	21	5	19	5	41
St. Dev. (yrs)	12.8	13.1	12.5	4.9	15.5	14.5	11.4
Minimum Age	24	29	24	36	32	24	29
Maximum Age	80	80	77	49	80	62	77
From 20 to < 30	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
From 30 to < 40	11	8	3	1	4	1	5
From 40 to < 50	29	19	10	4	7	2	16
From 50 to < 60	13	9	4	0	3	0	10
From 60 to < 70	7	6	1	0	1	1	5
From 70 to < 80	7	5	2	0	3	0	4
From 80 to < 90	1	1	0	0	1	0	0

Charts 1 and 2 present information about the age and ethnicity of participants in chart format.

Chart 1

Age of Participants by Gender

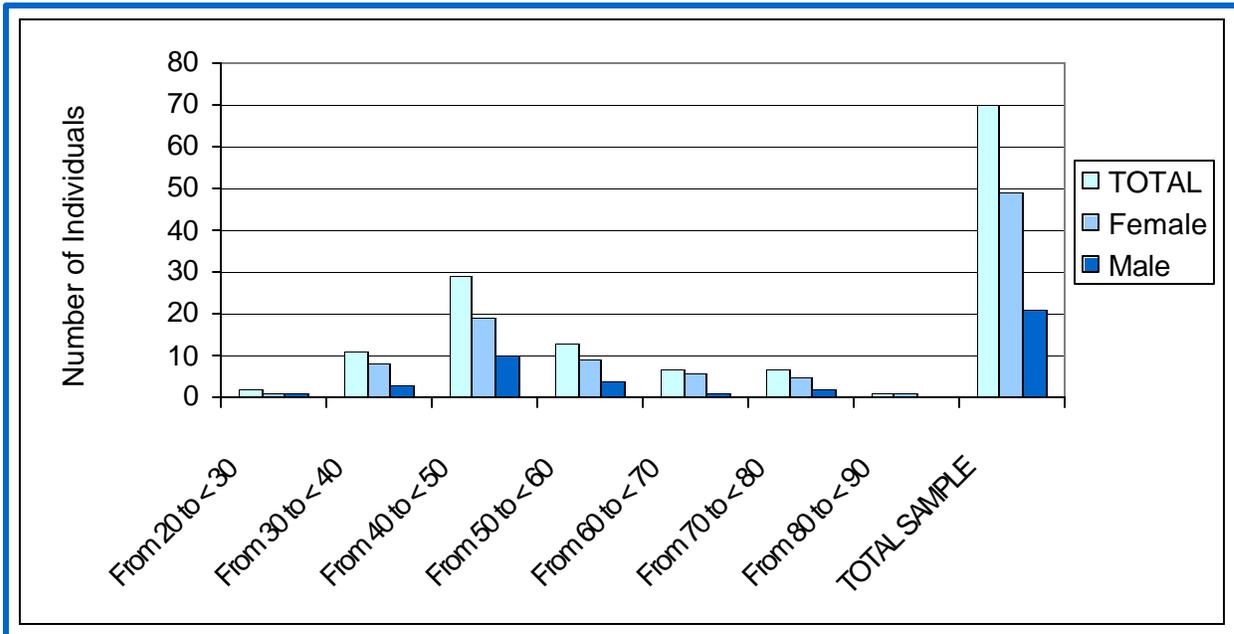
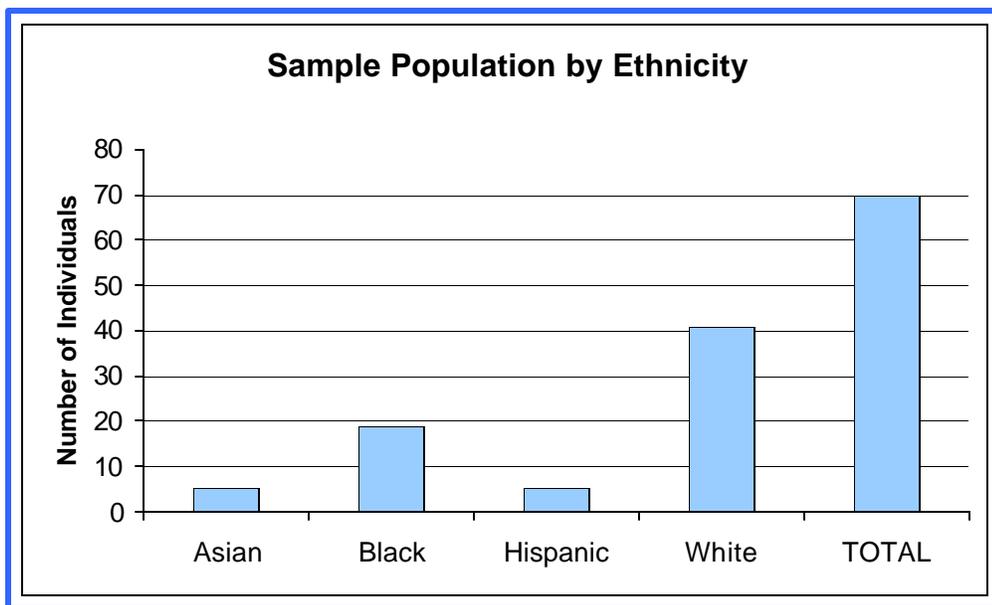


Chart 2

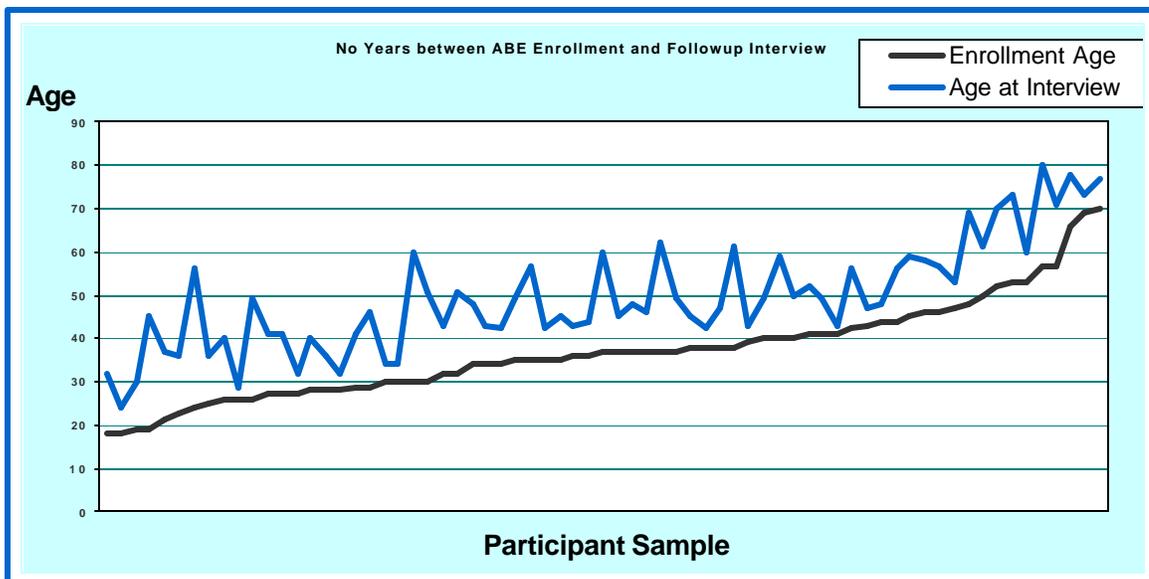
Ethnicity of Participants



It is useful to have a “snapshot” of the overall group of individuals participating in this study, as age may play a part in their perceptions and provides a background against which they can measure their life expectations and accomplishments. For the most part, the participants in this study reflect individuals who have an experiential framework with which to respond since only two percent were below 30 years of age. With this in mind, age as well as gender will be used in some of the subsequent analyses. Participants ranged from 18 to 70 years of age at the time of their enrollment in ABE classes and from 24 to 80 years of age at the time they were interviewed for this study. The shortest amount of time between program enrollment and study participation was two years; the longest span was 32 years; and the average span was 13 years. Chart III provides a graphic overview of the number of years between participants’ ages at ABE enrollment and their follow-up interviews.

Chart 3

Range of Time between ABE Enrollment and Follow-up Interviews



The Research Team

The longitudinal study was carried out in the field by eight research assistants chosen according to the locality of participants. Priority in selection was given to Success Stories award recipients who were teachers or social workers or were working toward degrees in these fields. Two former award recipients met the criteria and were selected to work in the Philadelphia area and in the Northwestern region of Pennsylvania. Two retired adult education teachers, a retired program director, and a university-based ABE researcher were selected to work in the Northeastern and Central regions. A former adult education state resource center associate and a former ABE program director conducted interviews in the Pittsburgh and Erie areas.

Training for participant/research assistants involved a one-on-one interview conducted by Dr. Royce prior to their field experience. Role playing a research assistant, Dr. Royce scheduled the interview, requested permission to tape, obtained signoff agreements, asked the open-ended questions, read and completed the Impact Survey and QOLI with the interviewees. There was a lengthy discussion of the interview protocol and prompt sheet as well as standard ways to administer the Impact Survey and Quality of Life Inventory.

When working with research assistants who were not study participants, Dr. Royce went through the same routine substituting participant tapes for the actual interview. Every research assistant signed a Confidentiality Agreement stipulating that the information gained and the tapes recorded during the interview process were to be used solely for research purposes. They were not to be shared with any individual outside the project.

Data Collection

Success Stories Booklets

The existence of Success Stories booklets dating from 1978 describing participants' backgrounds and attitudes has been an invaluable resource. The current study's ability to conduct successful interviews and to trace participants' ABLE experiences and life histories is due in large measure to the standard format and criteria used in the process of nominating and selecting outstanding adult learners for Pennsylvania's annual Success Stories achievement award. Between 1978 when the project was initiated and 2000 when this study was conducted, there have been only two changes in the information required for award nominations (See Appendix A-1). The 1978-79 nominations' criteria developed under the leadership of state director Ethel Matthews were relatively simple: 1) admiration and respect from teachers and fellow students for accomplishments in the program; and 2) information on the impact and influence of educational efforts on family, social interaction, independence, employment and civic involvement.

By 1980, when Dr. John Christopher became state director, the background information requested for Success Stories nominations became more sophisticated. The call for nominations sent to all ABE-funded agencies in Pennsylvania allowed only one nomination per agency and added questions about participant's background and future plans as well as specific information regarding program enrollment level, goals achieved and life problems experience and conquered prior to and during program participation. This background information remained in effect until 1997 when it was modified by state director Cheryl Keenan to shift the emphasis from challenges overcome by nominees to educational strategies employed by nominees to achieve their goals. Despite the elimination of "hardship" questions from the nomination form, agencies continued to include obstacles encountered as evidence of their nominee's persistence and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Success Stories booklets provided program sponsor's description of motives for participation, educational levels at program entrance, attitudes and accomplishments. *Learning for Life* draws upon information provided by these booklets as well as data collected in the current study in order to detail changes in participants' skills, attitudes, and life styles that occurred over time and to explore what role, if any, ABLE practitioners and programs played as catalysts in this process.

The Impact Survey

Two concerns governed the design of the Impact Survey and the selection of the QOLI instrument. Although the framework of the study allowed for both instruments to be read to participants, simplicity in choice of words and clarity in choice of content were principal factors. The time element was the second concern. We assumed that one hour would be sufficient for each participant session. If the informal talk was to take approximately 15 minutes, only 45 minutes was left to complete the Impact Survey and the QOLI. Furthermore, since no payment of any kind was offered participants, we believed that one hour of their time was the most we should request.

Dr. Richard Gacka, a certified school psychologist, licensed private psychologist and director of the PDE Bureau of ABLE's Northwest Professional Development Center, prepared the first draft of the Impact Survey. Dr. Royce reviewed and revised the draft to insure that the data requested indicated the participant's status before enrolling, while attending, and after leaving an ABLE program. The Survey addressed eight areas of interest (See Appendix A-1):

- Educational status
- Family status
- Current activities
- Job history
- ABLE program information
- Financial status
- Personal history
- Personal well-being

Under educational status, participants were queried as to their level of education before, during, and after ABLE participation, any degrees or certificates earned, and any training or personal interest courses taken. Family questions addressed marital status, number of children and the extent of children's education. In regard to program participation, sample members were asked to indicate their instructional group (ABE/GED/ESL/Basic Literacy/Family Literacy) at the time of entrance and exit from the program. They also had an opportunity to select impacts on their lives (i.e. scholarships, promotions, motivation to pursue additional education) that were a direct result of receiving the Success Stories Outstanding Student Award.

Data on employment and financial status before, during, and after program enrollment were determined by participants completing job histories and indicating alternate sources of income or assistance. They also checked off employer or self-provided benefits, listed the number of houses, cars, and computers they owned or leased, and rated their income group as homeless, poverty, low income, middle class, upper middle or wealthy.

The information collected about health status addressed physical and mental health problems, treatment for substance abuse, and severe accidents. The civic status area included questions as to whether participants had been arrested, received probation or jail time, filed for bankruptcy or had been sued. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they had obtained US citizenship, received a driver's license, completed reading a book, voted in a state or national election, had an article published and/or addressed a state or national audience. Involvement in personal and community activities was considered indicative of both civic status and personal well-being.

The final question required participants to rate the following 12 areas of personal well-being on a Likert scale with 5 indicating "things being excellent" and 1 meaning "there are major problems:" 1) job; 2) marriage; 3) children; 4) home; 5) education; 6) physical health; 7) financial status; 8) parenting skills; 9) job skills; 10) self confidence; 11) overall happiness, and 12) expectations for the future.

The Quality of Life Inventory

The *Quality of Life Inventory* (1994) is a brief but comprehensive measure of life satisfaction written at a sixth grade reading level. The introduction to the QOLI manual explains life satisfaction "as the perceived gap between what a person wants and what he or she has. The smaller the perceived discrepancy between a person's aspirations and achievements, the greater his or her life

satisfaction will be (p.4).” This inventory was standardized on a population of 798 individuals with a slight overrepresentation of black and Hispanic participants. The QOLI sample age ranged from 17 to 80, with 65 percent female and 35 percent male. The average educational level of the QOLI sample was three to four years of post-high school education. Except for the educational aspect, the QOLI sample demographics were remarkably similar to *Learning for Life* participants whose ages ranged from 18 to 80, with 70 percent female and 30 percent male.

The QOLI (See Appendix A-6) contains 32 items and normally takes only five minutes to complete. Participants were asked to rate each of the following 16 areas of life in terms of importance to their overall happiness and their satisfaction with the area: health, self-esteem, goals-and-values, money, work, play, learning, creativity, helping, love, friends, children, relatives, home, neighborhood and community. Participants also had the opportunity to further explain their satisfaction ratings by listing specific problems that interfered with their satisfaction in any of the 16 areas. Administration of this inventory to participants closely followed the instructions provided in the manual including the availability of an assistant to answer any questions that might arise about the meaning of particular words or about how the test should be completed.

The Informal Interview: A Qualitative Approach

Quantitative research assumes a reality composed of social facts that can be hypothesized, and then statistically quantified, massaged, and measured in order to make limited generalizations (Fingaret, 1982). Qualitative research, on the other hand, focuses upon multiple realities, presenting a holistic pattern of interrelated differences and similarities awash in context. The use of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews provides for interplay between reality as screened through consciousness and reality as vested in action. The Impact Survey entails answers to specific facts about adult learners’ lives. The QOLI requires participants to think about and rate their level of “life satisfaction.” The informal interview, or “unstructured talk,” encourages confidences, stimulates insights and can be genuinely enjoyable and helpful to participant and researcher alike.

Interview Procedures

The success of informal interviews in yielding information of value depends to a great extent upon the expertise of the researcher in establishing a “comfort level” that will allay fears and encourage participants to talk about sensitive issues. Since none of the research assistants were trained researchers, procedures were developed to assist them through the first few interviews and insure that there was consistency across the board. Interview procedures (See Appendix A-9) consisted of interview preparation, protocol, process, and prompt sheet.

During the interview training, each research assistant was provided with their award recipients’ stories and photographs as printed in Success Story booklets. They were asked to familiarize themselves with each award recipient’s history before making the initial contact. We learned over the course of the study that many potential participants worked split shifts and others were uneasy about receiving a call from a stranger. Persistence usually won out; only three of the participants who were contacted refused to take part in the study.

The interview protocol provided a scenario for the research assistants. They were trained to stress the significance of the project, explain that the information supplied by award recipients was extremely valuable and describe how a coding system would provide confidentiality for the facts and opinions provided by them in the course of the taped interview. After scheduling the place and time for the interview, research assistants were supposed to send out consent forms.

Early in the process, we found out that it was best for the research assistant to bring the consent form to the interview and have the participant sign it at the time he or she was given a code name.

To establish initial rapport between participant and researcher, a 15-minute informal talk was scheduled prior to the administration of the Impact Survey and the QOLI. At this time, researchers posed broad open-ended questions that addressed participants' life changes and attitude transformations without specifically focusing on their ABLE participation, advanced education, employment, family and/or community activities. Thus, any comments offered on these specific subjects during the interview would be a matter of participants' choice rather than researchers' direction. The administration of the formal Impact Survey would provide hard data to compare with participants' comments. In addition, an examination of participants' initial Success Stories and follow-up interviews would fill in any gaps in the survey and provide details substantiating the QOLI.

All interviews were conducted in person. If necessary, the research assistant would read the Impact Survey and the QOLI aloud and answer any questions about word meanings or QOLI instructions posed by participants. We anticipated and indeed obtained participants for this study who were former ESL students, new readers, adults with learning differences, and special education adults. The rationale guiding the person-to-person interviews and the assistance provided in completing the written instruments was to level the playing field.

Interview prompt sheet

After participants completed the consent form, research assistants showed the interviewee his or her Success Story and photograph. Research assistants allowed the participant to look over the story if they wished and then began an informal talk using the following open-ended questions:

- Do you recognize yourself? This story was written quite a while ago. What can you tell me about how your life has changed since this story was written?
- In 19xx (the year they received their award) you were one of the Department of Education's Success Stories. What do you think makes a person successful?
- Which of your life achievements to date are you most pleased with?
- How do you handle setbacks?
- If you could change anything about yourself or your life, what would it be?
- What goals have you set for the future?
- What help, if any, do you need to reach these goals?
- If you had three magic wishes:
 1. What would you wish for yourself?
 2. For your family or friends?
 3. For all adult students?

None of these questions: referred to gains in education or employment; inquired about children's education, community activities or leadership positions; probed participant's attitudes toward adult and literacy education staff or programs or asked about problems, perseverance, or self-esteem. Any answers dealing with these subjects were volunteered by participants "under their own steam."

Data Analysis

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses of the Impact Survey were completed using the Statview software program published by Abacus Concepts. Statview is an integrated statistical software package that combines the structure of a spreadsheet with the analytical capabilities of a stand-alone statistical program. Statview offers a comprehensive range of statistical analysis ranging from basic descriptive statistics to ANOVA, factor analysis and nonparametric tests. The format of Statview analyses allows for flexible analysis of data by specified characteristics. Most of the analyses in this study consisted of measures of central tendency, variability, frequency distributions, or in some cases measures of correlation and tests of significant differences.

Data were entered directly from each Impact Survey form into an Excel spreadsheet and transferred into Statview. For purposes of developing graphs and tables, summary data from Statview analyses were entered into Excel spreadsheets. Much of the data available from the Impact Survey were descriptive rather than quantitative and there was considerable variability in data reporting due to participants' failure to make entries in all applicable areas. A thorough review of data available from the Informal Interviews and Success Stories Booklets succeeded in filling in sufficient past and present data to provide overall descriptive statistics and quantitative statistics in limited areas.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis is a modified version of the system developed by Dr. Stephen Brookfield (1980) for his thesis on independent adult learners and utilized by Dr. Sherry Royce (1989) in her thesis on adult educators. The current reincarnation calls for exact transcription and coding of the interviews. Each interview was typed as an MSWord document with line numbers to assist in identifying quotations and a color-coding system highlighting participant statements that addressed specific topics. For example, each definitive point in a participant's transcription dealing with *Higher Education* was changed to red type, marked with the participant's code and transferred to a Higher Education Category document. Each document was then reviewed and examined for trends related to gender and/or ABE entrance levels (basic literacy, ESL, ABE and GED).

A classification system was arrived at by studying the first 15 interviews received from seven of the eight research assistants. Topics and sub-topics identified by nearly all participants were noted and definitive points were substantiated by quotations taken from the transcriptions. The remaining interviews were then transcribed and coded. Each participant's code (i.e. FW34-70) was assigned an arbitrary first name (i.e. Irene) for ease in reporting their comments in the study. The researcher found that the definitive points that emerged from the remaining interviews were easily assignable to the initial series of topics and sub-topics, with little revision needed. Topics and subtopics were then classified under two overarching themes presented in Table II: The Classification System.

The subtopic, Participant Background, includes five case histories, participants' risk factors and motives for enrollment. Program Experiences begins with a listing of participants' duration in ABE programs by enrollment category (Basic Literacy, ESL, ABE, GED) followed by an analysis of participation issues. Examples of practitioner and peer empowerment, adult theory in practice and leadership development complete the subtopic. Program Results presents the nonsense opinions of successful adult learners who discuss critical issues, program advocacy and the program's impact on their lives.

TABLE II
THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

THEMES		TOPICS
Chapter VI	Adult Literacy Outcomes	Participants and ABLE Programs
1.		Participants' Backgrounds
2.		Program Experiences
3.		Program Results
Chapter V.	Life Style Outcomes	Achievements and Challenges
1.		Continuing Education
2.		Employment
3.		Home, Family and Community

Life Style Outcomes examines participants' achievements and challenges in the areas of continuing education, employment, home, family, and community involvement. Lending depth to this analysis is an examination of the impact of parents' educational involvement on their welfare status, level of employment, financial security and children's educational attainment. This chapter also deals with problem areas such as balancing employment responsibilities with further schooling and the difficulties inherent in finding financial support for higher education. It closes with an examination of the relationship between basic skills improvement, self-esteem and a commitment to helping others in the family, the classroom and the community.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study of which the reader should be aware:

- The eight research associates proved expert in conducting the participant interviews and Quality of Life Inventories. However, they did not see to it that participants answered all the Impact Survey questions. As a result, there were several items with low response rates. Information provided by the Success Stories booklets and the Informal Interviews were used, as available, to supplement data missing from the Impact Survey.
- While data in this study were self-reported, the use of four separate instruments (Success Stories Booklets, the Informal Interview, the Impact Survey and the QOLI) provided a means of checking responses. Furthermore, data about participants' past and current lives and attitudes were volunteered in response to open-ended interview questions asked prior to the specific details required for the Impact Study.
- There was no control group in this study. Nevertheless, a case could be made for participants as their own comparison group provided you compare the facts supplied by participants' sponsors for the Success Stories nominations with the data provided by participants during the follow up interviews. The time-differential between the two strands varies from one year to 22 years. A future comparison of the study group with a matched group of current ABLE participants should be enlightening.
- The descriptive report compiled by Dr. Gacka in Chapter III differs significantly in its style of writing from the remainder of the study as written by Dr. Royce. As such, it stands on its own for readers who feel more comfortable with statistics than with oral history. For my part, it provides a sturdy skeleton upon which to rest the living, breathing flesh of anecdote.

CHAPTER III: THE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Quantitative analysis represents an effort to look at data in an objective and measurable way. Much of the quantitative analysis in this report is targeted toward the question of “what is,” and by report “what was.” This provides some basis for addressing “what changed.” While these questions may seem simple and straightforward, below the surface they raise several critical issues. Individuals are different making it difficult to quantify and proof of causality may be quite elusive. Therefore, much of the data presented in this Chapter are characterized as descriptive rather than quantitative. Two exceptions exist: 1) the pattern of change apparent in the Impact Survey’s *Key Changes Over Time* (Chart 8, page 29); and 2) the satisfaction levels scored by the participant group on the Quality of Life Inventory (pp.33-37).

The Impact Survey

Data gained from the Impact Survey were supplemented by information gathered from the Success Stories booklets and the Informal Interviews in order to arrive at the description of the study sample found in this chapter. The following groupings were established to provide a comprehensive representation of sample members: participant distribution by entry level, year of entry and year of Success Story award; family status, current activities, employment, financial status, educational attainment, major life occurrences and satisfaction index. While the demographics appear similar to other ABE learners in Pennsylvania and throughout the nation, participants appear to have achieved a more successful employment and financial status, educational attainment, and quality of life satisfaction index.

Participant Entry Level

One section of the Impact Survey (See Appendix A) asked participants to indicate the level at which they entered the ABE sponsored program. The following table shows the results of their responses, with adjustments made based on information recorded in the Success Stories booklets.

TABLE III

Number of Participants by Initial Assignment

Total Group		Basic Literacy		ABE		GED		Family Lit		ESL	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21	49	12	8	1	13	5	23	0	2	3	4
30%	70%	60%	40%	7%	93%	19%	21%	0%	100%	43%	57%
100%		28%		20%		40%		2%		10%	

Based on the enrollment data reported by the participants, GED classes represent the greatest area of studies accounting for 40 percent of the study population. This is not surprising given the more objective nature of GED programs and the existence of a tangible concluding point. Females far outnumbered males in terms of GED program enrollment while males outnumbered females in Basic Literacy programs. Interestingly, about 48 percent of award winners indicated that they had been enrolled at either the Basic Literacy or ABE levels.

The distribution of participants over the years as reflected in their program entry date and their Success Stories award year is presented in Tables IV and V.

TABLE IV
Participant Distribution by Entrance Level

Entrance Year	Literacy	ABE	GED	Family Lit	ESL
1968			1		
1970			1		
1971			1		
1974			1		
1977		3			1
1978		1			
1979	1	1	1		
1980		1			
1981			1		
1982	1	1	1		
1983		1			
1984	1				
1986	4	2	3		1
1987	1	1			
1988	3		2		1
1989	3		1		1
1990			2		
1991	3		2		
1992	1	1	3		
1993	1	1	2		
1994			1		1
1995			1		
1996	1	1	3	1	2
1997				1	
1998			1		
TOTAL	20	14	28	2	7

Under the Title III Adult Education Act of 1966 (P.L.89-750) and the 1968 Title IV Amendments (P.L. 90-247) GED classes did not exist. It was not until the 1970 Amendment (P.L. 91-230) that the revised statement of purpose (NACAE, p 19) permitted “programs of adult public education that will enable all adults to continue their education to the level of completion of secondary school.” Therefore, the two participants claiming GED entry in the years 1968 to 1970 were evidently referring to the level of their studies in ABE classes.

In reviewing Table IV, it is interesting to note the increase of Basic Literacy participants in the years 1986-1989. These increases undoubtedly reflect Pennsylvania's literacy legislation (Act 143, 1986) which provided state funds for literacy councils and promoted recruitment of basic literacy students. This is borne out in Table V by the fact that no Success Stories awards were presented to basic literacy students prior to 1986.

Similarly, the emphasis on family literacy in 1996 encouraged the enrollment and Success Stories recognition of two participants who earned their GED diplomas while studying in Even Start classes.

Table V

Participant Distribution by Success Story Award Year

Award Year	Literacy	ABE	GED	Family Lit	ESL
1978		1	2		1
1979		1	1		
1981		2			
1982		1			
1983			1		
1984		2	2		
1986	1				
1987	1				
1988	1	2			
1989	2		1		1
1990		1			
1991	1		2		
1992	2		1		1
1993	2		1		
1994	2		3		1
1995	2	2	2		
1996	3	1	2		
1997	1		2		1
1998			2		2
1999	1	1	4	1	
2000	1		2	1	1
TOTAL	20	14	28	2	7

Participant Family Information

Table VI presents information on the marital status of participants. Data taken from the Impact Survey are modified based on information obtained during the Informal Interviews. While married participants outnumbered those unmarried at the time of the study, there is a clear history of multiple marriages and divorces among participants. Only eight participants (11 percent) had never married while 19 participants (27 percent) had multiple marriages.

TABLE VI
Current Marriage Status

Participants	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Married	40	57.1	26	53.1	14	66.7
Separated	2	2.9	1	2	1	4.8
Divorced	12	17.1	10	20.4	2	9.5
Widowed	8	11.4	8	16.3	0	0
Single	8	11.4	4	8.2	4	19
Total	70	100	49	100	21	100

The 70 participants had a total of 245 children with 14 of 21 men (66 percent) parents to 41 children. One woman was single with no children and another was married with no children. The remaining 47 female participants were parents to 204 children. As reported in Table VII, six single women and one single man were the parents of 23 children; 188 children were the product of 54 first marriages; 30 children resulted from 13 second marriages and four children were the offspring of three third marriages.

TABLE VII
Number of Children Reported

Participants	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	# Children	% Children	# Children	% Children
Single Parent	23	9%	20	10%	3	7%
Marriage 1	188	77%	152	76%	36	78%
Marriage 2	30	13%	26	13%	4	10%
Marriage 3	4	1%	2	1%	2	5%
Total	245	100%	204	100%	41	100%

Participant Life Style

Current Activities

Section 2 of the Impact Survey asked participants to indicate whether they were involved in any of 14 different types of activities at the time of the interview. Participants provided a simple “yes/no” response. Based upon common characteristics, their responses were then classified as educational, group or personal activities. Table VIII shows the number and percentage of individuals indicating participation in each of the following activities.

TABLE VIII
Current Activities of Participants

Educational Activities	Total #		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
ABLE	23	33%	12	24%	11	55%
Mentor / Tutor	32	46%	25	50%	7	35%
School or College	23	33%	13	26%	8	40%

Group Activities	#	%	#	%	#	%
Church	41	59%	29	58%	12	60%
Social Org	35	50%	25	50%	10	50%
Band or Choir	10	14%	7	14%	3	15%
Fraternal Groups	2	3%	1	2%	1	5%
Athletics or Exercise	33	47%	23	46%	10	50%
Coaching	6	9%	5	10%	1	5%
Self Help Group	27	39%	22	44%	5	25%

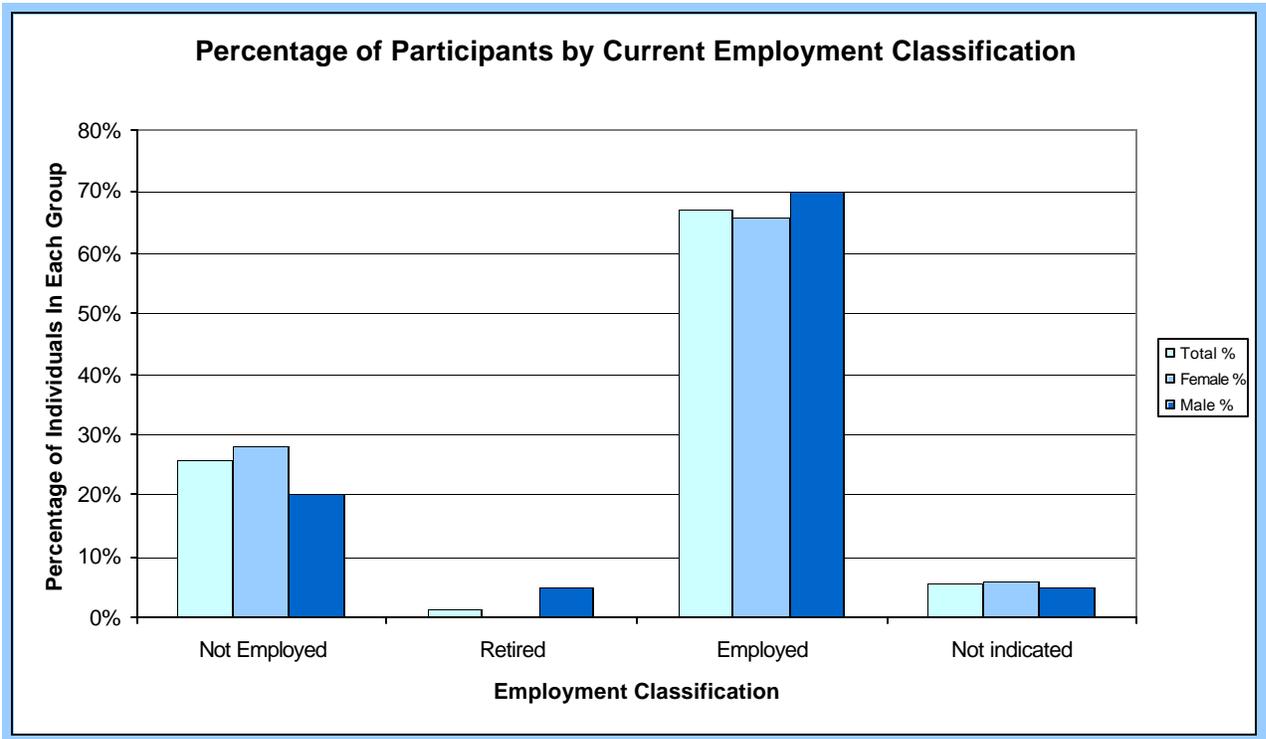
Personal Activities	#	%	#	%	#	%
Computer User	50	71%	37	74%	13	65%
Gardening	39	56%	29	58%	10	50%
Hobbies or Crafts	42	60%	34	68%	8	40%
Outdoor Activities	33	47%	21	42%	12	60%

Given the somewhat “open ended” nature of the questions in this section, interpretation of results in terms of general themes is warranted. As a whole, the respondent group appears to be relatively active in outside activities with frequent participation rates in the 50 percent to 60 percent range. While clearly involved in church and computer-related activities, the group does not appear to be highly active in fraternal or other structured types of social/community groups or organizations.

Participant Employment

Employment and financial status are relatively linked subjects and the data reported in the following sections reflect that relationship. There were several questions on the Impact Survey that dealt with issues related to employment. With the current emphasis on “workforce development,” historical information related to the ongoing accomplishments of ABLE program graduates is of interest. Information from the Informal Interviews was combined with information from the Impact Survey in order to identify the current status of participants. Chart 4 presents information on the current status of participants grouped into four major areas.

CHART 4
Current Employment Status of Participants



In interpreting Chart 4, the reader will need to take into account data presented earlier in the demographic section, specifically the fact that 15 individuals fell into the age group above 60 and another 13 individuals were above age 50. While the study sample obviously reflects a “mature” population, a relatively low percentage of individuals consider themselves to be “retired.” Levels of employment consistently range between 60 percent and 70 percent when viewed across gender. Although unemployment levels of 30 percent to 40 percent exceed the levels of the general population, the participant group includes a disproportionate number of handicapped individuals, a likely factor in the elevated unemployment.

Information about employment status was quite varied and required some type of classification in order to make the data manageable. The Impact Survey asked participants to indicate the years of employment for their current and, if appropriate, former employer. These data were cross-referenced with information from the Informal Interview. Table IX presents employment information grouped by gender and longevity of employment.

TABLE IX

Years in Current and Previous Jobs

	Total		Females.		Male	
	Average	Standard Deviation	Average	Standard Deviation	Average	Standard Deviation
Yrs in Current Job	10.8	9.5	11.8	9.7	8	8.7
Yrs in Previous Job	9.2	10.4	8.3	7.4	10.9	14.6

The data show considerable stability in terms of employment history, with an average length of employment of 10.8 years reported for current employment and 9.2 years for former employment. Several individuals specified concurrent employment with more than one employer. The data solicited on the Impact Survey did not differentiate between full time and part time employment; a circumstance which has a natural impact upon the discussion of benefits. The availability of health benefits reflects an indirect barometer of the quality of employment as such benefits, when paid in full or part by the employer, represent an additional payment to the employee. Table X presents information on the availability of various types of insurance coverage to participants classified by whether the benefits were employer, self, or co-paid.

TABLE X

Number and Percent Receiving Employer, Self and Co-paid Benefits

	Employer		Self		Co-Pay		Other **	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Medical	29	41%	8	11%	8	11%	20	29%
Dental	26	37%	4	6%	5	7%	21	30%
Vision	24	34%	6	9%	3	4%	20	29%
Prescription	27	39%	7	10%	8	11%	20	29%
Life	19	27%	13	19%	3	4%		0%
Disability	22	31%	4	6%	3	4%		0%
Retirement	22	31%	5	7%	8	11%		0%

** Other insurance includes benefits generally available through government programs or spousal coverage.

From the Informal Interview transcription, it was determined that several individuals had medical coverage who did not indicate so on the Impact Survey. These individuals were for the most part retired and recipients of Medicare. SSD and coverage under a spouse’s disability insurance policy were combined with Medicare and listed in the “Other” classification.

Chart 5

Percentage of Participants Receiving Health Insurance

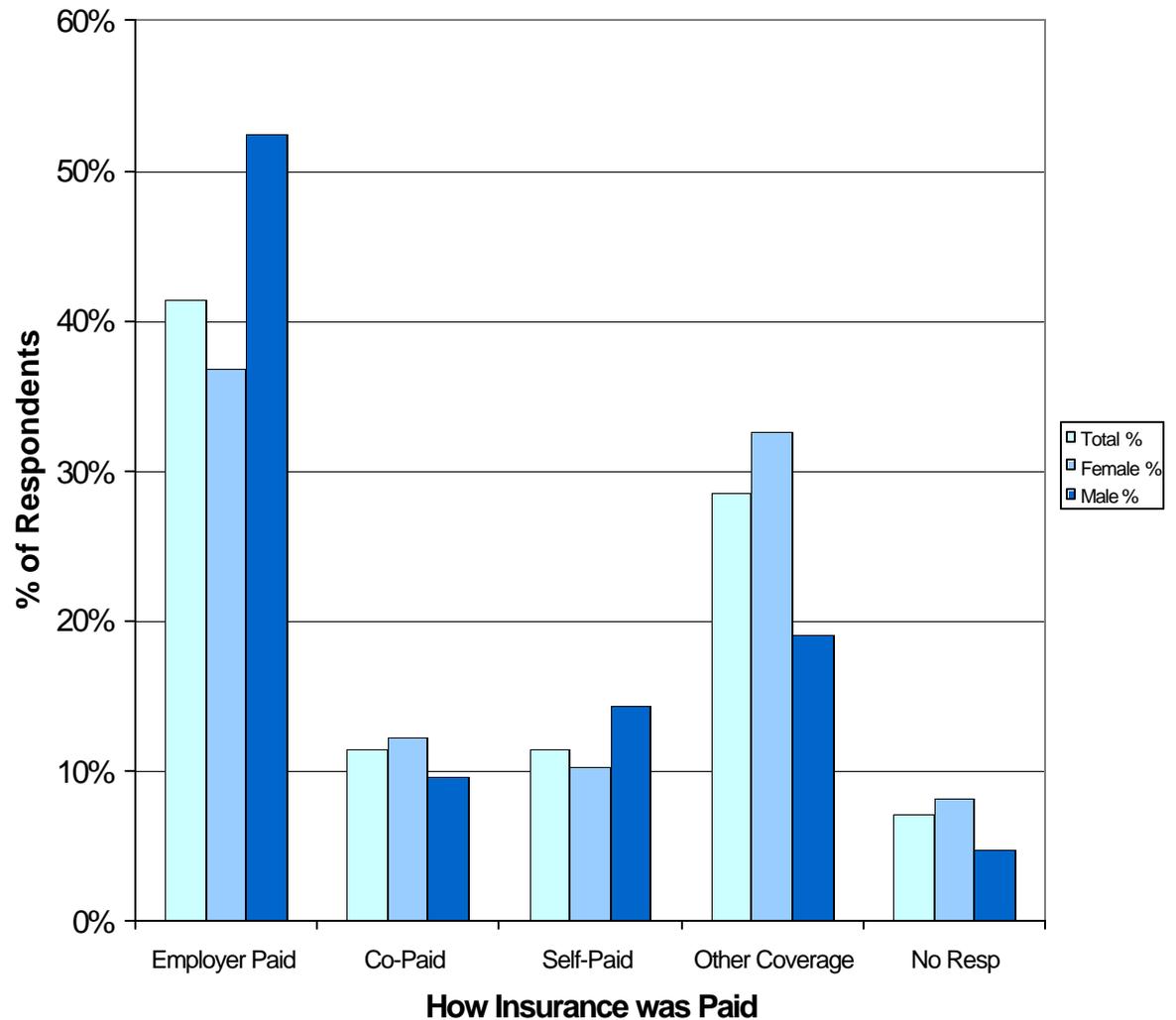
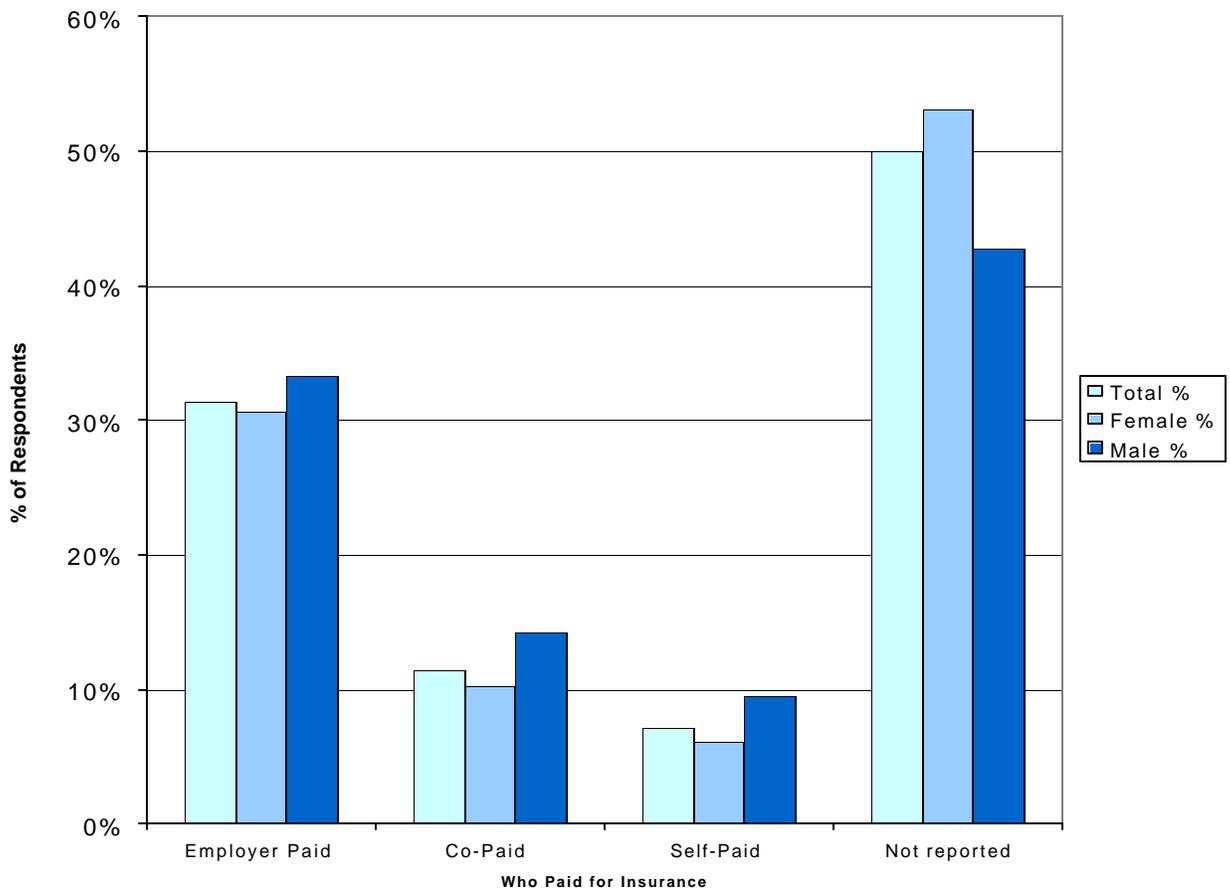


Chart 5 presents data for medical insurance but is generally reflective of the number who receive dental, vision and prescription coverage as well. While medical coverage is the most prevalent type of coverage at 41 percent, the cluster of medical, dental, vision and prescription range from 34 percent to the high of 41 percent. The cluster of non-medical coverage (i.e. life, disability and retirement) was consistently lower ranging from 19 percent to 22 percent. Males had much higher levels of employer paid health insurance than females.

Over 50 percent of the male participants indicate that they have employer paid health benefits while slightly over 40 percent of the female participants indicate such coverage. Consistent with the age demographics of this particular population, almost 30 percent of the participants have Medicare coverage. About 10 percent of participants have some form of insurance co-payment. Results were similar for disability coverage and somewhat lower when life insurance coverage was analyzed.

Chart 6 presents data on the number of individuals who were provided retirement benefits as part of their employment package.

Chart 6
Percentage of Participants with Retirement Benefits



The chart above represents retirement benefits by payee and sex. The chart also reflects the elimination, as a separate group, of the older individuals who had indicated that they had Medicaid and other coverage. This shifted 20 individuals into the “not reported” category. Fairly consistently, about 30 percent of participants had employer-paid retirement benefits with another 20 percent having some type of co-paid retirement coverage. There generally was not a large difference in coverage by gender, although males consistently had slightly higher levels of coverage.

Related to general financial status were several items on the Impact Survey that asked individuals to indicate whether they had used any of the following employment related services. Table XI presents data from participant responses, indicating for each factor whether the service usage occurred before attending the ABLÉ program, while they were enrolled or after they completed their ABLÉ program.

TABLE XI

Level of Usage of Employment Related Services

ABLE Program	Before		While		After	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Self-Employed	8	11%	4	6%	8	11%
Salaried	31	44%	25	36%	39	56%
Unempl. Comp Disability	1	1%	4	6%	6	9%
Unempl. Comp Laid Off	2	3%	1	1%	2	3%
SSI/SSD	5	7%	8	11%	9	13%
Public Assistance	21	30%	3	4%	2	3%
Food Stamps	21	30%	3	4%	2	3%
Support Payments	7	10%	2	3%	4	6%
SS Retirement	1	1%	2	3%	5	7%
Private Retirement	1	1%	1	1%	2	3%

Change in Key Economic Factors Across Time: A Significant Difference

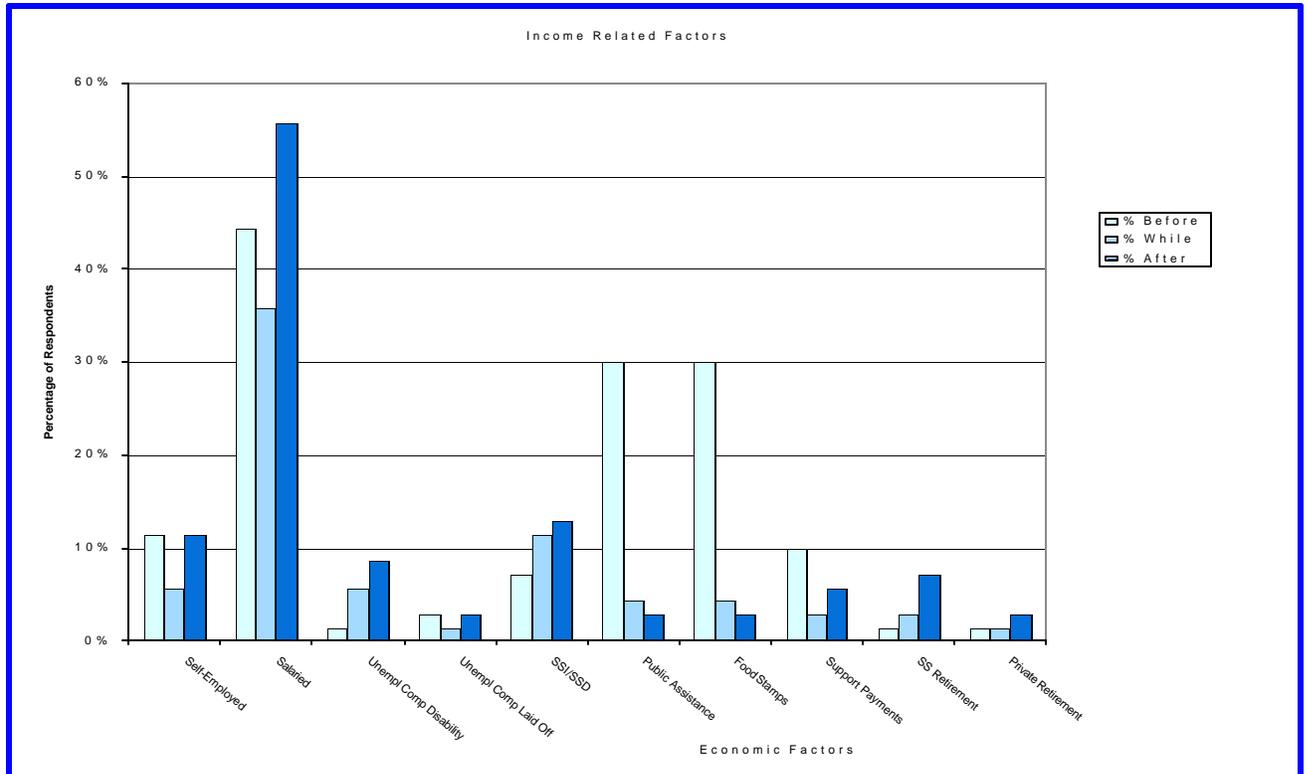
The view of participant economic status presented in Table XI can be analyzed from two perspectives: 1) which services were used; and 2) change in usage over time. SSI/SSD usage was reported in about 10 percent of the cases. The services most used were Public Assistance and Food Stamps, although there is a clear decrease in usage reported (from 30 percent to three percent) during and after ABLÉ program enrollment. At the same time salaried employment grows slightly from 44 percent to 56 percent.

Much of the data presented up to this point has been of the nature of a “snapshot,” or description of status of the individual at a particular point in time. With the introduction of Table XI we arrive at a pattern of marked shift across time in the usage of employment related services. This shift is particularly evident in the sharp reduction in the percentage of usage of Public Assistance and Food Stamps. The extent of the change is striking, dropping from about 30 percent during the “pre ABLÉ enrollment period” to about a five percent usage levels following completion of ABLÉ instruction.

At the same time as the decrease in social service usage occurs, there is a corresponding increase in the percentage of individuals who report salaried employment. While the two phenomena are likely related, the concurrent increase in employment and decrease in social service usage reinforces the probable validity of the information.

These key factors, as reflected in Chart 7, represent events that are under varying degrees of control by the individual, some reflecting long term voluntary change over time while others may be more reflective of short time events with long term implications.

Chart 7
Changes in Key Economic Factors across Time



Financial Status

Perception of Financial Status

The Impact Survey asked participants to indicate the economic levels into which they perceived themselves and/or their family to fall. Table XII indicates that the majority of participants, like most Americans, see themselves and their families as part of the “middle class.” None of the participants perceived themselves as “wealthy,” and none classified themselves as “homeless.” There appears to be little difference in perception of financial status between males and females.

TABLE XII
Economic Self-Classification by Gender

Economic Level	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Homeless	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Poverty	2	3%	2	4%	0	0%
Low Income	13	19%	9	18%	4	20%
Middle Class	46	67%	33	67%	13	65%
Upper Middle	8	12%	5	10%	3	15%
Wealthy	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Participant Educational Attainment

Following a review of data derived from the Informal Interviews and responses to the Impact Study, a designation was made for each individual reflecting the highest level of education achieved. The distribution of that data categorized on the next page in Table XIII are quite varied, denoting the “educational pathways” that are possible when participant careers are viewed in hindsight. For example, the doctoral category includes a physician who enrolled in ESL classes to prepare for the TESOL exam and the ABE + training category includes a participant who has not achieved a GED but is currently training for the ministry

Fourteen participants or 20 percent of the study sample had not attained a GED or adult high school diploma at the time of their interviews. One of these participants who had a high school diploma upon program entry despite a second grade reading level was able to complete mandated company training. Twenty-eight participants (40 percent of sample members) received their GED or adult high school diploma but had no additional formal education.

Twenty-eight participants (40 percent of the study sample) entered college and half of these received associate, bachelors or advanced degrees. The remaining 14 higher education enrollees attended college but did not complete any degree program although half of them are still collecting college credits. A more detailed accounting of participants’ continuing formal and informal education can be found in Chapter V.

TABLE XIII
Highest Educational Level Achieved by Gender

Basic & ABE Levels	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Basic Literacy level	3	4%	2	4%	1	5%
ABE level	3	4%	0	0%	3	14%
ABE + Training	2	3%	2	4%	0	0%

GED & Adult Diploma Levels	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
GED level	6	9%	5	10%	1	5%
GED Diploma	18	26%	12	25%	6	28%
GED + Certificate	1	1.25%	1	2%	0	0%
GED + Vocational	2	3%	2	4%	0	0%
GED + Workforce	1	1.25%	1	2%	0	0%
Adult H.S Diploma	5	7%	3	6%	2	9%
HS + Company Training Level	1	1.25%	0	0%	1	5%

Higher Education Levels	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
College Courses	14	20%	11	23%	3	14%
Associate Degree	4	6%	3	6%	1	5%
College Degree	4	6%	3	6%	1	5%
Masters Credits	2	3%	1	2%	1	5%
Masters Degree	3	4%	3	6%	0	0%
Doctoral Degree	1	1.25%	0	0%	1	5%
Total	70	100%	49	100%	21	100%

Personal Outcomes

Another measure of achievement contained in Section 8 of the Impact Survey was a series of questions dealing with the time of occurrence of 17 personal events. The results of those questions are presented in the following table, with characteristics clustered around similar areas such as legal issues, treatment issues and educational impact issues.

TABLE XIV

Percentage of Major Life Occurrences across Time

Legal Issues	Before	While	After
Spent Time in Jail	9%	0%	0%
On Probation	3%	0%	0%
Filed for Bankruptcy	4%	0%	0%
Been Sued	1%	0%	1%

Treatment Issues	Before	While	After
Had Alcohol Treatment	27%	26%	27%
Had Drug Treatment	9%	0%	0%
Had Counseling	6%	0%	0%
Had Mental Health Treatment	19%	11%	11%
Been in a Serious Accident	9%	3%	6%

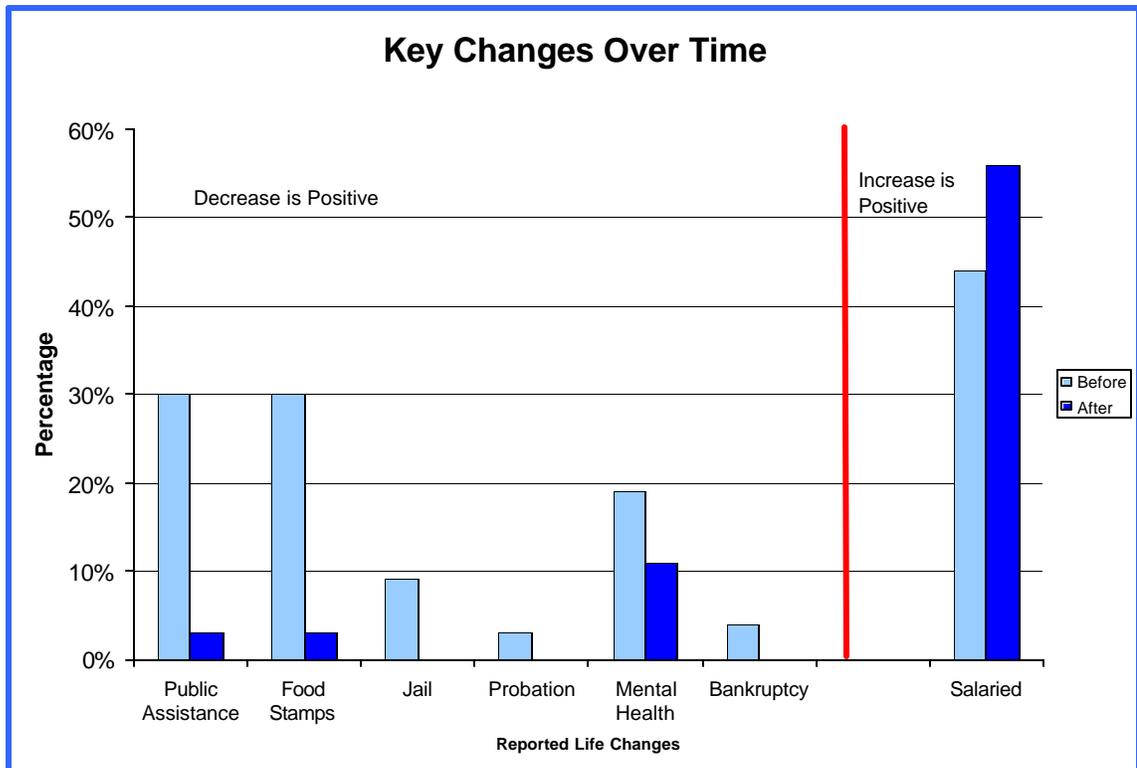
Educational Impact Issues	Before	While	After
Obtained U.S. Citizenship	4%	3%	3%
Obtained Drivers License	53%	7%	7%
Completed Reading a Book	71%	39%	40%
Voted in a State or National Election	59%	49%	50%
Addressed a State or National Audience	3%	30%	43%
Had an Article Published	7%	16%	27%

Considering the nature of the question, that is, “indicate which of the events occurred before, during or after your involvement in adult education,” the data provide some insight into the more general life status of the participants. Some themes that emerge from the data suggest:

- Many critical life events had already occurred to individuals prior to their involvement with ABLE programs.
- The incidence of alcohol abuse and mental health involvement is relatively high consistently in the 25 percent range for the former and 11 percent to 19 percent range for the latter.
- Except for the alcohol abuse, the incidence of problems tended to diminish after ABLE involvement, either a simple reflection that the “worst was over” at their time of involvement or an increase in feelings of “belongingness” and “self-esteem” as a result of ABLE program participation.

The information presented so far in this chapter describes tangible facts about participants’ lives past and present. Before addressing participants’ attitudes toward life as expounded in the Informal Interviews and the QOLI, it seems best to restate significant measurable changes that occurred in participants’ lives between program enrollment and the time of the Informal Interviews. Chart 8 presents *Key Changes over Time* in the areas of public assistance, food stamps, jail, probation, mental health, bankruptcy and salaried employment.

Chart 8
Key Changes over Time



Section 9 of the Impact Survey asked participants to indicate whether they had achieved any of five specific results after receiving an Outstanding Student Award. This information detailed in Table XV provides insight into some of the “positive” effects of participants being recognized for their achievements.

TABLE XV
Results of Receiving Outstanding Student Recognition.

	Total		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Received a Scholarship	8	11%	5	10%	3	14%
Received Some Financial Reward	12	17%	5	10%	7	33%
Received a Job Offer or Promotion	15	21%	10	20%	5	24%
Motivated to Pursue Education	51	72%	35	71%	16	76%
Improved your self-confidence	62	88%	43	88%	19	90%

The results of Table XV are quite interesting, especially in light of the previous identification of highest levels of achievement (See Table XIII, page 28). The former suggests that a core group of about 60 percent of participants only pursued formal education up to and through the GED level. However, Table XIV shows 72 percent of the participants indicating a sense of motivation to pursue additional education and 88 percent of individuals indicating that the experience had improved their self-confidence.

These levels provide the first evidence of a possible intangible result of ABLE programming, centering on the affective qualities of optimism and motivation. The data suggest that a major benefit of ABLE programming was enhancement of the perception of educational value and improvement of self-confidence.

The final section of the Impact Survey asked participants to rate their level of satisfaction with life on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “there are major problems,” 5 being “things are excellent,” and 3 being “average.” They were instructed to leave questions blank if they did not apply to them. This provides a rather informal reflection of the degree to which individuals are satisfied with major elements of their life, and some insight into which problems, if any, are problematic.

Table XVI on the following page shows the mean score by each of the 12 life area.

TABLE XVI

Mean Scores on Impact Survey Rating of Satisfaction by Gender

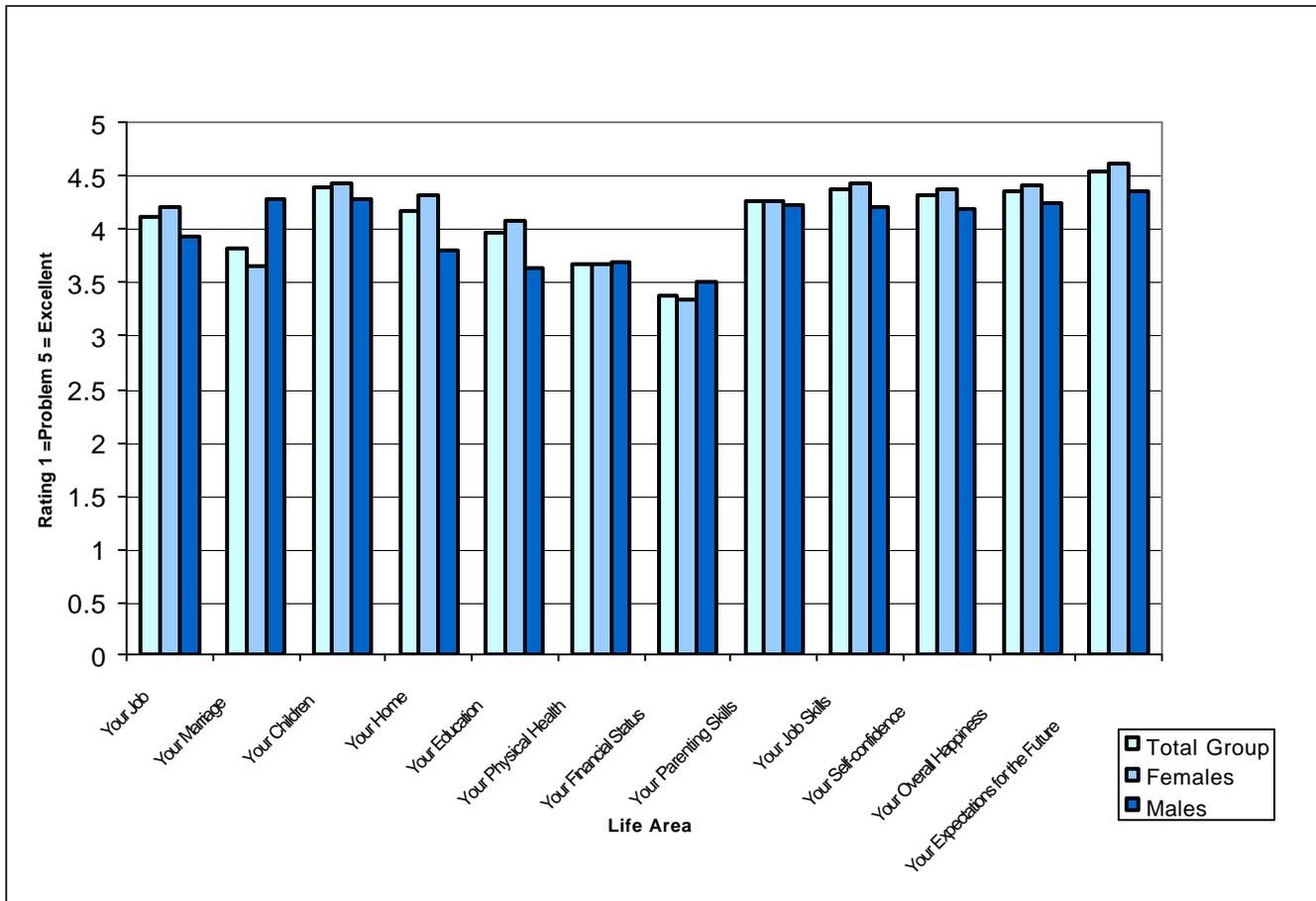
Major Areas of Life	Total	Females	Males
Your Job	4.12	4.21	3.94
Your Marriage	3.83	3.66	4.28
Your Children	4.40	4.43	4.28
Your Home	4.17	4.32	3.80
Your Education	3.97	4.08	3.64
Your Physical Health	3.68	3.68	3.70
Your Financial Status	3.38	3.34	3.50
Your Parenting Skills	4.26	4.27	4.23
Your Job Skills	4.38	4.44	4.22
Your Self-confidence	4.32	4.38	4.20
Your Overall Happiness	4.37	4.42	4.25
Your Expectations for the Future	4.55	4.62	4.36

Remembering that a score of 5 was defined for the participants as “things are excellent,” the ratings presented in Table XVI reflect very high levels of satisfaction in most areas. Areas of highest satisfaction include “your children,” “your expectations for the future,” and interestingly “your job skills.” The latter is noted because at the same time “financial status” received the lowest rating of all areas. There also appear to be differences in the perceptions of males and females with the females giving lower ratings to “marriage,” and “financial status,” while giving higher ratings in the areas of “home,” “physical health,” and “overall happiness.”

The data in Table XVI and Chart 9 show clearly the overall high level of satisfaction shown by the participant group. The lowest mean scores fell into non-educational areas, physical health and financial status. The third lowest score came in the rating of their education but surprisingly it was accompanied by high ratings in parenting, job skills and self-concept. The scores in the area of “overall happiness” and “expectations for the future” had an average rating falling just below “things are excellent.”

It is clear from this data that the group as a whole is very optimistic and self-confident. The latter variable tapped the same area as a previously discussed question regarding the results of having received an outstanding student award. That item, “improved self confidence” was checked by 88 percent of the total group, 88 percent of the females and 90 percent of the males. These present two strong indicators that high self-confidence may be one of the most significant outcomes of ABLE involvement. Data from the preceding table are presented in graphic form in Chart 9 on the following page.

Chart 9
Participant Satisfaction: Total Group and by Gender



Quality of Life Inventory

To this point the data that have been analyzed are rather subjective. For example, the satisfaction scores cited above clearly indicate at least average and in most cases well above average levels of satisfaction. However, there is no normative ABE population with which to compare their data. Therefore, the QOLI, a standardized life satisfaction instrument was administered to participants. QOLI raw scores are obtained by rating two aspects of the following areas: health, self-esteem, goals and values, money, work, play, learning, creativity, helping, love, friends, children, relatives, home, neighborhood, and community.

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 2 (extremely important), participants rated each of these 16 areas in terms of its importance to their overall happiness. Then, on a scale of -3 (most dissatisfied) to +3 (very satisfied) they indicated their satisfaction level or how well their needs, goals and wishes were met in each area. Areas are scored by multiplying the importance rating by the satisfaction rating yielding scores ranging from -6 to +6.

The raw scores presented in Table XVII represent an average of the participants' ratings in each category divided by the number of items rated. Raw scores ranging between 3.6 and 6.0 indicate a very high level of satisfaction. Raw scores between 1.6 and 3.5 represent average satisfaction levels. Raw scores between 0.9 and 1.5 are considered low. Table XVII presents the ratings and the mean raw scores by gender and for the total group.

TABLE XVII
Quality of Life Raw Score

Satisfaction Areas	Total Group		Females	Males
	Level	Rating	Level	Level
Health	2.7	Average	2.5	3.2
Self-Esteem	4.5	High	4.7	4.2
Goals & Values	4.3	High	4.3	4.2
Money	1.2	Low	1.4	0.7
Work	3.4	High	3.8	2.5
Play	3.4	High	3.7	2.7
Learning	4.0	High	4	3.9
Creativity	3.7	High	4.2	2.6
Helping	4.4	High	4.7	3.8
Love	3.8	High	3.8	3.9
Friends	3.8	High	4.1	3.1
Children	4.3	High	4.5	3.9
Relatives	2.9	Average	3.1	2.3
Home	3.6	High	3.7	3.2
Neighborhood	2.8	Average	3.1	2.3
Community	2.5	Average	2.5	2.3
QOL Raw Score	3.6	High	3.7	3.2
Total Weighted Score	55.6	Average +	58.1	49.7

The average score reported in Table XVII can be seen as being quite high and in at least four areas rated as being of importance and also being rated as satisfied. That is the only way that a score of 4 or above could be obtained. The four areas with mean ratings of 4.0 or higher were Self-Esteem, Goals and Values, Helping, and Children. The single area with an average score below 2 was Money.

The Inventory yields several different types of scores. Appendix B contains additional QOLI tables and charts delineating P-values (percentiles) and T-scores. T-Scores represent participant levels of satisfaction when compared to the general population. Chart 10 presents a Scattergraph that shows the T-Score data for each of the 70 participants in this study. The heavy line at 50 represents the average QOLI score for the general population. Each triangle above that line indi-

cates a participant whose total QOLI score was greater than that of the general population. This type of chart tends to make it easy to visualize the overall distribution of scores of all participants in the group in a way that numerical tables fail to reflect.

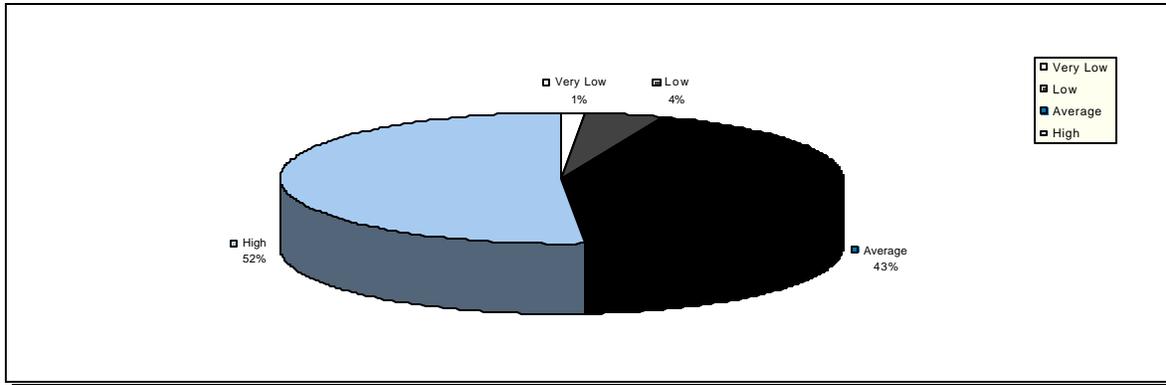
Chart 10
Scattergraph of QOLI T-Scores for Total Group



It is obvious from Chart 10 that the majority of participants were above average in overall T-scores on the QOLI with a mean (mid-point) of 58.07 for the participant group. Only two individuals had scores lower than -1 Standard Deviation while 10 individuals' scores were greater than +2 Standard Deviations from the mean. The mean T-score for Females was 59.22 and the mean for Males was 55.38. The QOL Inventory also provides a descriptive classification for total scores. The following system is used in assigning classifications. Chart 11 shows the distribution by category for the total group of participants.

Classification	T-Score Range	Percentile
High	58 to 77	81 st to 99 th
Average	43 to 57	21 st to 80 th
Low	37 to 42	11 th to 20 th
Very Low	0 to 36	1 st to 10 th

Chart 11
Distribution of QOL Inventory Respondent Rating: Total Group



Whether these patterns held true when analyzed by varying characteristics was then investigated. To address that question the data were further analyzed according to, ethnic group, entry level and perceived socio-economic level.

TABLE XVIII
Average T-Scores by Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	T-Score	# Participants
Asian	50.2	5
Black	59.7	19
Hispanic	56.6	5
White	58.4	41
Total	58.1	70

The average T-scores for the various ethnic groups did not show wide variability and the average scores were all above average with the Asian group showing the lowest overall satisfaction levels. The data were also reviewed in terms of the respondent's perceived family socio-economic level.

TABLE XIX
Average T-Scores by Socio-Economic Level

Socio-Economic Level	T-Score	# Participants
Poverty	54.5	2
Low	53.3	13
Middle	58.1	46
Upper	66.0	8
Total	58.1	70

Not surprisingly, individuals who described themselves as being in the upper socio-economic group had the highest mean T-score. Individuals describing themselves as being in the Low and Poverty levels had above average scores but their scores that were considerably lower than those of the middle and upper groups. The data were also reviewed in terms of respondents' marital status.

TABLE XX
Average T-Score by Marital Status

Marital Status	T-Score	# Participants
Divorced	59.1	12
Married	56.2	40
Separated	60.0	2
Single	56.1	8
Widowed	67.5	8
Total	58.1	70

Analysis of T-scores by marital status shows the Widowed group to have the highest mean score, followed by the Separated group. The Married and Divorced groups which makeup the majority of individuals in the study had mean scores of 56.2 and 59.1 respectively.

TABLE XXI
T-Score by Highest Educational Level Achieved

Highest Educational Level Achieved			
Basic Literacy Classes	75.0	High School Diploma	64.0
Basic Literacy Level	65.0	GED Classes	52.8
ESL Level	62.0	GED Diploma	59.3
ABE Classes	50.0	GED + Workforce	53.0
ABE Level	71.0	GED + Vocational	56.0
ABE – Company Training	56.0	GED Diploma + Vocational	47.0
Company Training	54.1	Workforce Classes	53.0
Ministry Training	70.0	State Certificate	54.2
College Courses	58.3	College Credits	64.0
Associate Degree	56.0	Masters Credits	52.7
College Degree	64.0	Masters Degree	53.0
Doctoral Degree	73.0	Total	58.1

While the classifications in Table XXI are somewhat arbitrary and dependent to a great extent on the description provided by the respondent during their interview, the data show some interesting patterns. As noted earlier, the overall levels of satisfaction are consistently above the normative mean (except for GED graduates with Vocational training). What is very interesting is the elevation of scores at the low and high ranges of the continuum; that is, the high satisfaction ratings attained by individuals achieving doctoral degrees are equaled by individuals whose highest level was ABE, ESL and Literacy. The individual pursuing ministry training (who was also an ABE student) was also elevated. Indirectly, what appears to be suggested is the concept that valuation of education in terms of credits and degrees may not be a sound barometer of individual satisfaction.

Summary

To summarize the findings of the Descriptive Study:

Personal and Family Data:

- Participants ranged in age from 24 to 80 with the majority falling into the middle years.
- Majority of participants were white (58.5 percent) followed by Black (27.1 percent) and Asian and Hispanic (7.1 percent)
- Current marital status was Married (57.1 percent), Single (11.4 percent) and Separated, Divorced or Widowed (31.5 percent).
- Some 245 children were reported; nine percent of these came from single parent homes while 91 percent were the result of one to three marriages.
- Participants were relatively active in outside activities with computer usage (71 percent) and church related activities (59 percent) leading the way.

Employment Data:

- Levels of employment ranged between 60 percent and 70 percent in a population where 40 percent were over 50 years of age.
- Average length of time for current employment was 10.8 years and for former employment, 9.2 years.
- Following ABE participation, salaried employment increased by 12 percent while public assistance and food stamps both decreased by 27 percent.
- The majority of participants perceived themselves as falling into the “middle class.”

Educational Data:

- Females far outnumbering males in GED enrollment while males outnumbered females entering basic literacy classes.
- Highest educational levels reported were: higher education degrees (20 percent); attended college courses (20 percent); received a GED or High School diploma (49 percent). Eleven percent (11 percent) did not achieve a GED or high school diploma.
- Of all the participants, 72 percent were motivated to pursue further education while 11 percent actually received scholarships.

Life Outcome Data:

- Except for alcohol abuse, the incidence of legal problems and treatment issues tended to diminish after program participation
- Improved self-confidence as a result of receiving recognition as outstanding students was reported by 88 percent of study members.
- Areas of highest satisfaction indicated by participants on the Impact Survey were their children, expectations for the future, and job skills.
- The group rating on the Quality of Life Inventory showed overall levels of satisfaction consistently above the normative mean. Self-Esteem, Goals and Values, Helping and Children were at a very high level relative to the general population while Money was the only category that was less than satisfactory.
- High satisfaction ratings attained by individuals whose highest educational level was ABE, ESL and Literacy are equal to individuals achieving doctoral degrees. This suggests that that valuation of education in terms of credits and degrees may not be a sound barometer of individual satisfaction.

While statistical tests show meaningful trends, they tend to depersonalize the data. Another less formal method of looking at the results provides, in the opinion of this reviewer at least, a more meaningful portrait of the normative group that has been the focus of this study. In effect, these are 70 individuals who have to some degree distinguished themselves to the point that they were recognized as outstanding students.

While some of the analyses are vulnerable to the uncontrollable impact of time, i.e. mean age and to some extent family characteristics, the QOLI data provide a reflection on life. The Scattergraphs provided in Appendix B offer a snapshot of the participant group in a way that allows the reader to see each of the 70 individuals and understand how the group is distributed across the range of possible scores. Comparing the relative elevation of the group across two life areas or the obvious “spreading out” of scores within a particular area are significant.

Hopefully, readers will view the Scattergraphs and find themselves responding with “Wow, look at that person!” This type of analysis makes the data alive and meaningful and that is good because this study is not about tables and charts, it is about people. Having spent a great deal of time looking at the numbers, one fact stands out above all others; the participants in this study are, all things considered, satisfied with their lives and optimistic about their future.

CHAPTER IV: ADULT LITERACY OUTCOMES

Introduction to the Qualitative Study

Qualitative research focuses upon multiple realities. It offers no single or simple truth but resembles rather a holistic pattern of interrelated differences and similarities, awash in context. It is uniquely suited to examining sensitive areas of human experience. Where emotions run high such as in confronting the unemployment, poverty, and lack of self-esteem often related to learning differences, lack of education and illiteracy, data obtained through informal “talks” can illuminate group behavior and values. Theory arising from inductive analysis of areas formerly clouded in secrecy can provide us with relevant predictions, explanations, and interpretations.

While the goal of the Descriptive Study presented in Chapter III was to ask the questions, “what is,” and “what changed,” the goal of the Qualitative Study is to answer the questions “how” and “why” did the changes occur and what role, if any, did ABLE practitioners and programs play as “change agents?” Chapter III presented us with a snapshot of the 70 study participants. In Chapter IV you will meet them in streaming video, up close and personal, as they enter, participate, and comment upon adult education programs. Chapter V uses a wide-angle lens to follow participants as they engage life as parents, workers, helpers and leaders in their communities.

Adult Literacy Outcomes addresses participants’ backgrounds, risk factors, motives for enrollment and program experiences. To set the climate for the ensuing qualitative study, the following section presents five brief case histories. The intent is to expose readers to the broad range of challenges participants faced, the solutions they selected to meet them and to introduce several of the themes central to this study.

Participants’ Backgrounds

Who are our most successful adult learners? The QOLI data inform us that 66 out of 70 participants are satisfied with their current lives. But, what were their lives like prior to enrollment in ABLE classes? It would have been most valuable to have administered the QOLI at the time of their enrollment. Lacking that information, we can only examine some of the “baggage” they brought to class with them in order to ascertain if their life context resembles that of other ABLE students and whether adult education played a transformative role in their lives.

Marcia’s Story

After failing first and second grade, Marcia was sent to a boarding school for mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed children. Marcia felt different from the other children; she could dress and feed herself and she wanted to learn to read. During her eight years at school, she was drilled occasionally in the same first reader, but there was no progress. Her first chance to be independent came at the age of 16 when a friend introduced her to a hospital administrator. Marcia was told that she could try out on the tray line for a week without pay. After one day, she was hired, with pay.

In 1988, her dyslexia and severe hearing problems were diagnosed. With her children grown and a desire to learn, she summoned up the courage to enroll in an adult literacy program and was matched with a tutor. She was taught to compensate for her disabilities and set goals as a series of small steps. She served as part of the tutor training effort at her literacy program, edited the student newspaper and counseled new students. She founded a support group for literacy students and served on the United Way’s task force on literacy. Although she has not yet attained her GED, she

can read her mail, shop for groceries and is studying to get her driver's license. Marcia works as a teacher's aide with students who have developmental disabilities. She says:

I show them a way to do things that I learned how to do... I sit down and I make up pictures and I make up flash cards so that they're thinking they're playing a game but they're not. I find that they learn better that way.

Benny's Story

When Benny was 15, his father left home and Benny became the man of the house. He supported his mother and three younger siblings by working as a laborer and a bodyguard. Then, for 15 years he earned a good living as a professional wrestler until broken bones and a broken marriage ended his career. In 1987, when he moved from Puerto Rico to Pennsylvania, the only job he could get was doing heavy farm labor. At his brother-in-law's suggestion, he enrolled in an adult center where his ambition and eagerness sparked the entire class.

In July 1996, Benny was hired by the adult center as a part time outreach specialist to visit families in the neighborhood and promote the importance of learning English. A full time employee of Wal-Mart since October 1997, he continues his outreach and community services on a volunteer basis. Now that he has passed the GED, his next step is to study to become a mechanic and earn his state automobile inspection license. He believes it will happen and teaches his children and other adults "how important it is to keep in school and make a future," saying, "Everything I do, you can do too. I'm here to help you."

Anna's Story

Anna was in the 11th grade when she dropped out to marry her childhood sweetheart. Over the next 20 years, he supported the family while she raised their children and worked at times as a seamstress. In 1992, when her husband died of a heart attack, Anna was left at the age of 37 to support four school-aged children on a five-dollar-an hour seamstress job. Overcome by stress, she sought therapy and her counselor suggested she return to school. In January of 1993, she called an adult learning center and talked her way into an already filled class. By June, she completed her GED, won a \$500 scholarship, and enrolled in a community college. Majoring in gerontology, she worked with adult daycare, Alzheimer's patients, and a diverse AIDS and paraplegic population.

Anna graduated in May 1995, with a 3.7 GPA, an associate degree, and a listing in Who's Who Among Students in American Junior Colleges. Two years later, she completed a bachelor's degree at Temple University. After completing her master's degree in Social Work, she was hired as the full time Director of Student Support Services at the adult learning center where she first enrolled to get her GED. Now 45 years of age, she looks back on eight years of educational struggle and accomplishment, and says: "Eight years of going from a GED student, to Associate's student, to Bachelor's Degree, and then to a Master's Degree. It is very fast. It's continual. You're still learning."

John's Story

John was about to start 8th grade at the time of his accident, a spinal cord injury which resulted in his total and permanent disability. In June 1994, at the age of 18, he joined a residential wheelchair community and enrolled in their education program. One of eight children, he had few relatives in the area and immersed himself in his studies to combat his loneliness. In just four months, he achieved his goal of computer literacy and was able to write long, descriptive letters to his family and friends.

Studying and practicing daily, he completed most of his homework assignments via the computer, used the Internet for personal areas of interest, research related to his studies and chatting with others across the nation. In August 1996, he passed the GED and in September of that year enrolled in the local community college. He took one course a semester majoring in computers and architectural design with the intent of becoming a graphic artist.

He is currently taking Multimedia and Web Design at an art institute. Engaged, and living on his own, John looks forward to finishing school, having a good job, and owning a van so that he can drive himself everywhere he wants to go. To be successful, he says:

Follow the dreams you believe in, the things you really want to do and don't let anybody take that away from you... I never gave up and even though this happened to me, I can still show people that I can do things like continuing my education and have a family.

Pamela's Story

Pamela, like many adult education students, got married at 16 years of age, had a baby, dropped out of school and moved away from home. Soon she was a single mother on welfare raising two sons. She prayed and kept her faith but gradually went from cigarettes and beer to crack cocaine. After 22 years as a drug addict, Pam made up her mind to kick her habit, obtain a GED and get off welfare. Within four years, she accomplished all three goals.

In November 1991, just six months into her own recovery, she opened her home to women who needed a place to stay. This grew into a residential program for women recovering from drug addiction. In November 1992, she enrolled in a literacy center and in July 1994, attained her GED. Her leadership qualities earned her a 10-hour-a-week job as a center coordinator to which she added a 30-hour-a-week job as a teacher's aide for a nontraditional women's program. Now married, a part time student at a community college, and a volunteer in the behavioral health and social work area, she helps people hands-on. Her latest assignment was working with an autistic 18-year old that didn't speak, didn't participate in class and just sat there all day. As Pam explained:

I worked with him for two months. Now he sharpens his pencil. He attempts to write his name. He can spell his name. He can identify his name tags. He goes to the bathroom and he smiles... I'm real happy about that because I don't have the formal training. I just love people.

Taken together, these stories illustrate the variety of participants that inhabit adult education programs as well as the range of the programs themselves. Conversely, there are similar participant characteristics and program practices the reader will meet again and again in the following chapters. These five participants have summoned the courage to overcome disastrous circumstances that would have defeated many individuals without educational deficiencies. The extent to which Success Stories recipients have accomplished their objectives, large and small, is exceeded only by the new dreams they've dared to conceive, the new paths they've chosen to follow.

Participant Risk Factors

At the time of enrollment, 24 of the 49 female participants were single mothers, recent widows, divorcés or women preparing to leave abusive husbands or homes. Laurie, now successful businesswoman, left home at 15 years of age fleeing an alcoholic father who was becoming more and more violent. In 1982, she took her younger brother into her home when he faced the same situation. Three men and 25 women were receiving public assistance, SST/SSD or food stamps at the time of enrollment. One man was homeless, and six individuals had met and conquered addic-

tion problems. Veronica, now a GED teacher for a church-sponsored community-based organization, describes her problem and her choice:

I was a heavy drinker. I did drugs, lost my family, lost two houses, and lost the respect of a lot of people, and one day I just woke up. My daughter just said it's either us or the street. And it wasn't a hard choice to make because there is nothing out on the streets except trouble and crime. You don't know where you're going to sleep from one night to another; where your meals are going to come from; where you're taking a bath if you do take a bath; and it is just not worth it. I've done a complete turn around. I am very happy with myself. I couldn't ask for anything better.

Childhood illness left two participants deaf and one crippled from polio. Later life illness and injury contributed to the paralysis, amnesia, visual, mental and physical impairment of six others. Three participants were abandoned by their fathers. Oscar, the child of his drug-addicted sister, had to adjust to the death of their father while he was in 6th grade. Isobel, whose father committed suicide when she was a baby, didn't know her biological mother till she was seven. She was adopted as a baby and physically abused as a teenager by her adoptive father.

In all, nine participants were abused by their parents or spouses. Vu-Lin, after surviving the slaughter of her parents and siblings and her own torture as a child at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, enrolled in adult education to prepare herself to take her three children and flee the mental abuse of the elderly husband she had been forced to marry.

The academic "risk factors" are not as dramatic but equally unsettling. Of four male participants who had received High School diplomas prior to enrollment in ABE and literacy programs, two needed basic skills in order to enter vocational training and two were reading at less than a third grade level. Despite the fact that Peter graduated from High School and held a responsible job with a municipal department, he enrolled in a literacy program in order to help his four children with their schoolwork. He said: *"I felt like a hypocrite, telling them to use the library when I couldn't use it myself."* Testing showed that Peter had a second grade reading level upon program entrance.

There are eight additional cases of participants with learning difficulties who, as children, were assigned to Special Education classes or boarding school for the retarded. Enid, for example, was misdiagnosed at the age of one as having cystic fibrosis and was placed in a Children's Home where she attended Special Education classes until she was released to a foster home at the age of sixteen. Nearly all of these participants dropped out of school along the way. There is a legacy of anger and despair that remarkable later life achievements have not completely obliterated.

Conrad, now a staff member of his Intermediate Unit and a reader recruiter for the literacy council, hoped the military might help him since the school system could not. In 1968, at the time of the Vietnam War, he enlisted because he thought:

If I went into the military, that if they pushed me hard enough and long enough, they would be able to break whatever was wrong with me... I actually went in, and I did the physical training part okay. But when they came out with the Marine Corps Bible that I was going to have to be able to read and memorize, I couldn't tell these guys that I forgot my glasses or I have to go to the bathroom so I can't read right now. I was given an honorable discharge by the military, and they had told me that if it hadn't been during war time, they would have sent me to school to help me learn to read; but being war time, they couldn't do that.

Marcia, who works as a teacher's aide in an MHR classroom, describes her frustrations:

I've known for years that I wanted to learn how to read but I didn't think I could because I was told I wouldn't. Through my disability, which is dyslexic, I still have some problems with writing that I can just overcome... (but) my children still have the tendency to see me as 'the illiterate.' They feel that they still need to keep doing things for me, maybe because they lived with me part of all my life. My wish would be that they just let go and look at me for what I am now, and not what I was.

William, who is active in the field of literacy, remembers:

As a child growing up, I had a rough life. People might not have seen it or realized it. People were nasty to me, other kids. I was not expected to achieve. I felt I was written off. I just felt that way... I wanted a challenge and I had always heard you can't go to college. College is for normal people and I had gone to special education school. It took me about ten years to get my associates degree but I got it. It was something people said I would never get.

Finally, there are seven women whose horizons were clouded by environment, custom, and prejudice. At the simplest level, there are participants whose continual movement from place to place and school to school precluded any opportunity for continuity in their education and one participant who could not secure transportation from her father's farm to the nearest High School. Gina, a former welfare mother who dropped out in 9th grade after going to 13 different schools, is now a college graduate and a radiological technologist with mammography certification. She explains how it all began.

My father had moved around a lot when I was growing up. My mother had divorced. When she remarried, I had a pretty stable time going to school again. But the elementary school that I went to had closed down. I went to another elementary school. I went to a middle school and from there, I went on to another school. And I went to a couple more. By that time, I had no interest in school.

Anna, who excels at academics, having won several scholarships on her road from GED student to a masters' degree, entered adult classes with trepidation because of a math phobia caused by the lack of continuity in her early education.

I went to 11 different elementary schools growing up so I had no continuous school elementary education. I was the oldest of six kids and we were always moving and moving and moving. I had a single mom. It was a horrendous childhood when I look back. You wouldn't learn times tables and go on to the next school and they already learned them... When you miss a lot when you're younger, you don't pick that up. You learn all over again. You just have to start all over, so that was a real struggle.

Two Asian women were raised in countries where the sole responsibility for girls was to take care of the house and their younger siblings, and two black women were raised in the United States at a time when public education was not available to one participant and domestic service the only job opportunity available to the other. Yvonne, after working long hard hours as a domestic and then as a nurse's aide in order to give her children the educational benefits she had been denied, enrolled in a literacy program and earned her GED at the age of 66. She is still thankful to the Sisters of Charity for providing the only avenue to learning open to her in her youth:

There was not a school for the black children to go to there because it was a segregated place. The sisters of Charity opened up one room for us to go to school. I was in

the first grade about three times, because every time someone came in, I had to be demoted because others should be promoted. But we all made it through. So I thank God a lot of times for the Sisters; they were excellent teachers. We never had one that could see; we always had one that was half blind, and one had gangrene of the toe. Their health wasn't good but their minds were, and they really worked with us.

Motives for Enrollment

While the life history of nearly all study members indicates the stimuli of disorienting dilemmas that Mezirow (1991) propounds as the first step in perspective transformation, economic factors appear to be the predominant impetus for participants' enrollment in adult education programs. Other causative factors include the encouragement of family, friends, and social workers, the desire to set an example for others, and a deep-felt longing for self-improvement and self-actualization.

The Need for Self-Sufficiency

Thirteen men and women sought to improve their academic skills in order to succeed in their current jobs or to enter training programs. Ronald explains:

It about came to a point where your job calls for education. You have to be able to read and spell. I had to do something. So the wife saw an ad in the paper on literacy, and I felt right there that I was going to give it a try. I felt, what have I got to lose, give it a try!

Fifteen women entered ABLE programs after abuse, a divorce, or the death of their spouse. These women hoped to improve their children's lives and looked to education as the first step toward self sufficiency.

*I had two kids and I was on Welfare. That was the only life I knew since I became pregnant. I was working on my own but I wasn't making any money. I was living with some elderly woman, cleaning her house for room and board. I was only making \$5 a week but that was enough for me at the time. I became pregnant. I had two boys at the time and the father and I weren't going anywhere. I decided to go back. I didn't want Welfare. I wanted to take care of my own. **Gina***

Encouragement by Others

Encouragement and a belief in the value of education were causative factors in the following adult learners' decisions to enroll in adult education. Five participants cited physical and/or mental injuries as the cause for their enrollment. Except for Fran who began teaching herself English as a cure for depression, other members of this category were referred to adult education by social service agencies. Oliver, who suffered from memory loss as a result of head injuries, decided to do something about it, and recalls:

when my grandson was 11, he was reading a newspaper article and sitting there talking to his dad about it, telling his dad what he read, and I couldn't figure out why (he was so young) that I couldn't read. So I went to rehab and told the lady out there that was a speech specialist, I told her I wanted to learn how to read, and that's when it was started.

Nine men and women were encouraged by family, friends, social workers and teachers/tutors to attend adult education classes.

I went to the....literacy council to learn how to read. The caseworker at the Welfare had told me about it. I wasn't planning on being a minister, a day care provider, or a foster parent. I didn't plan on doing a lot of the things that I am active in now. But it opened so many doors for me that it's unreal. I feel blessed, and I read everything. Agnes

The Desire to Set an Example

Seven mothers, fathers, daughters and grandmothers enrolled in adult education and family literacy programs to serve as examples for their families. Sixteen years after Sarah got her GED, she re-enrolled in a community education center along with her mother who had been forced to quit school in the 8th grade. Sarah worked on learning algebra and geometry in order to pass college entrance exams. After five months of hard work, her mom became the first female (other than her daughter) in her family of 14 to pursue and obtain a GED.

Charlene, who now has a BA in Social Work and five years' experience as an intensive case manager, had a child with special needs and explains: *"My son was the reason I went back to school, since he was having trouble, I didn't want him dropping out like I did."*

Self-Improvement and Self-Actualization

Of the 21 adults who enrolled with self-improvement and/or self-actualization in mind, three wanted to start their lives anew after being involved with drugs; seven hoped to increase specific or general academic skills; five wished to improve their lives and six simply wanted to learn. Stacy, who has 64 hours past her master's degree and been recognized as an Outstanding Teacher of the Year by her school district still remembers her exaltation at receiving her GED.

I always felt successful after I completed my GED. The GED for me was the climax of my life. It was difficult because I didn't speak English very well and I couldn't even write. I worked very hard and I was a very stubborn person... I thought if I have my GED, I'm not going to stop. I'm still going strong because I still take courses now. Every summer, I will take at least one or two courses. I don't need the credit, but I need the knowledge.

Appendix C lists participants' motives for enrolling in adult education programs and provides a bare bones overview of the road traveled by participants from the time they left formal schooling to their academic accomplishments to date.

Program Experiences

The comparison of participants' past history with present accomplishments makes impressive statistics. The real story lies somewhere in between. It is best told in adult learners' voices as they explain their difficulties in balancing schooling with family and work; as they acknowledge the importance of internal strength from God; as they recognize the value of external support from family, friends and teachers; as they whisper of their initial fears of failure; as they give testament to their inner beliefs and rejoice in their growing sense of purpose and possibility. Participants, for the most part, do not mention content learned in adult education programs although they report on effective strategies used by tutors and teachers. They do not speak at length about their teachers and tutors but eloquently express how these interactions have changed their lives.

Program Participation

The program participation data presented in Table XXII were arrived at by comparing available enrollment dates recorded in Success Stories Booklets with graduation, completion or departure dates reported in the Informal Interviews or Impact Surveys. Over two-thirds of the participants completed their program objectives within a two year time span. All study members in the ABE and GED programs have now attained a GED or High School diploma with 73percent of respondents requiring one year or less to prepare for and accomplish this goal. Nancy, who required six years' preparation in order to pass the GED test, had completed 9th grade in her native Hong-Kong before coming to the United States in 1992 and enrolling in a literacy program.

Table XXII
Duration of ABLE Participation

From (in years)	To (in years)	Total No.	Total %	Basic Literacy		ESL		ABE		GED/Family*	
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0	0.5	13	23.7%						3	2	8
0.6	1.0	11	20.0%				2		4	1	4
1.1	2.0	13	23.7%	2	3	3			2	1	2
2.1	3.0	4	7.2%	1	1				1		1
3.1	4.0	3	5.5%	3							
4.1	5.0	3	5.5%	2	1						
5.1	6.0	4	7.2%	1	2						1
6.1	7.0	1	1.8%		1						
7.1	8.0										
8.1	9.0	1	1.8%	1							
9.1	10.0	1	1.8%	1							
10.1	11.0	1	1.8%				1				
TOTAL		55	100%	11	8	3	3		10	4	16
Unreported		15	21%	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	9

*The two participants enrolled in family literacy classes studied for and achieved their GED.

The majority of ESL learners also accomplished their goals within a two year period. Five of seven ESL participants received their GED diploma either during or after program completion. Zachary, who took two years to study for the TOEFEL test, passed it with flying colors and is now a practicing internist and medical school teacher. As of March 2001, 11 years after starting her ESL program, Vu-Lin still attends evening classes and is only two tests away from passing the GED. Basic literacy students hold the record for participation.

With only one study member unreported, 74 percent of all basic literacy students continued to participate in tutoring or classes from two-and-one-half to 10 years after enrollment. This fact alone says a great deal about participants' persistence and the quality of instruction and personal involvement provided by tutors and teachers.

Participation Difficulties

Looking at the participation record, it is difficult to comprehend the number and variety of problems faced by these adult learners during program participation. There were child-care and transportation problems. There were employment conflicts and emotional conflicts. There were money problems and there were husbands that silently undermined their wife's efforts.

Charlene had an unreliable car that would often break down by the time she got to school and she would have to repair it before she could return home. Her husband could not help with car maintenance and gas money because his income barely covered their household expenses. Besides, he did not believe she would complete the program. And then, there were husbands who were completely and destructively against their wives improving themselves. Nina explains:

I have to admit with some of the women it's very rough. I was able to come and didn't get too much hassle from home, some, but not as much as some of the other women whose husbands would take their books and destroy them. It made it difficult, but they still came. Their goal was to get out of that situation.

Even when a husband was supportive, biology could come in the way. Fran, pregnant with her 11th child, knew she was working against time. She attended morning and afternoon ESL sessions two days a week, took GED classes twice a week, and spent another day at the Literacy Council. She passed the GED test in September 1996, gave birth in October, and was admitted to college in December. She was not the only one. Gina completed her GED, career classes, and pre-college classes while pregnant. She had her daughter exactly one week after finishing the program.

For women without husbands or family support, the challenges were even greater. As a single mother or widow, how do you work, go to school and take care of your children? In recommending Laurie for a success stories award, her sponsor noted: "*She attended morning classes, five days a week, worked odd jobs at night and cared for her daughter and her brother, yet never missed a class.*"

Rita was 57 and raising three of her granddaughters when she enrolled in a basic literacy class. Six years later, she got her GED. But in the intervening years, she remembers the difficulties of making ends meet.

During the time when I started going back to school, I had my three granddaughters. They were very young. Their mother wasn't like a mother should have been. A couple of my daughters brought them to me to keep them until she thought that she could be a mother for them... I got myself a little part-time job. They weren't getting enough welfare money. They gave me a few food stamps for them. But, gosh, three girls, and they were going to be taken care of. I got a part-time job. It would help.

Vu-Lin, who is now remarried, is still working during the day and attending GED classes at night. Shortly after she started ESL classes 11 years ago, she left her abusive husband, taking her three children with her. Her words express the hopes and frustrations of so many single mothers:

My daughter, when I first started school, she was only 18 months old. It was hard. Hard on her, hard on me. At the time, I was a single mother. I worked so many hours trying to keep a roof over her head, trying to put food on the table, trying to get my education. Sometimes I felt like I wish I could have it all, but I can't because I knew I had to leave her at the baby-sitter lots of times. I couldn't take her to the class with me. I tried it one time, but it didn't work.

Carolyn found a creative solution to her problem. She had grown up in the South, married early, and waited until five of her eight children were grown before beginning ABE classes in 1978. By volunteering after school hours at a daycare center, she secured daycare for her youngest child who was still in diapers. Anna who had her dead husband's pension to rely upon recalled:

I had a pension that allowed me financially to pursue an education while I worked part-time; financially, I was perhaps better off than some of the other students that were really struggling, working full-time and going to school full-time. So that allowed me a little bit of freedom there, although I worked my butt off going to school full-time and having four kids.

Men also had problems with their families and with balancing education and job responsibilities. Dennis, who holds a low-paying job in the family-owned business, is more comfortable talking to his tutor than his family. He shares his opinion that: "*Some of my family is not very supportive. I work with some of them and it's frustrating sometimes.*"

Frank stepped down from a profitable job where he was the supervisor of a university's food service because he realized that

I was just fooling myself because I couldn't read and I couldn't write. To just step out and just have the courage to let the job go and to work on my career education-wise. At the time when I was going to the education program, I was working two jobs at that time. So it was very difficult working the two jobs plus trying to do the schooling.

Perhaps the most difficult barriers to continued participation as well as to initial enrollment are the invisible fences adult learners erect for themselves. Ursala, the sole supporter of her son since she separated from his father, had to overcome cultural and gender barriers. She was taught to believe that a man is the sole provider and the means by which the woman gets what she needs out of life. This made her feel inadequate to achieve anything on her own. Ursala's initial lack of confidence in herself is shared by many participants entering at the basic literacy level whose past learning difficulties leave them unsure of their potential and sensitive about the stigma of illiteracy.

Agnes describes a legacy of fear experienced by basic literacy participants when faced with sharing their "secret:"

My greatest accomplishment was when I picked up the phone and called the Literacy Council and made the step to ask for help. When you are a non-reader, you don't want anyone to know about it. You want to keep it a secret because you don't want anyone to think you're stupid. So it took a lot for me to call and for me to tell the person on the phone who I was and that I needed help. That is the greatest accomplishment that I have ever achieved.

Paula, who was 40 years of age when her daughter took her to the literacy council, was afraid that people would make fun of her. She recalls: "*Years ago, I didn't have the faith that I could do anything. Over the 12 years I have learned that I can do anything that anybody else can do.*" Conrad, who recruits new readers for a literacy program, always shares his first tutoring experience with them:

I was so embarrassed that I couldn't even look at my tutor. I kept my head down. I was just so ashamed. I told my tutor that I was really a stupid person and if she thought she could teach me how to read, I would come to reading class but she had to work on that for me. I still didn't think she was going to be able to do it. She told me, 'well, you'd be surprised what you can learn'... We started in on the tutoring.

Support Factors

In order to succeed at any task, one must first believe that it is possible. The road to learning begins with the gift of belief. This gift can take the form of support from family and friends, internal fortitude reinforced by faith in God, and empowerment offered by teachers and tutors. In addition to motivating participants to enroll in adult education, many participants' mothers, spouses, siblings, and relatives have helped share the burdens inherent when a family member puts aside time for class work and homework. Eva admits that *"my husband pushed me and said I better get an education so in the future, I can get a better job. I am happy to be able to read and write."*

Yetta's family supported her decision to return to school by helping out around the house, thus allowing her the time she needed to study. Sophia admits that she could not have handled a job, school, and her children on her own and confesses, *"My mother watched my children while I did all these things. If I didn't have my mother, I don't think I would have been able to do it."*

About three months after Conrad began his tutoring, he summoned up the courage to tell his daughters that he had been going out evenings in order to learn to read.

They thought it was really great. There were times I could go home and I wouldn't do my homework until the night before I had to go to class; so they would come home one night and put their books back on the counter. They would say, 'okay, dad, you're not doing your homework; we're not doing ours'... This felt so strange to tell me that I have to do my homework. We were able to sit down at the table and they were able to help me with it. Even my wife was able to help me with it. Then, if I was learning something I was really excited about, I would say, 'Did you guys learn this when you were in school?' It was fun. We made a little game of it in a way.

Paula, who is 57, explains the importance of family help and her pride in new accomplishments: *"Working and going to school is hard. I do get help at home. I just started working on a computer and I love it. My family helps me learn it. I get a lot of good response. I feel good when I get it. I feel like each time I grow an inch."*

Isobel knows the importance of *"the encouragement of family and friends, which I do have. The Salvation Army has said that when they purchase the new computers that they will give me one of the old ones so I can practice on it. They told me that they were all ready to blow up so that if I blew one up, it wouldn't be a disaster."*

Fifty-nine percent of participants are active in their churches and faith in God appears to support their educational endeavors as well as other aspects of their lives. Paula expresses her faith in a context similar to other participants when she says: *"I just hope God lets me see 62 so I can put my all into going to school."* Kevin reinforces this acceptance of God as an ongoing and powerful force in life when he explains that he views success as a result of *"good family, lots of backing from family and a good religious background."* Faith not only provides personal comfort but is shared as reassurance for others struggling under similar circumstances. Barbara reports encouraging a classmate with the words: *"She said she can't do it. I said just don't give up. God was watching over you. Keep doing what you're doing. Try to do what you can. If you can't do it, you can't do it."*

Practitioner and Peer Empowerment

Barbara, who has been attending Basic Literacy classes for seven years, has picked up on the initial and perhaps the most important message tutors and teachers offer entering adult students: *"I*

believe in you. I believe you can do this.” Having been both a GED student and a GED teacher, Sophia understands that adults need support as much as they need instruction. She says: *“My heart goes out to adults who decide they want to come back to school. You have to give them incentive. You tell them: ‘You can do it.’”*

This is a message that can be caught as well as taught for *“I can”* is activated by *“You can!”* At the beginning of adult literacy involvement, students know this instinctively; at completion, they realize it consciously. Marcia expresses it extremely well:

We need to have someone that is caring and understands and listens to us because for the first time in our lives, we are admitting to another person, we don’t read. We need to know that that in the beginning of our tutoring, we are actually touching base with the tutor of trust. We need to know that if we can trust that person, we can learn from that person. If we cannot trust that person, we’re not going to learn anything.

Benny provides us with the following example of how an adult education teacher can empower an ESL learner.

When I came into this country, I could speak no English. I only spoke Spanish. I was given the opportunity to go to the schools which was a big deal in my life because they are very interested to help me to learn English, especially with Bonnie... She talked to me. I explained to her what was going on according to what has happened to me. She told me ‘Don’t worry Benny. English is not an easy language to learn.’ If you want it, you can do it. Keep going!

In eight years, Anna went from being a GED student to being an adult education staff member. She describes this process of affirmation from the point of view of student and counselor.

What I think I like mostly about the community learning center is you sit down and you see students come in and they are like, ‘I can’t do this, I can’t do this,’ very much like myself when I came in to get a GED. Joan (her teacher) had her foot literally up my butt, saying, ‘yes, you can do this.’ Now I would like to, in turn, turn students’ lives around in helping them pursue their goals. I see them say: ‘I can’t do this, Anna.’ I’m saying, ‘Yes you can, yes you can. You can do anything you set your mind to.’ Just empowering them.

Adult Theory in Practice

This tradition of encouraging and empowering adult learners carries over to the classroom or tutoring situation. Basic literacy students and other learners in need of acceptance and support were most likely to speak specifically and in detail about their tutors and teachers. Oliver, who began tutoring after a head injury later in life, said: *“I had to relearn everything; reading, writing, math, handwriting. With Sheila. She’s a good teacher... People have to understand each person they teach.”*

Dennis, a basic literacy student who lacked support from his family, appreciated the personal attention of his tutor: *“I’ll talk with my tutor, before or after class. We’re real comfortable with each other, and we can talk about anything.”* Conrad, who had real doubts about his ability to learn to read, indicated an obligation to succeed in order to repay a volunteer tutor’s investment in him: *“This is a lady who is giving up her time. She’s not getting paid for it. She’s giving up her evenings to teach me how to read. I felt I had the responsibility at least to go to class.”* Henry, who fled an abusive home for a life on the streets, believes his whole life was changed by his ABE experience. He regards his teacher as a friend and a mentor:

I think it was about the third day that I was there, something happened, I got involved with the teachers, and I met Florence... She kind of took me under her wing, saw that there was something, I guess, about me that she liked, and we became very good friends. I worked hand-in-hand with her, and I was sort of like the teacher's pet.

Evaluation of practitioner effectiveness is best found in the details of participants' instructional experiences. The examples cited below demonstrate adult theory in practice in Basic Literacy, ESL, ABE and GED situations. Specific adult learner weaknesses are addressed, individual strengths are shared, personal goals are respected and student leadership accepted, encouraged and acknowledged. Adult theory in action is portrayed as collaborative learning in a respectful, interactive environment.

Irene, a GED student whose math skills were very weak compared to her reading comprehension, thought that the type of individualized instruction offered in her small-group classes was particularly beneficial to her. John's education was tailor-made to suit his spinal cord injury, with emphasis on computer literacy and independent study. Quincy's schooling began with building basic math, reading and spelling skills till he was comfortable writing resumes and searching for a good job. Benny's sponsor, in recommending him for the success stories award, noted that he wrote lists of words he heard most often, looked them up in his dictionary and studied them at home. His quest to learn the fine points of English grammar raised the level of the class, sending his teacher to textbooks to answer his complex questions.

Della, who had graduated from High School, enrolled in an adult program because her reading skills were far too low to gain entrance to a business travel counselor program. Her instructor introduced Della to literature written by African-American writers, started her working on vocabulary and comprehension skills and told her: '*You can do it!*' She did. She raised her reading level two grades in eight weeks in order to qualify for the training program.

At 21, William had severe learning difficulties as a result of being hearing impaired for the first four years of his life. Tenacious in his determination to improve his reading skills, he was teamed with a tutor his own age who had cerebral palsy and was just starting as a work-study student at the literacy council. Both were reaching for goals beyond others' expectations for them. They did not see each other's limitations but only each other's potential. They worked together for eight months until William was ready to enroll at a community college.

The accepting environment and cooperative spirit of the classroom makes learners feel safe. After completing his tutoring program, Conrad went to check out the GED class at the high school. He took the required entrance test, enrolled, and after two months was able to take and pass the GED test. His explanation for his immediate success centered on classroom environment:

It really felt good to sit in the classroom because I was there with other adults and we were all there because we wanted to learn. There wasn't somebody making us be there. We wanted to learn... I actually saw myself learning things I never realized I'd ever be able to learn because I was very bad in math. I never had algebra when I went to school, but we had algebra on the test. I actually found algebra as being fun. There was no way in the world I would have thought that before.

This cooperative spirit also builds teamwork. Nina, an ABE student, whose initial feelings of inadequacy were soon dispelled, made special efforts throughout her time in class to help other students feel comfortable. She drove classmates to the GED testing site and even arranged to be tested over the summer so that she could offer her support to another student.

The Leadership Ladder

Beyond respect for students' individual interest and needs, beyond establishing an environment that fosters teamwork, there is evidence that leadership qualities were encouraged and rewarded. Adult learners who showed leadership qualities were recruited as mentors and outreach workers while attending classes and as volunteer tutors and aides after completion of their studies. Some graduates who performed well in this role were taken on as paid staff and others who completed training courses or college were subsequently hired as teachers, tutors and counselors. These employment opportunities during program participation advanced leadership skills and encouraged interests in teaching and counseling. Furthermore, the availability of paid positions within the adult education organization or agency assisted program graduates to adjust to the world of work.

Benny not only helped his peers in class but took it upon himself to serve as a liaison between non-English speaking students and the community. If someone had a vision problem, he would locate the proper social service, call for an appointment and, if necessary, take the person there himself. Well-liked by students of all ethnic backgrounds, he was hired while still attending ESL classes to canvass the neighborhood, going door-to-door and visiting families to promote the importance of education and learning English.

Carolyn, who volunteered as a Head Start aide in exchange for free daycare while she was in ABE classes, so impressed the teachers at the center that they encouraged her to pursue a career with the Head Start program. Hired as a substitute, she worked her way up to associate teacher before opening a daycare center of her own at her church. Henry, a construction worker who became a community development coordinator later in life, recalls how his leadership skills emerged as part of his GED participation.

I wound up getting involved in every aspect of the school: working along with the principal, I became friends with everybody; I worked on different projects. I got involved in our graduation, worked with the computer people to make one of the nicest signs I had ever seen that was in our graduation and was all done through the computer. I guess I have always been sort of a project coordinator at heart all my life. I just took that on... I left with the intent that my life was going to be much better. I left with a better attitude.

The leadership ladder in place in many of the participants' programs was not limited to mentoring, volunteer tutoring, and entry level employment. Recognizing the service to the community that Ed and his wife had given by being foster parents to over 20 children, his literacy council teamed up with a prestigious local university to offer him a scholarship to study for a bachelor's degree in social work. Sophie also parlayed her adult education experience into an opportunity for advanced education. Working as a teacher's aide at the same center where she obtained her GED, she was offered the opportunity to attend college classes through a Career Opportunities Center program.

Recognition of achievement and leadership can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Adult learners honored as outstanding students say it provided an internal validation that encouraged them to exchange dreams for the pursuit of possibilities. Anna, who earned more than one scholarship on her way to a master's degree, said of her recognition award:

I didn't receive any monetary rewards and I didn't receive any of the scholarships as a result of that, but I think I received some kind of internal high as acknowledgment when I got that award and it meant a lot because all my children were there with me when I received that award.

Dennis, a new reader, who is continuing his tutoring believes the award he received in 1999 helped his motivation: *“That award I won was like a stepping-stone, and whatever it took to win it, I did it.”* Tanya, who is learning disabled and still enrolled in a GED class, recalls February of 1994 *“when I was the award winner I was on cloud nine. It was a wonderful feeling, that I was important. I felt honored to meet all different kinds of people from all over. My kids are very proud of me. When I got into the GED class it was really remarkable how I started out from a beginner reader and where I am now.”* Ursala, who overcame an addiction to alcohol, speaks of the thrill of being acknowledged for her achievements: *“You know that moment where you get done with the banquet and you go and you talk in front of like 200 people, that was the most euphoric high that I have ever experienced. No drug, no drink could touch it.”*

Program Results

Program results are examined below in terms of constructive criticism by knowledgeable participants who addressed critical issues and in the heartfelt testimony of participants who described learner outcomes as the difference adult education made in their lives. Beyond the common call for additional funding and flexible hours, participants addressed such critical issues as: the stigma of “illiteracy;” the pressure to “complete;” and practitioner professionalization.

The Stigma of Illiteracy

The stigma of illiteracy was mentioned in the interviews time and again by basic literacy participants who remember being told that they were stupid (Agnes), could never learn (Conrad), and could not expect to go to college (William). One of the most potent results of involvement in adult education is a revised self-image. This new self-image says:

You don't have to run around being stupid all your life for no reason at all. There's a lot of free education out there. If it benefits you, then use it. Like I said, there's things going bad in my life, but it's not deterring me because now that I have the education and the knowledge and the know-how, there are things that I can do. Positive things. Quincy

In my case, just being a dyslexic always made me feel that I was stupid and dumb, but I'm not stupid and dumb. I find out now that I am a very smart lady if I may say so for myself. Marcia

We're all in it to learn something. We persist and go on and still try to learn. It's okay to say I don't know; I'll try to find out. Anna

They would say they're too old to learn the language. I would say it's never too late. If you really want it, you will do it...You need to show your knowledge about what you want. You have to learn so you will be ready for the assignment to a good job on your own. Benny

I started Gannon College one month after (I had my baby). I didn't get into my major but I got into Gannon. So the following year they said that if you go through nursing school and take algebra and chemistry. I finished those and got the grade I needed to get into the radiology center. So it was one thing after another but it all started with my GED. Gina

I feel successful in how I was given the tools to learn to read and build on my self-esteem that I can grow and be helpful to my family first and through that then be able to go out and help others. Peter

In spite of this new self-image, practitioners and programs must be sensitive to the use of the word “illiteracy,” in the presence of adult learners who become distressed by the label “illiterate,” even when it is indirectly applied. As Paula explains:

When I was in the Program, I was upset about the name Center for Literacy. We are not illiterate. We just have a part of us that doesn't function. Illiterate means a person that can't do anything. We can do a lot of things except pick up a book and go from the front to the back. We have women that can't read but can do hair and men who can't read but can fix cars. So we are not illiterate.

The Pressure to Complete

The pressure to complete also impacts upon learners and programs. After years of frustration, participants who experience success in learning are anxious to persist in their studies. Fifty-five percent of basic literacy participants and 14 percent of participants who enrolled at ESL, ABE or GED levels spent between three and 11 years in ABLE programs. At the same time, adult education programs are being pressured to provide participants with educational upgrading in a minimal timeframe. Participants from literacy, ESL and GED programs pleaded for patience; patience on the part of tutors, teachers and stakeholders. Marcia, who began as a basic reader and now works as a teacher's aide with HMR students. She talks about the importance of having patience as she addresses the role of tutors working with basic literacy students.

I know that they're volunteers and I know they are in a program to help others, but I need them to understand that they are there to help someone and not to give their know-how. I think they need to take patience with students, and I think they need to know that they're adults even though they might be getting material on very low levels...

We have been very smart people throughout our lives, we need to have someone that is caring and understands and listens to us because for the first time in our lives we are admitting to another person, we don't read. We need to know that that in the beginning of our tutoring, we are actually touching base with the tutor of trust. We need to know that if we can trust that person, we can learn from that person. Maybe they need to take their time on some things. A lot of tutors think they have so many hours (maybe 50 hours), and they want to rush through something, and that is not always the way to do it. Be patient.

Benny was concerned about the pace of ESL instruction. He believes the pressure to get people ready for work must be tempered in order to take into account participants' age and psychological burdens.

Well, the people in my school, in their own country, they never learned how to write, to read, or to speak the language. The teachers work with those people to teach them reading, writing, and how to speak the language. The people need to be taught to get ready to go to work. They don't understand how hard it is for those people who come to the school to learn reading, writing, and the language. Sometimes they don't understand. They want to push the people. Most of the people now are writing, reading, and speaking the language. They need more time. It's harder. It's different.

Sometimes those people come in with depression, very poor lives, with many problems because many people they saw in their country killing of their mother, brother, or sister. They saw that and they have that in their minds. Sometimes when the teacher talks about something close to that, they start crying. The people start crying. It's hard.

The people learn. They're old. They need to learn slowly. The people need help and more time. It's very sad in the heart. It's terrible. Sometimes it makes me mad with the pressure, work, work, work. But they need more time. If we can find a way to fix that, it would be very good. It would make many people happy.

Cora, who served as a VISTA volunteer in her GED program and took an active role in helping senior citizens, stressed the importance of patience on the part of stakeholders.

I just ask that the Board of Education would be a little bit more patient. Slow down. I know that this is a fast paced system we live in, but if you keep going at the pace you're going, you're not going to help as many people as you think you're going to reach out there and help. You start the program to say you want to help the people that have fallen through the cracks; but if you keep going the pace you're going, the people that fell through the cracks, they're going to still be there because you're moving too fast. Patience is what we need because I think the world is running out of patience. We are just hurting each other with not being patient.

Problems of Professionalization

The problems inherent in the present push for professionalization were addressed by three participants. Anna was hired last year by her adult learning center as Director of Support Services. She is concerned with the lack of social workers in adult education programs and the absence of a stable career path:

There are not too many social workers in literacy. So when I go to conferences and all of that, I am the odd ball. I'm the social worker. There are not too many social workers in the literacy agencies, and it's very well-needed... You work with any non-profit literacy agency. It's a one-year, continual contract. Who knows where I'll be next year or the following year. I know that they have just gotten a nice grant that is going to pay my salary for next year. But beyond that, I don't know.

Florine is employed as a Student Services Coordinator at a community-based organization with a case load of over 400 students. She switched her major from education to mental health and social services four years ago when she was bumped from her teaching position because she did not have certification. She is concerned about teacher turnover at her agency:

The turnover is extraordinary, and I'm not sure if it's good or what. It's not good for the clients. If I'm their teacher, they grow to like me. When I leave, half the class leaves. Because they're putting this big thing on degree. A lot of teachers who have degrees don't want to work for the pay they'd get here.

When I first started here they had quite a few people who were program participants who had graduated from this program, who had come through it, and who were teaching. At one point they decided to let go of all part time people and they wanted all full time people and all full time people should have degrees if they were teaching.

Yetta is completing her master's thesis in Communications while working for Children and Youth Services. While working on her thesis, she has had time to reflect on the changes she would like to see in adult education program management.

What it comes down to is I think the teachers in adult education need to be very nearly as specialized as the teachers in any public school would be. I believe they need the subject specializations. What is happening now is that students who would be low learners or learning disability students in a public school are placed in a general class, in an adult education class, and they are judged on a level at which they can't attain.

Every student should have the right to attain what their level allows and we have to recognize that some students will never ever attain a degree of any kind—not even a high school diploma. But that does not mean they cannot attain what they need to be a functioning member of society which is a form of learning. It's learning life skills and a needed process of life for them. Putting our value on education and having the diploma and degree and all of that onto a student who is not capable is an injustice to that student. The students are important and need to be treated as such.

Her concerns address the need for specialization in order to provide more equitable education to all adult learners. Inherent in this line of reasoning is the concept that adult education should not be merely about diplomas and credentialing. It should be learning for life.

Learner Outcomes

Participants' reports of satisfaction with their accomplishments at every level appear to be validated by the QOLI. This inventory places 70percent of the sample population in the "high" category, corresponding to an 81st to 99th percentile. Is this satisfaction index due in part to the participants' involvement in adult education programs? Participants' satisfaction with their adult education experience appears to be closely tied to the difference it made in their lives. While Chapter V will detail participant life style changes and investigate substantive behavioral changes, this Learner Outcomes Section will present adult learners' voices as they describe what program participation has meant to them.

There appears to be three categories into which learner outcomes can be classified. At the simplest level, there are new readers who entered at a basic literacy level and achieved their goal of learning to read. Next, there are participants whose success at reading or passing the GED propelled them into new roles in their lives and careers. Finally, there are participants who gained confidence in their abilities, experienced the delight of learning and became lifelong learners.

Pride in Accomplishments

When asked, "which of your achievements to date are you most pleased with?" Danny, like several other new readers, replied: *"My education, this reading and writing. I don't know how I got through life without knowing how to read or write. I think that this education that I got is tremendous. I can read it all."* Ronald, who dropped out of special education classes as the age of 17, works in a furniture factory he calls "sweat shop." He did not advance in his job nor did he get his GED. He still considers his life has improved: *"I can figure things out better. I can do a better job. They stopped picking on me. They actually just work with me."* Oliver, who has been tutored for 10 years, explains his enthusiasm about continuing his learning. *"Psychiatrists and doctors tell you*

with a head injury, you'll learn. You'll keep going uphill for about two years and then all of a sudden you'll level off and there's no more. What you learned is what you learned. You learn little things. On this uphill grade, I beat them. I'm still learning. It's been 10 years."

Noreen, another new reader, who put her aspirations for a GED on hold because of her husband's illness, still feels proud of what she has had accomplished to date:

I read a heck of a lot better than when I did at the beginning. It's done wonders for me. I would tell anybody about the program because I think it's fantastic. It really is. I enjoyed everything. I can read street signs, places where I'm going, and I can fill my applications out a lot better. Sometimes I like to have somebody with me just to make sure. I help him (her husband) out a lot with his applications like for doctors and that's because he's handicapped.

Marcia outlines specific changes that occurred in her life since she learned to read and their importance to her:

My life has changed by that I am now able to do things for myself where before I couldn't read my mail, I couldn't write a letter, I wasn't able to shop and buy things in the grocery store, but now I'm able to do all of those things. I'm introduced to new products which are in the grocery store. When my mail comes, I get excited. Now I can sit down and say it's all for me. It makes me feel very important for myself... I still feel that learning myself, as the greatest thing I could have given myself and the best gift in life I could give myself. So where they say that life begins at 50, it does. For me, it did because it gave me a whole new life and a new respect for my life.

Lydia, who works as a paraprofessional with special needs children explains: *"If I didn't accomplish any more than get that diploma I would have been proud of myself, because it was something I wanted to do."*

New Opportunities for Achievement

Secondly, there are basic literacy, ESL and GED graduates to whom participation in adult education brought new perceptions about their abilities and, consequently, a desire to reach higher and further than they ever dared to imagine. Tanya and Agnes are new readers who have not yet attained their GED and may never do so. Nevertheless, their participation in adult education programs opened their eyes to what was possible for them to achieve and encouraged them to "go for it." Tanya who advanced from basic reading describes her feelings:

When I got into the GED class it was really remarkable how I started out from a beginner reader and where I am now. Now I feel very good about myself because I can do things. Before, I had no self-esteem I felt stupid, like a little kid. Now I feel proud of myself... For the future I plan to get my GED and become a teacher or social worker, to help other people realize that it's going to be rough, especially, if for many years they were told they couldn't do anything.

Agnes, who struggled with reading before participating in the adult program, explains how a change in attitude resulted in many changes in her life:

There have been so many changes in just the last year. I don't know where to begin. It was like I was a non-reader; then I was in class reading. It was like a dream and I was Cinderella. The more I got to know myself, the more secure I got with myself... it opened so many doors for me, that it's unreal.

Richard was a school custodian when the adult education program director invited him to enroll in the literacy program. Beginning as a basic reader, he attained his diploma and then started teaching others:

It was like a whole new world opened up to me more or less. For a long time, I had a lot of fun with that. I used to read signs on trucks going down the road because before I could never do that. I was reading a lot better in church and I felt better about myself, and I starting volunteering for different things... After I learned to read better and got going, it really boosted me and I could do anything I wanted to do.

While involvement in adult education programs appears to enhance skills and increase motivation and self-esteem, it still remains for the individual to chart his own future. Life does not change for everyone. Frank passed his GED and then stopped studying. He explains:

I guess what happened, after I graduated from the program... I really didn't pursue the education part of it anymore. That's where I'm at right now. There really hasn't been any promotions. I really haven't pursued the education part to get a promotion. I would say I'm just in limbo.

Most participants who achieved their GED did pursue further education and training. Carolyn expresses their sentiments that the GED was the all important first step along the way:

The GED is a beginning not an end. I wish they [other adult students] would pursue their career and not give up and keep going. Once they get their GED, they can go to college because nowadays it takes more education than a GED. You have to have a degree for everything now.

Anna who earned a master's degree recalls: *I went to Temple and got my Master's Degree right there at the Apollo Theater on Broad Street, but I didn't feel in my heart any happier than I did when I first received my GED... That was one of the first goals that I had going. When I received that GED, I was just on top of the world.*

Learning as a Way of Life

The third learner outcome observed as a result of program participation was a personal delight in learning, a lifelong pursuit of knowledge and an understanding of the value of education that goes far beyond immediate satisfaction, job security or prestige. Irene, who obtained an associate's degree in Liberal Arts and helped establish a national organization for adult learners, puts forth her view of education:

Education is ongoing all the time; you learn a lot more than just your basic academics with every education program. I value being graced with the opportunities to keep going... continuing with my education... putting myself in the position where the options are available to me to do something that I feel is meaningful and productive to my life and my family, my community. I think that's all a part of becoming a fulfilled person, how you function within your own family and work place and with friends.

Vu-Lin's writing ability in her new language is exceeded only by her insight, as she comments on what education means to her:

Education is very important to me because it helped me with a lot of things. When you can't read, you feel blind and you feel like you live on the other side of the world. Everywhere you go, you would have to depend on somebody. Now since I know how to

read and write, wherever I go, I feel more brighter and I can see where I'm going, what I'm doing and I understand better.

Henry, who entered adult classes as a brilliant vagrant and a homeless advocate, is extremely vocal about how his adult education experiences turned his life around:

It goes back to how I got changed around by going back to school. How it changed not only my life, but I would have to say it changed everybody around me because they began to see somebody totally different, somebody who went from carefree, didn't care about nothing, to caring about everybody and everything.

Please, I'm not an angel, I'm not a Saint, but the fact that I went back to school and I worked with some of the nicest people, it made me realize we are only here for a short period of time, let's make something of it. Even when I was in school, I was a homeless advocate, but that's all I did... I was probably successful in it, but I didn't go outside of that. I just stayed inside that little shell. Education has put me on the outside of that. I was able to work on the inside and the outside.

When it comes to anybody for adult education, I think everybody should take a moment and say, 'what's in this for me', and I believe that if they just tried it, they would become a better person, not necessarily the most educated person. Because I don't know if I retained all of that. There was a lot in a very short period of time. So I don't know if I retained everything, but evidently I did.

I retained responsibility, I retained trying to work to be a better person, and I would make the suggestion to anybody that wants to try adult basic education to go ahead and do it because even if you don't learn to be a mathematician and even if you don't learn all of your geography and history and all of the fundamentals that we were supposed to learn when we were younger, you'll learn to be a better person, you'll learn you've got something in you that you never knew, you'll learn that maybe you didn't get your high school education, but you walk away with your GED and you'll shock yourself. You'll find something inside yourself that you never knew you had.

Summary of Adult Literacy Outcomes

To summarize the findings regarding Adult Literacy Outcomes:

- Eighty-five percent of participants suffered disorienting dilemmas prior to program entrance.
- Motives for enrollment included a need for self-sufficiency followed by the encouragement of others, the desire to set an example, self-improvement and self-actualization.
- Over two-thirds of the participants completed their program goals within a two year time span.
- All ABE and GED participants and five of seven ESL students have attained a GED or High School diploma.
- Participation difficulties included child-care, transportation problems, money problems, employment and emotional conflicts, and efforts by spouses to undermine attendance.

- Support factors included families, religious faith, peer and practitioner encouragement.
- Individualized and collaborative learning in an interactive environment addressed individual needs while fostering peer mentoring and teamwork.
- A leadership ladder encouraged excellence and provided participants with job-training and employment opportunities within a supportive environment.
- Program results included participant recognition of three critical issues: the stigma of illiteracy; pressure to complete in conflict with the desire to persist; and problems of professionalization.

Quantitative instruments generally measure the effectiveness of ABLE programs with results directed to justifying the funding concerns of multiple stakeholders. Learner outcomes as candidly self-reported and backed by participants' life actions reveal pride in their accomplishments, recognition of new opportunities for achievement, the choice of learning as a way of life, increased self-confidence and the belief that ABLE participation has changed their lives. "*Nothing is ever the same again.*" Successful adult learners' testimony about the impact of adult education upon their attitudes and behaviors provide an alternative insight into the longitudinal results of ABLE participation.

CHAPTER V: PARTICIPANT LIFE STYLES

In Pursuit of the American Dream

While Chapter IV examined participants' journey toward literacy skills, Chapter V will address the practice of literacy in their daily lives. What is their record as continuing learners, productive workers, responsible parents, and concerned citizens? How have the knowledge and skills taught in ABE programs survived and developed given the buffeting of daily life? How have the new attitudes and behaviors inculcated in cooperative classrooms encouraged participants to pursue the American dream of opportunity for all, the potential of a secure future for themselves and their families, and the possibility of marking their mark in the world?

Chapter IV records the changes in participants' attitudes towards education. Basic Literacy enrollees who had been told and believed they were "stupid" and "unable to learn" found that given time, suitable learning strategies, and the support of practitioners and peers, they could succeed far beyond their expectations. ESL students ranging from refugees without any schooling to professionals seeking economic opportunity found their voice in classrooms where English was the only common language. Youngsters who had lost their way grasped a second chance in their middle years. They saw the GED or High School Diploma as a first step toward advanced education and employment. Seniors who had been denied formal education by prejudice, poverty or simply the vicissitudes of life demonstrated to themselves, their classmates and their families that education is a lifelong endeavor.

The ABE experience convinced participants not only that they could learn but that education could be both profitable and enjoyable. How they translated this understanding into action varied according to each individuals' needs and inclinations. Participants of every age and at every level engaged in informal learning for pleasure as well as improvement. Although some new readers might not be ready for higher education, there were many skills that now seemed feasible for them to acquire.

Continuing Education

Informal Learning Choices

Among the informal learning activities participants mentioned were learning to drive, attending literacy conferences and workshops, increasing their conversational skills and extending their knowledge of computers and foreign languages. They supplemented higher education programs with alternative courses of interest and sought out less formal and less expensive sources of career education. From new readers to GED graduates, one of the lasting lessons inculcated in ABE classes was that education is an essential prerequisite for success and that you can never stop learning for life.

For Oscar, learning to drive was a challenge he overcame. He advises adult students "*if they're going to get their driver's license, go to driver's school. I did.*" For Marcia, driving school represents her next challenge.

I always used to admire people that drove. Well I'm in driving school right now. It's like another challenge to me. I'm very surprised at myself because I don't believe I know all these signs and I don't believe I know how to read that manual. When I got it, it was like,

oh no, another challenge. How do I know what this means? I put it this way: It's not going to lick me; I'm going to lick it.

Dennis, a basic literacy student since 1992 attends literacy conferences to find out more about learning differences. He states: *"I am looking forward to going to my fourth annual reading conference; I learn so much from these about reading and disabilities ... I want to take courses to prepare to go to college. I'd like to write some children's stories some day about learning to read. To prove people wrong who said I couldn't do it."* Conrad who became a literacy promoter after attaining his GED not only attends literacy conferences and workshops, he presents at them.

I started going to conferences and actually found myself attending workshops to help me with my own education. I had learning problems, so I would attend workshops on how to deal with learning problems. I can't really make the learning problem go away, but there are things I can do to help me with my learning. The more of these classes I went to, the more I wanted to go to, to help with my own education.

Informal learning is particularly appealing to older adults. After Kevin retired, he *"took a Dale Carnegie course and I did pretty good anyway for not having much education to begin with."* Carolyn is a retired day school director. Her learning is mainly informal because class hours are difficult for her to schedule. She says:

I'm learning through experience and just by being busy and doing what I'm doing. I do want to go back into computers. I do want to learn more about that. I'm still thinking about taking some classes. Right now, it has to work in with my schedule right now because I'm short-staffed and I have to fill in a lot.

At 80 years of age, Olive also intends to *"get into the class with the computers. I have a computer. I will start a newsletter for the family."* Kelly, who just completed her GED at the age of 73, agrees with her, saying *"I hope to go to computer school, if I can get in."*

Many participants see informal learning as a necessary adjunct to formal education and a way of life. Wilma who earned an associate degree helps her husband run their business. She says: *"Our business is booming. We'd like to travel more — go to England and Italy again. See more of the world...I'd like to study Italian before we go back to Italy."* In addition to formal schooling, Ursula is involved in continuing education. She hopes to use both to assist her in establishing a business when she retires.

Over the last two years, I kind of put a lot more of my energy in another form of schooling which is in New York...The school in New York is not just about prophesy, it's about personal healing. It taught us different classes like color therapy, aroma therapy, meditation, and self-healing inside. ... I'm integrating that with hopefully my BS in psychology and use it for my personal business as far as counseling women or whoever comes to me in need.

One of the reasons Gina just applied for a new job was the opportunities for learning it afforded. She believes: *"Education, you really can't get anywhere without it ... Today, I am a radiological technologist. And I just got a new job in one of the two largest hospitals in [my city]. I have the same title and do the same work, but there are more benefits and much more of an opportunity for learning."*

Bella makes the point that learning for employment carries over to learning for life.

After I got my GED, I went to a secretary class. I went over there for a year. I really learned a lot there. It was called a modern technology secretary class. Before I went over there, I couldn't even type. I learned a lot of computer skills there.

I would be able to help my kids with homework and how to set up the margins. Even now, I use the Internet at home. I am able to communicate with my relatives from Taiwan.

Agnes who was a basic reader for many years is now studying for the ministry. Her attitude toward learning says it all: “*You can never stop learning ... Keep reading, read everything you can. Everything you read you use, so don’t give up.*”

Higher Education

Of the 28 participants who enrolled in higher education, ten earned college or advanced degrees. An additional four participants received Associate degrees, bringing the total of earned degrees to 14 or 50 percent of those that enrolled in higher education. Of the 14 participants listed as taking college courses but not graduating, seven are still enrolled as part-time students accumulating credits year after year as time and money permit. Their stories and those of the higher education graduates reveal a pattern of lifelong learning impacted by personal and employment challenges but always driven by a fierce determination to succeed.

Sarah’s Story

In 1971, at the age of 16, Sarah dropped out of high school, married and had two children within a three-year time period. In 1974, feeling a need to further her education, she enrolled in a community adult education center and one year later passed the GED with fairly high scores. In 1977, she took a Vo-Tech keypunch program and was hired for a temporary position in the tax office. After her third child was born in 1979, she decided to stay home in order to raise the children. When her husband was laid off from his job in 1983, Sarah went to work as a grocery store cashier. Her interest in social work led her to volunteer at a domestic abuse shelter. In 1990, she took refresher courses in algebra and geometry at the adult center and succeeded in passing her college entrance exams.

At the age of 36, Sarah struggled to be a wife, mother, college student, employee and volunteer. Six years later at the age of 41, she graduated with a 3.88 GPA and a BS in Social Work. In 1996, she was hired by the social service agency at which she had volunteered for eight years. She worked there until 2000 when she was recruited by the adult center as a teacher for their new Family Literacy program. As to the future, this lifelong learner says:

I’m still struggling with thinking about going on for my Master’s...Financially, if someone would say here is the money to get your Master’s, I may be able to fit it in. I think about financially and time-wise, I’m not able to do that right now, but that is a goal I may consider in the future. I do continue to get education anywhere I can; anytime workshops come up in our agency and it’s something that sparks my interest. I am always working on continuing education because education is very important to me.

Ursala's Story

Ursala had few of the advantages of family support, financial assistance, and academic excellence that eased the way for Sarah. In 1970, she left high school during her junior year due to an unexpected pregnancy. Six months after the birth of her son, she separated from his father. In 1975, she moved to rural Pennsylvania and found work in a factory. Her low self-esteem led to depression and then to substance abuse. She was arrested and given probation along with counseling and drug and alcohol treatment. In the fall of 1991, Ursala reluctantly entered a tutoring program. She was reading at a 5th grade level and feared failure because of previous unsuccessful GED testing. As her tutoring progressed and she gained confidence, she worked fiercely to reach her goal. In 1993, at the age of 40, she passed the GED, enrolled in the local university, maintained her factory job and married. Ever since then, she has been going to school part time. She explains:

I've only been able to go part-time. I would take a lay off from work and I would go to a couple of classes. If I go full-time, I won't get any money from my employment. So it's been real financially difficult. However, about last year at this time, I entered in for a scholarship (it was the first time I ever tried that), and, of course, the first thing you think of is: 'No way am I going to get this.' But when I started making out the stories and doing the paperwork and when I put that letter in the mail, I knew in my heart I was going to win and I did. It was only for \$500; however, \$500, my goodness, could pay for my books and a little bit of the tuition...

Right now, I'm like: 'well, when's the money going to come in so I can go back to school.' Every little bit helps. I don't think I'm going to give up. It's probably going to take me another five years to get my BS. You know, that's okay because I work at the plant in town and I've been there 24 years; so in 8 years I get to retire. So what I'm doing is I'm educating myself so when I do retire, I would still have a life. It's like I'm going to start my whole working life over again. I'm going to be doing something I enjoy doing.

Conflicting Pressures

Powerful forces war against each other for control of the participant's world: health, employment, family and most of all, money. These multiple challenges prevalent in Sarah and Ursala's stories are echoed by other adults engaged in higher education. An exploration of this interlocking web of obstacles reveals their tensile strength and explains why so few GED graduates are able to conquer them.

Health

The one obstacle that does not yield to determination is health. Fran, Irene, Darcy and John experienced health problems. Fran, who taught herself English after emigrating from Romania, entered ESL classes at a community college in 1996. After passing her GED test at the age of 38, she was admitted to the college carrying a full student load. She maintained a 3.9 GPA until a motorcycle accident left her with severe physical problems that did not permit her to continue her studies.

Irene, a single mother who suffered an employment-related disability, was referred to a literacy center by OVR. She passed the GED at the age of 35 and began working for the center as a member of the clerical staff and a volunteer tutor. Irene then enrolled in a community college and in 1997 received an associate degree. One year later, she registered at the university with the intent of becoming a Special Education teacher. She explains: "I applied and was accepted...a year ago. I

had to withdraw because of physical problems with a knee injury, for which I got a medically excused absence. I was getting A's and B's in all my courses and I will be going back."

In 1986, at the age of 18, Darcy fell 40 feet while employed by a tree trimming company. Three years later, he was discharged from rehabilitation, got an apartment and enrolled in a GED class at a community college. He passed his GED in June 1990 at the age of 24 and continued as a part time student at the community college. Ten years later, Darcy estimates that he is half the way to an associate degree in human services.

John is also physically disabled as a result of an auto accident that occurred when he was 16 years old. Individual tutoring at a wheelchair community enabled him to pass his GED test at the age of 20. In 1996, he entered a community college expecting to take at least one course a semester. He has exceeded his goal and will receive his associate degree in 2001 and then continue in multi-media and web design at an art institute.

Learning Differences

For participants who encountered physical problems prior to attending college, the road may be long but is buttressed by financial support from disability insurance. For other GED graduates who are determined to enter and complete college, there is little payment for fortitude. Both Fbrine and William who have learning difficulties work worked full time while attending college. William had the advantage of going to a high school that catered to learning differences. After graduating in 1984 at the age of 21, he enrolled in a literacy council to improve his reading and writing skills. One year later, he began correspondence courses and then enrolled in a community college. In 1995, he received an associate degree in applied science, hotel and restaurant management.

Florine whose parents deserted her when she was six weeks old was raised by her grandmother who earned \$20 a week as a domestic. Poorly dressed, hungry, and unable to keep up with the other children in her grade, she did poorly in school and did not recognize her learning disability until much later in life. Pregnant at the age of 14, she left school in 1966 to marry her boyfriend. Twenty years later, remarried and the mother of five teenagers, Florine enrolled in GED classes and in 1987 earned her diploma. Hired by her adult center as a part time tutor and then as a full time teacher, she began taking courses at a community college intending to earn teacher certification. Twelve years later, she directs the center's case management program which she developed. She is still taking college courses but switched her major to mental health and social services to accommodate her new responsibilities. Others might be discouraged, but Fbrine explains:

Coming from the background that I have with a learning disability, trying to be full time mother, a full time employee and go to school at the same time, it's like juggling apples. I feel I'm very successful at what I'm doing.

Employment

Florine is not the only participant whose college experience was driven by the exigencies of their employment. In 1978 at the age of 23, Laurie enrolled in a GED program and within three months earned her GED. Her goal was to become a nurse and she

went to University for a year and took science and nursing courses, but I couldn't finish. That was in some ways for the best, because I ended up in an altogether different field. I'm still doing that (nursing) part time, but I ended up doing business courses, automotive, mechanical courses. Believe it or not, I'd like to go back and take more courses... I guess my

first wish would have to be to be able to go back to school full-time. I would love to, but I know that's not feasible. Money is always a play.

Other participants took college courses just long enough to reach goals related to specific future employment. Olive had worked as an airplane mechanic for 18 years. When the base was closed, she decided to open up her own beauty shop and retooled by taking business classes at a community college. When Della was laid off after working as an anesthesia aide for six years, she decided she wanted to be a travel agent. After completing a training centers' business travel counselor program, Della was hired by a travel agency. She excelled at her job and the agency paid for college courses that trained her to become an International Travel Counselor.

Zach went directly from ESL classes to graduate study. A medical student in his native land, he struggled to make ends meet living on part time jobs and public assistance while learning enough English to pass the TOEFEL test. Two weeks after completing the test, he began his internship at a local hospital and today is a certified internist and teaches internal medicine at a university.

The needs of the job also kept some participants from entering or completing higher education. Nancy, whose job is to assist immigrants at a large city temple, explains:

I want to study more because I like that. If I had a chance, I would learn more. I would like to go to college but I don't have time for that because I take care of things here. I spend a lot of time here.

Wylie, on the other hand, is a fascinating example of the advantages and conflicts between higher education and employment. At the age of 51 he is vice president of his own company. It is a "business that actually stemmed out of ... graduate work" at a large university where he was a research assistant six years ago. Wylie would like to complete his master's degree but explains:

I'm involved in this business and any start-up business is more demanding than any child, spouse, or anything can possibly be. Even though I have three other partners in this thing with me, we're all putting in 50 hour weeks. So the schooling isn't getting done. I have one math course to finish. I have to finish writing my Master's thesis. Those keep getting pushed to the side because of the demands of the business where the opportunity is now; so I have to get on that right now, and the schooling just has to wait.

Family

Family support is as necessary to higher education adult students as it is to ABLE learners. This "family" can consist of a spouse, parent(s), children, siblings, relatives or friends. Support can involve caring for children, helping with studies, providing financial support and offering personal encouragement. Ursula depends upon her husband to help her with language arts, admitting: "*I still struggle with doing the reading. My husband helps me do my grammar, and proofreads everything I found out; but all the creativity of putting it together is me. I do allow myself some credit for that.*"

The necessity of balancing education, work and family is hardest on women participants, especially single mothers. Charlene, Laurie and Kathleen had children with special needs. This influenced their interest in education, nursing and social work but also required them to drop whatever they were doing during intermittent emergencies. Florine and Nina put off their college education until their children were older. As Nina explained:

I took one semester at college, but between working, getting the credits and having small children, it became pretty difficult. So at this time in my life, for my own personal satisfaction, I will hopefully be retiring and then I will go back. Not because I need it but for my own personal satisfaction: to meet a goal I have set for myself that I have not achieved completely yet.

Ed, who is currently balancing ongoing education with a full-time job and responsibilities as a parent and foster parent, sums it up: “*Going to work, being a parent, and going to school, it’s a full plate.*” Sarah acknowledges the importance of the help she received from her family, saying: “*I really haven’t had too many setbacks. The door has been opened for me to further my education and get a degree that I was hoping to get. Like I said, I have a very supportive family.*”

Going to college as an adult with young children is nearly impossible without a supportive family. Frank knows this. He is still working as a janitor and confessed that after receiving his GED: “*I really haven’t pursued the education part to get a promotion.*” But Frank is providing the child care, emotional and financial support for his wife who “*is in college at this present time studying to be a teacher for special education.*”

Finances

Six of the 14 participants (43 percent) who completed associate, college or advanced degrees received financial assistance in the form of a scholarship, pension or employment disability compensation; five were single mothers and one was a recent immigrant. Other higher education students had to support themselves, their families and pay college tuitions. Although participants in this category had working spouses, it was not easy. Georgia worries about her husband’s health and can’t wait till she can help pull part of the load that was incurred during her schooling.

He has been working so hard providing for the family both physically and mentally, I’m not sure how much longer he is going to be able to last. So I would like to be able to be in a position to be able to support the household with or without his income, maybe even have my own business.

Charlene did part time bookkeeping, housecleaning and farm chores while going to college. She earned her degree in 1992 and has been employed as an intensive care social worker ever since. Eight years later, she and her husband are still working to pay off the debt that was incurred. Bruce enrolled in college in 1989 and graduated four years later at the age of 36. During his college years, the family lived on \$10,000 a year. He worked evenings, weekends, and summers at any job he could find and his wife worked full time to support the family. According to Bruce, it was worth it:

The achievement that I’m most proud of is probably graduating from college. I’m the first male in my family that I know of who even got a GED; everyone just quit school and went to work, I’m the only one I know of who graduated from college.

Of major interest is the fact that all but one of the higher education graduates went to college immediately after completing their ABLE program. Furthermore, 12 of the 14 earned their associate or college degrees within the normal (two or four year) time frame. Anna, who attained a Master’s Degree in Social Work eight years after receiving her GED, describes the process:

After receiving a GED, I continued right on through getting my GED at the learning center, did my first internship there for the ...community college and then from that internship, I went on and I received a scholarship to go on to ... university for undergraduate. I got that in two years, working part-time, going to school full-time, and then I kept saying after

I got my Bachelor's Degree, that would be it. 'I don't want anymore school. I am getting too old for this school stuff!'

I did what I had to do one little step of the way. I had a lot of good people behind me saying, 'You can do this,' kind of directing me. Because when I got my associate degree from community college, my peers were saying, 'I'm going to ... University; where are you going?' I'm going home with my kids, like find a job, and they were saying, 'you're not going to get a good paying job; go on, go on.'

Like I said, the financial freedom that I had existed, so I could very well go on. I looked into scholarships for everything. Every time I got a degree, I went on and looked for another scholarship. I kept that GPA up. It was 3.57. I kept it up really high so that qualified me for going on to scholarships. It was very difficult. ... You're still learning. I'm with people every day. I think just the greatest success is that I'm able to do what I do, I guess, and that I have changed so much.

The Problem with Higher Education

One problem with higher education is that it's not for everyone. And that is something that GED teachers do not always recognize. They often raise successful learners' expectations and encourage them to go on in the face of external pressures despite a lack of prevailing personal goals. Cora was a successful GED graduate. The GED enabled her to leave an abusive husband. It provided her an initial job as a Vista volunteer and it paid off in the education of her four daughters who were all honor students in high school. It enabled her to:

see life differently than I did when I first came into the Literacy Council. I challenge things more now. I'm not as afraid as I used to be... I found I'm more confident in myself than I was back then. I am happier with myself. I am at peace with myself...

But as to higher education, she says: *"I have spent a couple of years of college. I'm not college material. I'm not saying that I can't do it. I'm lazy in some degrees when it comes to college. I haven't set any real big goals."*

Another problem with higher education is that it's mandated. Adults who are highly successful in their jobs still need the validation of formal credentials. Lydia was a lucky exception. After receiving her high school diploma at the age of 47, she was hired by the school district as a paraprofessional to work with children with disabilities. She was also employed as the director of a summer program for children. Lydia explains her surprise:

when I went to the interview because the first thing it says on the top of it was college degree. But they said since I graduated from the high school program that they trusted me and this will be my third year doing it.

Pamela and Kathleen are GED graduates who have many years of experience in community service. Kathleen is vice president of a community board, a member of an historical board that deals with parks and coordinates programs for children and teenagers. Despite her expertise, this busy 36-year-old understands that a college diploma is essential to legitimize her work. But which path to follow?

I am in college. I have not decided what to major in. I am in Social Work right now. I also do early childhood development. I am leaning toward social work with some mental health... My goal is to be a guidance counselor."

Pamela works with autistic children and is a mentor in a drug rehabilitation program she started ten years ago. She also attends community college and explains:

I am not even sure what year I am in. I'm still getting used to it. I know I have very few credits. It'll pick up. I am doing social work — behavioral health and social work and I'm enjoying it. I started out working on a certificate and I am not sure I am going to continue on that route. I would like to get a degree...

The major problem with higher education is that it's expensive and there are few financial resources available to participants. Ursala who works part time at her factory job and then takes a layoff in order to go to school for a term states the problem cogently:

I hope again that the government or whoever is in charge makes it financially possible for us to have the means of education. Financially, it's hard to be in your 40s, 30s, and try to support a family and trying to keep your job that you've already established. It's not like I can drop out of work. I have 23 years invested in there. I get paid very good money for this area; however, it's already got places for it (mortgage, etc.).

At a time when teachers are desperately needed, especially in the inner city, Pamela, Arlene and Ed provide examples of participants who need financial assistance to make their dreams of becoming teachers come true. Pamela explains:

My goal is to finish college. And my Americore Scholarship ran out and I am in desperate need of money to go to school. The state grant turned me down. I am searching for scholarships. I am going on the Internet and I'll find some scholarships. I am not giving up. I am taking it one step at a time. Right now I go part time because I have to work and I don't want to fail out of college. I do plan on finishing.

Arlene, who attained her GED in 1996, was hired at her program as an outreach worker and a classroom aide. When one of the instructors quit a month after she was hired, Arlene was asked to fill in for her. The program director came in one day and said, "I need to see what you can do." Arlene did an excellent job.

I knew the program and what the women went through. I knew their struggles so I always had a sense of how to teach other students different ways of learning. I just had that quality about me. I always had a way of explaining things to people that made it easier.

We did math, social studies and life skills. She felt I was good for the position and she hired me as the GED instructor. My part was to take courses to better myself so that I would be able to pass it on to the other adult students. I did that for four years. Now, I am a teacher's assistant in a charter school that just started in September 1999. I am also a substitute teacher.

However, Arlene lost her opportunity to enroll in a college program and become a teacher because she had a delinquent student loan.

I had the opportunity to start classes at [the university] but I wasn't able to go. I have a default loan because I went to one of those nine-month schools where you can get a diploma and a degree in computers. So, now I am financially unable to go to college. So, in the meantime I started taking courses and passed the Parent Afri-

can Studies (PAS) program. It permits people from the neighborhood and other people who aren't able to afford to go to college to take pre-college courses like math, literature, home repair and hairstyling — just a lot of different courses. We pay a minimum payment and we can get a certificate for it.

I would really like to be a teacher/social worker. That's what I think about and dream about. I eat and sleep wanting to be a social worker/teacher. What I am doing is when I get money, I pay for a college course, but I would like to get this degree. I really want this and I am going to do it.... That's right so when I get money, I fly down to [the] University and pay for a course, your know, to keep me up on my skills and to just learn. I love learning.

Ed who holds a job as a maintenance worker was helped in his first year by a scholarship presented by his literacy council and the university. When the scholarship ran out, he had to find another way:

I went to the University for two semesters, a class a semester and afterwards, I entered into an extension of [another] College. I have been there in their human resource management program and biblical administration as well. I am in the process of learning how to deal with setbacks... The object is just to stay in the game and keep at it... I plan to finish school with a Bachelor's and then you can go on to get a Master's."

His poignant plea to stakeholders for funding to continue the schooling that was begun at the ABE level speaks for all adult students:

Now that you have gotten us adults to get back into education, is there some sort of funding that we can use to continue our education? Sometimes what can be frustrating is we get these awards and then you start going to school and then you find out the money is not there or that you can only go so far and then you have to stop. So, that's one thing.

And it's not just for me but for all of those who have come before me or will come after me. From what I gather, they want us to further our education, but how far do they want us to go? Maybe someone can talk to the government to ask if there is some sort of funding that can be generated to help the adults that are really trying to make a difference, not only with their own lives, but even to help others out there as well.

Summary of Continuing Education

To summarize the findings regarding participants' continuing education:

- Education is seen as the pathway to career advancement and personal enhancement.
- Informal education is seen as an alternative or supplement to formal education.
- According to their Informal Interviews, 79 percent of participants were engaged in formal and/or informal education; another seven percent discussed specific plans for future education.
- Forty percent of participants enrolled in higher education; 20 percent have earned degrees ranging from associate to doctorate; 10 percent are currently continuing their studies.
- Conflicting pressures of health, employment, family concerns and financial resources determine if and when participants can engage in higher education.
- Community colleges are the prevalent entry path for GED graduates on their way to college or advanced degrees.
- Ninety-three percent of higher education graduates entered college immediately after completing ABLÉ programs; 86 percent of them finished in the normal (two or four year) time frame.
- Forty-three percent of higher education graduates had financial assistance in the form of pensions, scholarships or internships; the remaining participants came from families where both spouses worked.
- Participants with learning differences and participants with funding difficulties may take ten years or more to complete higher education degrees.
- Federal and/or state funding designated for GED graduates who have shown the determination and the ability to do college work would make a difference in the participation and completion statistics for higher education.

Employment

Learning for Life shows that one powerful outcome of ABLÉ participation can be long term employment benefits. For years at a time, determined participants juggled jobs, family responsibilities and finances with the education and training they needed to pursue their American dream. The quantitative study informs us that employment figures for participants show a series of jobs as they move through life. The interviews reveal the exact nature of their changing employment. The quantitative study tells us there has been a striking reduction in the usage of public assistance and food stamps after ABLÉ program completion. The interviews reveal that many former welfare clients now have careers not merely jobs. Without funding specifically designated to aid GED graduates engage in continued vocational and higher education, we can only speculate as to how many participants could have received the education that leads to financial security.

This section will examine four aspects of participant employment: 1) the benefits and challenges incurred by welfare recipients whose ABLÉ involvement led to constructive employment; 2) the problems and advantages accruing to workers who chose ABLÉ programs to upgrade their

skills; 3) participants' overwhelming choice of "helping" professions and the satisfaction their derive from these career choices and 4) participants' ongoing plans for future employment.

From Welfare to Work

Appendix C, Assistance and Employment History, lists each participant's situation prior to ABLE enrollment and after program completion as well as their gender, ethnicity and age. Of the 32 individuals who received some type of assistance prior to ABLE program enrollment: 10 were black (53 percent of black participants); one was Asian (20 percent); three, Hispanic (60 percent) and 18 (44 percent) white. Of those currently receiving assistance, four are black (a reduction of 60 percent), none is Asian (a 100 percent reduction), one is Hispanic (a 66 percent reduction), and 10 are White (a 45 percent reduction).

Working participants receiving assistance at program entry held manual labor jobs such as laundry, maintenance and factory workers or entry level service jobs such as nurse's aides and sales clerks. There was also a cab driver and a woman who ran a drug rehabilitation program after her own recovery. Individuals who had been treated for substance abuse accounted for 22 percent of initial assistance recipients. Currently, only two participants on assistance had previous abuse problems (a 71 percent reduction).

Five of the seven men on assistance at program entry (71percent) had experienced a prior physical injury and one was a recent immigrant who needed to improve his language skills before he could gain employment in his field. Of the five men currently receiving Unemployment Disability or SSI/SSD, two are college students, two work part time in literacy and community development positions and one is retired. The remaining male participants formerly on assistance are now self-sufficient and working at hospitals: one in food services and the other as a physician.

Initially, the largest number of those receiving assistance were single mothers (44 percent). Currently, only three of these women are not self-sufficient, a reduction of 79 percent. The following story describes Gina's journey from welfare to work. It illustrates the career ladder available to a determined and resilient woman as well as the challenges that must be met and overcome by a single mother.

Gina's Story

Neither of Gina's parents had finished high school, so there was no pressure from home when she decided to drop out in 9th grade. She started a course at an OIC but became pregnant and did not finish. Twelve years later, Gina was in trouble. As she explains:

I had two kids and I was on Welfare. That was the only life I knew since I became pregnant. I was working on my own but I wasn't making any money. I was living with some elderly woman, cleaning her house for room and board. I was only making \$5 a week but that was enough for me at the time. I had two boys at the time and the father and I weren't going anywhere. I decided to go back [to school]... I didn't want Welfare. I wanted to take care of my own. That's what kept me going. I became pregnant with my daughter and I was afraid to give up. Because I felt that I would be stuck on Welfare for another five years.

Gina did remarkably well. She went from GED classes to the career exploration program, New Choices. Refused admission to college, she entered the university's ACT 101 program and completed it, receiving an outstanding student award on the day her baby was due. When her daughter was one month old, she was accepted at the university as an undeclared student. After a year of

courses as a matriculating student, Gina earned a scholarship and graduated with a 3.35 cumulative average in her major, Radiology.

Her first full time hospital job required her to commute 149 miles each day. When the wear and tear became too great, she accepted a noon to 8:30 pm part time job at a local health center. This choice was made possible only because her oldest son took on the responsibility of caring for the two younger children until Gina came home each evening. In 1994, she was offered a first shift full time job at less salary and gladly accepted it. Since then, she has become a radiological technologist with certification as a mammography technician. Her job level and salary have improved and her children are doing well in school, but she still faces challenges related to her welfare years. Gina explains:

Coming from a background of being on Welfare to having money now, I wasn't very good at balancing checkbooks, I have gotten credit cards. And I think the more you make the more you spend. I'm learning now. I became quite a material person. And now I'm happy with my T-shirts and I've gone from balancing the food stamps and surviving on a very low income to where material things are not important in life.

I mean I have a new home. I have a new car. But a lot of it is on credit cards... And then I took on my school loans. For some reason, I never got help with them. I got a state grant but I never got help like with Welfare to pay for my books. I basically did it on my own. And if it wasn't for the CAP program, they helped me out a lot.

It's a whole new challenge. Cutting back now, I've taken on extra jobs to get out of my little hole. When I get out of debt in a couple of years, I want to go back to school. I want to go back and add on to what I have in another direction. To extend up the career I have or possibly in some other field...Now I'm working, so whatever I decide to do it has to be added on slowly.

Gina is not the only example of a participant on assistance who is struggling with past loans. Joy who is a computer network administrator for an adult center comments:

I think that one of the most important parts of it is the financial part of it. I'm making more money than I was before, but I'm also not on welfare anymore so, therefore, all of the expenses are coming out of my pocket. I started going back to school for my CNE (Certification for Network Engineering) and I had to take out some loans; so I'm paying back loans.

Without free schooling beyond the GED, welfare participants must be willing to mortgage their future in order to pay for higher education and training. They do so hoping that this investment will enable them to gain the employment status that will provide financial security.

Enid became interested in nursing while taking care of her daughter who is a special needs child. She now works as a nurse in a retirement facility and is proud to say: *"I own my own home. It's hard making the payments, but I feel I'm doing pretty good. I've been here four years. It just makes me keep working all that harder."* For the past 17 years, Nina has worked as a domestic violence counselor to Hispanic women in her community. She understands the importance of self-sufficiency for herself and for others and states: *I feel better about myself, because there is always a feeling of self-worth when you are accomplishing something; obviously making a living and earning a paycheck is very good for your self-esteem."*

Della who has met her initial goal of being a successful travel agent is pleased with her success but continues planning for her future:

I have changed in a positive way. Instead of living in an apartment, I live in a house now. As far as my job is concerned, I moved up in seniority. Sales are wonderful. I'm still one of the top selling agents at my job...Funding. That's the biggest thing. Finances. I plan to open my own travel agency, but it takes about \$200,000 to do it correct. You can start off with maybe \$50,000-\$75,000; but if I want to do it the way I want to do it, it would take about \$200,000 to successfully open it.

Like Della, most participants came to adult education classes with dreams for themselves and their families. ABLE programs helped them to turn their dreams into goals and taught them how to approach those goals one step at a time. Of the 18 participants who cast off the bonds of assistance, 14 engaged in college or advanced training courses, and four including Gina completed college degrees. Furthermore, 12 of the 18 chose employment in the "helping" professions or "service" areas. In this cohort we find:

- Five teachers/teacher aides;
- A nurse's aide, a radiological technologist and a physician
- Two career counselors and
- A community center administrator

Intentional Change

In life, we either choose change or it is thrust upon us. Unanticipated changes such as the death of a spouse, divorce, immigration, accidents, plant closings and layoffs often create an economic vacuum that needs to be filled by education and a subsequent change in employment. While one-third of the participants were moved from stasis by unanticipated alterations in their lives, two-thirds of the study's participants appraised their lives and opted for intentional change. This commitment acted as a catalyst that shaped their future education and employment, family and community relationships.

Many who chose intentional change were proud people like Gina who would no longer accept being dependent on welfare. They were strong individuals like Kathleen who "kicked" drug and alcohol habits and needed to "move on." They were lifelong learners like Yvonne who, after sending five children through college, believed her turn had come. They were reliable workers like Peter who felt educationally inadequate in responsible positions. In nearly all instances, the actions they took to alter their lives paid off in more than just employment benefits.

In 1988, Peter was a high school graduate holding a responsible job with the city water department. Nevertheless, he knew his reading skills were deficient. He couldn't help his children with their homework and he was concerned about written tests required by his employer. Peter had a 2nd grade reading level when he began literacy tutoring. Four years later his skills were at 12th grade level and he easily passed a commercial truck driving test and another exam that tested his knowledge of chemicals used on the job. Peter explains how his personal confidence and job responsibilities have changed:

I still work at the same job I had in 1995 but with the building of my confidence, in some of my jobs at work and the tasks that I have, the bosses have given me more opportunities to show a leadership role. One of the positions is a crew leader in the

job. On occasions when the superintendent or foreman are away on vacation, I would be filling in doing their tasks; so I think with my self-esteem and being able to do the tasks, they have given me these responsibilities.

In 1943, Kevin “went in the service when I was in 10th grade. I wanted to get in there before the war was over, like a lot of other guys, I guess. When I got out, I got pretty busy; went thru mechanical school and finally went into the mill. I wound up teaching guys that graduated from college.” Despite his natural abilities and experience, he was working in a non-managerial position at the steel mill in 1980 when he entered GED classes at a Vo-Tech. After completing the GED, he took additional courses in steel production and was consequently promoted to foreman at his plant and then to general foreman for the Steel Company.

Sometimes, there were setbacks along the way and participants paid dearly for the courage to change their lives. In 1991, Frank was in his fifth year as the personnel manager of a food service business at the University of Pittsburgh supervising 100 employees when the pressure to perform beyond his third grade reading and writing abilities caused him to resign his job.

When I was working as a supervisor for the University ... the fact that I was willing to step out, out of faith and realize that I was just fooling myself because I couldn't read and I couldn't write. To just step out and just have the courage to let the job go and to work on my career education-wise. It was very scary for me. Since the program I have not really pursued it, but it really was a big step in my life. Of course, I lost a lot of money through this whole thing, which we still didn't get back to that point.

After attending four years of evening classes while working at two jobs to support his family, Frank attained a GED. ***“The program has given me courage and I wanted to continue to improve my skills. I just don't want a piece of paper; I want to be able to compete in this world.”*** However, Frank is still a janitor and is biding his time while his wife is in college. His goal for the future is *“one day to have my own business running apartment buildings. That's always been a dream of mine. We would like to open apartments and charge low income to give back to the elderly.”*

Despite participants concerns, most employers were sympathetic to their employees' efforts at educational advancement. When Conrad was nominated an outstanding student, program staff were going to invite his employer to the award ceremonies. Conrad decided that he'd better be the first one to tell him. He walked up and said:

John, I gotta talk to you about something. I was so afraid. He thought it was great. He just told me that most people would complain that they can't read, but it's the person that goes and actually tries to do something about it that makes the difference. He stood behind me 100 percent after that.

William's experience was different. After he received statewide publicity as a Success Stories winner and Outstanding Adult Education Student of 1986, he remembers:

I was broken at my job at one point because I went public. Because of this, I lost my position at [the university]. I was broken as head breakfast cook and was set back and was devastated. Because I won this award, I actually got punished.

I stayed there and worked my way back up through and worked back up to where I was and then kept going to manager. So that was a major setback. But since then I can't say I've had anything knock me down to where I can't get up. I've been

extremely lucky. I can't say how I handle setbacks. I don't have them. I don't accept them.

William advanced on the job until he became manager of the university's food service. At the same time he devoted a great deal of personal time to advocacy efforts on behalf of other new readers. This advocacy for literacy as an avocation while remaining on the job as a vocation held true for many male participants including Dennis, Conrad, Richard, Ronald and Peter. However, William went one step further. After 17 years in the food service field, he quit his position at the university to move into the field of adult literacy. His current goal is to help other adult students *"find their voice. And believe in themselves and realize that yes you can help other people. You do make a difference."*

The Helping Professions

This need to help others is symptomatic of participants in this study. When asked the questions: *What do you think makes a person successful? Of all the things that you have accomplished, what are you most pleased with? What goals do you have for yourself for the future?*, most participants talked about helping others.

When Anna came into the GED program, the director kept pushing her and saying: *"yes, you can do this."* Now an adult education counselor, she remembering and says: *"Now I would like to, in turn, turn students' lives around in helping them pursue their goals. Benny spoke of the help he received from his teacher who "worked very hard with me, very, very hard. She worked with me every day. Every day she was with me, she took a moment to help to try this and try that."* When Benny started his first job as the outreach specialist for his ESL program, he was determined to help students of every nationality as she had helped him.

I deal with the people as much as I can. I know why it's hard for those people because they don't speak English. I know what a hard situation that is. That's why I try to help as much as I can. My wish is to help the people in everything that they want. If they come to me about something, I want to have the solution. I want to do everything to help their problems. I said to those people, 'Everything I do, you can do too. I'm here to help you.'

Conrad continues to attend workshops to become informed about learning difficulties not only for himself but

because that, in turn, helped me to help other people... I also go into the school systems because I think the students need to hear from an adult that has been through that type of situation and not being able to read to let them know if they don't learn to read while they're in school, these are the problems you are going to have when you get out of school.

Carolyn who opened a community center and summer camp for inner city children speaks with pride of her accomplishments: *I'm proud of some of the things I accomplished at the community center. Some of the young people have joined the church. Some have gone back to school and into college themselves. I'm proud I can help somebody. I want to keep working until I can't work anymore, work for the Lord, and work to help people, and do things to help others."*

Fully one half of study participants choose teaching, counseling or other "helping" careers. In Table XXV, counselor status includes both aides who are used for program outreach and profes-

sionals employed as counselors. The Helping Career category includes medical/nursing and employment in social and community service agencies.

Table XXIII
Employment Status by Profession

a. Entry Level	Tutor or Aide		Teacher or Administrator		Counselor		Helping Career		Other Career		Retired or Homemaker		Student	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Basic Literacy		1	1	1	1	1		3	8		2	2		
ESL							1		1	3		1	1	
ABE		2		1		1		1		2	1	5		
GED/HS/FL		3	1	7		4	1	4	2	4		1	1	1
TOTAL		6	2	9	1	6	2	8	11	9	3	9	2	1

*Family Literacy (FL) is listed with GED as participants attained GED degrees.

Consistent with the age of the sample, 12 participants identified themselves as homemakers or retired. From positions as aides to administrators and counselors, women were twice as likely as men to select “helping” careers. In terms of ethnicity as shown in Table XXVI, 30 percent of Asians and Hispanic participants chose “helping” careers as compared with 47 percent of Black and 56 percent of White participants.

Table XXIV
Current Employment Status by Ethnic Group

Entry Level	Tutor or Aide		Teacher or Administrator		Counselor		Helping Career		Other Career		Retired or Homemaker		Student	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Asian								1		3		1		
Black		3		3				3	4	2		4		
Hispanic				1		1			1	1			1	
White		3	2	5	1	5	2	5	6	3	3	4	1	1
TOTAL		6	2	9	1	6	2	9	11	9	3	9	2	1

*Counselor status includes both aides who are used for program outreach and professionals employed in social service positions.

Career Challenges and Satisfaction

Participants who selected helping careers were far more likely to express the enjoyment they experienced in their work than other participants. Most of them realize that they are not going to “get rich” in education or social work but believe the trade off in job satisfaction is worth it. Anna explains:

Gerontology, that was my first love in working with the seniors. I loved working with seniors. I worked with the hospital with adult daycare. I worked for Respite Care Services with Alzheimer’s patients. I really liked that. My last intern was with [a] Nursing Home with a diverse AIDS population and younger AIDS and paraplegic population. I liked working with that. ... I’m not in social work to get rich and I know that. I picked the wrong profession if I was going to get rich. I like my work and I like working with students. I love the joy on their face when they achieve some personal goal that they have set for themselves.

Pamela started working toward an education certificate but decided to switch to social work because:

I am the sort of person that just likes helping everybody so I figured I might as well just go ahead with Social Work... There is no money in Social Work. A lot of people have said that to me. I think there is enough money for me to live a good life. I am not looking to be rich.

At 63, Nina looks forward to retiring in a few years but still is deeply involved in the domestic violence counseling she has been doing for the past 17 years.

I enjoy what I’m doing. I work with the women. I work within the Hispanic community dealing with domestic violence. ... seeing the changes in the women that I work with in the battered women house. Some of them with barely any self-esteem whatever, the attitude changes completely, there are things that they can do. The satisfaction from even a few cases is sufficient for me to say that what I’m doing is worthwhile.

Sophie found her work as a high school teacher helping troubled teens a solace at a time of personal tragedy.

I lost a son 10 years ago due to drugs and he committed suicide. That kind of set me back, but then at the same time, I was working with what we called SACK team at school. Students in this program had problems in growing up. At that time, I was doing that. It just makes me want to deal with more people more and more.

Teaching others the basic skills she learned gives Marcia a sense of importance.

I’m able to feel good to see that what I’m teaching them, I already know. I feel like: ‘Wow, I’m so important.’ I don’t want to forget that I was there too. I don’t want to make myself look as though I am that important. I want other people to get the reward of learning how to read.

Agnes works with women in the correctional system as a way of giving back to others the gift of learning she received.

... I volunteer with the women at the Correctional institute. We encourage them to achieve their goals even though they are incarcerated and prepare them for when

they get out. I tell them my story. There have been a lot of changes in my life. I do a lot of giving because some one gave to me.”

Forward to the Future

One of the skills learned in ABLE programs and reiterated over and over by participants is the ability to set goals, to plan, to overcome obstacles, to see the future and to make it your own. At the age of 40, 25 years after she found herself motherless, homeless, pregnant and a non-reader, Agnes is looking forward to the future. She still believes “*her greatest accomplishment was when I picked up the phone and called the ... Literacy Council and made the step to ask for help.*” Agnes is now self-sufficient. She is reading beyond 7th grade level, is training for the Ministry and building a career for herself helping unwanted children

Other participants are following similar pathways. Bruce was a teenage trouble maker and a 9th grade dropout. At 32, when his company closed down, he found himself a displaced food manager with a wife, two children, and property. At the age of 40, after completing a GED, a university degree, and working part time as an adult education instructor, he

heard about a new charter school opening ... I thought they would need teachers, I sent a résumé in, and they gave me one interview and hired me on the spot. All of our students are at risk. They're students who aren't working in the public schools and they're bussed into us. I was an adult student myself, so they thought I would have some success with students and I have been able to establish a good rapport with most of the students.

As a social studies teacher, I wrote a new curriculum this year for job training classes in the high school and we tied it in with social studies so the students could get social studies credit as well as be able to develop a résumé, job skills, basically make them employable. I have speakers from the community and employers come in and talk to the students, give them applications. We're going to carpenters' union training school; apprenticeship schools and they are letting them know what's available as far as a future for the kids. Schools, colleges, are coming in to talk to them.

Asked about his goals for the future, Bruce said:

Maybe becoming a principal. I believe you should set a goal even if it's unrealistic. If a person sets a goal to be president of the United States and he gets to be a senator, that's not so bad. I set a goal to become a schoolteacher and I didn't even have a GED. Unrealistic, probably. I was told that. I was lucky enough to get there.

Vu-lin understands hard work. She was only five when her parents were killed by the Khmer Rouge and she was placed in a children's camp where she was required to work 12 to 18 hours a day. At 13, she walked across the mine fields to Thailand and in 1979, at the age of 14, arrived in the United States and enrolled in school for the first time. Two months before her 16th birthday, she was forced to marry a man 13 years her senior. For the first four years of her 10-year marriage, she worked 60-hour weeks at a chicken packing plant, eventually receiving a promotion to inspector. She then moved on to a less arduous, better paying job at a sewing factory. Throughout this time, she bore three children and suffered the abuse of a husband who tried to prevent her from attending church or school.

In 1989, Vu-Lin enrolled in an adult center and fled to a woman's shelter with her three children. When she entered classes, she was illiterate in both Cambodian and English. Since then, she has supported herself and her children, often working seven days a week at a container plant, while keeping up her studies. Remarried in 1996, she told her future husband: *"I'm studying and I don't have much time to spend with him. He said he would stand by me 100 percent and supported me through all of these times. So he did."*

Summary of Employment

The findings regarding participants' employment are divided into three sections. The first addresses participants who were receiving some form of assistance prior to ABLE enrollment. The second contrasts job status prior to ABLE enrollment with current employment levels. The final section summarizes findings related to employment selection and future career plans.

PARTICIPANTS RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

Prior to ABLE enrollment:

- Forty-eight percent of the study sample were receiving some form of assistance.
- Fifty-three percent of participants on assistance were single mothers.
- Twenty-two percent of participants on assistance had a past record of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Five of the seven men on assistance had prior physical disabilities.

Current assistance status:

- Fifty-three percent of all participants formerly on assistance are now self-sufficient.
- Eighty-one percent of self-sufficient participants attended college or advanced training courses and four completed degrees.
- Sixty-one percent of female participants selected helping careers as contrasted with 24 percent of male participants.
- Fifty percent of male participants remained in their jobs or changed to similar positions; 60 percent of these received promotions or pay increases.

PARTICIPANTS' GENERAL EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment conditions prior to ABLE enrollment:

- Twenty-nine percent of the study sample were homemakers or unemployed.
- Ninety-six percent of employed participants were working at manual labor or entry level service jobs.
- Unexpected adversity was a key factor in 23 participants' decisions to change their employment status.
- The remaining 47 participants opted for intentional change.

Current employment statistics by categories:

- Seven percent of participants own or manage businesses.
- Twenty-nine percent are career professionals.
- Nineteen percent hold blue collar or entry level service jobs.
- Twenty-one percent of participants are students, homemakers, or retired.

Retired and Disabled Workers

- Participants are workers. They engage in volunteer jobs after they retire. In a population where the average age is 49.6.
- Ten of the 15 participants between 60 and 80 years of age declared themselves retired; of these, four are active community volunteers and one is looking for financial assistance to bring a toy he developed to the marketplace.
- Of the 13 participants still on unemployment disability or SSI/SSD; three are college students, three are retired, and six of the remaining seven are working at part time jobs in “helping” professions.

CAREER SELECTION AND FUTURE PLANS

- The “helping” professions and service areas were practitioners’ overwhelming choice for new careers.
- Jobs were valued for the self-image they imparted and the satisfaction of helping others as much as for the financial resources they provided.
- Continuing education and training were key elements in securing employment.
- Nearly all participants regardless of level (ABE, ESL, GED, Higher Education) were able to find better-quality employment after exiting educational/training programs.
- Participants show an “information age” spiral of alternating schooling with employment and returning to education for career changes and further advancement.
- Positive attitudes and the ability to face and overcome setbacks were mentioned by participants far more often than specific academic or employability skills. Credit was accorded ABLE practitioners and programs for helping to instill these attitudes.
- Regardless of current position or level of job satisfaction, participants under 50 years of age continue setting goals for future advancement; older participants set goals for future learning.

Home and Family

Did changes in participants’ education, employment and attitudes that stemmed from ABLE participation affect their future way of life? Has steady employment in better than minimum wage jobs led to financial security? Does that security (in tag terms of the sixties) break “the cycle of poverty” and “illiteracy?” Is the American dream of two cars and a home in the suburbs still possible for people who start with nothing but determination? And, if so, is that all there is?

Have participants’ educational striving, regardless of level attained, affected their children’s educational motivation and attainment? Have participants followed Maslow’s continuum (1971) from satisfying their individual basic needs to attaining transcendence, the desire to help others realize their potential? This chapter will examine participants’ present “existence” in terms of basic security acquisitions, “relatedness” in terms of family interactions and the consequences thereof, and “growth” in terms of productive efforts on behalf of their communities.

Chart 12
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

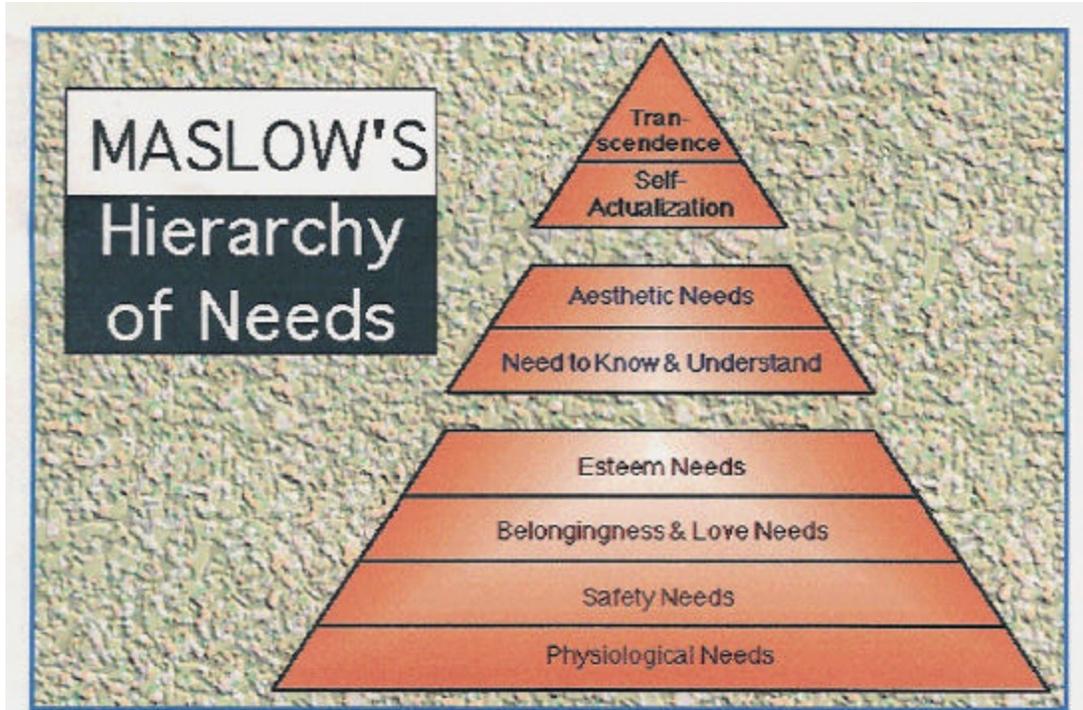


Illustration by William G. Huitt (<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/regsys/maslow.html>)

Home and Financial Security

What are the material rewards that accrue to successful ABLE participants and how are they valued? The impact survey recorded participants’ ownership of homes, cars and computers as seen in Table XXV.

Table XXV
Participants Current Ownership of Property

Property	Participants				
	Own	Two or More	Rent/Lease	None	No Information
Home	67%	6%	17%	0%	10%
Car	30%	3.9%	2%	29%	0%
Computer	59%	0%	1%	41%	0%

Thirty participants (43 percent) owned one or more homes, cars and a computer. Of the 20 participants without cars, 70 percent live in the cities of Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. Of the 50 participants (71percent) that use computers (See Table X, Chapter III, page 21), 42 own or lease their own machines and 19 percent of whom do not own a car or a home. Furthermore, 56 percent of the 34 participants who received assistance prior to program entrance now own their own homes; 56 percent own their own cars and 50 percent own or lease computers.

For many participants, buying a “house” is an important goal. As Benny states: *“My big goal now is to buy a house. I want to buy a house. That is why I am working very hard to get that. I want to give my family their own house to show my family that when we want to go on with our life, we can.”* Della, Joy, Enid and Georgia who were on public assistance prior to program entrance regard the homes they purchased as symbols of accomplishment. Della says: *“I have changed in a positive way. Instead of living in an apartment, I live in a house now.”* Joy adds: *“I purchased a home which I’m really proud of myself doing. I want to fix it up, but right now I can’t because of my financial status.* Enid agrees: *I own my own home. It’s hard making the payments, but I feel I’m doing pretty good. I’ve been here four years. It just makes me keep working all that harder.*

Several participants have bought into the myth of a house with a white picket fence as an indicator of success. Olive’s satisfaction rating on the QOLI in regard to her home was a 6+, the highest level possible. She compares her former dream to her present reality:

I always wanted a house with a white picket fence. Well, I have a house, no white picket fence. When I first went to work, I was scrubbing floors. Now, I have a full time job and I tell other people what to do. My next achievement is to own my own car, red with black upholstery.

John, who is attending college despite a spinal injury, is also looking forward to owning his own vehicle. He explains: *“One of my goals is to one day have my own van and be driving all over the place.* William who has achieved a great deal in his life provides us with an unsolicited before-and-after picture:

You can’t compare the apples and the oranges where I was with no future to where I am controlling my destiny and making life better for myself and others. I am married, two kids, nice house, a good wife and a good life. You just can’t compare the two.

Family Interactions

For most participants, a home of their own means much more than an emblem of achievement or a status symbol which others recognize. It is a critical element in preserving and enhancing family life for individuals whose former family backgrounds so often included abandonment, homelessness, scorn, abuse, rape, multiple marriages and divorces, and the untimely deaths of parents and spouses. As Anna says: *“Our home is our refuge.”* She goes on to explain that *“closest to my heart and my family are my children.”*

While a few children dropped by the wayside during the early troubled years experienced by many participants, the children and grandchildren that surround them today are for the most part sources of pride and symbols of success. Participants who worked exceedingly hard in later years to correct mistakes or overcome disadvantages encountered in their youth are determined that their children or grandchildren are not going to follow the same tortuous path. Arlene states it clearly:

I wish for my children not to have the struggles I went through; I wish for my children not to repeat my mistakes. I wish for them to go through school, to enjoy school, to love learning and to care about themselves and their education. I wish for them to go to college and to be happy in whatever endeavor they accomplish.

For most participants, wishing is not enough; they have set examples and established rules that family members are expected to follow. Anna states firmly: “*Not graduating high school is not an option in our house. It’s just not an option for them not to graduate high school.*” Mothers like Enid, Mabel and Veronica who were formerly on assistance take an active role in their children’s and grandchildren’s education. Divorced after 10 years of marriage and raising three daughters on her own, Enid says: “*I had to fight for my youngest daughter for stuff she needed because she is a special needs child. It took five years because she finally got approved for Social Security.*”

Mabel, a single mother of seven, borrowed children’s books from her GED classroom for her younger boys and took classroom readings and activities home to her older one. She was also active in a community organization that works with parents and their children to promote computer learning. Veronica who lost her children because of her drug and alcohol abuse has been clean since 1998. Now a GED graduate and GED tutor, she is trying to make a difference in her grandchildren’s lives:

I help my grandchildren with their homework. They get so excited when I explain things to them because it’s like ‘WOW, I got it, I can’t believe it!’ Their teachers don’t explain it. I guess they don’t have the time to explain it like I do. When I see that light go on in their head; it makes me happy.

Sarah, Richard, Charlene and Peter who enrolled in ABLE programs to set an example for their families are pleased with the results. Sarah explains that 16 years after getting her GED at an ABLE center, she “*was able to go through the center again and prepare for college. At that time, I was also able to get my mom to come through with me, and she was able to get a GED at the age of 58. She was the only one in her family to obtain any type of higher education.*” Richard has been married for 32 years and has three children. Two received a high school diploma and one graduated from a High School Diploma program. Richard reflects:

When I was working ... as a custodian, I decided I was going to sign up for the literacy program and get a high school diploma and set an example for my son and my younger daughter. My son went back to school, got his diploma after I had gotten mine, and my daughter had quit school. She went back to school and got her diploma after I got mine. So I feel that my getting my diploma helped me tremendously in life; plus it helped both of my kids because it set a big example for them to follow.

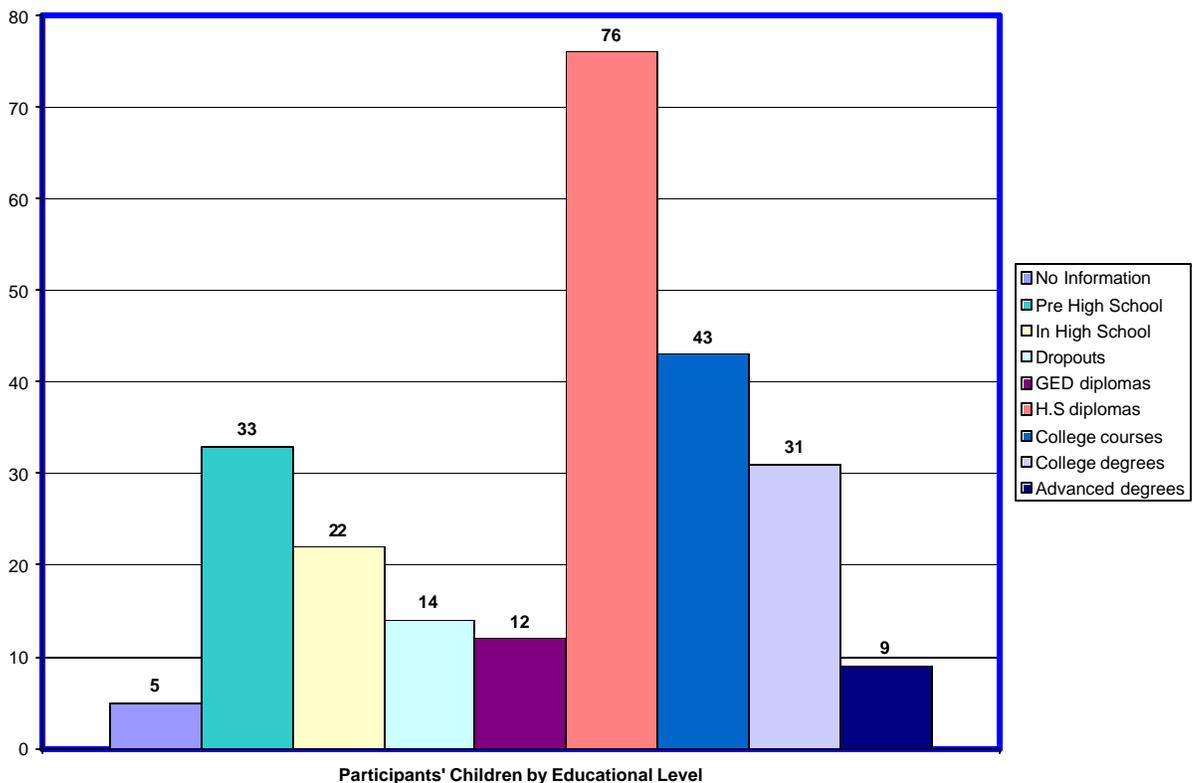
Charlene adds: “*My son was the reason I went back to school, since he was having trouble, I didn’t want him dropping out like I did. I overheard my son talking to a friend, convincing him to stay in school and graduate, and that made everything worthwhile.*” Peter, who had a high school diploma and a 2nd grade reading level when he enrolled in a literacy program in 1988, explains his motivation and its results:

The reason that I entered the literacy program was to help my children in their reading ... They’re quite a bit older now from when I received the award and I have one out of college that is 23 and is working for a funeral home; my second son is 20 and he has just finished his second year of college; I have a son that will be a senior next year; and my daughter is just completing the eighth grade in school. The second son that has gone off to college, I think they have seen my role in continuing with literacy as a role model, and going off to

college has given them the incentive to work hard and to study. What you reap is what you sow.

The crop of participants' children who hold high school, college, and advanced degrees is impressive. The 70 participants had a total of 245 children with 14 of 21 men were parents to 41 children and 47 of 49 females were parents to 204 children. Chart 13 illustrates the highest level of education currently attained by participant's children

Chart 13
Participant's Children by Educational Level



no information about five children

33 pre-high school children

22 in high school

14 high school dropouts

12 GED recipients

76 high school graduates

43 children in college or having taken college courses

31 children with college degrees

Nine with advanced higher education credits or degrees

On one end of the scale, six of Barbara's nine children were high school dropouts. Barbara, a former special education student and welfare recipient, attended basic literacy classes for seven years. Large families on assistance do not necessarily translate to lower academic achievement. Kelly and Carolyn both started ABLÉ classes while on assistance. Carolyn, who later opened a

daycare center, camp, and community center for inner city children, had eight children. Two of them attended college and the remaining six graduated becoming respectively a lawyer, dentist, state policeman corporate executive, realtor and social worker. Eleven of Kelly's 12 children completed high school and nine completed college including one child who has a masters' degree. Three children received military training, another took college courses, and five also received vocational training.

On the other hand, two of the nine children with advanced degrees belong to Stacy, an immigrant from Greece, who is currently a special education teacher and has a master's degree plus six credits towards a doctorate. She states proudly that her

son graduated from [the] university in sales/business. I have twin daughters: one of the girls, she is a director, a therapist, an economist, and also a professor. The other girl is in charge of the program in [a major city] for Hospice. Both of my girls have married doctors. They work together.

Higher education and professional degrees are not the only standards for success. Participants look to military service and vocational training as alternative avenues to productive lives for their children. Gina, a single mother, reports that her 22-year old son completed high school and graduated second in his class with honors in the Marines and her second son is in high school and wants to join the Army.

There are other family benefits that participants believe have ensued from ABLE program participation. After 21 years of marriage, Quincy is separated from his wife and is having a hard time paying child support for their three children. Nevertheless, he claims that since his enrollment in adult education classes "*the relationship between me and my children is a lot better. I'm definitely pleased about that.*" Quincy is not the only participant pleased with his children. When asked during the informal talk, "*What do you feel makes a person successful?*" children were a main topic of conversation. Here are some of the answers:

I think what makes a person successful is being able to support their family, to raise their kids in a proper way that they would become productive members of society. FRANK

Actually, being successful is about completing things, doing things, and just doing the best you can, and being the person that you are supposed to be. Myself, raising my children and teaching them the right things to do, I consider that being successful. . Bringing up my children and to continue to work with other children who are less fortunate, that's being successful. ED

For myself, I feel successful in how I was given the tools to learn to read and build on my self-esteem that I can grow and be helpful to my family first and through that then be able to go out and help others. PETER

Having goals that you try to strive for — the attempt is important, even if you don't get there. Being a contributing member of society — doing my part in the community — raising decent young people to do their part in the world. Setting a good example. My daughter went back to school as an adult with a child to become an RN. I think my example helped her. WILMA

Agnes Story

Perhaps Agnes best exemplifies the viable difference ABLE programs can make in the lives of participants, their children and their community. Agnes' mother died when she was quite young

and after completing 8th grade, Agnes found herself pregnant and homeless. Unable to read beyond third-grade level, she quit school, lied about her age to get on welfare and began to “play house” in an apartment she found. In the fall of 1986, at the age of 26, this addicted single mother realized that she “*was tired of getting high and [being] caught up in hells I didn’t want. My kids were getting bigger. I was running out of games. I had some choosing to do. Did I want to be an alkie, a junkie, an unfit mother? Was there any way out of the traps?*” When Agnes made the decision to change, she had help. As she recalls:

I went to [the] Literacy Council to learn how to read. The caseworker at the Welfare had told me about it. I wasn’t planning on being a minister, a day care provider or a foster parent. I didn’t plan on doing a lot of the things that I am active in now. But it opened so many doors for me that it’s unreal...

I had low self-esteem because I wasn’t sure of myself at that time. The more I got to know myself, the more secure I got with myself. I did a lot of transforming. I am more sure of myself now. I’ve learned that when you set goals and you press towards achieving them you may win some and you may lose some. I have won a lot and I’ve lost a lot. I’ve still gained because I’ve tried. I never use the word, I can’t. I always say I can and I will. Sometimes, I may have to go through the back door to get to the front door. It’s not which door you go in but how you end up. As long as you get in and get what you want. As long as you give it your best effort; put your best foot forward.

I feel blessed and I read everything. I have three children; they all graduated. They saw that I wanted to get my GED. I didn’t get it. I put it on the back burner. So many things were happening that that wasn’t important to me any more. I’m not saying I don’t want it. It’s just not the most important thing in my life right now...

Right now, I’m working on my ministry license to teach the Gospel and I believe in God that I will adopt six kids. It doesn’t matter whether they’re boys or girls. I also believe I will be able to open a home for unwanted children. There are so many children in the system and after a certain age, no one wants to adopt them. I believe that in the near future, I will be able to purchase a building and open it for kids...

A lot of times people say money is success, having a home is success. This is not success. Success is not being there for yourself but being there for others. The real things in life like loving people, being happy, kissing your grandkids and watching them grow up. That is real success.

As Agnes’ story illustrates the long term impact of ABLE programs does not lie solely in getting a GED or going on to college or obtaining secure employment or encouraging children or grandchildren to attain professional status. ABLE successes are best measured in terms of changing attitudes, opening vistas, empowering learners and transforming lives.

Community Involvement

If we look at community involvement as “transcendence,” a reaching out to help others realize their potential, where does it begin? Each ABLE participant is different. We know and can assess the fact that participants enter ABLE programs at different reading and math levels and with diverse learning styles. We must also recognize that individuals enrolling in ABLE programs are at different motivational levels. According to Maslow (1954), before the individual is ready to fulfill growth strengths the following deficiency needs must be met:

- 1) Physiological: freedom from hunger and thirst
- 2) Safety and security: freedom from danger
- 3) Belongingness: acceptance and love of others
- 4) Esteem needs: Recognition and approval of one’s competence and ability to achieve.

In each ABLE program, we can and should recognize enrollees who are deficient in these basic needs. In this study, we have encountered proud women who were divorced or widowed and see ABLE programs as a way to get off welfare. We have met addicted men and abused women who look to ABLE programs to provide the academic and job skills that will enable them to leave homeless shelters. We recognize the new immigrant seeking to communicate and be accepted as an American and the new reader striving for acceptance after years of being labeled as “stupid” or “illiterate.”

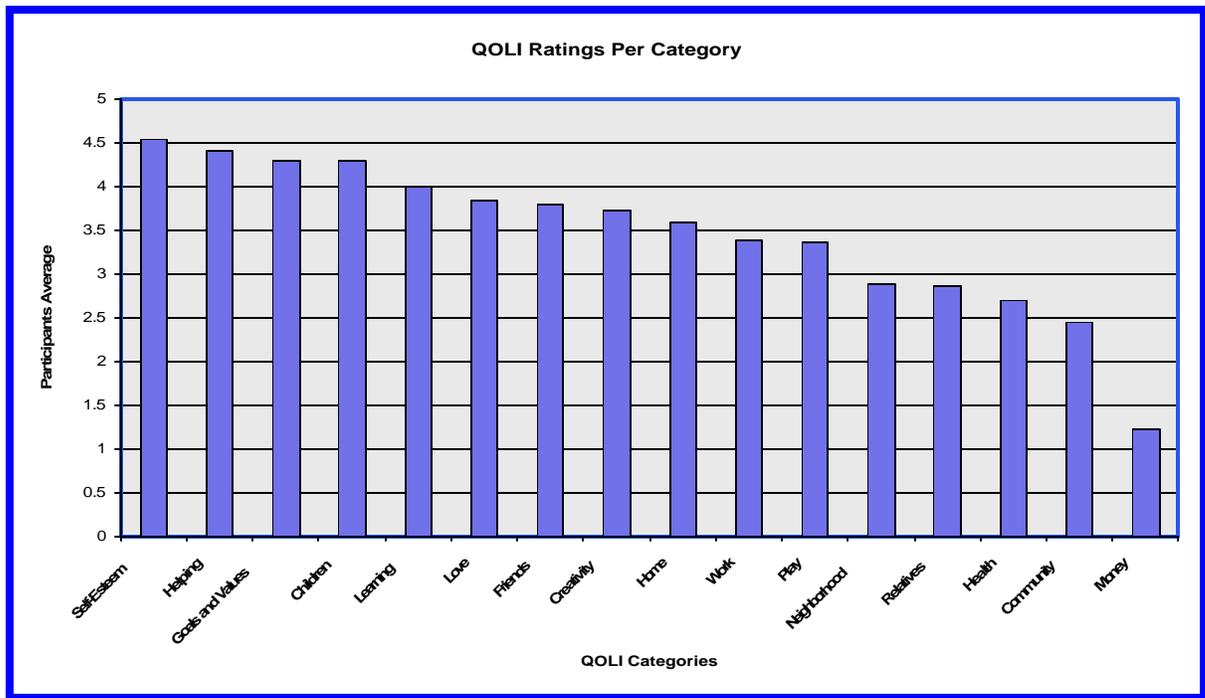
Adult education authorities (Beder, 1999; Bingham, 2000; Bossert, 1994; Daarkenwald, 1984; Merrifield 1994) have long agreed that one recognizable product of ABLE program participation is enhanced self-esteem. However, stakeholders in their search for quantifiable measures of participant success have been blind to its value. As Marcia notes: *“If you’re going to be successful in life, you first have to be successful in yourself.”*

ABLE students must first feel competent within themselves, know that they can achieve and have the approval and recognition of others if they are to attain the higher level growth strengths characterized by Maslow (1971) as

- 5) Cognitive: to know, understand and explore
- 6) Aesthetic: to appreciate the order and beauty of the world
- 7) Self-actualization: to recognize and realize one’s potential
- 8) Transcendence: to help others realize their potential and to contribute to the world.

The QOLI study defined Self Esteem as: “liking and respecting yourself in light of your strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and ability to handle problems.” When asked to rank how important self-esteem was to their happiness and how satisfied they were with their self-esteem, participants ranked it highest of the 16 life areas. Out of a maximum score of 6.0 points, participants’ average for self-esteem was 4.5. The only other areas of life that rated 4.0 or above, as seen in Chart XXIX, were Helping (4.4), Goals and Values (4.3), Children (4.3) and Learning (4.0).

Chart 14
Quality of Life Inventory Satisfaction Ratings



This chapter will describe a variety of contexts in which participants who began with providing services to their families expanded these efforts in order to improve their communities. While there is self-reported testimony that many study participants ascended the ladder from motivational deficiency needs to cognitive and transcendent strengths, it should never be assumed that all enrollees exhibited motivational deficiencies at program entrance nor demonstrated transcendence as a direct consequence of ABLÉ program participation.

This study includes participants such as Yvonne who attained her GED at the age of 67 as the crowning achievement of an exemplary life. Denied an education early in life because of her race, she worked long, hard hours as a domestic and then as a nurse’s aide to provide her five children with all the educational benefits she had wanted — music lessons, international travel and college educations. Her son now works in industry while her daughters hold professional jobs as a college teacher, a nurse, an attorney and a legislative assistant. Yvonne is also making sure her grandchildren have an education.

I have two grandchildren and I want to contribute some funds to their education, so I save all my change. And when I get my little garbage can in there full, I take it to the bank and have it converted to US Savings Bonds. I’ve been doing that for about five or ten years. Sometimes I have the two of them and sometimes they get a \$50 or \$100 bond, it depends on what I have in there at the time and I add something to that...I realize how important education is to everyone.

Yvonne understands the true value of education and is moved to contribute not only to her own family but to other children as well.

I think there's a thing that when you go to a school of higher learning your thinking changes ... You find a much more human person than you do if you find a person that's uneducated. I can see it in my grandchildren. When you're talking you can almost see the wheels in their little minds going around; young children, particularly. Then you see some children whose parents aren't interested and you even try, like I buy some tickets for the various circuses and things and give them to the children so they can go to the circus to see that. I've given some to children that their parents don't even bother to take them.

Service to the Family

Charity begins at home and service to the family is often the first step in service to the community. As with Yvonne, participants have been active in taking responsibility for the sick, the neglected and the helpless first in their families and then in the community. At 15 years of age, Laurie not only took in and raised her brother after her father had abused both of them but later cared for her abusive father when he became terminally ill with cancer. During the time when Rita started going to adult classes, she was raising her three granddaughters because

their mother wasn't like a mother should have been. A couple of my daughters brought them to me to keep them until she thought that she could be a mother for them. They were very young and all of this was supposed to be temporary, but I wound up keeping the girls until they became teenagers. I really had it kind of tough with those three kids. They weren't getting enough welfare money. They gave me a few food stamps for them. But, gosh, three girls, and they were going to be taken care of. I got a part-time job. It would help.

Florine is currently caring for two of her grandchildren while Joy is raising her grandson in addition to her own seven children. Odessa is an assistant pastor, a youth advisor, and visits the sick and shut-ins of her church. She has the custodial care of a mentally challenged niece who was widowed and became homeless when her husband passed away. She also cares for an adult son who experienced a mentally damaging injury. She is not the only participant to take responsibility for siblings' children. Monica raised nine nieces and nephews while between them Ed and Lisa cared for 22 foster children. Della expresses the satisfaction she gets from the

fact that I'm able to take on four extra kids (I have my sister's kids now). And I went from two to six. Those are things I am proud of. I don't take credit for it. I give God all the glory because he gives me the strength to make it through another day. Those are the things that I am proud of. Just being a functional person in society.

Kathleen's Story

In 1991 when Kathleen enrolled in a GED program, she was a single mother with a daughter and a son who had Menkes Syndrome, a rare disease in which a common cold can easily develop into life-threatening pneumonia. Due to her son's handicap, Kathleen was a stay-at-home mom. When her son was strong enough to go to school, she volunteered in his classroom assisting the

teacher to conduct range of motion exercises with her son and other students. As a member of the Home and School Association, she then expanded her volunteer role to working in the community.

Her son passed away three years ago and she is currently taking courses in child development and mental health at the community college. She also serves as Vice President of the Community Cooperative Board which is part of a Foundation Rebuilding Communities project and is a member of an historical board that deals with different parks in her area. As to her work, Kathleen reports:

I am working with one of the largest community-based organizations since 96. I have traveled as their spokesperson. I am working with children seeing the accomplishment they have made because of what I have to offer, seeing growth in myself.

I do early childhood development with children, 0-5. I go into the home. I do supportive programs for the family as opposed to working with just the child. If you're going to build the child, you have to build the family around them also. That is really challenging. It's great to see the outcome. Parents can't always see the strengths within them so it is up to me to help them see their strengths.

Service to the Community

As participants emerge from the chrysalis of education, they test their wings on their own family and then spread them to encompass the larger community, the family of man. The process may take 10 to 20 years but, as participants acknowledge, the initial stimulus can be traced directly to the empowerment achieved by earning a high school diploma.

The larger community takes many different forms and offers many different rewards. According to the Impact Survey, 59 percent of participants are involved in church activities. Richard states that after getting his GED, he started

reading a lot better in church ... I felt better about myself and I starting volunteering for different things. I was a Sunday school teacher with 8th graders for a couple of years. I was an adult Sunday school teacher for about a year. I was a Sunday school superintendent. All this stuff came about after I got my diploma, after I learned to read and got my diploma. I really felt it never would have happened if I hadn't gotten my diploma. That really picked me up and I needed that.

Although Kevin received his GED in 1977 and went on to become a general foreman at his plant, it was not until he retired in 1988 that he became involved in community affairs. He explains: *"I was appointed to the municipal authority, and then I was Chairman of the board for 8 years, which was a wider authority. I was on the board of the retirement village for 3 years ... and I resigned from there, but I got a lot of recognition from the community. But the work I did, I wouldn't have been able to without my HS diploma and GED. That was a big burden off me."*

Wilma has an associate degree and is the co-owner of a prosperous business. A recognized cultural leader in her small community, she associates her present standing with increased self-confidence and enhanced aesthetic understanding:

I'm involved in so much stuff right now. I was on the Board of Directors for an interfaith charity group here. I'm involved with the ... County Cultural Center and we're reopening the ... Theater as a non-profit cultural center in addition to showing movies. I'm also on the Board for the ... Library and I'm starting to do some

grant work for that. I don't think I'd be doing these things without my education. I have much more confidence now. Also, I wouldn't be interested in cultural events if I didn't know what they were.

Henry's Story

Henry has come a long way. He grew up in a home where his father beat him and put wine in his baby bottle to pacify him. Taking to the streets at 12 was not much different from living in a house with one room, no phone, no TV and no heat. A rebellious teenager in the late 60s and early 70, he was attracted to drugs, the civil rights struggles and the anti-war movement. Work for the disenfranchised began with his activism in the 60s and the homeless cause became his "calling," a justification for his existence.

In September 1991, he enrolled in an adult education and technical center to pursue the field of Building Trades Maintenance. He hoped that this trade might be a viable vocation to help his cause. Then, as Henry says:

"Due to my schooling, everything has changed. I mean, totally everything!" ... I continued doing my work at the state and national level with the homeless but sort of got tired of that and moved into working here in my own neighborhood as the project coordinator which I'm really excited about. It was a lot of work, but it has a lot of rewards, not monetary rewards, but a lot of rewards.

So here I am as the project coordinator, working in our neighborhood, trying to make our neighborhood a better place to live for everybody and a better place to work. I enjoy it. One of our city baseball fields which is used by our little league which is part of the Athletic Association has a field called Young Field. Instead of letting it go, we decided to work diligently to make it a nicer place. I worked with [a] Councilwoman who is a personal friend of mine and a personal friend of the group, to get some funding to have the field completely redone. We put a concession stand up there, we had it completely fenced it, we brought 140 tons of play dirt in to redo the infield which was given to us through the Public Works Department. We're real excited...The completion date should be soon.

One of the other projects that we're really proud about is on May 20, 2000, [our] Civic Group with the help of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and [the] Councilwoman, we were able to put in our own neighborhood garden. There were several of them placed throughout the entire city... We have never had one. I took it under wing, and I now am the actual caretaker of the garden. May 20, we had some volunteers on a cold, misty, rainy morning. We had hot coffee, we had refreshments down there, and we had some very fine volunteers. It's in and it's beautiful.

Another project is we're working on complete clean up and the beautification of our business district and our main streets. I worked on Operation Clean Sweep with the city ... and they asked me to put together a packet of work that I thought was necessary for some of the things we needed around here. When I put this packet together, they said, "Boy, he really did his homework". I got them to do street cleanings and paving, and paint the fire hydrants. Then I got some volunteers of our own and we went out and we worked right along with the city. We set up mobile command here at the office. It was a very beautiful day and it worked out very nice. I had some fine volunteers. Again, they went up to Young Field which was my big project and they

did some of the hillside, and we had some people do some city steps, and they walked through the area and picked up debris and stuff like that. It was a one day project, but it was a very successful one.

One day can make a huge difference. One person can inspire dozens to contribute to the good of all. Henry states it simply: *“What makes you successful is you have to think successful. You have to feel successful. You have to not only feel it, but you have to show everybody around you that you are successful and that if they see that and they feel that, they may try it also.”*

Service to the Field of Adult Education

The quantitative report informs us that 46 percent of participants are currently active in education as mentors, tutors and teachers, of which 33 percent are directly involved in ABLE programs. Several reasons can be cited for this phenomena. In 1986, Act 143 literacy programs launched with Pennsylvania legislative funding encouraged program graduates to take Laubach training and sign on as volunteer tutors. Furthermore, because of a shortage of money to pay aides, capable students in multilevel classes were encouraged to mentor struggling learners as part of a cooperative learning and leadership training process. This leadership ladder from student to mentor is not confined to literacy programs but has become a valued component of a collaborative approach to ABE, GED, ESL, Family and Workplace Literacy instruction. However, none of the reasons given above is sufficient in and of itself to explain why participants continue to volunteer their services year after year. Their motivation includes: empathy for others who face the same difficulties that they have conquered; a need to return the rare gift of learning that they received; and a sincere delight in helping others.

Assistance to Students and Programs

Benny not only helped classmates in school but became an advocate for non-English speakers, helping them to navigate the complex worlds of American employment, housing, medicine, law and welfare. For some participants like Marcia, there is the realization that whatever their beginnings they were meant to be teachers. As a literacy student, Marcia served as part of her programs' tutor training effort and founded a support group for new readers. As a graduate, she became a teacher's aide at Goodwill. She believes: *“if years ago, I had the opportunity to learn how to read as others, I believe I would have a degree in teaching. I never realized until I started becoming an aide that that was my goal in life.”*

Stacy is a High School teacher who counsels potential dropouts to remain in school and provides tutoring in the GED for those who do not follow her advice:

My number one wish would be that my students continue to graduate from high school instead of dropping out. I am speaking to them about that every day. I tell them how difficult life is without a high school diploma. I even tutor them to get their GED now. I have books in school and I do say “if you do have to drop out for whatever the reason, and I can't persuade you to stay, then let me help you get your GED” They come to the house.

After Adele graduated from college, she served as a Private Industry Council (PIC) counselor for 15 years helping people to enroll in school or find employment. Concerned with safeguarding federal funding for adult education, she says: *“I know that for my own situation, without it, I would have never been able to go and finish, get my GED, and then go onto college.”* Vu-Lin knows many new immigrants. She says: *I work with a lot of them right now at work and I will en-*

courage them to go to school. I even take a couple of them into the school in the evening. I encourage them to learn ESL. Vu-Lin has moved from ESL to ABE to GED. She is now a United States citizen with a home, a job, a car, a new husband and three children who are excelling in their school work. This would be enough for many people but Vu-Lin has other dreams and goals. Her hope "for the future (is) to get my GED, go to college, and become a journalist so I can help others as they helped me when I needed it."

While getting her GED, Monica noticed other students having difficulties reading. This sparked her interest in literacy. After completing Laubach training, she opened a Literacy/ABE/GED study program at a community center in a rural area. She and her husband put in \$6,000 to \$7,000 to get the program started and she was able to augment that base with \$950 from the community. Her constant concern is raising enough money to keep this small program open. As she explains: *"Not everybody can go to a regular GED program and make it. Right now I'm getting 17 and 18-year olds within the LD classes. I like to take the ones that are harder, that need the help more."*

It was Conrad's wife who suggested he enroll in a literacy council that was formed in 1987. As his skills improved, he became more and more involved in advocacy efforts. By 1991, he was totally involved:

I not only work on a local level, I work on a state and national level also. I have four or five different conferences throughout the year I go to. The more positive things I was doing, the more I wanted to do because it really felt good to be able to help other people. I started getting involved and started getting dressed up more and going to the conferences and I'd come home and tell my wife about it for a whole month.

This situation caused friction in the family. Out of this difficulty came a workshop entitled "New Readers and Family Relationship" that Conrad and his wife present at tutor training sessions and conferences. The purpose of the session is to tell the tutors that *"spouses need to know what's going on in a reading program. If they can go along and see that their husband or wife is sitting down with a tutor and this is the lesson program we're doing, then that explains a lot of things; but if you don't get the family involved, things can be thought of that's not happening."*

Advocacy for Literacy

Other participants are engaged in advocacy roles promoting adult education programs to drop-outs and encouraging children and teens to remain in school. One year after Quincy first met his tutor in a VA shelter for homeless veterans, he became employed, recruited ten other veterans to enter the literacy program, appeared on a radio talk show, was interviewed on television, and spoke to young parish members about the value of an education. A recent GED graduate at the age of 73, Kelly is *"speaking in churches to the young people. I can encourage them more about education and how to stay in school and to get an education while very young. When you get older, it seems to be harder."*

After four years and 300 hours of being tutored, Peter upgraded his reading skills from a second to a 12th grade level and was given leadership opportunities at work and as chairman of a volunteer fire company. These leadership skills led him to an advocacy role on behalf of literacy on both local and national stages.

I have had that chance to go back into the schools and talk to kids about the importance of reading. It took a while, but I have had that chance to go back and help the school system, as well, and to fill in the gaps so the kids don't fall through the cracks. There is a lot more testing that is now taking place that wasn't there when I was. I've kept active in the literacy movement.

On the local level, I sit on the board of directors for a well known literacy program and have for almost 10 years now. For the last six years now, I have sat on a national board of the literacy program. I am a student rep for the state of Pennsylvania and we help other adult learners to achieve their success in life.

I want to find easier ways to bring more people into our programs, be it on the local, state, or national level, to get the word out more to people that if we work as a group, we can control the problem. I think what we need in accomplishing this is more of an awareness program or visibility to put it back on the front burner. For a while it has been lurking in the back burners. I think it's, again, time for us to move and move it back up on the front burners to help these people.

Irene, who is not at all shy about her adult education experiences, describes the opportunity she had to put in a good word for adult education at the national level.

Since I have completed the adult education program, I have obtained an associate's degree in Liberal Arts and I was asked to help establish the new national organization for adult learners I was also asked to sit on its eleven-member board....

In June 1999, I had surgery on my knee. July 3, I was in Washington DC for National Literacy Day. Patricia McNeal, the assistant Secretary of Education and I were both on crutches. It was a bonding moment, when we got to exchange war stories. That was an absolutely wonderful opportunity for me to talk about literacy centers, about me becoming a success story, about [Voice for Adult Literacy: United for Education] VALUE.

Conrad, Peter and Irene were not the only participants to take advocacy for adult education to the national level. William is a natural leader. While attending a school for the learning disabled, he was elected senior class president and student body president. He ran a snack bar at lunch time and then joined with other students to start a cafeteria that still exists at the school. Upon graduation, he enrolled in a tutoring program and raised his reading level six grades in eight months. He then enrolled in a community college while still working in food service.

It took William ten years to earn an associate degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management. At the same time he progressed on the job from a cook's helper to food service manager where he was responsible for seven employees and a budget of about three million dollars. But his real interest lay in adult learner advocacy. After 17 years, he quit his job to move to a full time position in the field of adult literacy:

Now I have a grant to do research ... I've learned how to impact state, impact local programming, and also adult learners. I am ready to get my stuff published... As an administrator, I'll be trying to find money, hiring staff and running an office. ... Ten years ago, if you look at Adult Education student involvement, it didn't exist. The student came into the program, their reading level went up and there was just no

place for you. I have watched this field incorporate student involvement all the way through.

As to the volunteer literacy factor, students are in every phase of the volunteer literacy program now. When I started, this was not true. Students have even become directors in programs. There are student groups all over the country now. And we are poised to become our own voice, our own national organization. My greatest achievement is I've always been a part of the spearhead. I make things happen.

Summary of Home, Family and Community Involvement

Participants' home, family and community involvement are interwoven threads that make up the fabric of their daily lives. While each component can and will be reported upon separately, it is the interactions that provide us with an understanding of how participants' learning has affected their lives.

HOME AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

- Nearly 75 percent of participants own one or more homes and regard the ownership thereof as a significant achievement.
- Participant's ownership of property (homes, cars and computers) bears out the "middle class" status they reported in the Impact Survey.
- A home represents a critical element in preserving family "safety" and "togetherness" for participants whose former family backgrounds were dysfunctional.

FAMILY INTERACTIONS

- According to the QOLI, participants are highly satisfied with their children; the group average for Children is 4.3 out of a possible 6.0 points. This equals their satisfaction with Goals and Values and is only exceeded by the areas of Helping and Self-Esteem (4.5).
- Their high scores reported for Helping (4.4) are in part indicative of the satisfaction they receive from raising siblings, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and foster children.
- To guarantee that their children will not suffer from a lack of education, participants have set examples for their families and established rules about studies and schooling.
- The statistics for the educational attainment of participants' children (See page 86) suggest that their examples are viable, their rules work, and that parents who acquire self-esteem as successful ABLE participants can reverse the cycle of illiteracy to one of educational growth from generation to generation.

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

- Service to the family usually paves the way for service to the broader community.
- For most participants, involvement in school and church activities serve as the pathway to community service.

- Retirement, financial security, and the “empty nest” syndrome are often factors in participants turning to community service.
- Participants report a direct correlation between the knowledge and confidence gained through ABLE participation and their desire and ability to contribute to the welfare of others.
- Participants measure success not merely by educational attainment or financial advantages but by “having goals that you try to strive for — the attempt is important, even if you don’t get there. Being a contributing member of society — doing my part in the community – raising decent young people to do their part in the world. Setting a good example.”

SERVICE TO THE FIELD OF ADULT EDUCATION

- Having found a secure haven in ABLE programs, a place where they are not only encouraged to excel but valued as they are, participants seek to retain the connection after leaving the program.
- Options selected include seeking direct employment, volunteering their services to adult programs and leading advocacy efforts for the field and, particularly, for adult learners. This study reports that 33 percent of participants are currently involved in ABLE programs in one or more of these functions.
- In a time frame of five to 30 years, one-third of the participants who enrolled in ABLE programs with deficiencies in basic skills, personal security, belongingness or esteem have become contributors to ABLE programs and models for incoming adult learners to emulate.
- A few participants have become leaders in the field of adult education. They have found their voice. They believe in themselves and realize that they can help other people. They can and do make a difference.

CHAPTER VI: OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

Learning for Life focuses on the lives of 70 adult learners who participated in ABLE programs between 1968 and 2000 and were recognized as Pennsylvania's Outstanding Adult Students of the Year. By studying our most successful students, we ascertain benchmarks of attainable adult education outcomes experienced over time; outcomes such as adult learners' educational, attitudinal and life style changes that produced lasting impacts upon participants, their families and their communities. In so doing, we put forward answers to the questions posed by Beder (1999, p.81):

- What is the meaning of impact from the perspective of successful learners?
- Are there important impacts of adult literacy that learners recognize in themselves, but are not amenable to quantitative measurement?
- How and to what extent do increased self-confidence and self-efficacy enable other positive changes in successful learners' lives?

Learning for Life provides a forum for successful adult learners' voices as they discuss their backgrounds, risk factors, motives for enrollment, ABLE program experiences and ongoing changes in their life styles. They describe challenges they faced in striving for advanced education and training. They discuss jobs they hold and plans they envision. They relate their children's accomplishments and discuss the satisfaction they experience when reaching out to help others in their families, programs and communities. Each participant's story is unique, significant and valuable. Taken as a whole, their comments compared, categorized and compiled provide the reader with an understanding as to "how" and "why" their lives changed and what role, if any, ABLE practitioners and programs played as catalysts.

Adult Literacy Outcomes

Adult literacy outcomes addressed participants' backgrounds and risk factors, motives for ABLE enrollment, program experiences and critical issues. The following research questions yielded the following answers:

Are there characteristics shared by study participants that make them receptive to success in ABLE classes?

- Eighty-five percent of participants suffered and survived disorienting dilemmas prior to program enrollment. Successful adult learners are survivors and despite initial lack of self-confidence, participants exhibited resolve and resilience.
- Participants who enrolled with specific goals in mind were most likely to succeed. While economic factors were prime incentives, only 20 percent of participants were directly motivated by the need to get a job or enter a training program. Other motives included: encouragement by family members or social agencies (20 percent); single mothers seeking to improve their children's lives (20 percent) to set examples for others (10 percent); and for personal improvement or self-actualization (30 percent).
- Participants were supported by their religious faith and by strong family ties.

Are there common classroom and/or instructional attributes that contribute to participants' initial and ongoing success?

- A “trusting” relationship between adult learners and practitioners led to personal bonds that strengthened participants' determination to succeed.
- Individualized and collaborative learning in an interactive environment addressed each participant's specific needs while fostering peer mentoring and teamwork.
- A leadership ladder encouraged excellence and provided participants with job-training and employment opportunities within a supportive environment.
- The use of experienced, concerned adult learners as community outreach workers, tutors and mentors built participants' self-esteem and fostered their leadership skills.

Are there noteworthy changes in participants' skills and perspectives that they ascribe to their ABLE experiences?

- Over two-thirds of the participants completed their program goals within a two year time span. Basic literacy students (27 percent of the population) participated in programs from two to 10 years with an average of 4½ years.
- All ABE and GED participants and five of seven ESL students attained a GED or High School diploma. Of the two remaining ESL participants, one became a physician five years after passing the TESOL test; the other is still in GED classes 12 years after enrollment and has now passed three of the five required tests.
- The qualitative study contained numerous statements by participants citing pride in their accomplishments, recognition of new opportunities for achievement, the choice of learning as a way of life and the desire to share their knowledge with others.
- Participants cite tutors' and teachers' belief in their abilities, patience, persistence, flexibility and friendship as qualities that convinced them they could succeed in the classroom and in life.
- Participants' self-reported endorsements of the effect of ABLE participation are borne out by measurable changes in their lives and by the participant groups' high satisfaction scores on the standardized Quality of Life Inventory.

Life Style Outcomes

Adult life style outcomes addressed changes in participants' continuing education, welfare and employment status, children's education and family and community involvement.

Continuing Education

Do participants continue to seek informal and/or formal education or training?

- Seventy-nine percent of participants engaged in formal and/or informal education while an additional seven percent discussed specific plans for future education. Participants regarded informal education as an alternative or supplement to formal education.

- Forty percent of participants enrolled in higher education and 20 percent completed higher education degrees ranging from associate to doctorate. Half of all participants who enrolled in college but did not earn degrees are continuing to take credit after credit as time and money permit.
- Community colleges are the prevalent entry path for GED graduates on their way to college diplomas or advanced degrees.
- Ninety-three percent of higher education graduates entered college immediately after completing their ABLE programs and 86 percent of them finished in the normal (two or four year) time frame. Participants with learning differences and participants with funding difficulties may take ten years or more years to complete associate or college degrees.
- Conflicting pressures of health, employment, family concerns and financial resources determine if and when participants engage in higher education. Forty-three percent of college graduates had financial assistance in the form of pensions, scholarships or internships; the remaining graduates came from families with two sources of income.

Employment and Welfare

Do participants experience an increase in income and a decrease in welfare dependency?

At ABLE Enrollment:

- Forty-eight percent of the study sample received some form of assistance.
- Fifty-three percent of participants on assistance were single mothers.
- Twenty-two percent of participants on assistance had a past record of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Five of the seven men on assistance had prior physical disabilities.

Current Assistance Status:

- The Impact Survey reveals a 90 percent drop (from 30 percent to three percent) in welfare and food stamp usage after ABLE participation.
- A corresponding employment pattern suggests that working participants left part-time or minimum wage jobs to engage in ABLE programs with a subsequent 20 percent increase in salaried employment after program completion.
- Of 23 participants receiving public assistance prior to ABLE participation, 18 (78 percent) are now self-sufficient. Eighty-one percent of these self-sufficient participants attended college or advanced training courses and four attained degrees.

Career Selection and Future Plans

Do participants attain skilled employment and/or professional careers?

The qualitative study delineates changes in the quality of employment pre- and post-program participation. Prior to ABLE enrollment, 22 participants (31 percent) were unemployed homemakers or students. Currently, 15 participants (21 percent) are not in the workforce; these include three college students; four individuals on employment disability, two homemakers and six retirees with an average age of 69.

Employment data show the average length of employment being consistently over ten years on the present job with several individuals reported holding more than one job at a time. With seven percent of participants handicapped and 21 percent over 60, relatively few people considered themselves “retired.” Of the 55 participants (79 percent of sample members) currently employed, five (nine percent) own or manage businesses; 37 (67 percent) hold professional or service positions in “helping” areas and 13 (24 percent) are working in blue collar or entry level jobs.

The “helping” professions and service areas were practitioners’ overwhelming choice for new careers. These jobs were valued for the self-image they imparted and the satisfaction of helping others as much as for the financial resources they provided.

- Sixty-one percent of female participants selected helping careers as contrasted with twenty-four percent of male participants
- Fifty percent of male participants remained in their jobs or changed to similar positions; 60 percent of male participants received promotions or pay increases.
- Nearly all participants regardless of level (ABE, ESL, GED or higher education) were able to find jobs after exiting educational/training programs. Participants indicated that education and training were key elements in securing employment.
- Participants mentioned positive attitudes and the ability to face and overcome setbacks as essential job skills. ABLE practitioners and programs were given credit for helping to instill these attitudes.
- In general, participants showed an “information age” spiral of alternating schooling with employment and then returning to education for career changes and further advancement.

Regardless of position or level of job satisfaction, participants under 50 years of age continue setting goals for future advancement; older participants set goals for future learning. This emphasis on goal-setting is borne out by the participant groups’ high scores on the “goals and values” area in the standardized Quality of Life Inventory.

Generational Impact

Do participants’ children complete high school and enroll in higher education?

Although married participants were clearly in the majority when study data were taken, there is a clear history of multiple marriages, unmarried and single parents, and an average of four+ children for participants with offspring. The 70 participants had a total of 245 children with 14 of 21 men parents to 41 children and 47 of 49 females parents to 204 children.

To guarantee that their children would not suffer from a lack of education, participants set examples for their families and established rules about studies and school. The statistics for participants' children suggest that their examples were successful. The following data indicate the highest level of their children's educational attainment at the time of participants' Informal Interviews:

- There are thirty-three pre-high school children.
- Twenty-two children are currently attending high school.
- Fourteen children are high school dropouts.
- There are 12 GED recipients.
- Seventy-six children are high school graduates.
- Forty-three children are in college or have taken college courses.
- There are 31 children who earned college degrees.
- Nine children have advanced higher education credits or degrees.
- There is no information about five children.

Social Impact

Do participants value their newly acquired expertise and contribute to the welfare of others?

A review of critical life events pointed to the fact that prior to program entrance a number of participants had negative experiences with the law (17 percent) and received addiction (36 percent) and mental health (25 percent) counseling. Except for alcohol abuse, these problems and their consequences appear to have abated after ABLE program completion.

Having gained self-esteem and, for the most part, steady employment and financial security, there is evidence that participants reach out to help others. Service to others which often begins with taking in needy relatives expands to include leadership in their churches, schools and neighborhoods.

- Nearly sixty percent of participants are active in their church; 50 percent in social organizations and 39 percent in self-help groups.
- Forty-six percent of participants are active as mentors, tutors and teachers; of which thirty-three percent are directly involved in ABLE programs.
- Female participants were most apt to serve as ABLE volunteers or acquire staff status in adult education programs
- Male participants tended to gravitate toward advocacy roles at local, state and national levels.

When asked to rate how important self-esteem was to their happiness and how satisfied they were with this area of their lives, participants ranked it highest of the 16 life areas measured by the standardized Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI). After a history of self-doubt, the joy of achievement and the recognition of their competence served as a springboard that propelled participants to undertake volunteer and advocacy roles in their families, communities and in the field of adult education.

Critical Issues

Are there problems inherent in ABE programs and the ABE system that are obvious to participants?

Critical program issues identified by participants included:

- The stigma of illiteracy, still a sensitive issue for many participants.
- The pressure brought upon participants to complete ABE programs quickly so they can enter the workforce.
- The problems of professionalization impact participants as well as practitioners, namely: the lack of counselors; the replacement of experienced part time teachers with credentialed novices; and the emphasis upon diplomas and credentialing rather than the skills necessary to become functioning members of society.

Treating adult students with the respect, patience and the competence they deserve is the tie that binds all the critical issues raised. The concomitant question brought forth is how can this be done when: 1) adult education programs are being pressured to meet participant outcomes and timetables set by stakeholders with diverse vested interests; and 2) part-time adult education practitioners with proven on-the-job competence are being dumped in the name of professionalization for full time credentialed teachers whose demand for professional wages and secure career paths cannot be met.

What challenges face successful adult learners after completing ABE programs?

The major problem facing adult learners is an inability to upgrade the basic skills they acquired in ABE programs by enrolling in higher education. Health, employment, family and, most of all, money present an interlocking web of obstacles that explain why so few GED graduates become college graduates.

Ed, who holds a job as a maintenance worker was helped in his first year by a scholarship presented by his literacy council and the university he attended. Now, he has to find another way and his plea for himself and all ABE graduates speaks to all of us.

Now that you have gotten us adults to get back into education, is there some sort of funding that we can use to continue our education? Sometimes what can be frustrating is we get these awards and then you start going to school and then you find out the money is not there or that you can only go so far and then you have to stop. So, that's one thing.

And it's not just for myself but for all of those who have come before me or will come after me. From what I gather, they want us to further our education, but how far do they want us to go? Maybe someone can talk to the government to ask if there is some sort of funding that can be generated to help the adults that are really trying to make a difference, not only with their own lives, but even to help others out there as well.

Success, Self Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Recognition as a result of successful ABLE attendance was responsible for participants' scholarships (11 percent), financial rewards (17 percent) and job offers (21 percent). Far beyond educational, financial or employment benefits, participants (88 percent) cited improved self-confidence as the major outcome of their successful adult education experience. This self-confidence is reflected in the groups' overall high level of satisfaction and their expectations for the future. The evidence that success in adult education programs translates to self-esteem which leads to self-efficacy is borne out in both the qualitative study and the standardized QOLI. Nevertheless, in order to be successful, it is incumbent upon participants to bring something to the process. The resilience and determination these participants brought to adult education worked in their favor. Nina states it best:

My belief is that you have to have an inner core, you have to have the desire; if you don't have the desire, it's hard. You can succeed but it takes longer, and it's more work for the staff to get you there. If you have a goal already set in your mind, and this is something you want to do or need to do in order to get ahead or get out of whatever mess you're in, and the only way to get out is education, then you'll work towards it.

Not everyone enjoyed success after program completion. For three participants, the intention to continue learning for life evident at the time of their award ceremonies did not persist after program separation. While Frank's wife is in college studying to be a special education teacher, his life has gone on pretty much as usual since he received his recognition award a year ago.

Since I was a winner, it hasn't really changed much. I'm still working the same job as a janitor. I really didn't go to pursue the air conditioning and the heating. I guess the fact that I'm just trying to pay the bills and trying to keep food on the table. I would say I found it very difficult to go to school. ...I guess what happened, after I graduated from the program, I kind of just stopped studying. I really didn't pursue the education part of it anymore. That's where I'm at right now. There really hasn't been any promotions. I really haven't pursued the education part to get a promotion. I would say I'm just in limbo.

Lack of achievement is not always linked to lack of incentive; life can intervene. Fran was carrying a 3.89 grade point average and needed only two more classes to complete her associate degree when a motorcycle accident changed her plans. Her interview clearly indicates intense dissatisfaction stemming from physical problems which prevent her from realizing her dream of becoming a dental assistant.

Quincy is being pressed to the wall by child support payments. Like Fran and Frank, he is currently unable to move forward. However, he knows this is a temporary condition and he has learned that there are always options. Education has given him a new perspective that enables him to deal with whatever life sends his way.

I'm struggling here and there to pay my car bill, my insurance, and I'm on the verge of losing my car; but due to the value of education, there are things that I can do now that I know I can do. I mean, I'm not all burned up and bent out of shape about this. I just have to do what I have to do.

Now that I have myself a little education (I want a lot more than I have), I know there are a lot of things that I can do today and I don't have to sit back and cry and moan and groan and not do anything. I don't have to go out and rob no banks or stick anybody up. I've got several options. I'm working on all of them. It's crazy but, that's the way it works. Just get up and learn how to deal with life on life's terms."

Perhaps the most significant outcome of ABLE program participation lies in its ability to transform participants' attitudes about themselves and their place in the world. The re-examination and re-valuation of self that arises from the fulfillment of participants' needs for security, belonging and esteem creates a powerful energy field. Freed from constricting assumptions, participants establish fresh expectations, deal with persistent obstacles, expand their potential and reach out to take charge of their world.

DISCUSSION OF LEARNER OUTCOMES

What do successful adult learners have to tell us about the long-term impact of ABLE participation?

External Analyses

Both the Impact Survey and the QOLI present the facts and leave it to the researcher to interpret "what is", "what changed" and "what it significant." The facts indicate positive outcomes for both ABLE program participants and their communities. Despite concerns about finances, these participants are highly satisfied with their lives and consider themselves middle class citizens. Their steady employment records back this claim and a significant drop in welfare benefits after program participation confirms the ABLE connection.

The desire to learn and the willingness to change experienced as part of adult education continues far beyond the classroom. This is amply demonstrated as nearly all participants, having completed entry level educational goals, continued learning for life either formally or on their own. A spiral of "learning" and "doing," reaching out for assistance and then providing help to others has become an ongoing way of life. We can measure generational impact in terms of children's and even grandchildren's educational performance.

We can assess community impact. Civic problems such as jail, probation and bankruptcy which were evident prior to program enrollment did not reappear during or after participation. In their place, we find adults who went no further than a GED serving as community development coordinators as well as public school and adult literacy tutor coordinators.

Participants Point of View

The successful adult learners who are the subjects of this study entered adult programs with specific goals in mind. They were not "illiterate" in the sense that "illiterate means a person who can't do anything." They might have been abandoned, abused, addicted, in jail, homeless, trouble-makers, single parents, dropouts or told again and again that were stupid until they believed it. But they had survived, they were resilient, and they were on a mission to change their lives.

Despite their determination, most participants entered adult programs sensitive and vulnerable, steeped in myths and unsure of their ability to learn. For some it had been 30 years since they were

in a classroom and often the memories were not pleasant. For others, school was a whole new experience. A few had excelled in their studies before marriage, pregnancy or prejudice cut short their exposure to formal learning. This was a second or third try for several participants who studied on their own or enrolled in classes without meeting their objectives.

Support systems were important in helping new readers and ESL students find and enroll in literacy programs. They were essential for single mothers, especially those who needed to work while attending school. In several cases, individual tutoring before moving into a classroom setting seemed to solve the problem. Support was also based on faith. Numerous participants spoke of the importance of God in their lives helping them accomplish tasks they could not conceive of doing on their own.

Even students entering at the GED level were unsure of themselves at first. Student volunteers or former students who share their own experiences, fears and confidences, failures and successes can make an enormous difference in establishing an environment of trust. Tutors and teachers need to establish trust and connect with adult learners before the learning process can begin.

What successful adult learners are telling us is that the classroom/tutoring environment, personal relationships, modeling of successful behavior by peers and practitioners, empowerment and opportunity for leadership are as important to the process of learning for life as instructional strategies and content.

Are there important aspects of adult literacy that learners recognize in themselves but are not amenable to quantitative measurement?

Learning for Life applies four distinct research instruments (the review of Success Stories booklets, the descriptive Impact Survey, the normative QOLI and the qualitative Informal Interview) to reveal the long term outcomes of ABLE participation. Taken together, they provide a substantive portrait of successful adult education participants as they relate to their peers, instructors, programs, families and communities.

Each instrument adds its own harmony to the composition. Success Stories provides us with the facts and opinions of third-party program sponsors who describe participants early years and offer impressions of participants' mettle. The Impact Survey poses specific questions (educational and vocational pursuits, marriage and financial status and children's education) that might not be revealed in the informal interviews. By providing a standardized group with similar demographics to participants, the QOLI allows researchers to make valid comparisons in areas of life satisfaction.

Each of the above instruments can provide quantitative measurements. The grounded study based on participants' Informal Interviews yielded important aspects of adult literacy not amenable to quantitative measures. In response to open-ended questions, successful adult learners vigorously stated their opinions. At every level of educational attainment, we found adult learners who were proud of their accomplishments and unambiguous about the difference that ABLE participation made in their lives.

How do you measure pride? Can you compare the pride of the new reader who is no longer being "picked on" by his fellow workers with that of a former ESL student who is now practicing and teaching medicine? Even participants whose health kept them from pursuing the educational and employment advantages of receiving a GED retained pride in its accomplishment. Lisa explains:

I had a heart attack shortly after I had the high school diploma program graduation, and so I didn't get a chance to do anything. It has helped me mentally knowing I got it; physically, knowing I could do it; and it just made me feel taller, and made me feel like a better person by doing it.

How do you assess a newly found love of learning and its effect on family members? When mothers and fathers model their joy in learning by reading books, taking informal classes or enrolling in higher education, their children and grandchildren follow in their wake. A participant who earned a masters states: *"My children know the value of an education, I think, more so now because of my educational pursuits."* A non-reader who advanced to ABE level and volunteers at a correctional facility explains: *"What I did was set examples for my grandchildren. I have six grandchildren. They are A-B students and it makes me feel good. Learning to read opens a new world of independence for ESL participants and adult new readers. "Now since I know how to read and write, wherever I go, I feel more brighter and I can see where I'm going, what I'm doing, and understand better."* How do you place a value on self-sufficiency?

How and to what extent do increased self-confidence and self-efficacy enable other positive changes in successful learners' lives?

The ability to solve problems and to deal with setbacks without fear is one result of increased self-confidence. *"I think better than I did before. Before, a setback to me was a tragedy. It was like 'Oh my goodness, there I go again. I can't open that door and I don't know how to open that door and I can't figure it out.' Now it's like, 'Let's think about this. How do you get that door open because that door has to open? If you don't open the door, it isn't going to open. So you have to figure it out yourself.' It doesn't make it such a tragedy to me anymore."*

Participation in ABLE programs often leads to intentional change. *"The GED is a beginning not an end."* With new attitudes toward life and new credentials, participants discussed their surprise and delight at being propelled into new "adventures" in careers and community affairs. Despite the extent of their achievements after ABLE completion, successful adult learners regarded the GED as the turning point in their lives. It was the first goal they set for themselves. It provided their first taste of success. From then on, they set out to reshape their lives in accordance with their dreams.

Collaborative ABLE programs build leadership skills. As adult learners traverse the continuum from setting and achieving their educational goals to mentoring and tutoring peers, they acquire leadership skills. When does the learner become a leader? Leadership skills are recognizable in both the former non-reader who is teaching a learning disabled teenager to recognize "letters" and the learning disabled adult who helped found a national organization.

The adult education experience is transformative. *"It gave me a whole new life and a new respect for my life." I was in a world but I wasn't existing; I was just in the world. Now, I look at trees blooming and different things. I thought there was no one there to help. But there were people here and I thank God for the Center for Literacy. They made a different woman out of me.*

Learning for life means "renaming" yourself, overcoming old myths, seeing challenges as opportunities, experiencing yourself as "important" and worthy of respect. ABLE participation encompasses far more than building basic education, critical thinking and workplace skills. For successful participants, the ABLE program provides an opportunity to learn *"to become a better person, not necessarily the most educated person ...to find something inside yourself that you never knew you had."*

IMPLICATIONS FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS

What does this research say to adult learners?

Participants in *Learning for Life* can serve as models of excellence for adult learners to relate to and emulate:

- The first and perhaps most courageous step for adult learners is to put past problems behind them and dare to enroll in ABLE programs. Study participants have proven that success is mainly a matter of surviving failures.
- Purpose is the key to success in adult education. The word “purpose” has three meanings. It means having motivation. It means having determination and it means having a goal. No tutor or teacher can give you purpose. It is your gift to yourself and your contribution to the learning process.
- All adult learners bring as “baggage” to ABLE programs the wisdom and fallacies of past experiences. In sharing their hopes and fears with peers, tutors and teachers, participants learned to reassess past beliefs, revise present behaviors and share their understanding with others. In any ABLE program, participants are both learners and teachers.
- Participants who were most satisfied with their lives did not necessarily complete college degrees, own two houses or have professional careers. They tailored the basic skills learned in ABLE programs to address their specific interests and goals. Once participants gained the self-esteem that was a significant outcome of program success and recognition, they fashioned their world according to their own satisfaction rather than identifying with other people’s expectations.
- Participants identified critical issues in ABLE programs and problems inherent in higher education. These issues are every adult learner’s concern. The problems of professionalization, the pressure to complete ABLE programs quickly and the lack of directed higher education funding for GED completers must be addressed by a coalition of adult learners speaking on their own behalf.

What does this research say to practitioners?

Listening to adult learners’ voices raises several points of interest for practitioners:

- Initial contact with adult learners must establish a “trusting” relationship. The personal bond between the learner and the “caring” practitioner is a crucial catalyst in the learning process.
- A grasp of adult learners’ “risk factors” and support systems is as important as an assessment of their skills.
- Adult learners who enroll in ABLE programs with specific goals and the determination to pursue them are the most likely candidates for success. An initial goal-setting meeting, incremental plans, and periodic follow-up sessions are essential program components for all learners.

- How you teach is as important as what you teach. The practice of adult theory as exemplified by collaborative learning in a “safe” environment is central to adult learner success.
- Adapting curriculum to adult learners’ goals is important but not sufficient. Thought must be given to introducing materials that will expand the adult learner’s universe, and empower each student to take action within the classroom and in the community.
- The use of experienced, concerned adult learners as community outreach, tutors and mentors is both helpful to enrollees and fosters adult learner leadership.
- Practitioners must model the quest for knowledge and the excitement of lifelong learning.
- Never underestimate adult learners’ sensitivity or their capacity for change.

What does this research say to stakeholders?

The outcomes sought by ABLE stakeholders have changed repeatedly with the temper of the times. Since 1965, state agencies and local programs have been required to provide documentation of participant growth in basic skills, high school diploma achievement, competency-based survival or coping skills, employability skills, critical thinking skills, parenting skills and workplace skills. The common denominator has been a record of participant seat time and level of growth within a specified time period. Funding for follow-up on long-term outcomes of adult education program participation has not been a priority.

Learning for Life challenges this myopic focus on “in situ” results as an accurate prediction of the value of ABLE programs to adult learners and society. In determining the economic, civic and social impact of ABLE participation, stakeholders need to consider that:

- All adults bring a profusion of life experiences, including personal “risk factors” and preconceived notions about education to ABLE programs. Constructive changes in attitudes towards themselves and society are not short-term fixes. Nor can they be measured by seat time or levels of academic growth.
- Adults learn at a different pace than K-12 students — with good reason. They have jobs, families and responsibilities that occupy them. This leaves less time to concentrate on learning. It takes time to make up for the years lost since they were in school. Older ESL students and new readers must build confidence in their abilities before they can blossom educationally. The pressure to complete in order to be placed in entry level jobs is, in the long run, economically and educationally destructive.
- Professional development for practitioners cannot be limited to assessment techniques, goal planning, curriculum development, instructional strategies, program evaluation, technology usage and program operations. Without training in human relations beyond SCANS competencies, some practitioners will never forge the bond with learners that acts as a catalyst for learning.

- Leadership building is a viable vehicle for promoting adult learner empowerment. Furthermore, adult students as aides, tutors, mentors and community workers play an important role in many adult programs. There is a need to legitimize this group of workers, recognize and pay them.
- In our concern for the professionalization of the field, we must take care to “grandfather” part-time experienced non-certified “teachers.” This entails providing a way for them to receive accreditation via a demonstration of “competence in action.”
- In our pursuit of program accountability, we must validate qualitative research and longitudinal studies as viable instruments particularly appropriate for measuring adult learner outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

Research Instruments

SUCCESS STORIES NOMINATION CRITERIA

1978 Criteria:

1. Admiration and respect from teachers and fellow students for accomplishments in the program;
2. Information on the impact and influence of educational efforts on family, social interaction, independence, employment and civic involvement.

1980 Criteria:

1. How many grade levels of education had the nominee completed before he/she entered the program?
2. What reasons caused the nominee to quit school?
3. When did the nominee enter your program?
4. What difficulties did the nominee overcome to enroll in adult education/ literacy courses?
5. Is he/she still enrolled, or has he/she achieved his/her personal goals and stopped?
6. What academic or life problems has the nominee experienced and overcome in the adult program?
7. What are the nominee's specific plans for the future, such as a career, further education, training, etc.?
8. In what, if any, organizations or activities is the nominee involved?
9. How has the nominee been a promoter and supporter of the program, or an inspiration to others, etc.

1997 Criteria:

- b. How many grade levels of education had the nominee completed before he/she entered the program?
- c. When did the nominee enter your program?
- d. Is he/she still enrolled, or has he/she achieved his/her personal and educational goals and stopped? What has she/he accomplished since enrolling in or completing his/her program?
- e. What innovative approaches has the nominee developed to achieve personal and program goals while enrolled in the adult education program?
- f. What are the nominee's specific plans for the future (such as a career, further education, training, etc.)?
- g. In what, if any, organizations or activities is the nominee involved? Has the nominee maintained family, civic, or employment responsibilities at a high level while pursuing educational goals?
- h. How has the nominee been a promoter and supporter of the program, or an inspiration to others, etc.?

IMPACT SURVEY

Developed by Drs. Richard Gacka and Sherry Royce

1. Your Education

LEVEL of EDUCATION	Before attending ABLE Program	While attending ABLE Program	After leaving ABLE Program
Dropped out High School			
Obtained GED			
Certificate or non degree			
Associate Degree			
Bachelors Degree			
Masters Degree			
Doctorate			
Company provided training			
Military			
Personal Interest Courses			

2. Your Family Status

STATUS	LENGTH OF TIME	# CHILDREN Y or N if Problems	CURRENT STATUS (Divorced/Separated)
Single Never Married			
Marriage 1			
Marriage 2			
Marriage 3 or more			

3. Your Children's Education: Pre-K: _____

# K-6	# Completed HS	#In HS	# Dropped out HS	#Received GED
# Some College	# Completed College	#In College	# Masters Degree	# Advanced Degree

4. Your Current Activities

<input type="checkbox"/> Active in church	<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics or Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer User	<input type="checkbox"/> Active in ABLÉ program
<input type="checkbox"/> Active in social organizations	<input type="checkbox"/> Active with school or college	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentor, Tutor or Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Self Help groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Active in Coaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Active in Band or Choir	<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Gardening
<input type="checkbox"/> Active in Fraternal group	<input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies or Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adult Learner Code: _____ Interviewer's Initials: _____ Interview Date _____

5. Job History (most recent first)

Title	Length	Reason for Leaving

If you are currently employed, which of the following benefits do you have and who provides it?

Item	Employer Provided	Paid by You
Medical Insurance		
Dental Insurance		
Vision Insurance		
Prescription Insurance		
Life Insurance		
Disability Insurance		
Retirement / Pension		
Stock		
Other		

6. ABLE Program Informa-

Enrolled in an ABLE Program in the following area

ESL	Literacy	ABE	GED	Family Literacy	Workforce

Left program after completing the following areas

ESL	Literacy	ABE	GED	Family Literacy	Workforce

Result of the Outstanding Student Award

- Received a scholarship
- Received some financial reward
- Received a job offer or promotion
- Motivated you to pursue additional education or training
- Improved your self confidence
- Other: List

Adult Learner Code: _____ Interviewer's Initials: _____ Interview Date _____

7. Financial Status

TYPE of INCOME	Before Attending ABLÉ Program	While Attending ABLÉ Program	After Leaving ABLÉ Program
Self Employed			
Salaried			
Unemployment Comp Disability			
Unemployment Comp Laid Off			
SSI/SSD			
Public Assistance			
Food Stamps			
Support			
SS Retirement			
Private Retirement			

	Own	Lease	Monthly Pay-	
Residence 1				
Residence 2				
Car 1				
Car 2				
Computer				

What group would you consider yourself to fall into?

- Homeless
- Poverty
- Low In-
- Middle
- Upper middle
- Wealthy

Adult Learner Code: _____ Interviewer's Initials: _____ Interview Date _____

8. Your history. Which of the following have ever oc-

	Before attending ABL program	While attending ABL program	After leaving ABL program
Arrested			
Jail time			
On Probation			
Filed for Bankruptcy			
Been Sued			

Have had Medical problems			
Had Alcohol Treatment			
Had Drug Treatment			
Had Counseling			
Had Mental Health Treatment			
Been in a serious accident			

Obtained US citizenship			
Obtained a driver's license			
Completed reading a book			
Voted in a state or national election			
Had an article published			
Addressed a state or national audience			

9. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "there are major problems," 5 being "things are excellent" and 3 being "average" give a numerical rating to each of the following. (leave blank if item does not apply)

Your job	1	2	3	4	5
Your marriage	1	2	3	4	5
Your children	1	2	3	4	5
Your home	1	2	3	4	5
Your education	1	2	3	4	5
Your physical health	1	2	3	4	5
Your financial status	1	2	3	4	5
Your parenting skills	1	2	3	4	5
Your job skills	1	2	3	4	5
Your self confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Your overall happiness	1	2	3	4	5
Your expectations for the future	1	2	3	4	5

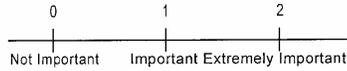
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QUALITY OF LIFE INVENTORY

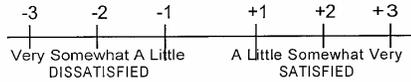
QUALITY OF LIFE INVENTORY by Michael B. Frisch, PhD

HEALTH is being physically fit, not sick, and without pain or disability.

1. How important is HEALTH to your happiness?

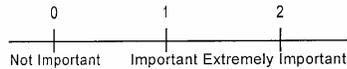


2. How satisfied are you with your HEALTH?

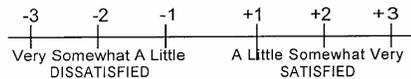


SELF-ESTEEM means liking and respecting yourself in light of your strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and ability to handle problems.

3. How important is SELF-ESTEEM to your happiness?

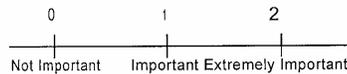


4. How satisfied are you with your SELF-ESTEEM?

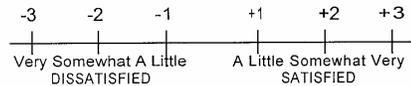


GOALS-AND-VALUES are your beliefs about what matters most in life and how you should live, both now and in the future. This includes your goals in life, what you think is right or wrong, and the purpose or meaning of life as you see it.

5. How important are GOALS-AND-VALUES to your happiness?

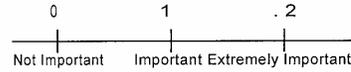


6. How satisfied are you with your GOALS-AND-VALUES?

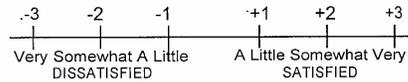


MONEY is made up of three things. It is the money you earn, the things you own (like a car or furniture), and believing that you will have the money and things that you need in the future.

7. How important is MONEY to your happiness?

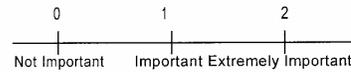


8. How satisfied are you with the MONEY you have?

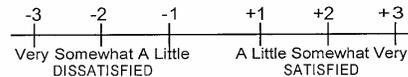


WORK means your career or how you spend most of your time. You may work at a job, at home taking care of your family, or at school as a student. WORK includes your duties on the job, the money you earn (if any), and the people you work with. (If you are unemployed, retired, or can't work, you can still answer these questions.)

9. How important is WORK to your happiness?

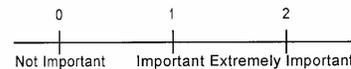


10. How satisfied are you with your WORK? (if you are not working, say how satisfied you are about not working.)

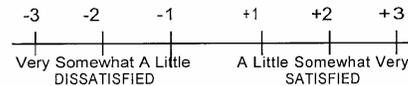


PLAY is what you do in your free time to relax, have fun, or improve yourself. This could include watching movies, visiting friends, or pursuing a hobby like sports or gardening.

11. How important is PLAY to your happiness?



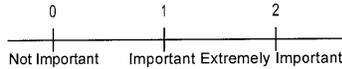
12. How satisfied are you with the PLAY in your life?



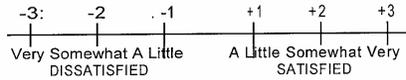
QUALITY OF LIFE INVENTORY

LEARNING means gaining new skills or information about things that interest you. **LEARNING** can come from reading books or taking classes on subjects like history, car repair, or using a computer.

13. How important is **LEARNING** to your happiness?

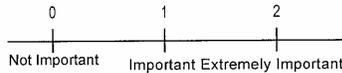


14. How **satisfied** are you with your **LEARNING**?

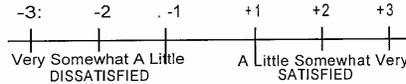


CREATIVITY is using your imagination to come up with new and clever ways to solve everyday problems or to pursue a hobby like painting, photography, or needlework. This can include decorating your home, playing the guitar, or finding a new way to solve a problem at work.

15. How important is **CREATIVITY** to your happiness?

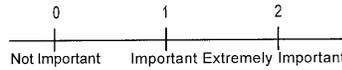


16. How **satisfied** are you with your **CREATIVITY**?

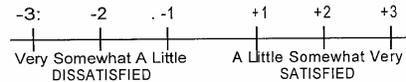


HELPING means helping others in need or helping to make your community a better place to live. **HELPING** can be done on your own or in a group like a church, a neighborhood association, or a political party. **HELPING** can include doing volunteer work at a school or giving money to a good cause. **HELPING** means helping people who are not your friends or relatives.

17. How important is **HELPING** to your happiness?



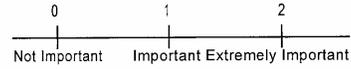
18. How **satisfied** are you with the **HELPING** you do?



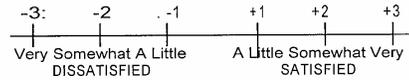
Page 2

LOVE is a very close romantic relationship with another person. **LOVE** usually includes sexual feelings and feeling loved, cared for, and understood. (if you do not have a **LOVE** relationship, you can still answer these questions.)

19. How important is **LOVE** to your happiness?

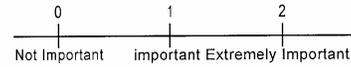


20. How **satisfied** are you with the **LOVE** in your life? (if you are not in a **LOVE** relationship, say how satisfied you feel about not having a **LOVE** relationship.)

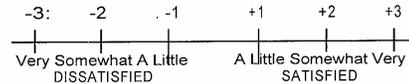


FRIENDS are people (not relatives) you know well and care about who have interests and opinions like yours. **FRIENDS** have fun together, talk about personal problems, and help each other out. (if you have no **FRIENDS**, you can still answer these questions.)

21. How important are **FRIENDS** to your happiness?



22. How **satisfied** are you with your **FRIENDS**? (if you have no **FRIENDS**, say how satisfied you are about having no **FRIENDS**.)



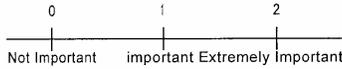
Adult Learner Code _____ Date: _____

Interviewer's Initials _____

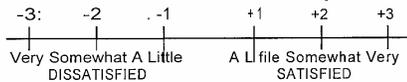
QUALITY OF LIFE INVENTORY

CHILDREN means how you get along with your child (or children). Think of how you get along as you care for, visit, or play with your child. (If you do not have CHILDREN, you can still answer these questions.)

23. How **important** are CHILDREN to your happiness? (If you have no CHILDREN, say how important having a child is to your happiness.)



24. How **satisfied** are you with your relationships with your CHILDREN? (If you have no CHILDREN, say how satisfied you feel about not having children.)

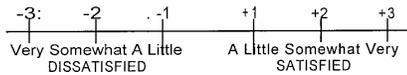


RELATIVES means how you get along with your parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and in-laws. Think about how you get along when you are doing things together like visiting, talking on the telephone, or helping each other out. (If you have no living RELATIVES, blacken the 0 ["Not Important"] circle for question 25 and do not answer question 26.)

25. How important are RELATIVES to your happiness?



26. How satisfied are you with your relationships with RELATIVES?

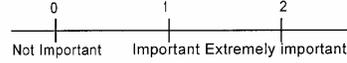


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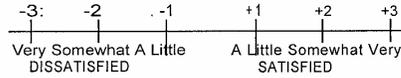
Interviewer's Initials _____

HOME is where you live. It is your house or apartment and the yard around it. Think about how nice it looks, how big it is, and your rent or house payment.

27. How **important** is your HOME to your happiness?

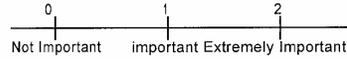


28. How **satisfied** are you with your HOME?

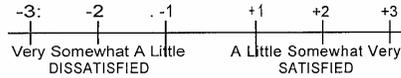


NEIGHBORHOOD is the area around your home. Think about how nice it looks, the amount of crime in the area, and how well you like the people.

29. How **important** is your NEIGHBORHOOD to your happiness?

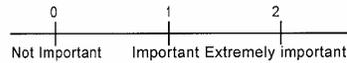


30. How satisfied are you with your NEIGHBORHOOD?

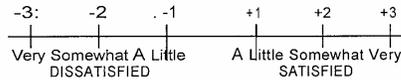


COMMUNITY is the whole city, town, or rural area where you live (it is not just your neighborhood). **COMMUNITY** includes how nice the area looks, the amount of crime, and how well you like the people. It also includes places to go for fun like parks, concerts, sporting events, and restaurants. You may also consider the cost of things you need to buy, the availability of jobs, the government, schools, taxes, and pollution.

31. How important is your COMMUNITY to your happiness?



32. How satisfied are you with your COMMUNITY?



Interview Procedures

Initial Contact

Instructions given to research assistants regarding the initial contact were as follows.:

Introduce yourself as a former Success Story award recipient or a former adult education teacher. Remind them about the Success Stories project. *I have found that mentioning their trip to Hershey is a good reminder.* You will have full information about each individual before the first telephone contact.

Tell the person you are going to interview that you were given their name, address and telephone number by the State Department of Education. Ask if you have the correct person. *In nearly all cases either their program director or I have checked the address and telephone. All but one person that I spoke with was delighted to be remembered and willing to cooperate.*

If they say you have reached the right person, check their address once again and ask them if they have a few minutes to discuss an important study the state is conducting about former award winners. If they say they have the time, provide the following information in your own words and schedule an appointment time to see them in person.

If they cannot talk with you then, request a time to call back and explain the project.

Interview Protocol.

The interview protocol provided the following scenario for research assistants to follow:

1. I am working on an important project with other Success Stories award winners throughout Pennsylvania. Our job is to find out what has happened in the lives of former outstanding adult students since they received their award. We need your help and are interested in your opinions.
2. The facts and opinions you discuss with me will be combined with information received from other award winners to provide a picture of the current lives of Pennsylvania's outstanding adult learners. No names will be mentioned in our report.
3. I would like to schedule a one-hour interview with you. I can meet you at a library or an adult class near your home. *(This can be done at their home provided you – the interviewer - are comfortable with this and it is necessary. We have a few older and infirm participants and that might be easier for them).*
4. I will be taping the interview. But what you say is strictly between the two of us. I will give you a code name. All the information from your interview will be labeled with your code name and combined with other outstanding adult learners' information for our report. Your real name will never be used.
5. We need you to sign a consent form. I will send this to you at _____ *Check address again.* I must have this form signed before we can do the interview. Can we schedule it for a week from today?

Interview Procedures

Interview Process.

The follow interview provisions and general suggestions about conducting an interview were supplied during the research assistants' training:

1. Interviewing is an art not a science. As such, while there are rules to be followed. Successful interviewers develop a style that is comfortable for them and for the person being interviewed.
2. I will give you copies of your adult learners' Success Stories and their photographs. Familiarize yourself with their past history so that you know where they have been in order to understand their present situation. I will also give you the Consent Form, an Impact Survey, a Quality of Life Inventory and an interview prompt sheet.
3. Before you begin, be sure to state that you are taping the interview. Ask the participants whether this is acceptable to them. Ask them their age and show them how you add this to their code number. (*Example: FW20-45 where FW stands for Female White and 45 is the age of the adult learner.*) The 20 is a unique number which is added to the FW and their age.
4. Have participants sign the consent forms and read the forms into their tape. Call their attention to the sentence at the bottom of each form that states: " You can get a copy of our final report by checking the box marked Send Final Report." Finally, before you begin, ask them if they have any questions.
5. It is best to memorize the open-ended questions provided on the prompt sheet. This will enable you to let adult learners speak freely about their lives while you steer the conversation from time to time to follow up on the questions in the prompt sheet.
6. Share your own experiences but do not monopolize the conversation. Talking about your own challenges often allows others to trust you with theirs.
7. Write down snatches of participants' answers as you go along in case your tape recorder fails. *This can happen.* But always remember to listen. Do not jump into silences with another question. Silence can bring forth additional and important information.
8. After about 15 minutes or when the conversation slows, bring out the Impact Survey and complete it with the participant.
9. Next, administer the Quality of Life Inventory.
10. You will be provided with stationary that lists your name and telephone number. Always thank the adult learner in person after the interview and with a follow-up letter.

Interview Procedures

Interview Prompt Sheet.

After participants completed the consent form, research assistants were told to show the interviewee their Success Story and photograph. They were to allow the participant to look over the story if they wished and then begin an informal conversation using the following questions:

Do you recognize yourself? This story was written quite a while ago. What can you tell me about how your life has changed since this story was written?

In 19xx (the year they received their award) you were one of the Department of Education's Success Stories. What do you think makes a person successful?

Which of your life achievements to date are you most pleased with?

How do you handle setbacks?

If you could change anything about yourself or your life, what would it be?

What goals have you set for the future?

What help, if any, do you need to reach these goals?

If you had three magic wishes:

What would you wish for yourself?

For your family or friends?

For all adult students?

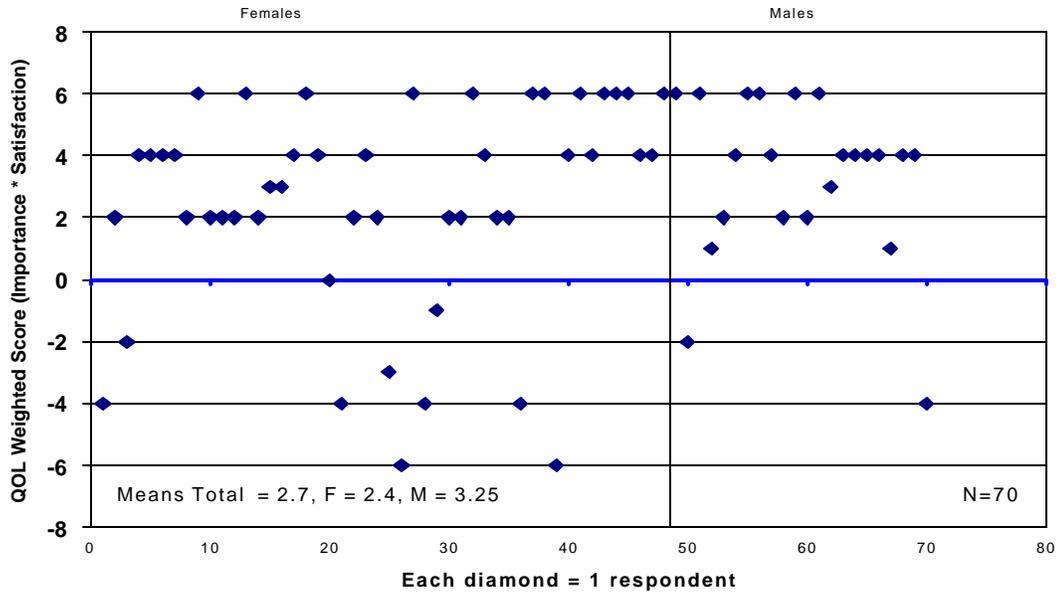
APPENDIX B
Participants' Scattergraphs

Participants' Scattergraphs

Scattergraphs of respondent scores on the QOL Inventory follow. Each symbol represents one individual. Maximum scores range from a low of -6 (unvalued and unsatisfied) to +6 (valued and highly satisfied). Each chart reflects a snapshot of 70 individuals ranking of their satisfaction in that area of their life.

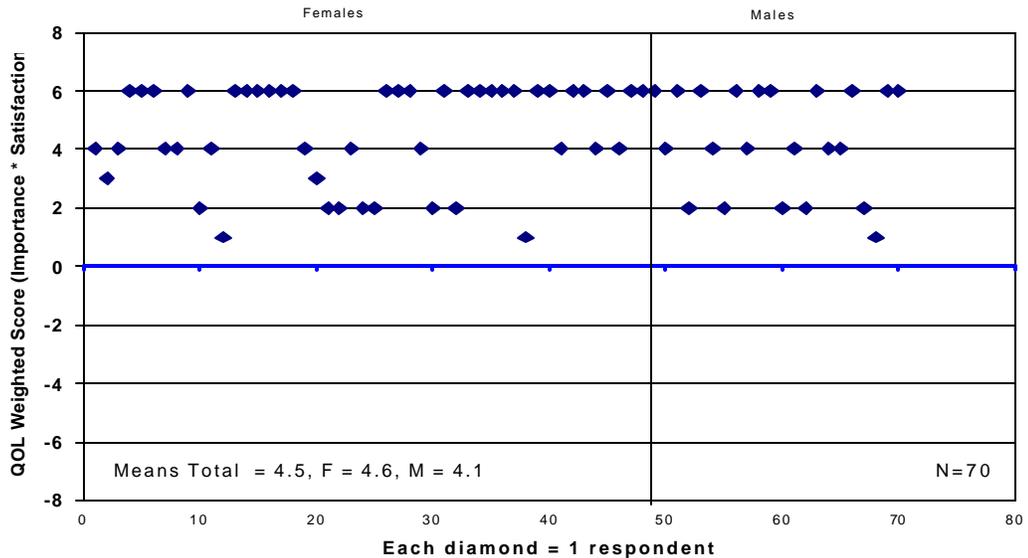
Health: Physical fitness, freedom from sickness and pain

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Health



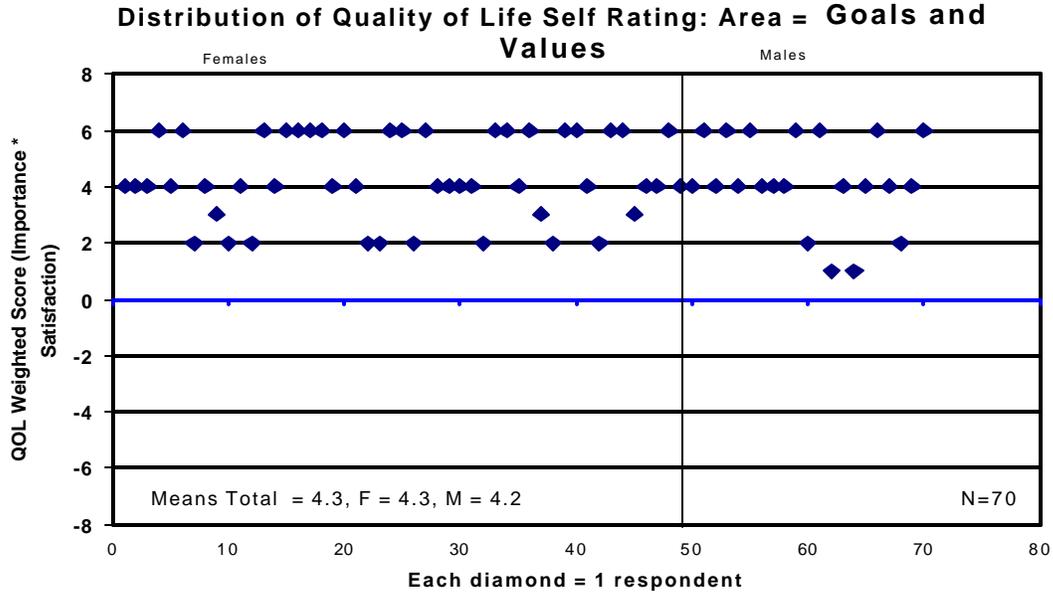
Self Esteem: Liking and respecting yourself, successes and failures and ability to handle problems.

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Self Esteem

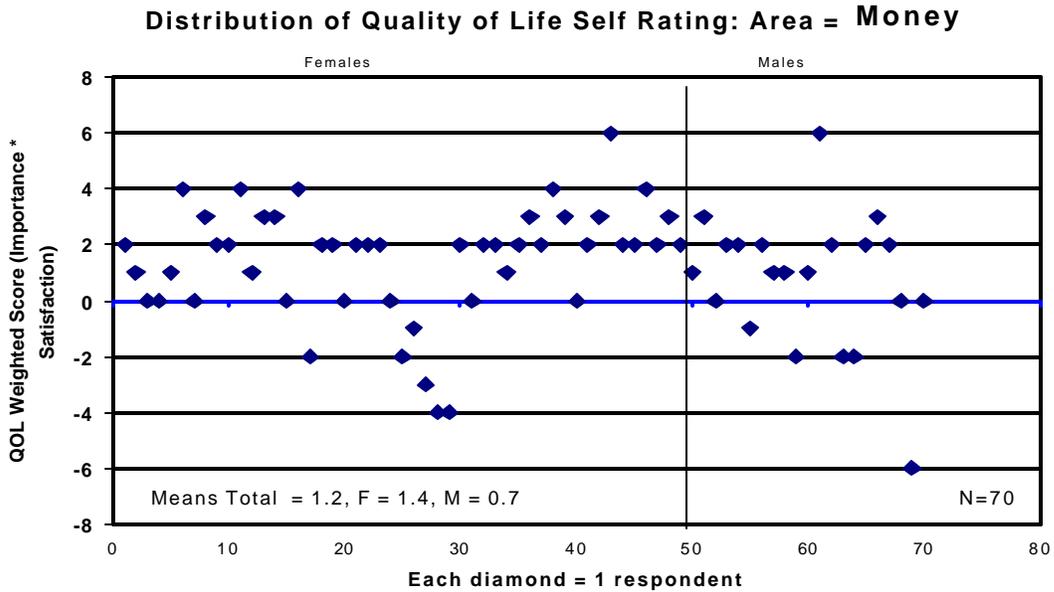


Participants' Scattergraphs

Goals and Values: Beliefs in what matters in life, goals in life, what is right and wrong.

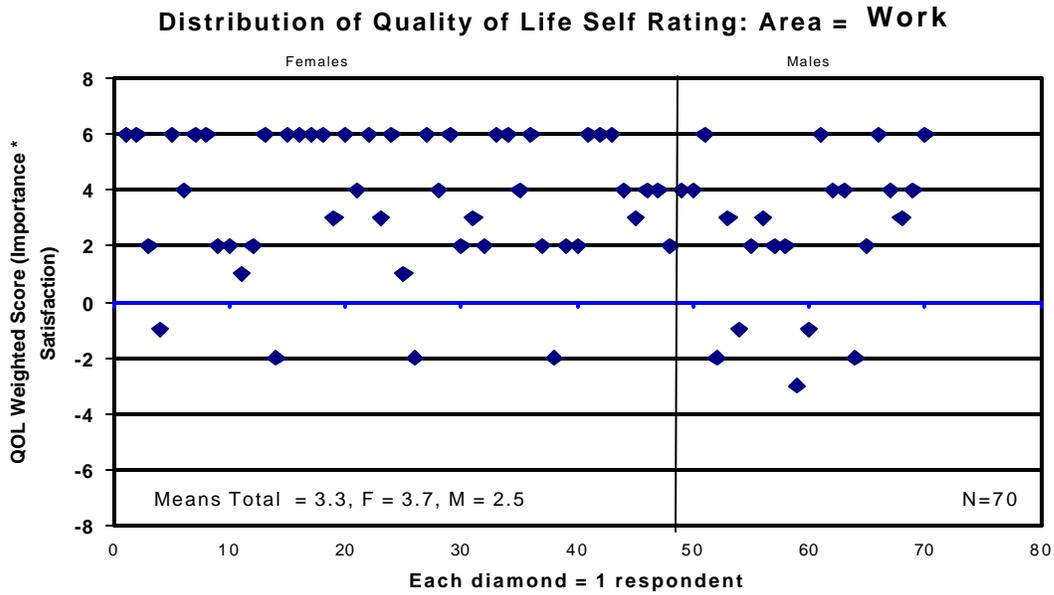


Money: The money you earn, the things you own and things you need.

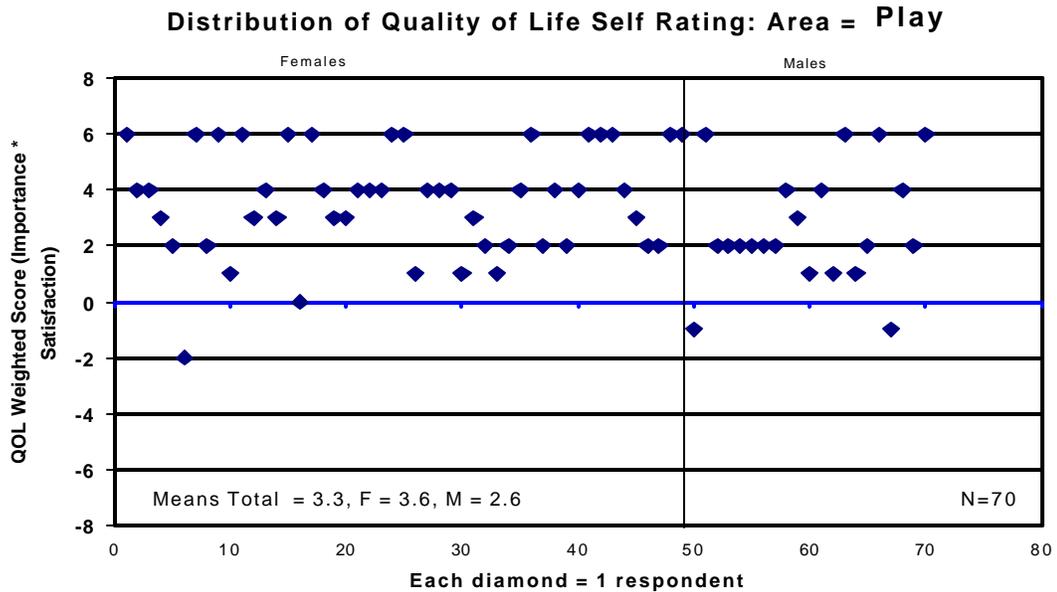


Participants' Scattergraphs

Work: What your career means, how you spend your time, job duties and people you work with



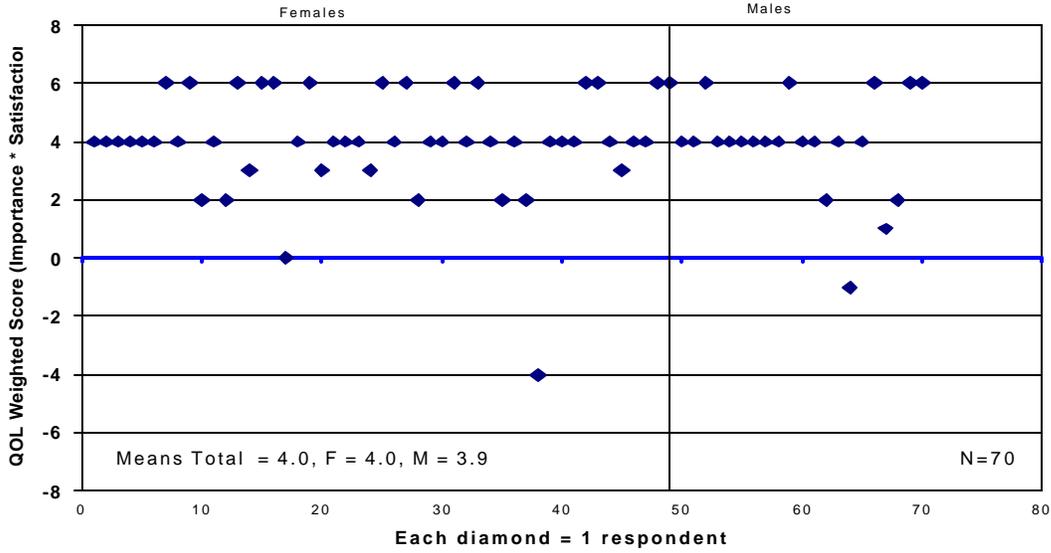
Play: What you do in your free time to relax



Participants' Scattergraphs

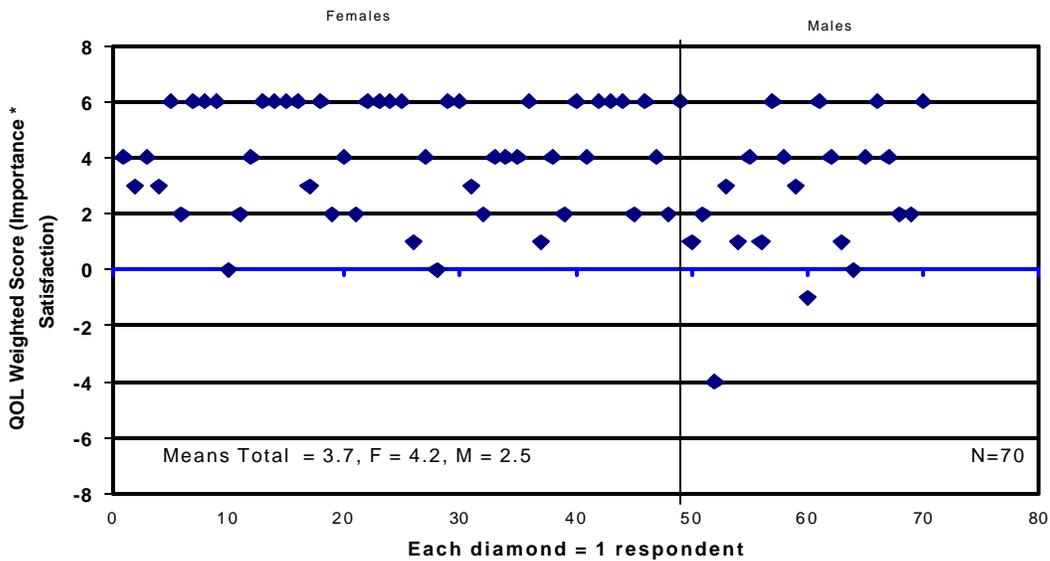
Learning: Gaining new skills or information

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Learning



Creativity: Using your imagination to solve problems in work or recreation

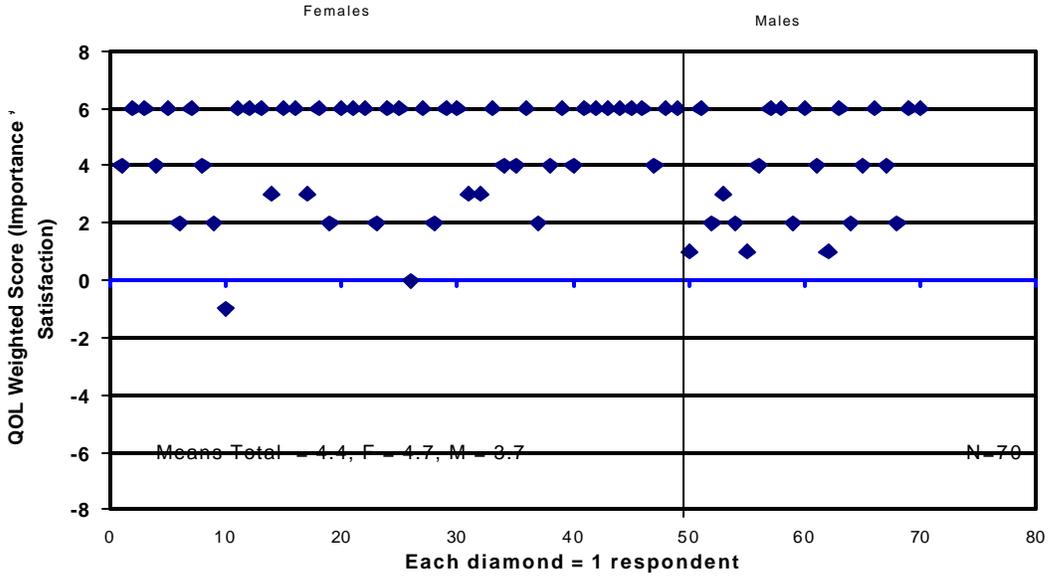
Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Creativity



Participants' Scattergraphs

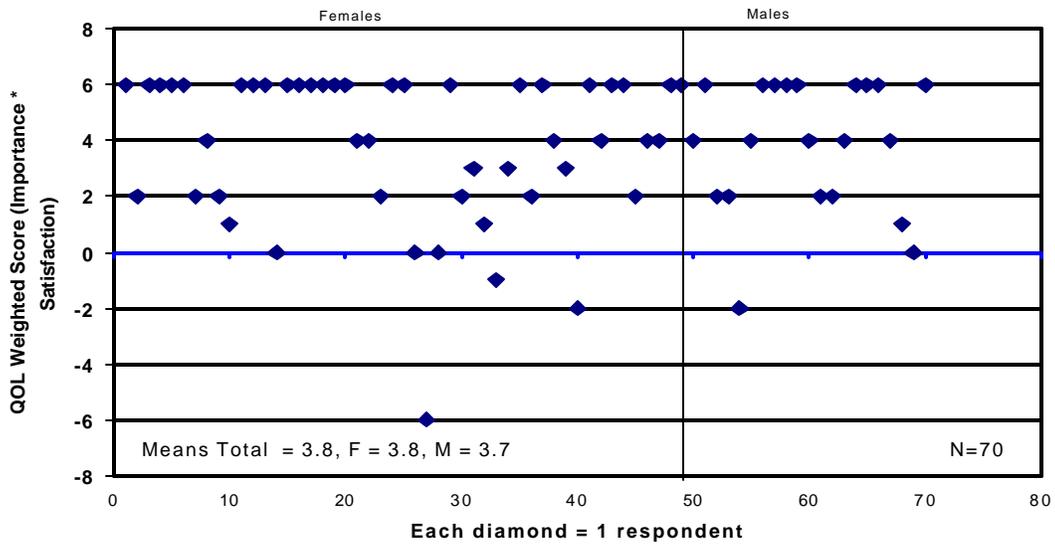
Helping: Helping others, church, neighborhood activities

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Helping



Love: Romantic relationships with another person

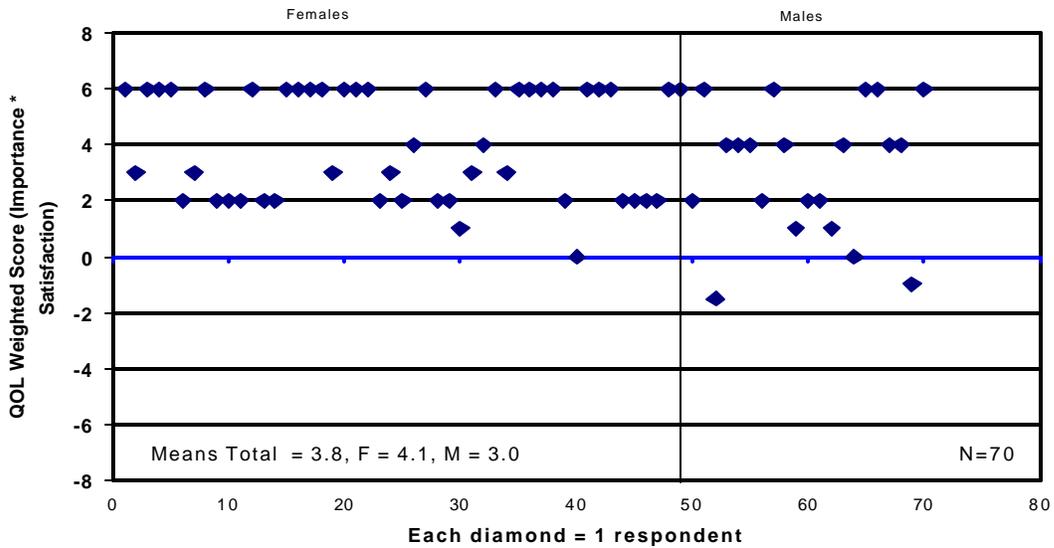
Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Love



Participants' Scattergraphs

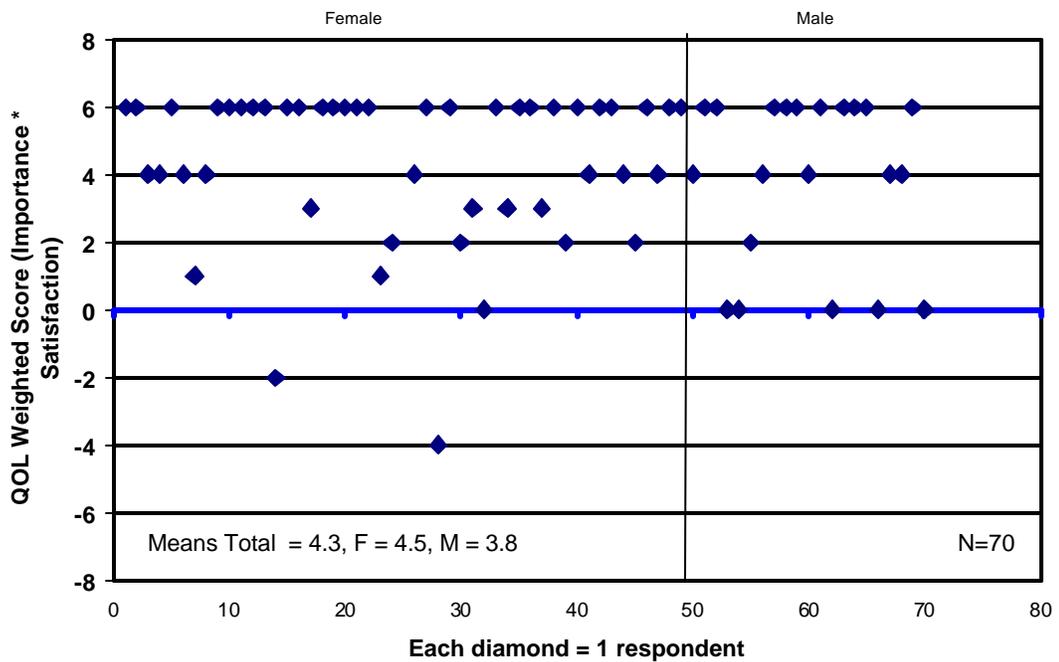
Friends: People you care about and have interests like yours

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Friends



Children: How you get along with your children

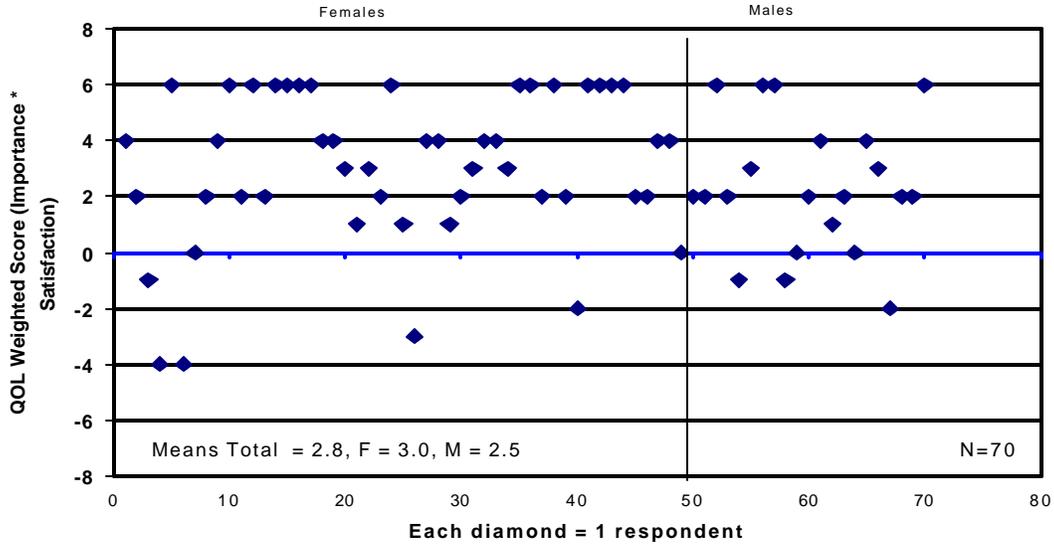
Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Children



Participants' Scattergraphs

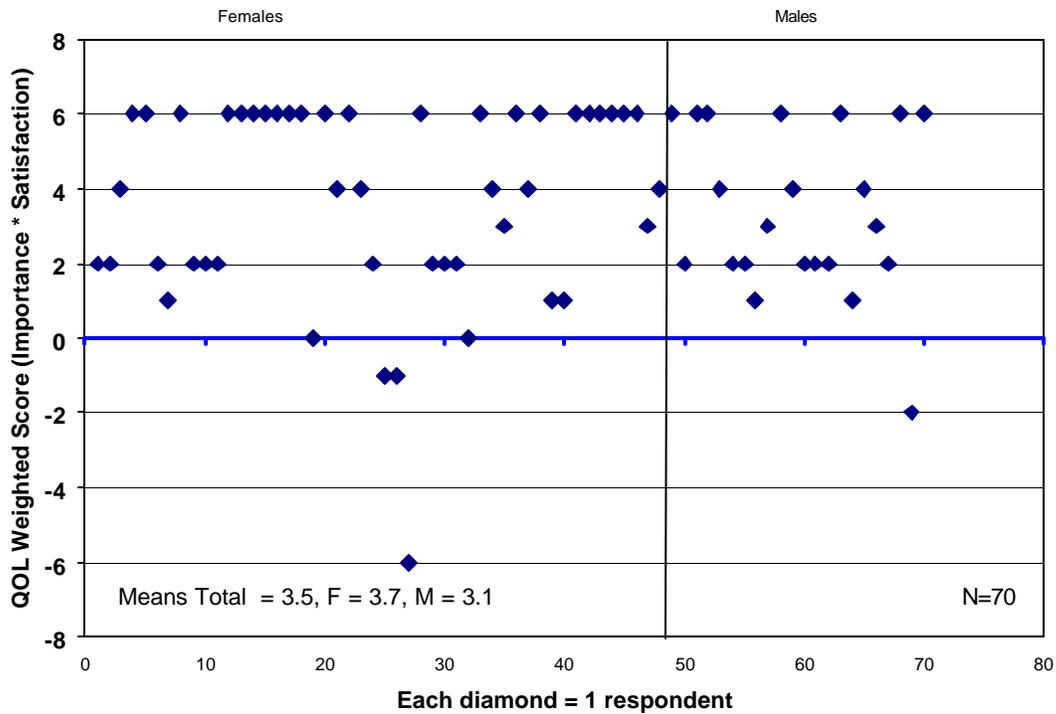
Relatives: How you get along with your parents, and other relatives.

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Relatives



Home: Where you live and the area around it.

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Home



Participants' Scattergraphs

Neighborhood: The area around your home, crime rate, neighbors

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Neighborhood

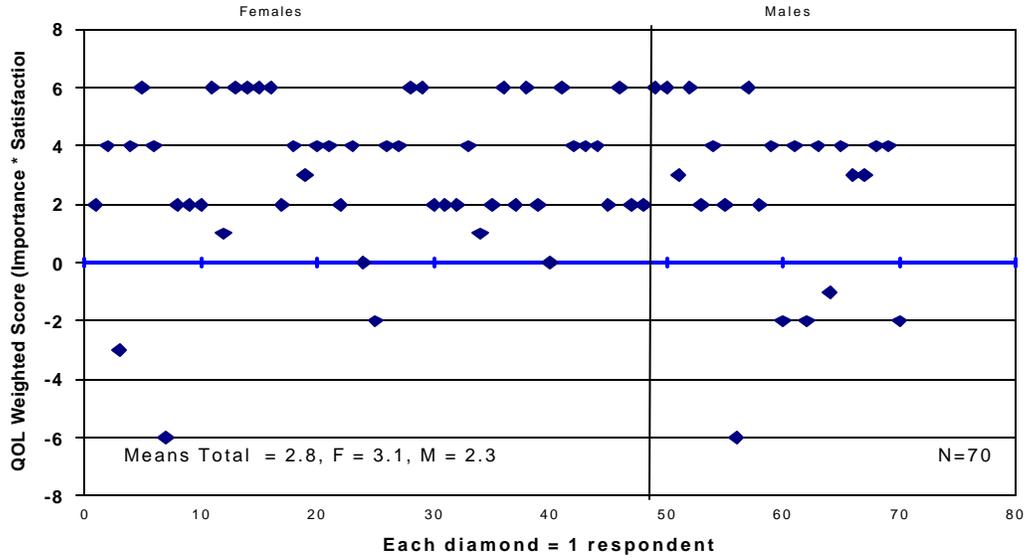
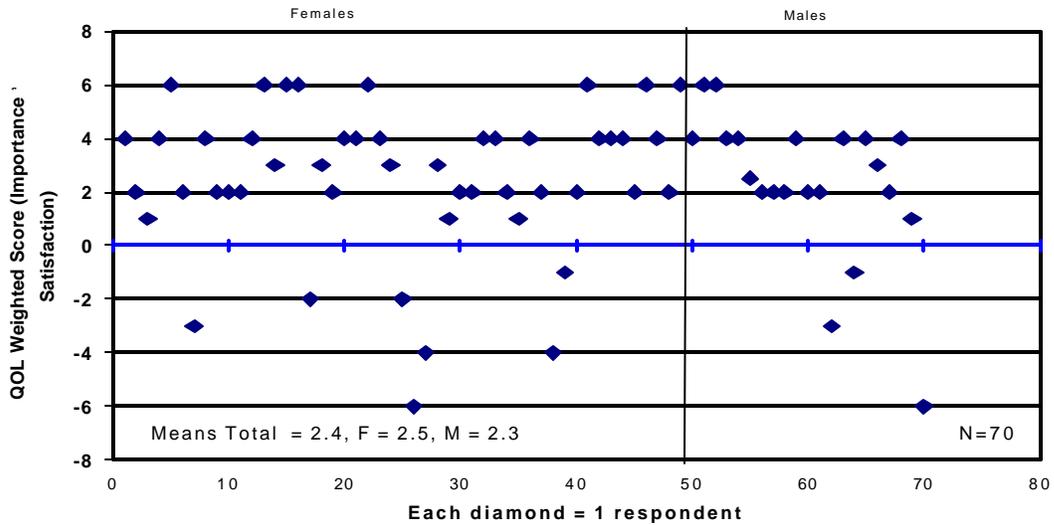


Chart 24: Community: The whole area around where you live

Distribution of Quality of Life Self Rating: Area = Community



APPENDIX C

Participants' Educational and Employment Data

Enrollment Factors and Educational Attainment

Name	ENROLLMENT FACTORS	Entrance Level	Level Gained	QOLI Score
<i>Injuries as a cause of enrollment</i>				
Oliver	Rehabilitation from head injuries.	Basic Literacy	ABE Level	Average
John	Spinal injury residential community	ESL	College Courses	Average
Fran	Stroke victim to combat depression	ESL	College Courses	Very Low
Darcy	Brain injured from accident, enrolled by speech therapist.	GED	College Courses	Low
Irene	After injury OVR sent to get a job	GED	Associate Degree	Average
<i>Encouragement by others as a cause of enrollment</i>				
Danny	VA social worker encouraged him to enroll	Basic Literacy	Basic Literacy level	High
Paula	Daughter encouraged her	Basic Literacy	Basic Literacy level	High
Ronald	Wife urged him to enroll in literacy program	Basic Literacy	ABE Level	High
Richard	Encourage by school administrator where he is a custodian	Basic Literacy	Adult HS Diploma	Average
Conrad	Wife encouraged him to call literacy council.	Basic Literacy	GED Diploma	High
Quincy	Met literacy tutor in a VA shelter for homeless veterans	Basic Literacy	GED Diploma	Average
Benny	Brother-in-law encouraged him	ESL	GED Diploma	High
Isabel	Community Action Committee encouraged her to get GED	GED	GED Diploma	Average
Ed	VA placed with literacy tutor	GED	College Courses	Average
<i>Literacy skills needed for job or to enter training program</i>				
Barbara	Widow, needed job	Basic Literacy	Basic Literacy Level	High
Frank	Skills not equal to his job	Basic Literacy	GED Diploma	Low
Eva	Divorced, needed to gain employment	ESL	GED Level	Average
Bella	Husband laid off, needed work	ESL	GED/Vo-Tech	Average
Zach	Learn English to pass TOEFEL & obtain interns' license.	ESL	Doctor/MD	High
Kevin	Cooperative program with Vo-Tech training	HS diploma	GED Diploma	Average
Georgia	Needed GED to enroll in beauty school	ABE	GED/State Certificate	High
Henry	Cooperative program with Vo Tech training	GED	GED Diploma	High
Laurie	Single mom, needed GED for nurses training.	ABE	College Courses	High
Della	Single mom, must raise reading level for business training	HS grad/GED	College Courses	High
Olive	Desire to enter college and study business	GED	College Courses	High
Bruce	Plant closing made him realize need for education.	GED	College Degree	Average
Yetta	Husband laid off, needed job	GED	Masters Credits	Average
Wylie	Must improve job skills	GED	Masters Credits	Average
<i>Single women seeking to improve their children's lives</i>				
Agnes	Single mom, straighten up her children	Basic Literacy	ABE/Ministry Training	High
Vu-Lin	Immigrant/need to escape abusive husband with children	ESL	GED Level	High
Arlene	Single mom, need to support her children	ABE	GED Diploma	Average
Cora	Prepared to leave abusive husband and support children	ABE	College Courses	High
Carolyn	Divorced mom, ambitious for herself and children	ABE	College Courses	High
Adele	Single mom, divorced, on welfare needed job	ABE	College Degree	Average
Enid	Divorced mom, on welfare, wants a better life	ABE	Adult HS Diploma	High
Mabel	Single mother on welfare, sought GED	GED	GED + Workforce	Average
College Courses and Degrees = Gray				
NAME	ENROLLMENT FACTORS continued	Entrance Level	Level Gained	QOLI

Enrollment Factors and Educational Attainment

<i>Single women continued</i>				
Joy	Single mom, sought a better life for herself and her children	GED	GED + Workforce	Average
Kathleen	Single mom, wants a better life for herself and her children	GED	College Courses	Average
Gina	Single mother wanted off welfare	GED	Associate Degree	High
Wilma	Single mom, divorced, needed job	GED	Associate Degree	High
Sophie	Single mom, divorced, needed job	GED	Masters Degree	Average
Anna	Single mom, widow, needed job	GED	Masters Degree	Average
<i>Adults seeking to encourage other family members</i>				
Peter	To help his children with their school work	HS/Basic Lit	Company Training	High
Zelda	Single mom, set an example for her children	Basic Literacy	GED Diploma	High
Kelly	Set an example for family members in Even Start	Family Lit/GED	GED Diploma	High
Toby	Entered Family Literacy with child	Family Lit/GED	GED Diploma	Average
Lydia	Husband terminally ill; set an example for her son	GED	Adult HS Diploma	High
Charlene	Married, with special needs child	GED	College Degree	High
Sarah	Enrolled with her mother to further their education	GED	College Degree	Average
<i>Desire to improve their lives; self-actualization</i>				
Dennis	Wanted to improve basic skills	Basic Literacy	Basic Literacy	Average
Marcia	Wanted to improve her life	Basic Literacy	ABE/Company Training	Average
Harold	Wanted to improve basic skills	Basic Literacy	GED Level	Average
Tanya	Wanted to learn to read	Basic Literacy	GED Level	High
Noreen	Wanted to improve reading skills	Basic Literacy	GED Level	High
William	Wanted to improve reading skills	Basic Literacy	Associate Degree	Low
Oscar	Wanted to improve his life	Basic Literacy	Adult HS Diploma	High
Rita	Desire to learn	Basic Literacy	GED/Vo-Tech Training	Average
Pamela	Get off drugs, welfare, improve her life	ABE	College Courses	Average
Gertie	Wanted to improve herself	ABE	GED Diploma	High
Vera	Children grown; desire to learn	ABE	GED Diploma	High
Thelma	Desire to learn	ABE	GED Diploma	High
Nina	Desire to learn	ABE	College Courses	High
Nancy	Wanted to improve English language skills	GED	GED Diploma	Average
Monica	Wished to improve herself	GED	GED Diploma	High
Yvonne	Desire to learn	GED	GED Diploma	High
Veronica	Get off drugs; welfare, improve her life	GED	GED Diploma	High
Lisa	Wanted to learn and get her diploma	GED	Adult HS Diploma	High
Florine	Children grown; wanted to improve her life	GED	College Courses	Average
Ursala	Desire to learn after overcoming drug addiction	GED	College Courses	Average
Stacy	Desire to learn	GED	Masters' Degree	High
College Courses and Degrees = Gray				

Welfare to Work Record

NAME	Pre-ABLE Program	Post-ABLE Program	Job before Program	Current Job
Barbara	SSI/SSD	SSI/SSD	Homemaker	Care Provider
Isabel	Public Assistance	SSI/SSD	Homemaker	Salvation Army worker
Rita	Food Stamps	SSI/SSD	Homemaker	Practical nurse, part time
Monica	Public Assistance	Support	Homemaker	Tutor coordinator – Lit. Council
Mabel	Public Assistance	Public Assistance	Homemaker	tutor-aide - Elementary School
Henry	Food Stamps	Unemployment Disability	Window Cleaner	Coordinator, Community Project
Kelly	Public Assistance	SSI/SSD	Laundress	Pastor's Assistant, Volunteer
Tanya	Unemployment Disability	Unemployment Disability	Nurse's aide	Domestic Violence, Volunteer
Conrad	Unemployment Disability	Unemployment Disability	Manual laborer	Literacy Outreach - IU
Darcy	Unemployment Disability	Unemployment Disability	Tree Trimmer	College Student
Irene	SSI/SSD	SSI/SSD	Landscaping	College Student
John	SSI/SSD	SSI/SSD	Disabled Student	College Student
Fran	Food Stamps	Food Stamps	Homemaker	Retired - Disabled
Thelma	SSI/SSD	SSI/SSD	Laundress	Retired - Disabled
Noreen		SSI/SSD	Factory Worker	Disabled
Oliver	Unemployment Disability	Unemployment Disability	Truck Driver	Retired - welder
Cora	Public Assistance	Support	Factory Worker	Retired - Security Guard
Agnes	Public Assistance		Homemaker	Daycare Provider/Ministry Training
Enid	Public Assistance		Homemaker	Nurse's Aide
Zach	Public Assistance		ESL Student	Internist/Teacher of Medicine
Gina	Public Assistance		Maid	Radiological Technologist
Joy	Public Assistance		Data Entry Clerk	Computer Network Administrator
Florine	Public Assistance		Cab Driver	Student Services Coordinator
Sophie	Public Assistance		Piecework	H.S. Teacher of the Year
Pamela	Public Assistance		Rehab Director	Teacher – Disabled Children
Katherine	Public Assistance		Homemaker	Coordinator, Teen Leader Program
Veronica	Public Assistance		Babysitter	Adult Ed Teacher, part time
Georgia	Public Assistance		Homemaker	Beauty Operator And Teacher
Della	Public Assistance		Anesthesia Aide	International Travel Counselor
Quincy	Public Assistance		Janitor	Hospital Food Service
Ursala	Public Assistance		Factory worker	Crew leader - Secretarial training
Vu-Lin	Public Assistance		Chicken Cutter	Factory Worker
Carolyn	Public Assistance		Factory Worker	Retired - Center Supervisor
Adele	Public Assistance		Homemaker	Retired - Employment Specialist
Zelda	Public Assistance		Nurse's Aide	Retired
Charlene			Housekeeper	Intensive Case Mgr – Social Service
Lisa			Foster Mother	Church & Community Volunteer
Lydia			Homemaker	School District LD Paraprofessional
Marcia			Cook	Teacher's Aide, Goodwill
Anna			Seamstress	Director AE Support Services
Laurie			Landscaper	Manager's Asst., Auto Dept.

Helping Professions/Jobs=Gray

Welfare to Work Record

NAME	Pre-ABLE Program	Post-ABLE Program	Job before Program	Current Job
Bruce			Mgr, Produce	Teacher, Social Studies
Frank			Food Service Mgr.	Janitor
Benny			Farm Laborer	Clerk, Wal-Mart
Dennis			Laborer	Laborer, Family Business
Ed			Maintenance	Maintenance – College Student
Harold			Bakery Worker	Operator – Duplicating Machine
Ronald			Carpenter	Carpenter – Furniture Company
Richard			Janitor	Mechanic Auto Supply Company
Peter			Utility Worker	Utility Worker
Eva			Nurse's Aide	Clerk, Pharmacy
Bella			Homemaker	Clerk, Food Store
Gertie			Homemaker	Homemaker
Yvonne			Maid	Retired
Danny			Welder	Retired Welder
Kevin			Factory Worker	Retired, General Foreman
Arlene			Security Guard	Teacher's Aide, Charter School
Toby			Homemaker	Teacher's Aide, Head Start
Nina			Homemaker	Domestic Abuse Counselor
Yetta			Homemaker	Caseworker, Youth Services
Nancy			Temple Admin.	Temple Administrator
Sarah			Clerk, Grocery	Teacher/Counselor Family Literacy
Stacy			Waitress	Teacher/Trainer – LD High School
Paula			Cook	Supv., Retarded Children's Service
William			Cook's Helper	Director, National AE Organization
Oscar			Sales Clerk	Manager, MacDonald's
Olive			Mechanic	Owner, Tax Business
Vera			Fork lifter	Owner, Tax Business
Wilma			Clerk, hardware	Owner/mgr. Auto Supply Business
Wylie			Carpenter	Owner, VP, Water Testing Company

Helping Professions/Jobs=Gray