SUCCESSFUL ILLITERATE MEN

by

ROGER CLARK

B.A., Wilfrid Laurier University

M.A., University of Waterloo, 1970

M.ED., Queen's University, 1978

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

NOVEMBER, 1992

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature)

Department of __Administrative, Adult__ and Higher Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date __January 21, 1993__

DE-6 (2/88)

ABSTRACT

Despite widespread concern and many attempts to eradicate illiteracy, it persists. Part of the problem is that too little is known about the people for whom literacy programs are designed. Such programs may fail if they are designed by people who view their clientele as deficient.

This perspective of deficiency is based on two assumptions: first, that literacy is a necessary pre-condition for success in life and second, that illiterate people are lacking in self-confidence, are unable to maintain employment, are poor, and are caught in a cycle of deprivation and undereducation.

This study examines the characteristics and perceptions of illiterate men who have achieved varying degrees of financial and employment success but do not read beyond the grade-three level.

The findings indicate that in spite of deficiencies in reading, illiterate individuals learn a number of coping techniques and manifest innumerable skills and achievements. Thus, a "deficiency" oriented intervention program that over-emphasizes the importance of literacy diminishes the observable accomplishments of the illiterate adult and may fail. Intervention programs designed for illiterate adults need to bolster the participants' sense of accomplishment and teach coping skills as well as literacy skills.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study considers the views of illiterate men on the nature and effects of their illiteracy. These men, unable to read beyond the grade-three level, describe the feelings, ideas, values, and attitudes that inform their daily lives. As a result, new questions about the effects of illiteracy arise. This chapter sets the stage for the study, outlines the problem, explains the research, states relevant definitions, and finally indicates the organization of the dissertation.

Setting the Stage

Many perceive illiteracy to be one of the major problems facing the world's nations. Although not new, this concern for illiteracy is particularly urgent in industrialized nations with their vast numbers of people apparently unable to function in everyday life because they can not read or write. According to a Southam News survey, 5 million illiterate adults live in Canada, about 24 per cent of the adult population (Calamai 1987a, 7). In the United States, conservative estimates place this number between 20 and 30 million (Chisman 1989, iii). Further, the pool of illiterate adults is estimated to grow by 2.3 million every year (Forlizzi 1989, 4). The business world is concerned with the cost of illiteracy as suggested by statistical evidence (Ontario Ministry

of Skills Development 1988). In spite of widespread concern, the problem persists. In the following pages, questions about this important issue are explored in order to establish the basis for this study.

What Is the Popular Perception of Illiteracy?

Illiteracy is generally perceived as affecting people's ability to function in society. Those who cannot read or write are thought to struggle more than others do simply to make a living, raise children, protect their rights, and carry out normal routines like travelling and shopping. Many believe that illiterate people are neither capable of learning nor able to think at even moderate levels of difficulty. Stereotyped images depict illiterate people as embarrassed, withdrawn, and secretive. Generally, they are perceived to need help and to be aware of this need (Hunter and Harman 1979, 110-13).

In society, illiteracy is seen as the cause of numerous problems such as crime, poverty, illness, and political apathy (Graff 1978 and Calamai 1987a). Illiterate people are often considered misfits caught up in a cross-generational, self-perpetuating cycle of poverty. Economically, illiteracy is thought to cost millions as a result of lost work time caused by illness, inefficiency, and injury, while literacy is thought to contribute significantly to economic development (Calamai 1987a, 32).

According to these common biases, illiterate people lack important skills considered necessary for a normal and successful life. Although long held, these views are nowhere defined and are seldom espoused by literacy experts. Yet, these prejudices about illiterate people influence many literacy programs and pervade public thinking, especially

among those groups who affect literacy policy and practice.

Who Fosters and Promotes These Ideas?

Among those fostering such ideas about illiteracy are members of the media.

Typically, newspaper articles concentrate on the problems faced by illiterate people where

stories, often emotionally charged, are written to encourage public opinion for new

programs or campaigns. The Southam News report on illiteracy in Canada, Broken

Words: Why Five Million Canadians Are Illiterate (Calamai 1987a), is the latest

example of such an attempt to affect public opinion and government policy. Since the

report's publication, an increase in public interest in illiteracy in Canada has occurred.

Statistics contained in the report have been employed by government to support public

policy initiatives.

As well, television specials and Hollywood take a similarly biased approach.

Movies such as Stanley and Iris (Sellers and Winitsky 1989) present images of illiterate

people incapable of any achievement until they are literate. While literacy is a most

desirable goal, the depiction of the illiterate person as someone without skill and ability is

both unjustifiable and damaging.

In addition to the media, governments find it useful to maintain stereotypes. The

image of the deficient illiterate person helps sustain support for worthwhile literacy

programs but, at the same time, may deflect public concern from other causes of poverty

and social unrest which governments appear either unwilling or unable to confront. The

Hunter and Harman report on illiteracy in the United States (1979) sparked North

American interest. The First Lady, Mrs. Bush, has sponsored a campaign in the United States while various provincial governments are responding to the Southam report and to pressures from business in Canada. Responses similar to these have occurred elsewhere in the world; active literacy campaigns are run in developing countries like Nicaragua and Brazil. In addition, the problems of illiteracy have become a high priority for the United Nations as evidenced by its declaring 1990 International Literacy Year. The war on illiteracy has become a major focus for governments and international agencies responding to a world-wide call for equality and a fair chance for the poor and underprivileged. This is troubling only when the campaign for literacy denigrates illiterate individuals, thus denying quantifiable strengths that might otherwise be built upon in the attempt to increase literacy.

A third group fostering negative images of illiteracy and illiterate people is made up of teachers, academics, administrators and counsellors associated with literacy programs. Some providers of these programs seem to feel that advancing the concept of the illiterate person's inadequacy will somehow hasten the problem's solution and not discourage otherwise eager participants in programs offering to expand their ability to function in the world. Frequent advertisements in major magazines suggesting that illiterate people "cannot read this page" or cannot function well in daily life bring the seriousness of the problem to the reading public. These advertisements guarantee support for government policies and grants and attract volunteers for financially strapped programs. Unfortunately, they also have the negative effect of diminishing the self-esteem and ability of the people they are attempting to help.

The final and increasingly influential voice affecting general views of illiteracy comes from the business world. The workplace is now a major focus for the energies expended in the name of a more literate labour pool. Millions of dollars, it is said, are being lost yearly as a result of the dangers or inefficiencies involved in employing illiterate people. Business is supporting workplace learning centres that it hopes will stem the tide of current or future economic loss. Clearly, ample reason exists for business to be involved in education at all levels, since government funding for literacy programs has been unpredictable and sporadic. Since the time and financial investments aimed at increasing literacy are so great, it is crucial that programs designed to do so be effective.

When so many interest groups foster and promote public interest in illiteracy, its persistence calls for investigation.

What Is Happening in the Campaign Against Illiteracy?

In 1983, Washington stated that 2.3 million adults were enrolled in federally funded Adult (Basic) Education (ABE) programs -- usually some form of high school upgrading -- aimed at improving literacy and job skills. (In Ontario, ABE most often refers to basic literacy and numeracy courses only). Given an estimated 23 million functionally illiterate adults at that time (Thomas 1983, 10), the participation rate in these programs would have been about ten per cent; Washington further pointed to a typical dropout rate for ABE programs of fifty per cent, suggesting a net participation rate of five per cent. This rate of participation was an improvement on the one per cent noted by Griffith and

Cervero in 1977, and may reflect improved courses or ways of reaching undereducated adults; however, the fact remains that few undereducated adults do or did take advantage of opportunities to eliminate their illiteracy. This result confirms earlier findings associating a lack of education with low participation rates in adult education courses (Cross 1981, 54; Glustrom 1983, 19).

Much money has been invested in ABE and Adult Literacy programs in the recent past with periodic reminders of the prevailing beliefs regarding the great social and economic problem of illiteracy (Cairns 1977, 43-51; Dickinson 1978, 83-89; Wellborn 1982, 53-56; Washington 1983 ; Coleman 1983 ; and Calamai 1987a). Yet participation remains at five per cent. In addition, completion of literacy programs does not lead to the kind of improved work experience or quality of life that people are often led to believe it does (Levine 1982; Berlin 1983). Thus, those promoting literacy as a solution to many problems are faced with poor results and an unresponsive target population.

Why Is the Fight Against Illiteracy Not Succeeding?

A number of reasons for this lack of success can be hypothesized from an appraisal of the evidence. One relates to the existence of assumptions about illiterate people that appear to underlie much of what is studied or planned in this area. A second relates to the lack of knowledge about illiterate people and their perceptions, while a third relates to the existence of definitions of literacy that may be conceptually inadequate and misapplied.

Assumptions. Three assumptions about illiterate adults seem to have considerable

effect on programs offered and research conducted. The first is that illiteracy is a problem and is recognized as such by all illiterate adults. Since illiterate individuals are expected to find their condition a burden, virtually no one mentions the existence, despite the evidence, of adults who do not feel so burdened. The second is that literacy is deemed a precondition for learning, and thus, almost without exception, ABE programs include a literacy component. The third concerns the belief in the necessity for a universal standard of literacy, an assumption that leads to the idea that being literate represents one side of a dichotomous state -- either you are or are not literate (Guthrie and Kirsch 1984, 351-55). As a result, most programs neither offer different levels of literacy competence, nor evaluate success in terms of these varying degrees. A person who achieves a pre-set grade level is assumed to be "literate", and hence should be as prepared as any other person who successfully completes the same requirements. These assumptions effectively limit the pool of potential ABE users. The first assumption excludes those who do not find illiteracy a burden while the second eliminates those inclined towards methods of learning other than the printed word. A recent study by James and Galbraith (1985) found that adults ranked print fifth in a list of perceptual learning preferences after visual, interactive, aural, and haptic modes. The third assumption does not recognize that people function at different levels of literacy. Consequently, programs that establish and aim for one level may not meet the needs of potential users who are on some other level. Combined, these assumptions restrict the potential client group considerably.

Lack of Knowledge. Very little is actually known about the illiterate adult

population beyond the prejudices of the dominant literate society. With the exception of researchers such as Fingeret (1982a), Sisco (1983), Heisel and Larson (1984), Manning (1984), and Wood (1984), few have attempted to measure or identify the perceptions of illiterate adults; no one has done so with a sample employing multiple selection criteria. For instance, it is unclear whether illiterate adults even view their world in ways similar to those of literate adults. If the perceptions of the illiterate minority contrast with those of the dominant group, then poor participation rates in courses created by the dominant group should be expected. To develop programs without consulting the proposed users of the service is inefficient.

Definitions. The definitions of literacy forming the conceptual basis for policy and practice are often limiting in scope and focus. As with literacy research, they tend to be narrowly fashioned by the perspective of the literate society. Illiteracy becomes the opposite of literacy rather than an entirely different and often helpful means of perceiving the world. Paramount among the weaknesses of definitions arising from this narrow view is the attempt to establish a universal standard of literacy. Recent studies (Powell 1978; Levine 1982; and Guthrie and Kirsch 1984) suggest that people in general embrace varying degrees and levels of literacy; some may be partially literate or their chosen life-style may require a higher or lower level of mastery of language. As long as these considerations are ignored, programs based on the narrower view of literacy as a single, typical and wholly self-sufficient or independent state are likely to be poorly attended and thus relatively unsuccessful.

An additional irony arises from attempts to define literacy. As stated, definitions

tend to be narrow and skill-oriented. Yet a tendency exists to take this narrowly defined group, that is, those who cannot read or write according to a single standard, and assign it a wide range of characteristics. These characteristics, described earlier, range from embarrassment and withdrawal to an inclination towards crime and a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and ignorance. The result of this unique defining process is a tendency to include all illiterate people in one definition and then to attribute as wide a range of afflictions as possible to them; consequently, people are often misdiagnosed and programs sometimes miss the mark.

This narrow definition of literacy does not guarantee any sense of unanimity. In fact, almost as many definitions of literacy exist as people or institutions offering them. As a result, programs to alleviate illiteracy are difficult to coordinate and produce widely varying results.

The total effect of these assumptions is a continuing restrictive focus on illiterate adults. In what is often considered to be the definitive statement on types of illiterate adults, Hunter and Harman recognize four sub-groups among the illiterate population (1979, 110-113). Although categorized according to relative degrees of success, illiterate adults are perceived to be suffering from the same problem and to be in need of help. Little or no consideration is given to illiterate adults who manage to cope well with daily life and who perceive little if any need to improve their skill with the written word. Nor does the Hunter and Harman classification recognize large groups of adults who, although they can read, choose not to when they can avoid it. One result of this narrow focus may be that programs based on these assumptions about illiteracy ignore the existence of

illiterate adults who are reasonably successful and satisfied with their circumstances, thereby excluding a considerable part of the illiterate population. It seems unreasonable to expect high participation rates in programs offered under these assumptions. In addition, successful illiterate adults demonstrate useful and necessary skills and abilities that are not normally acquired as part of formal schooling.

These discrepancies and contradictions call for further research into the perceptions of illiterate adults in order to correct the low participation rates and unimpressive results of literacy programs (Roomkin 1973, 87-96; Moore 1978, 190-200; Levine 1982, 249-66; Washington 1983; and Berlin 1983).

The Problem

Despite wide concern for the problems of illiteracy and well publicized government efforts to eradicate it, the numbers of illiterate people are greater than ten or twenty years ago. Target clientele still resist programs aimed at extricating them from what is sometimes described as a hopeless situation. Even when illiterate people register in the literacy programs created for their benefit, little personal or financial change results in their lives. Why?

The lack of success of well intended programs may result from ignorance about the needs and aspirations of prospective learners and the skills they require. With these shortcomings in mind, this research aims at discovering how illiterate men with varying degrees of economic success perceive themselves and cope with both their illiteracy and the demands of the literate world.

The Purpose

The purpose of this research is two-fold: one, to examine the accuracy of the view of the illiterate male as deficient; and two, to discover how illiterate men cope with literate society and through these coping skills become financially successful.

This study focuses on men for three reasons. First, a study dealing only with illiterate women was in progress (Horsman 1990) at the time of preparation; second, as a male, this researcher expected better success interviewing men; and third, a sample of men was likely to reflect better career prospects (as they are narrowly defined in this study) given conditions of employment and opportunities for women over the past fifty years. The study's narrow definition of success embraces only income and employment records. Study subjects deemed to have been most successful were currently earning $30,000 or more per year (the Canadian average as of 1986, the most up-to-date census material available at this writing) and had rarely been unemployed since having left school. Results of this study were expected to contradict arguments positing wage and employment opportunities as the key benefits of becoming literate. Admittedly, success has a much wider scope than it is given here; however, the commonly accepted standard of financial success allows for discussion that relates directly to the current popular debate over the values of literacy training.

Successful illiterate adults pique interest because they contradict the numerous prejudices against them. They function well in society without supposed essentials like the ability to read and write; they appear unmoved by the literacy debate, thus presenting a clear minority view; and, they have developed certain skills that can at least partially

account for their success. Thus, a consideration of successful illiterate men should uncover useful ways of improving programs aimed at increasing job prospects for prospective clients. Specific reasons for the failure of many literacy programs might also be found.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation's eight chapters consist of a literature review, a description of data collection and analysis, the reporting of results, a profile of a typical successful illiterate male compared to the popular perception of illiteracy and to the related stream of research begun by Fingeret (1982a), and a summary and conclusion.

Appended are copies of the original and revised interview protocols; biographical sketches and charts comparing each interviewee; tables of biographical data for all those interviewed; tables of perceptions; and an overview of the process of locating interviewees and conducting interviews.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literacy issue has inspired an immense body of literature, with topics ranging widely to include everything from the meaning of literacy to programs, problems, and research. Much that is written is emotionally charged as a result of the sensitivity of the issue.

First examined here is the view of illiteracy common to the literature, coupled with accepted categories and assumptions, and recent writing suggesting a new perspective. Then presented is a view of how ignorance and misperception distort commonly held views about illiterate people, revealing how various social agencies contribute to these distortions.

Typical North American policy and program responses, most of them built on possibly inaccurate perceptions of the problem, are then considered. Identified next are ideas, criticisms, and suggestions proposed in some of the newer literature that might determine the direction of new research and improve our present responses to illiteracy.

The last section, "Developing a Research Plan", includes a brief rationale for the research method chosen and an overview of recent and related literacy research.

Perceptions of the Nature of Illiteracy

Many believe that illiteracy makes life harder for all illiterate adults than for their literate counterparts. This perception and some of the alternative ways of looking at the effects of illiteracy provide the basis for much of the literature reviewed in this chapter.

Categories of Illiterate People

The four categories of illiterate adults described here represent generally accepted conceptions of the range of illiterate "types". In turn, these ideas influence the design and implementation of literacy campaigns and learning activities.

In their 1979 report to the Ford Foundation, Hunter and Harman attempted to develop categories of illiterate adults in order to avoid "blurring the genuine distinctions in the situations, needs, and aspirations of those with educational deficiencies" and to stimulate a "balanced approach to research . . . to obtain accurate and systematic data that does not distort reality and that is useful for policy-making" (Hunter and Harman, 110). The Hunter and Harman categories are similar to those first suggested by the Appalachian Adult Education Centre and identify four groups in what they refer to as the "broad spectrum" of "disadvantaged" adults. The following passages provide a brief synopsis of each of the Hunter and Harman categories.

Group 1. At one end of the spectrum are those who appear to be most like the dominant American cultural group. Although members of this group have dropped out of school, they continue to learn through non-formal learning experiences, occasional courses, and reading. Most are regularly employed, either inside or outside the home,

and raise families. In addition, they are surrounded by people who have completed their schooling. Members of this group are embarrassed by their lack of a diploma, a lack that for them is a barrier to advancement and self-esteem. The members of this group generally wish to become literate and often do well in school when they return to a program of study.

Group 2. The members of the second group have more serious educational deficiencies. Having left school earlier than Group 1, they have never really learned to read; however, they still belong to social groups where literacy is assumed. Their embarrassment stems not only from their lack of a diploma but also from their inability to do simple tasks. They live in fear of discovery, often going to extremes to hide the problem. They have trouble admitting this difficulty and may even secretly seek help. They are slightly harder to reach than Group 1.

Group 3. These people suffer multiple deprivations, live in high poverty areas, have generally failed at school. As a result, they place a low value on schooling; if they return, they end up with little hope that things can improve. The members of this group are even harder to reach than the other two; they not only have hostile feelings toward education but also tend to live among people with lower skills who are sceptical about their return to school.

Group 4. The members of this group merge on the spectrum with Group 3 in experience and environment but have even less hope of improvement. Their interaction with the literate society is minimal; they appear unable to take advantage of programs set up for them. They seem doomed to a cycle of poverty and deprivation although some

hold out hope for their children (Hunter and Harman 1979, 110-113).

Although at one end of this spectrum group members have had moderate success and appear to fit in with the literate society, members of all groups are deemed to need literacy education, either as a result of their own or others' assessments. Implicit in this categorization is the assumption that those who are illiterate, to whatever degree, would be able to improve themselves materially and financially by improving their level of literacy. Thus, literacy becomes a prerequisite not only for economic success but also for peace of mind and a positive self-image. Situations in which literacy is unrelated to the achievement of success are not considered.

The four categories suggest types of educationally disadvantaged adults who are sensitive in varying degrees to their supposed disadvantage, and who may even see a need for more schooling. However, this categorization assumes that all those who lack a high school diploma also lack the skills and benefits accruing to those who achieve this educational plateau. Thus, such categories fail to acknowledge the possible existence of adults who lack credentials but have steady employment, a stable home life, a house of their own, and seem untroubled by their inability to read. Such are the adults with whom this study is most concerned, adults whose existence at least partially brings into question assumptions concerning the disadvantages of illiteracy. The existence of illiterate adults whose lives are relatively normal in every way provides researchers with an interesting population for whom something other than literacy has led to success.

The Existence of Other Groups

Richard Darville, quoted in the 1987 Southam News report <u>Broken Words</u>, says that, "the stereotype of the illiterate down-and-outers just doesn't hold . . . . They are good workers, loving parents, helpful friends and neighbours" (Calamai 1987, 16). Darville's words suggest the existence of illiterate adults who do not fit neatly into Hunter and Harman's four categories. When compared to those in the conventional categories, important sub-groups are revealed within the larger illiterate group about whom little is known.

Heisel and Larson, in a study of elderly blacks in Newark, New Jersey, have found that even though most of their subjects are considered functionally illiterate (having completed, on average, only grade six), seventy-five per cent consider themselves average or better readers, and only ten to fifteen per cent have difficulty functioning in their own milieu. Rather than being embarrassed, they are particularly satisfied with their achievements (Heisel and Larson 1984, 63-70).

In a study aimed at replicating Allen Tough's "Adult Learning Projects" study with rural adults, especially those with fewer than twelve years of formal education, Burt Sisco has found that people in this group tend to pursue self-directed learning with a commitment similar to those in Tough's original population of college graduates. Illiterate individuals display neither the reluctance to learn, nor the perception that illiteracy stifles their learning (Sisco 1983, 14-15).

Arlene Fingeret's work also provides interesting insights into the perceptions of illiterate adults. She has found many of them share a strong bond and social relationship

with an extended social group, one often containing illiterate members. Tasks are shared; each contributes. In addition, Fingeret has found some illiterate adults with a strong self-concept based on an ability to solve problems. They refer to their skill as "common sense", and hold it equivalent to "book learning" (Fingeret 1982b).

In a study that focuses on independent black businessmen in the Syracuse area, Allen Manning defines his group as having an annual income of at least $20,000 and a reading level lower than that of the average grade four student. He has discovered that these men do not consider their level of literacy a particular problem, even though some of them have been involved in literacy classes. More important for them is their ability in handling the system, or "learning the ropes", as they call it (Manning 1984).

F.L. Graves and B. Kinsley have identified another significant group. By analyzing statistical data on reading activity and level of education, they discovered the existence of "elective illiterates" (1983, 315-331). These people can read and write but choose not to. According to Graves and Kinsley's statistics, "elective illiterates" account for 9.2% of the overall population ranging from a high of 21.8% among people with public school education to a low of .08% among those with a university degree. No stigma is attached to their non-reading; they feel little or no need to read in their daily lives. By extension then, the emphasis on the importance of reading for daily functioning may be misplaced.

The above studies indicate that some people are not easily included in Hunter and Harman's four categories. Not everyone regards the acquisition of reading and writing skills as a prerequisite for normal functioning. Some people do not feel particularly embarrassed or inferior because of their perceived disadvantage. Others appear to

prosper and do not need to be literate to earn a living. A knowledge of how these people feel about themselves and their achievements would be illuminating. They can be identified either as belonging in the Hunter and Harman categories or as being distinctly different from them. In any case, theirs is an experience that provides insight into how people succeed.

Assumptions and Their Weaknesses

For many years, certain assumptions about literacy have informed both research and practice. In some ways, these assumptions have limited the nature of research undertaken and the types of programs offered to illiterate people. An awareness of these assumptions, their historical origins and inherent inadequacy, is paramount in further research. The assumptions under scrutiny are that a direct causal relationship exists between literacy and social problems such as crime, unemployment, and poverty, that literacy is an essential factor in the economic development of both the individual and the society, that literacy is a prerequisite for participation in the political process, and that illiterate people are less suited than literate people to career advancement, and therefore are less likely to achieve it.

Illiteracy and social problems. The link between illiteracy and social problems like crime, unemployment and poverty is often discussed in the popular press. On May 17, 1982, the U.S. News and World Report quoted Barbara Bush, the wife of the then Vice President of the United States: "Most people don't know we spend $6.6 billion dollars per year to keep 750,000 illiterates in jail, ... I'm trying to remind people that there's

a direct correlation between crime and illiteracy and unemployment" (Wellborn 1982,

53). A year later, in the Los Angeles Times of September 9, 1983, then U.S. Education

Secretary, Terrel H. Bell said, "Functional illiteracy correlates highly to crime rates and

. . . it obviously relates to the great unemployment problem" (Irwin and Houston, I-7).

On September 9, in an article in the Washington Post, E. Thomas Coleman, a Republican

representative from Missouri stated, "People who can't read earn $4,000 per year less

than their counterparts who can" (1983, A17). He further asserted that "functional

illiteracy is costing the society as a whole an estimated $6.7 billion in federal social

spending programs, and $6 billion in lost production . . . this year" (A17). These views

also exist outside of America. The 1987 Southam News report on illiteracy in Canada

expresses the author's belief that illiteracy among Canadians contributes directly to the

costs of social assistance programs and of running prisons (Calamai 1987a).

The positing of this causal link is not a recent phenomenon. Harvey Graff notes

that, in the nineteenth century, Egerton Ryerson, the founder of the public school system

in Ontario, "succinctly stated that ignorance -- the lack of schooling -- was the first factor

in the life of crime" (Graff 1979, 239). The Globe, a Toronto newspaper of the time,

published a similar viewpoint: "'Educate your people and your gaols will be

abandoned'"(239). Another value of literacy was in the elimination of poverty. Again

Graff quotes The Globe of 1851: "If we make our people intelligent, they cannot fail to

be prosperous" (240). The history of these assumptions can be traced back further

(Goody and Watt 1968; Graff 1981; and Pattison 1982). The entrenchment of this

tradition in perpetuating beliefs about illiteracy should not be underestimated; values and

beliefs have been passed from generation to generation.

Also important, however, is a growing awareness that any causal relationship between illiteracy and social ills may be exaggerated, if not completely untrue. Hunter and Harman target this causality precisely: "We must dispel two myths: that literacy is the primary cause of progress, and that illiteracy is the cause of poverty and injustice" (1979 109). Pattison (1982) agrees: "Reading and writing in itself is a neutral talent incapable of effectuating change without some further training" (152). Michael Fox (1986) states "that improvement [literacy] will not automatically get [illiterate people] better jobs or keep them out of trouble" (10). Finally, Forlizzi (1989) says that "the role of literacy in helping to reduce the number of homeless is rather controversial as the correlation between homelessness and illiteracy has not yet been determined" (6).

Some who accept a causal relationship between literacy and one or more of the economic factors listed above suggest the opposite causal link. Hunter and Harman (1979) describe this thinking in the following three passages: First, "If it is true . . . that literacy skills are not sought unless they are generally considered desirable within the culture -- that is unless 'literacy consciousness' is the norm . . . -- then it is probable that literacy skills follow rather than precede development"(15). Second, "Research suggests that poverty and the power structures of society are more responsible for low levels of literacy than the reverse"(10). Finally, "Acquisition of reading and writing skills would eliminate conventional illiteracy among many, but would have no appreciable effect on other factors that perpetuate the poverty of their lives" (p.10). Graff (1979) also raises the question of causality repeatedly.

Little has been written to contradict the belief that illiteracy causes crime; however, Graff (1979) found that, in 19th century Ontario, "illiterates in Middlesex and London were not the most frequent offenders; nevertheless, they were punished with greater regularity than others" (256). He believes that the rates of conviction were related to patterns of discrimination and social prejudice against the Irish, the lower classes, and women.

The issue of the relationship between literacy and the various socio-economic problems remains unsettled. Statistical data imply a strong correlation, often interpreted as causal. However, no concrete proof of causality has been established, while several important writers consider it reasonable to assume either no causal link, or one opposite that of conventional thinking.

Literacy and economic development. The UNESCO "Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education" suggests that literacy be "an integral part of adult education because it is a crucial factor in political and economic development, in technological progress, and in social and cultural change" (1976, 1). The perception of a close relationship between literacy and economic development seems to have arisen concurrently with the concept of functional literacy. According to this concept, literacy is an important tool for the successful economic development of communities (Bhola 1979, 38; Hunter and Harman 1979, 14; Tripathi 1970, 5). When primarily associated with programs of economic development in the Third World or undeveloped nations, the belief that literacy is an integral part of economic development remains relatively unchallenged. Concern arises when claims are made about the value of literacy (most

often functional) for personal economic improvement.

Focusing on the economic benefits of literacy, Scharles (1970) states:

> Generally speaking, investment in human capital at the basic or primary educational level provides greater returns than similar investment at higher educational levels. Basic education investment in the United States provides a nine per cent return on investment for two years of schooling and twenty-nine per cent return for eight years of schooling. (138)

Fundamental to the perception of many is Scharles' statement concerning the relationships between basic education (typically including literacy) and job acquisition along with personal economic welfare. Of course, this argument ignores the fact that highly educated people may also be unemployed and that certain crimes can only be committed by educated people. Superficially, the idea that being educated lessens the chance of suffering some social ill makes sense. Most statistics show that more education brings better job prospects and generally higher incomes. The relationship appears solid as long as social factors such as home environment and family tradition are ignored.

Neither is the supposed link between literacy and economic development lost on those who promote the idea of illiteracy as a national disgrace. For example, the Southam News report of October 1987 spoke openly of the economic costs of undereducation. Among these costs were unnecessary unemployment insurance payments, inflated prices to cover mistakes, subsidies for industrial retraining, lost taxes, and reduced international competitiveness (Calamai 1987a, 31-33). In June of 1988, Paul Jones, President of the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy, told businessmen in Cambridge, Ontario that illiteracy costs Canada about $10 billion a year (Wood 1988, B3).

However, an assessment of claims that basic education at the adult level can provide

improved jobs and income reveals a slightly different picture; some writers again challenge this assumption. Levine (1982) states that "the elevation of literacy as a panacea for adults is disingenuous, particularly with respect to the goal of employment in competitive labour markets" (250). Echoing this view, Berlin (1983), in a Ford Foundation report entitled "The Role of Remedial Education in Improving School Achievement, Job Training and Future Employment," states that "researchers contend that increases in literacy levels are rarely associated with increases in employment, job advancement, personal growth, or economic growth" (12). A study by Moore (1978) also indicates that "even with the acquisition of basic literacy skills, most jobs are low-paying with questionable promotion or long-term employment possibilities" (198). Another study, conducted by Roomkin (1973) in Milwaukee, checks the relationship between improved incomes and adult education. He finds the average pre-tax benefit for trainees is $159 per year while the average cost per student (based on 307 hours) is $1,274 (93). Apparently, little has been uncovered to counter these conclusions; James (1990) can still say that "it is rarely the case that literacy enables a greater degree of control over one's life, particularly in the workplace" (17). Consequently, the belief that literacy automatically leads to better jobs and higher incomes for adult learners must be challenged.

The history of this belief has been explored by several writers (Goody and Watt 1968; Soltow and Stevens 1977; Graff 1978, 1979; Pattison 1982). Some evidence correlates literacy to wealth and job mobility, and establishes a popular perception of such a relationship (Soltow and Stevens 1977). However, nothing conclusive regarding

the possibility of a causal relationship exists. In fact, Heath's suggestion that "if students acquired the moral values, social norms, and general rational and cultural behaviours of literate citizens (even though their skills of communication were questionable), occupational mobility often resulted" (1980, 125) implies that other factors ought to be considered as causes of wealth and job success.

Whether or not literacy is a primary factor in economic development remains a significant issue in the ongoing debate. Making literacy an issue is of use to industries and businesses that employ educational certification to screen prospective employees. Governments can exploit beliefs surrounding literacy as a means of developing popular policies. Finally, developing nations may find it economically useful to equate becoming literate with throwing off the shackles of tradition and entering the twentieth century. On the other hand, the failure to see the opposite view continues to place competent illiterate people at a disadvantage when they compete for jobs in the marketplace, ultimately depriving it of people who can contribute.

Literacy and political participation. Few argue with the belief that literacy is prerequisite for participating in democracy. This belief appears sound, supported by evidence of the need for reading and writing in an informed electorate. Presumably the effective functioning of government depends upon a citizenry able to read government publications and to fill out forms. In addition, a citizen must read reports on candidates so that informed decisions can be made. Citizens interacting with government need to deal with printed material. For this, literacy is required, the higher the level the more assured the success, so the traditional argument goes. But the apparent truth of these

points is based on assumptions concerning literacy and its relationship to the democratic political process.

The first assumption is that literacy is a human right. This concept was made part of the Declaration of Persepolis in 1975 (Thomas 1983, 239), a declaration that embraces two commonly held ideas. First, literacy is deemed a factor in developing individual freedom and potential (Thomas 1983, 9), and in exercising democratic rights like freedom of the press. It is commonly believed that human rights and democracy are interrelated and causally linked; neither exists without the other. Second, the idea of a "right" and a "need" are conflated, making the words synonymous. It seems natural to assume that if a personal right exists, the individual must need it; however, literacy may be optional. For example, with communication advances brought about by technological innovations, citizens may well be informed of political issues without reading about them (Harman 1987, 36).

A second implied assumption is that only literate people can make sound decisions. Naturally, since democratic principles require citizens to participate in decision-making, citizens must be literate. This line of argument is enshrined in the liberal philosophy of John Stuart Mill: "Universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement . . . I regard it as wholly inadmissible that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write and . . . perform the common operations of arithmetic" (Pattison 1982, 148). An unwritten premise that in a free society truth will conquer and that men will be reasonable if they are schooled underlies these ideas (Pattison 1982).

A third assumption presupposes that democracy and literacy have always existed

together (Goody and Watt 1968). It is an assumption that relates the earliest forms of democracy with Athenian Greece, an era associated with renowned philosophers and critical thinkers. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the early Athenian experiment involved direct participation by member citizens who were not required to be literate in order to be allowed to vote.

The assumptions underlying the belief in and commitment to literacy as a prerequisite for participation in the political process are questionable. Another way of looking at the link between literacy and political involvement has to do with the effect of reading and writing on the distribution of political power.

Pattison (1982) states a possibly exaggerated view in quoting eminent anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, who says that "the introduction of writing is invariably followed by a consolidation of power in the hands of an authoritarian elite" (61). After all, the democratic tradition can be undermined by significant factors other than the mere ability of its citizens to read and write. Yet Graff (1979), in researching public education policy, found the link between literacy and moral training as a means supposed to prevent unruliness among newly literate groups. Theoretically, literacy alone could lead to subversive activity, since free thinking and open debate, without moral judgement or political orthodoxy to temper them, would naturally lead to revolution. Graff indicates that this attempt to use literacy to control disadvantaged groups was the design of leaders such as Egerton Ryerson (21-48). Today, one might consider our leaders incapable of formulating such a comprehensive design. However, the machinery to preserve and promote a continued dominance by the hegemonic social elite exists in the form of a

bureaucracy and an educational system, both of which can be controlled by public policy formulated by those in power, and both of which can exert considerable influence over public opinion.

The role of literacy here is interesting. Pattison (1982) suggests that ABE training makes learners more efficient, not more intelligent, and that its main usefulness is in preparing learners for the transfer of basic information (174). He suggests a breakdown in social obedience without literacy (179). Johan Galtung's article entitled "Literacy, Education, and Schooling -- For What?" suggests that "literacy is there to a large extent to create an illusion of equality" (1981, 278). He speaks mainly of literacy as a tool to receive information and thus it "is not functional; it is only a statistical artifact for large groups of the population in underdeveloped and overdeveloped countries alike, and probably even more in the latter because they are more routinized in their work structures" (279). The most telling criticism comes with Michael James' claim that literacy does not "translate into political consciousness, awareness of basic rights, or an ability to demystify social reality" (1990, 17), and that " literacy alone rarely guarantees privilege, access, or political leverage" (1990, 15). These concerns and critiques are all based on an interpretation of literacy as non-active, passive, receptive. In our society, the majority of literate people are limited to this receptive literacy and this by itself is unlikely to allow a more active participation in the political process since having received information, it is very difficult to respond other than at voting time.

Statistical proof that literacy is a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of democracy is lacking. High literacy rates in democracies may merely reflect the

increased availability of popular education or a very loose definition of literacy, such as the ability to sign one's name or fill out a form. However, the seeming logic appears persuasive, and further information about the political activities of illiterate adults will be needed to determine the truth.

Literacy and superiority. Judgements of superiority or inferiority are based upon a comparison of something against a selected standard. Standards in turn are set by those desiring to make a comparison. Consequently, statements about superiority or inferiority are relative. However, when large groups subscribe to the same values, common standards emerge; if the groups also have social, cultural, economic, or political power, these standards may then be imposed upon those lacking power. In the West, the belief in the equality of beings before God has been a social and political rallying point for almost two centuries; yet, whites have been deemed superior to blacks, men to women, the working to the unemployed, the educated to the uneducated, and the literate to the illiterate. In each case, the criteria have been decided by the power elite to reflect their values and privileges. Too often, superiority and inferiority have been regarded as innate to the group rather than reflections of opportunities for those groups.

Contemporary society and culture are dominated by literate forms; most people are literate (especially those in positions of influence). Thus the belief in literates' superiority and hence illiterates' inferiority has, as we might expect, wide acceptance. As Bormuth (1978) rightly states, the value of literacy increases in proportion to the number of literate individuals in a community. In a contemporary society that attempts to see itself from a global perspective, the word community expands greatly in meaning. So

communities in which no one is literate can, in the context of a global perspective, be viewed as inferior as long as the usual biases of Western industrialized countries are made to apply.

The assumed inferiority of illiterate people is perhaps more dangerous because it is implied in much that is written about them, both in the popular press and in serious academic works. Whereas academics were in the past forthrightly prejudiced in the views that they expressed on paper (Levine 1982, 95-98), today the implications of inferiority are more subtle. Although theirs are not blatantly prejudicial statements, they are often accepted and become part of the rationale for saying that illiterate adults are inferior to literate ones. As Levine points out, "Ideas like 'the culture of poverty' and 'the cycle of transmitted deprivation' arm investigators right from the start with enhanced expectations of . . . 'differentness'" (1982, 98). Added to this are euphemisms such as "educationally disadvantaged" which often have an effect contrary to that intended. Furthermore, hearing or reading about numbers of illiterate adults in jail, unemployed, or living in poverty merely increases this belief in inferiority. All in all, it is a powerful persuader.

Some evidence suggests that the superiority of literate people is not assured even by their own standards. For instance, Scribner and Cole (1981) report that "research does not support designing literacy programs on the assumption that non-literates do not think abstractly, do not reason logically, or lack other basic mental processes" (459). Works by Sisco (1983) and Brockett (1983) suggest that undereducated and illiterate adults do plan and participate in learning projects almost to the same degree that the highly

educated do. In addition, Machalaba in the January 17, 1984 edition of the Wall Street Journal, discussed the financial success of two illiterate males (1, 17). Thus, though sparse, some evidence exists for believing that some illiterate adults do manage well and are not inferior to literate adults.

Arlene Fingeret (1983) has discovered that illiterate people are also involved in standard setting. In her survey of urban illiterate adults, she discovered a negative image of literate people. Her group value "common sense" over "book learning" and have developed a strong community bond based on their shared illiteracy. They do not feel inferior to literate people at all.

The idea that being literate makes a person superior to an illiterate person seems to rest largely on society's being generally dominated by literate people. Consequently, literate people set the standards and make the rules. The values and norms of the literate therefore continue to be the values and norms of society as a whole; only when the voices of illiterate people are heard will it be possible to begin to shed some light on the validity of this widely held belief about the superiority of those who are able to read and write over those who are not.

Much of what has been written about illiteracy tends to look judgementally on illiterate people and their potential; yet this unsympathetic view may not be supportable by all of the evidence. Not all illiterate adults fit the stereotypical models projected by the Hunter and Harman categories. The supposed causal relationships between literacy and social problems like crime, poverty, and unemployment are suspect. Factors other than literacy help shape the individual's economic development. The supposed

relationship between literacy and political participation is not entirely clear, nor is the supposition that illiterate people have inferior ability or potential when compared to their literate counterparts.

This evidence indicates a great need to learn more about the lives of illiterate people, for only by acquiring such knowledge can we test the assumptions that presently inform theory and practice.

Forces and Interests That Perpetuate

the Myths About Illiteracy

Negative views of illiterate adults are perpetuated by ways of thinking about them that are too often guided by misleading definitions, assumptions and ignorance, as well as by interest groups such as the media, government, literacy providers, business groups, and academics, all of whom are involved in forming the popular view of illiteracy and determining policy and practice. Consideration of these agencies and their views is given here, along with examples of some alternative thinking on the matter.

Ways of Thinking About Illiteracy

Inaccurate ways of thinking about illiterate adults perpetuate negative views.

Misleading definitions. The definitions of literacy that guide the development of policy and practice have changed yet literacy has usually been considered to be some kind of absolute state -- either you are or you are not literate (Guthrie and Kirsch 1984, 351-55). In addition, definitions have, with few exceptions, been based on a universal

standard; that literacy has many levels of difficulty and degrees of achievement has rarely

been addressed (Powell 1978, 3-8). As a result, programs guided by universal,

unidimensional definitions tend to ignore unique individual contexts and needs. Thus, the

possibility exists that groups within illiterate society are not served by these programs and

their success in the programs is therefore limited.

Another related problem is that literacy is often narrowly defined in terms of a level

or range of skills, yet is often interpreted to mean much more than simply the ability to

read and write at a certain level. The assumptions about illiteracy and illiterate people

revealed earlier in this chapter have become almost automatic responses. By association,

therefore, being illiterate is equated with being embarrassed, politically inactive, unable

to learn, unlikely to succeed, and troubled by illiteracy.

Because these automatic associations are taken for granted, all illiterate people have

been lumped together in many people's minds; programs for the benefit of illiterate adults

have been designed assuming that they all have similar needs and beliefs about their

possible shortcomings. As a result, programs have been designed along practical lines:

literacy has been seen as required to facilitate the achieving of other goals, like getting a

job or improving one's life. Consequently, economically successful illiterate adults who

do not perceive a need for literacy skills for practical purposes may not be attracted to

literacy programs.

Ignorance, assumptions, and misperceptions. Only a few researchers, like

Fingeret, Manning, and Wood, have delved deeply into the world of the illiterate person.

Many program planners, literacy workers, and volunteer tutors would disagree, but it can

be argued that even though these people expend a great deal of time and passion, they are often motivated by concern for the problems that illiteracy causes. When this is the case, they bring to their work preconceptions about the nature of their students' abilities and are largely negative in their assessment of what they see.

In the long run, their ignorance of illiterate people's perceptions exacerbates the effect of the following misconceptions: that illiterate people are inclined to other social problems like crime, unemployment, and poverty; that illiterate people need and want the skills of literacy; that illiterate persons cannot lead normal lives; that illiteracy prevents thinking and problem solving; that illiteracy prevents learning; that illiterate people are embarrassed and withdraw from social interaction; and that illiterate people cannot be successful financially or socially.

Interest Groups

Several interest groups actively promote negative views of illiterate people although their motives for doing so are not always clear.

The media. Members of the media play a major role in determining popular opinion and government policy concerning illiteracy, which in turn directs literacy providers who often depend on government grants. With this interrelationship in mind, a look at recent media contributions to the literacy debate will be useful.

The latest and most influential, from a Canadian point of view, has been the previously mentioned Southam report of 1987 (Calamai 1987a), the result of over 2,000 interviews with Canadians. It has served as the primary determinant for a host of

initiatives aimed at eliminating the "problem" of illiteracy. The report sketches a grim

picture of the state of literacy in Canada; most subsequent government and business

responses to illiteracy have been affected by its findings. According to the report,

illiteracy is a major contributor to business losses, government social assistance costs, and

increasing social problems including the rising crime rate. In addition, the Southam view

of illiterate people clearly upholds past stereotypes. Until 1987, Canadians tried to

convince themselves that their illiteracy problem was not as severe as illiteracy in the

United States. Meanwhile, rhetoric about the problem was less emotional; press coverage

was less sensational; clear thinking was still possible. The Southam report guaranteed

that the Canadian literacy debate would be taken as seriously as it was in the United

States after the early 1980s.

The American debate has been emotionally charged, resulting in a campaign to

"eradicate" illiteracy. Much of the emotionalism has been a direct result of the nature of

media coverage.

William S. Griffith suggests that "those who write for the public are more likely to

attract attention and sales if they take a sensational approach to the situation and cry out

for crusades and campaigns to correct this awful social ill." Furthermore, since funding

often depends on public concern, he says "it would seem self-defeating to question the

soundness of the arguments that seem effective in stimulating the appropriation of

additional funding" (1990, 16).

The unfortunate result of this sensationalism is to focus on illiteracy as a plight.

Michael Moss sees this as a great mistake: "Our making victims of the illiterate only

fuels their lack of self-respect," whereas "a boost in self-esteem likely would be one of the first results of empowering the illiterate with the knowledge that they're not wholly to blame for their condition" (1988, 9-10). Moss also suggests that "there are very real causes to illiteracy," and that "a misinformed public . . . led to think that explanations of illiteracy lie with the illiterate . . . is worse than an underinformed public." In addition, Moss says that the government's apportioning blame to illiterate people allows it a moral escape from the responsibility of supplying funds.

Governments. From time to time, both U.S. and Canadian federal governments, as well as Canadian provincial governments (who are constitutionally responsible for education), become involved in new initiatives aimed at eradicating illiteracy. Rhetoric flows freely, reinforced by opinions espoused in the popular press. On September 8, 1988, in a speech made in Toronto, Prime Minister Mulroney said that "adults who cannot read and write cannot participate fully in mainstream Canadian social and cultural life," and further that "the impact of illiteracy on both productivity and workplace performance is particularly costly . . . illiteracy leads to increased accidents, lost productivity, increased unemployment and more extensive training, costing Canada $10 billion a year" (Government of Canada 1988, 2). These comments echoed the message presented in September 1987 in the Southam News study of the state of literacy in Canada, and were guaranteed to elicit the instant responses that are always forthcoming when the public is reminded of the "horrible truth" about illiteracy. The Canadian government, Mulroney said, was preparing to respond.

The Ontario Ministry of Skills Development's document, Literacy: The Basics of

Growth, presents a potent set of statistics to support its responses to the Southam report,

including social costs which it outlines as follows:

$10.7 billion annually -- the conservative estimate of the total drain on

Canadian society caused by illiteracy, including

$8.8 billion in lost earnings;

$1.6 billion in industrial accidents;

$0.17 billion in unemployment expenses;

$0.08 billion in federal prisons; and

$0.03 billion in federal adult education (1988, 10).

These estimates appear to be based on the report of the Canadian Business Task Force on

Literacy published in February of 1988 entitled Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in

Canada. When closely examined, this report reveals certain shortcomings in research and

presentation. Estimates were based on the coincidence of data: for example, illiteracy

was assumed a factor in industrial accidents because people with less than a grade nine

education were over-represented in "a number of 'high risk' industries" (16). The

authors appear to assume that illiterate workers can not communicate and innovate (18),

or have no drive and self-esteem (19). The authors also use single situations to

generalize a case (19) and do not always separate the illiterate group from the general

population when making generalizations (19-20).

The Ontario Skills Ministry document also states that "many people lacking literacy

skills suffer from low self-esteem and feelings of alienation" (1988, 17); that "it is very

difficult for those who lack literacy skills to develop goals for themselves and visions of a

better life " (1988, 17); and that "children of illiterate parents are more likely to be

illiterate" (1988, 19) than children of literate parents.

These emotionally charged government statements reveal current thinking behind

the development of public policy in Canada, and paint a dismal picture of the lives of

illiterate people. This kind of thinking garners popular support for policies but is not

realistic or reliable about the nature of illiteracy and illiterate people.

In January, 1989, Forrest P. Chisman, author of a report on an adult literacy

project sponsored by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, called for government

action:

> There is no way in which the United States can remain competitive in the global
> economy, maintain its standard of living, and shoulder the burden of the retirement of
> the baby boom generation unless we mount a forceful national effort to help adults
> upgrade their basic [literacy] skills in the very near future. (iii)

Shortly afterwards, on February 9, 1989, Bill H.R. 970 was introduced to the 101st

Congress. It proposed to establish a National Center for Adult Literacy. Congress

concluded that "adult literacy is a critical national issue that affects the productivity of the

workforce . . . , the growth of the Nation, and the quality of life of the people of the

Nation."

Although these statements may seem less emotional than some political ones cited

above, they still play on the emotions by referring to maintaining the American way of

life -- they imply that illiteracy can somehow bring on its demise.

Casting blame for lost income, lack of productivity, unemployment, industrial

accidents, imprisonment, and other social costs indicates that governments generally

subscribe to the popular, largely negative view of the effects of illiteracy. Moreover,

emotionally charged public statements apparently indicating government positions on illiteracy are bound to promote and perpetuate negativism, especially among literacy providers whose very existence depends on government funding.

Literacy education providers. Literacy providers and related professional associations also contribute to a perpetuation of the predominant perspective on illiteracy.

Two of the most influential literacy providers in North America are The Literacy Volunteers of America and Frontier College in Toronto. Both are often at the fore of new initiatives. The tutor's manual for the Literacy Volunteers of America illustrates their bias: "When non-readers come for help, they are usually burdened with social problems. . . . Learning is a lifelong experience but one must start with the basics of reading and writing and the skills to cope with realistic lives" (Colvin and Root 1987, 8, 11). Similarly, the latest Frontier College information brochure states that "people who are illiterate are less active in their leisure time, and watch 24% more television than people who are literate" (1988). Such statements reinforce the assumption that illiterate people have many social problems, lack basic skills required to cope with life, and have boring, non-productive social lives. Griffith (1990, 4) draws attention to a profile of a typical illiterate person found in a Project Literacy promotional package used in British Columbia. An illiterate person, it suggests, can be recognized by his avoidance of the written word, his career opportunities and his social events; his inability to support a family or to buy a house or car; his lack of ambition and self-esteem; his being chronically unemployed and intellectually stifled; and, his having a limited circle of support. This unpleasant profile makes the situation for a typical, illiterate person appear

quite hopeless. Professional associations such as the Movement for Canadian Literacy and the Canadian Association for Adult Education have also contributed to the perpetuation of popular perceptions about illiteracy. In a letter to members dated 20 July, 1987, support for a campaign to influence federal, provincial, and territorial governments was solicited. The letter stated that, "the enclosed Open Letter to the Prime Minister, the Premiers and the Territorial Government leaders will be placed in . . . several newspapers and magazines" (Wright 1987; Appendix G). For a minimum contribution of $25, people could add their names to a supporters' list that was to appear under the following statement: "Millions of Canadians cannot participate fully in our society because they cannot read and write well enough" (Wright 1987). When literacy providers, the very people expected to be most sympathetic to the illiterate person's viewpoint, also promote a negative view, all the people involved in the programs are affected, including tutors, volunteers, and especially learners.

Business groups. In recent years, business in both Canada and the United States has become concerned about illiteracy; however, this interest does not appear altruistic.

On June 2, 1988, Paul Jones, President of the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy, claimed when speaking in Cambridge, Ontario that the cost of illiteracy to business was "$2,000 a year for every single functionally illiterate employee" (Wood 1988, B3), and mentioned a $10 billion price tag as the national cost of illiteracy, indicating agreement with the Southam report.

Jones' speech coincided with the beginnings of a movement towards what is called workplace literacy. Workplace literacy responds to the perceived needs of business and

assumes that the teaching of basic skills on the job rather than in the classroom will achieve greater results. However, the negative image of the illiterate adult endures.

Some writers claim rapidly developing technologies make illiteracy a greater problem than ever before because unskilled or semi-skilled jobs are replaced by new positions requiring a much higher level of literacy. For business, this problem translates into lost revenue variously attributed to waste, lost productivity, increased remediation costs, reduced product quality, and ultimately a loss of competitiveness (The National Alliance of Business in the United States 1984; the Toronto Sun, April 1987; the Ontario Ministry of Skills Development 1988; Gibb-Clark 1989; and Chisman 1989). The most persistent business voice is the newsletter of the Business Council for Effective Literacy. It articulates the problem of illiteracy, and keeps readers informed about new programs and business initiatives to deal with workplace illiteracy.

The argument is not with whether businesses can improve efficiency and productivity with workplace programs but with the continued scapegoating of illiterate people. Griffith (1990) is precise: "Can basic and workplace literacy programming be reconceptualized to build upon adults' strength rather than continuing to stress a remedial and deficiency-oriented approach?" (19). Broken Words suggests that a change in attitude is highly unlikely as it describes how some businesses treat illiterate people: "They [retailers] cope with literacy by 'dumbing down' the task" (Calamai 1987a, 32). The danger in failing to revise this thinking is that the predictions of Michael Moss about illiterate people's self-esteem may well hold, and the potential for self-respect among illiterate adults will erode to the point that remediation and retraining will be impossible.

The potential effect may boomerang on the business community. Prospective workers may be frightened away by a fear of the demands of the new technology. Good illiterate workers may leave for similar reasons. The public and the media will be affected by the dollars spent on advertising the need for workplace literacy programs. The net result will likely be to reinforce the negative view of illiterate workers.

Academics. Some academics espouse a traditional view of the ills of illiteracy and of illiterate people's expectations. Serge Wagner of the University of Quebec in Montreal writes that "being unable to read, write and do arithmetic, together with incomplete basic education, are real handicaps for both the social integration and the personal development of those who suffer from them" (Wagner 1985, 410-11). Within academia, this view may affect the thinking of literacy providers and instructors exposed to it. Fortunately, this view is uncommon as more and more academics begin to look at illiteracy and illiterate people differently (Brockett, Fingeret, Griffith, Manning, and Sisco -- all mentioned above), though these voices have failed to influence public opinion to any great degree.

The above references suggest the worst in both popular and official thinking about illiteracy in North America, the tendency to adopt and support the traditional views concerning the effects and disadvantages of illiteracy both for the individual and society as a whole. Fortunately, other points of view, while lacking wide coverage, represent a small but welcome alternative to the previous position.

Alternative Thinking

As suggested above, some academics and researchers have begun to question traditional interpretations of illiteracy. Arlene Fingeret (1982a), Burt Sisco (1983), Ralph Brockett (1983), Allen Manning (1984), and Heisel and Larsen (1984) have discovered members of the illiterate sub-group who do not fit the stereotypical image of insecure, withdrawn, incapable people dependent on others. Hunter and Harman (1979) and Graff (1979) challenged the supposed causal relationship between illiteracy and social problems and poverty; Pattison (1982), Levine (1982), Berlin (1983), and Michael Fox (1986) see or find little justification for believing that literacy programs improve the lot of the illiterate person. The perspective is changing slowly, but it is changing.

In an article entitled "Overselling Literacy" Frank Smith suggests that the value of literacy may be exaggerated. He says that "literacy won't guarantee anyone a job; this is a tragic deception too often perpetrated on the young" (1989, 354). Second, he points out that "when literacy is promoted as the solution to all economic, social, and educational problems, it is easy to assume that the inability to read and write creates those same economic, social, and educational problems" (355). He continues: "Literacy does not guarantee jobs or a better life, no matter how extravagant the claims made for it" (358); and concludes, "the world is not crying out for more literate people to take on jobs, but for more job opportunities for the literate and the unlettered alike" (354). With these comments, Smith argues against the fundamental poses adopted in the controversy, namely, that literacy will guarantee jobs, that literacy can answer today's economic, social, and educational problems, that literacy will bring better jobs, that the real

problems of unemployment are the numbers of unemployed illiterate adults. He suggests that the real problem is simply the overall shortage of jobs for literate and illiterate workers alike. He implies here that governments may be throwing money away by promoting literacy programs that cannot possibly do what is expected of them. Worse still, governments may be purposefully deflecting blame for their inadequate social policies onto the unemployed illiterate worker.

Supported and spread by the media, governments, literacy providers, businesses, and academics, the traditional negative view of illiteracy is widespread. Admittedly, the development of an alternative view has begun, but those who hold these alternative views have less influence on public opinion than do the traditionalists. Hence, the general public and those who inform them will likely remain misinformed and thus unable to address either the nature of illiteracy or the needs of illiterate adults.

<center>**Policies and Programs That Respond to the**

Perceived Problem of Illiteracy</center>

Following is an overview of some initiatives that have attempted to deal with illiteracy in Canada and the United States.

Canada

At the time of writing, no single source reveals the status of the nation-wide literacy project. This overview is based on the writer's personal experience as an educator in Ontario and on information provided by the coordinator of the local Regional Literacy

Network who represents the region at the provincial level and who knows much about a variety of literacy activities in Canada (Saunders, 1990).

Literacy support services. Canadian literacy support systems are just beginning to be clearly defined. In Ontario, regional literacy networks are being established to coordinate local programs and touch base with the provincial network. The Ontario Literacy Coalition is, in turn, part of the national network known as the Movement for Canadian Literacy. Nationally, the MCL has ties with Laubach Literacy of Canada and the Canadian Association for Adult Education. All present network members hope for a unified national network at some point in the future. They can then access computer information banks in order to share data concerning literacy needs, methods, and strategies. The National Adult Literacy Database was begun in International Literacy Year to provide a comprehensive record of the nation-wide literacy effort and was completed in 1991.

Literacy programs. Since education in Canada is primarily a provincial responsibility, most literacy programs are provided either by provincially supported boards of education or by private literacy organizations. Very little funding or direction comes from the Federal government; the funding that is available comes from the Secretary of State's Literacy Secretariat and is provided only for programs with a specific time limit geared to a specific end result. For example, a provider might apply for funding for the literacy training of fishermen whose company has recently ceased to operate.

Private groups such as Laubach Literacy, Frontier College, and library programs,

are funded by the provincial Ministry of Education, the Federal Secretary of State, or local charitable societies.

Provincially funded programs are run mainly by boards of education and community colleges. Funding comes in Ontario from either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and from parallel organizations in other provinces. Universities receive some funding but concentrate on research and not on the teaching of literacy.

As in the United States, workplace literacy in Canada is rapidly growing. Funding here is shared by provincial governments, local boards of education, and business communities. Workplace education appears to be the place where the provincial governments will place more emphasis and money -- at least this is the case in Ontario.

The United States

Literacy support services. In Adult Literacy in the United States Today, Lori Forlizzi (1989, 9-22) surveys available literacy services and programs. Several organizations provide important services within the literacy community, among them coordinating programs within and between both the Department of Education and the private sector, stimulating and encouraging new literacy programs and facilitating referrals to programs. The organizations mentioned are the Adult Literacy Initiative, the Federal Interagency Committee on Education, the Coalition for Literacy, the Business Council for Effective Literacy, the Library of Congress, Project Literacy U.S., the Assault on Illiteracy Program, and the Urban Literacy Network.

Literacy programs. Forlizzi lists seventy-nine literacy-related programs, as of 1986, administered by fourteen Federal agencies with spending on programs of $347.6 million. In addition, several legislative developments extended the literacy initiative: the extension of the Adult Education Act to 1992, the education for a Competitive America Act, the Literacy Corps Assistance Act of 1988, the Workplace Literacy Assistance Program, and the Library Service and Construction Act.

Beyond the Federal influence are 467 programs run by libraries, 50,000 Laubach volunteer tutors, 15,000 Literacy Volunteers of America tutors, community development agencies, churches, community colleges, universities, business, labour, and the military. These providers extend the influence of the literacy initiative nation wide.

What are the effects of the literacy initiatives? This network of programs is not particularly effective. According to Forrest P. Chisman, "the vast majority of the twenty million plus [illiterate people] are not reached by any program that would help them in any way" (1989, 5). This stunning criticism of the literacy effort may well apply to Canadian initiatives too.

A cursory view does reveal a great deal of activity. Many school boards have literacy programs. The libraries are involved, as are private providers across each state and province. Millions of dollars are spent. Still, the pool of illiterate adults grows. Participation in literacy programs rarely reaches ten per cent of the potential population; the dropout rate remains near fifty per cent. Why has the success rate not improved, given the extensive effort? Why are more illiterate adults not reached by these new programs? Why do 50% of illiterate adults drop out? In short, what is needed to

improve policies and programs?

Program and Policy Improvement

The need to improve literacy practice is now taken for granted by many whose ideas are presented here under two headings, New Definitions and Literacy Research, both of which lead to an awareness of the directions in which knowledge of illiteracy will have to expand to meet the needs of illiterate adults more adequately.

New Definitions

The emerging new perspective on literacy (Guthrie and Kirsch 1984, 351-55) calls for a definition that relates literacy to social contexts, with input from prospective learners being vital to the establishment of literacy levels and needs (Clark 1984, 133-46). This definition is rooted in UNESCO's definitions of functional literacy (Levine 1982, 249-266), and in those provided by Hunter and Harman (1979, 10). Instead of assuming that a single standard level of literacy is universally necessary, this new definition requires that thought be given to the varying literacy requirements of different individuals and communities. In addition, it proposes that programs meet clients at their own levels. The idea is based on the premise that as the learner gains mastery of a particular level of literacy and begins to perceive a need to achieve a higher level, the combination of success and perceived need provides the motivation necessary to seek higher levels of achievement. With this new focus, emphasis shifts from imposing standards based on the values of literate society to the need to know how illiterate adults

perceive their circumstances, needs, and goals. The proper starting point of any literacy

initiative is now the strengths and needs of the individual clients rather than the officially

sanctioned needs of the nation state.

In Illiteracy: A National Dilemma, David Harman seems to support this new

perspective: "There is a question whether a country as vast and diverse as the United

States can adopt and sustain one universal definition of literacy." He suggests that "many

scenarios can be projected, each of which represents different literacy needs and would

yield different standards and figures" (1987, 32). A perspective such as this increases

our knowledge of illiterate adults' views of literacy and provides data to improve the

effectiveness of literacy programs when employed as a basis for research.

Literacy Research

Michael Fox denounces as a glaring misuse of statistics, evidence from promoters

of the need for literacy campaigns to eradicate the great problem of illiteracy:

> What we don't know, and none of the studies thus far have shown us, is: how well
> those who "flunk" a pen-and-pencil functional skills test normed to reflect "external"
> middle-class standards of competence actually function in their own environments
> according to their own "internal" standards. We do not know, in other words,
> whether the inability to read a classified ad makes one less apt to get a job, or
> whether the inability to read bureaucratese limits access to social services. We do not
> know what literacy or lack of literacy means within a certain situation or context.
> (Fox 1986, 5)

Fox decries studies which have typically involved manipulating numbers without

providing insight into the nature of the lives of illiterate adults and their perceived needs.

Too often, statistics showing high percentages of illiterate adults among the unemployed,

the poor, and the imprisoned are interpreted as indicating a causal relationship between

illiteracy and social problems. Moreover, it has been assumed from this simple numerical association, that making illiterate people literate removes problems they face. Fox and others feel this assumption is inappropriate, especially in view of a profound lack of success of past and present programs resolving social problems. Research aimed at finding out about the illiterate people -- their hopes, problems, successes, and needs -- is essential.

"We also need to learn more about the human beings on this end of the spectrum and their needs as they see them" said Hunter and Harman in 1979, "as well as the strengths within their communities that enable them to survive" (113). Here, the authors are referring to those most educationally deprived groups, but this concern can readily be applied to all illiterate adults. This sensitivity about the need to learn more about the lives of illiterate adults has grown since Hunter and Harman's Ford Foundation report in 1979. As if in response to this expressed need, Shirley Brice Heath stated in 1980 that "ethnographers of education . . . have suggested that participation and observation in the lives of social groups can provide a more comprehensive picture of the uses of literacy and its component skills" (127). Now, as the nineties begin, this point of view is being re-emphasized. In an interview, Dame Nita Barrow, President of the International Council for Adult Education, said that "to be able to overcome illiteracy, go to the people, learn from them and then you will know how to teach them" (Yarmol-Franko 1990, 11).

But the leading proponent of the movement to understand the lives and cultures of illiterate adults has been Arlene Fingeret. Her doctoral research at Syracuse in 1982

created interest and legitimized research in discovering more about the world of the illiterate adult.

The Syracuse-based research continued with a dissertation by Allen Manning in 1984 that identified a group called "prosperous illiterates" who had views of themselves quite different from popularly held perceptions of them.

These studies have opened a new perspective on illiteracy, a perspective that does not define all illiterate adults in the same way and that demonstrates that many see themselves more positively than had been previously imagined. In addition, both studies emphasized the value of the interview and other means of qualitative -- rather than quantitative -- research in the field of literacy. In fact, in her article "Adult literacy education: current and future directions", Fingeret says that finally qualitative studies are beginning to address issues such as the way in which adult readers approach reading, the culture of illiterate adults, and the social characteristics of basic education programs (1984, 4). She writes:

> Literacy programs that insist on recruiting students by publicizing their functional incompetence may be participating in creating the very problems the literacy education community is committed to addressing. Research must be conducted with sophisticated models that address the interaction between the individual, culture, and larger social forces. Furthermore, research must go beyond examining illiterate adults only in the context of literacy programs. It must explore the complexity of their rich and often difficult lives, their strengths as well as their inability to use the printed word. (40)

Fingeret has not been alone in calling for an in-depth look at the lives and perspectives of illiterate adults. In 1983, Audrey Thomas implied a more in-depth look was needed when she argued that

Education is generally seen as a key to "the good life", and a leveller to inherited

social circumstances. However, a system geared to the norms of the middle class is not always the most appropriate vehicle for those of the lower classes. Recognition of this factor is a stimulus behind the move to "popularize" ABE, that is to root it in the community life of the undereducated. (1983, 9)

Rigg and Kasemek (1983) echoed Thomas' statement by commenting that too often illiteracy is perceived as an illness. Consequently, treatment is required, typically from the teachers seldom recognizing the necessity of obtaining input from the student. Under such circumstances, Rigg and Kasemek are not surprised that programs generally fail (26). Carman Hunter and David Harman in the preface to the 1985 revised paperback edition of their Ford Foundation study agree: "We simply do not know enough about their [the intended learners] perceptions of their world nor do we know how they view the value placed on education (including literacy) by the literate who make decisions about programs that will be offered for them (Clark 1984)." A still stronger statement came from Heisel and Larson in 1984 when they wrote that "literacy demands and abilities can only be assessed within a given social context, and we must take the time to examine the requirements of specific subcultures before embarking on literacy campaigns targeted on inappropriate objectives" (69). In 1986, in a pointed article "My father, my self", Wayne Otto stated the case this way:

> What we don't need now are more slick statistics and screaming headlines -- SERIOUS LITERACY PROBLEMS AFFLICT A THIRD OF THE NATION -- followed by instant replays of pat programs that have already failed. What we do need is to get serious about understanding and acknowledging personal, social, and other contextual differences that limit or proscribe literate behaviour. (478)

Perhaps the strongest and best informed statements are the ones made by David Harman (1987) in Illiteracy: a National Dilemma; it may not be without significance that such a strong statement comes from someone who eight years before had called for

improved research aimed at understanding the lives and cultures of illiterate adults. The

following excerpts from a short section on "Action and Research" provide a sense of the

tone of his suggestions. First, he points out the inadequacy of research:

> Despite statements regarding the adequacy of current knowledge about literacy and
> instruction, the fact remains that the solid research on the subject is virtually nil. (98)
> . . . . There has unfortunately been so little research undertaken into matters
> pertaining to literacy that most of its secrets await discovery. (99)

Second, he explains why it is this way:

> Since the general attitude towards literacy has for a long time been that the issue is a
> temporary one, little energy has been expended on improving our understanding of its
> intricacies. (98) . . . . So intellectually impoverished is the area of literacy studies
> that it cannot seem to attract the sustained attention of the research community. (98) .
> . . . Slogans, unsubstantiated assertions, simplistic analyses, and feelings of
> righteousness do not abrogate the need to understand the problem. (99)

Finally, he describes the ensuing problem:

> Hypotheses abound-all unexamined. (98) . . . . As a result, practice navigates its own
> course and, more often than not, flounders. (98)

Harman perceives an urgent need for complete, competently conducted literacy research:

". . . The quest for literacy, if it is to be successful, must be guided by understanding,

research, and experience" (98-99).

    <u>Required new knowledge about illiteracy and illiterate people</u>. The great need is

for more research that aims at a better understanding of the lives of illiterate adults. A

list of new and needed knowledge that research can provide if improvements are to be

made in dealing with illiteracy and illiterate people should certainly include the following:

a new definition of literacy accommodating individual needs and recognizing both

personal strengths and different environments; knowledge of the strengths of illiterate

people in order to re-orient popular perceptions concerning them; knowledge of how illiterate people function in their lives in order to know precisely when literacy is necessary, and if it is, at what level; knowledge of the actual effects of literacy on life achievement; knowledge of the norms and values of successful, functioning illiterate people and their relationship to the literate population; and knowledge of how successful, functioning illiterate adults succeed.

Developing A Research Plan

The need that exists for more knowledge about illiterate people can best be gained by research that approaches them directly. The type of research required is explained here in addition to an assessment of three related research studies.

Choosing a Research Design

Qualitative research has been suggested as appropriate and necessary in order to learn more about adult education and literacy-related issues. Dell Hymes and Claire Woods-Elliott, in a paper commissioned by the Functional Literacy Project (1980), suggest that "the uses and functions of literacy as a mode of communication, of reading and writing and the use and relationship to the text in specific groups and communities, are best illuminated by naturalistic and ethnographic approaches to research" (21-22). Kidd (1981) suggests that "we should emphasize more qualitative kinds of research" (14) because, as he says, "what is needed is the utilization of research methodologies so that people who will be affected by research outcomes can participate in identifying the

problems" (6). Further support is provided by Hunter and Harman (1979), Green and Reder (1984), and Fingeret (1984).

For research into people's perceptions, a form of interview or participant observation seems to be most appropriate. Magoon (1977) suggests certain key assumptions underlie such an approach to research: subjects are considered knowing beings; their knowledge has important consequences for the interpretation of behaviour; the locus of control over much intelligent behaviour rests initially with the subjects and is generally purposive; and, the human species is quite capable of organizing complexity rapidly, of attending to complex communications, and of taking on complex social roles (651-52). John K. Smith (1983) says that qualitative research is "concerned with the realm of the knower" (10) and that from the qualitative perspective the purpose of investigation should be on "the attempt to achieve a sense of the meaning that others give to their own situations through an interpretive understanding of their language, art, gestures and politics" (12). Further, Spradley (1979) says, "the ethnographer seeks to learn from people, to be taught by them" (4), and that, "the essential core of ethnography is the concern with the meaning of actions and events to people we seek to understand" (5).

Applications to literacy research. By conducting qualitative research based on interviewing men about their views, valuable insights into their world can be gained. Among the concerns on which light can be shed for literacy practitioners and researchers are the following: the extent to which the perceptions of literacy providers and their program clients correlate, especially in regard to things like the importance of and need for literacy, the levels of literacy required, and the self-image of prospective clients; the

extent to which illiterate men view themselves as needing literacy skills; the extent to which illiterate men's views of their world differ from literate society's; the extent to which the perceptions of illiterate men vary depending on location, age, or environment; how illiterate men manage to cope with the demands of literate society; and how illiterate men become financially successful. Since people's perceptions are important to researchers, the results of this research may have important applications.

Assessing Related Literacy Research

Other literacy-based research projects have employed qualitative methods; three concerned with the perceptions of illiterate adults are discussed here, studies conducted by Arlene Fingeret (1982a), Allen Manning (1984), and Bertie Wood (1984). Although both Manning and Wood refer to Fingeret, neither appears to be purposefully continuing her line of research in a planned fashion. It would be neither appropriate to assign each of the above studies equal status in the realm of literacy research, nor to say that any of them is a paradigm of qualitative design. Yet significant similarities among these three studies indicate a trend toward the use of the interview in qualitative literacy research. For clarity, this discussion is organized under the headings of purpose, population, and the gathering and analysis of data, with applicable information from each study noted where appropriate, including comments and criticisms.

Purpose. Although stated differently, the three studies had a similar purpose: to discover how illiterate adults felt about and responded to their world. Fingeret wanted to examine competence within the literate world. Manning, interested in understanding

more about "prosperous illiterates", sought an understanding of job reading requirements, of how illiterate adults learn job skills, and of the non-cognitive aspects of economic success. Wood sought to learn about concepts common to illiterate adults in order to develop an implicit learning theory of intelligence.

The statements of purpose of the three studies reveal two common elements. First, all three researchers respect the illiterate person's strengths -- no mention of any weakness occurs since key words like "competence", "prosperous", and "intelligence" stress the dignity and ability of illiterate people. Second, all three focus on the perceptions of the adults themselves, not on statistical proof of the degree of conformity to anyone's preconceptions. Recognition of dignity is the first step in accepting what is also apparent in these purposes: illiterate people are the best source of knowledge about their own perceptions. These studies differ with earlier research about illiterate adults in their concentration on discovering the individual's perceptions as opposed to a description of them from the literate perspective.

Population. The populations of the three studies were as follows. Fingeret interviewed forty-three adults, sixteen females and twenty-seven males; Manning interviewed eleven men making over $20,000 per year; Wood interviewed six males and eleven females. Manning used a test of illiteracy to determine eligibility for inclusion into the study. Fingeret says she requested referrals of people tested at or below grade-four reading level. Manning found five of his eleven interviewees in literacy programs; Fingeret found half of hers there; and Wood made contact through help agencies including an ABE program, but at the time of his interviewing no interviewee had

attended a literacy program. None of these projects attempted to study illiterate people within the context of a literacy program; instead, they showed interest in how illiterate people function in their own worlds. That some subjects in these studies were in literacy programs was a function of the method of locating subjects and not a factor in selection.

The population sizes of these studies are small and heterogeneous. Fingeret's (forty-three) is the largest and most heterogeneous. The only reliable common element is all members' apparent illiteracy, yet respective levels of illiteracy were not clearly established. Manning's group of eleven appears more homogeneous but is very small. Although larger, Wood's group of seventeen suffers from ambiguities similar to those in Fingeret's study. As a consequence, other problems exist: first, uncontrolled, undefined variables (like different ages and sexes) may confound issues; second, results based on very small samples, not randomly selected, preclude safe generalization to a larger population. Statisticians may thus feel justified in dismissing these studies summarily.

On the positive side, the research conducted, albeit on small samples, may indicate useful directions for future research. The results indicate the existence of illiterate people who do not fit the stereotypes of literate-oriented studies. Some illiterate adults may feel neither the need to go back to school nor any sense of inferiority as a result of an inability to read. These studies point to the existence of a population and a body of knowledge hitherto ignored.

Gathering and analysis of data. Fingeret's data were gathered through interviews and participant observation; she was intensively involved in the networks identified. No indication is given of structured interviews nor were all interviews private. Concepts and

understanding appear to have arisen from the analysis of data although no analytical plan was discussed. Manning collected data by interview and participant observation as well, but the interview structure appears to have been very loose. He coded his data into sixty-one categories, reviewing them until he made some sense of what they appeared to be revealing. Wood collected data through interviews, and arranged the data according to headings or ideas commonly occurring ".... grounded theory design as developed by Glaser and Strauss" (1984, 163).

All three studies used interviews as the major source for data. Only Manning mentioned entering the respective situations with a preset agenda or preconceived notions reflected in structured interviews; however, he rejected this approach quite early on when he found that structured interviews restricted the direction that the conversations might take. All three researchers attempted to observe and to learn from the illiterate adult. These similarities are significant because they indicate the researchers' attempts to reach a group whose views have been generally ignored and to listen seriously to what this group has to say. This attempt to collect the ideas of illiterate adults reflects a new direction in literacy research.

Assessing usefulness. In summary, a new body of literacy research is beginning to appear. That two of these early works are based in Syracuse would appear to indicate support for qualitative, interview-based research there. This research emphasizes the perceptions of not only illiterate persons but more particularly of illiterate persons who do not readily fit the stereotypical images promulgated by literate society. Unfortunately, no relationship among the studies appears to exist in that neither Manning nor Wood seemed

knowingly to attempt to further Fingeret's seminal work in any particular direction.

The body of research represented by these three studies has several flaws from a traditional point of view, and although it may appear unfair to attack non-traditional research using traditional criteria, it may prove useful to point out certain key concerns if for no other reason than to demonstrate possible barriers to the acceptance of the ideas being raised by this new line of research. First, small heterogeneous samples result in no generalizable conclusions. Second, very little information is provided concerning the type of analysis conducted on the data, making the reproduction of any of the studies in order to expand the population base very difficult. Third, no one employed a comparison group to determine the uniqueness of the apparent qualities of the groups under study. Finally, only Manning attempted to identify ahead of time a characteristic of a group of illiterate adults not conforming to the conventional view of illiterate people nor necessarily related in any way to the issue of illiteracy. His concept of "prosperous illiterates" has the potential for determining systematic differences among groups of illiterate adults or between illiterate and literate adults. Unfortunately, the issue remains unclarified.

Admittedly, none of these researchers would have defined generalizability as a goal; in seminal research, arguably, generalizability is not of prime importance, and yet it is necessary for research to offer insight into and revision of current practice, apparent trends, and generalizable findings in order to make literacy providers take notice. The practice of literacy education is imbued with traditional methodologies. Many, if not most, literacy educators are volunteers, either untrained or trained in the old ways; the

process of changing to a program based on the perceptions of illiterate adults will be difficult, and the more solid research that can be compiled, the more likely the chance of bringing about changes in practice.

If the overall usefulness of these early research studies is accepted, the following suggestions for expanding and focusing this new line of research may improve the consistency and thus the general acceptability of research based on the perceptions of illiterate people. First, dealing with more homogeneous populations could help to eliminate possibly confusing variables. Second, standardizing data-gathering formats could allow for the comparison of results across studies. Third, increasing population sizes may eventually lead to a greater acceptance of the likelihood that findings will be consistent across a larger population. Fourth, facilitating replication in other environments may demonstrate the broader existence of results reported in these early studies. Fifth, attempting to identify comparison groups within studies may immediately verify the uniqueness of characteristics discovered through data analysis. Finally, employing qualities not usually assumed of illiterate people as selection criteria may begin to change the suppositions and stereotypes presently biasing research into literacy issues. If these changes can be made over time, a new, reliable body of knowledge will both reflect illiterate adults' perspectives and withstand the scrutiny of the research community.

Summary

The following conclusions drawn from this review of the literature form a

conceptual basis for the present study.

First, categories of illiterate adults defined by the Appalachian Adult Education Centre and later revised by Hunter and Harman seem not to recognize groups of illiterate people living quite normal lives who are relatively unconcerned about becoming literate.

Second, some evidence suggests that such groups of illiterate people exist.

Third, a number of assumptions concerning the importance of literacy for functioning in society, avoiding social problems, and achieving economic well being appear questionable. In addition, it appears unlikely that literacy insures superiority in the areas of thinking, valuing, or learning. Questioning long-standing assumptions further justifies the need for research to learn more about illiterate people and their perspectives.

Fourth, the most common perception of illiteracy and of illiterate people is that they are thought to lack something, to be deficient in some way crucial to their survival in a literate society. Rarely are their strengths examined or built on. This thinking powerfully influences the development and implementation of policy and practice and may well contribute significantly to the failure of literacy programs to reach those perceived by the literate society as most in need of literacy.

Fifth, the negative view of illiterate people is supported by influential groups within the literate society: creators of the media, government officials, literacy providers, business personnel, and academics. Their power virtually guarantees the persistence of the predominant negative view, so they must be convinced of its shortcomings.

Sixth, many services, policies, and programs exist to fight illiteracy, yet little is

ever achieved.

Seventh, whereas past definitions of literacy tended to inform research and practice from a narrow, literate world-view, interest is growing in a contextual definition of literacy emphasizing the illiterate person's perspective to determine literacy needs. This approach to defining literacy implies that more must be known about the client's view; this can only be achieved through talking with illiterate people to discover what is required of them in their daily lives.

Eighth, new knowledge is required if the nature of illiteracy and the needs of illiterate people are to be understood.

Ninth, qualitative research is suggested as the means most suitable to exploring the world of the illiterate person because this research tries to explain behaviour by identifying the ideas and attitudes of those involved. This is the precise need in literacy research now.

Tenth, three studies have attempted to describe the perceptions of illiterate adults and appear to be defining a new direction for literacy research. These studies are primarily exploratory in nature and thus have not provided clearly generalizable conclusions. What is needed is continued development along this line of research into illiterate people's perceptions with an increasing emphasis on larger, more homogeneous populations, consistency in data collection and analysis, replicability, comparability, and the breakdown of traditional stereotypical images of illiterate people.

Eleventh, a group of illiterate people functioning quite successfully in society could provide a useful source of information about what it takes besides literacy to be

successful while at the same time contradicting popular belief that illiterate people are incapable of economic success.

Finally, a number of prominent literacy experts including Arlene Fingeret, Michael Fox, Carman Hunter, David Harman, Shirley Brice Heath, and Audrey Thomas are calling for research on illiterate people, especially in regard to ideas, aspirations, values, and perceptions. In this way, literacy programs may be aligned with what illiterate people want instead of with what the literate world thinks they want.

Taken in total, these conclusions justify a need for further research into the world of the illiterate adult, and hence the essence of and motivation for this study.

CHAPTER 3

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study methodology is divided into six sections: Purpose, Pilot Testing, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Reporting Results, and Summary Comments. Adjustments made in the planned process during the collection and analysis are described and rationales provided. For the sake of clarity, matters regarding subject selection and the process of collecting data have been placed in Appendix F. Readers interested in replicating this study or in conducting a similar study may find this appended material useful.

Purpose

To repeat, the primary purpose of this research has been to examine perceptions held by illiterate men exhibiting varying degrees of financial success in order to discover if views commonly held by literate society about them are accurate; how illiterate men cope with literate society; and how some of these men manage to be financially successful. Thus, the means by which these perceptions were to be gathered, recorded, and evaluated were crucial to the research design. Appropriately, subjects were interviewed, their responses recorded on tape, and the results compiled and interpreted.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was conducted to provide interviewing experience and to assess the interviewer's abilities in this regard, to assess the usefulness of the type and order of questions, to test the methods of recording and transcribing data, and to assess measures used to diminish threats to reliability and validity. Where appropriate, pilot test results are dealt with below.

Identifying the Population

This process involved determining sample size, locating subjects, selecting criteria, and then contacting subjects.

Size and Sampling

A random sample of successful illiterate men could not be gathered since the entire population cannot be identified. Sample selection is difficult even with few restrictions, as with studies by Fingeret (1982a) and Manning (1984), who had difficulty identifying their respective subjects and who both resorted to techniques of identification not compatible with random selection, like referrals and telephoning. Population identification for this study was not likely to be easier, so people were included who met the qualifications for the study regardless of how they were identified.

Originally, a goal of this study was to have two distinct groups of illiterate men, one successful financially with an income of at least $30,000 annually and one having an income of less than $30,000. As it turned out, distinguishing varying degrees of success

among illiterate men was virtually impossible. Some subjects making just under $30,000, for instance, nevertheless had steady jobs and appeared to be meeting their financial responsibilities. Like distinctions among varying levels of literacy itself, "success" per se is hard to define precisely. Thus, separating interviewees into distinct groups was not possible. Instead, subjects were placed along a continuum of success based primarily on income. In this way, the original definition of success was maintained and subjects were not forced to conform to either group, while the hoped-for goals were still addressed.

Despite complications regarding the identification and interviewing of subjects that considerably lengthened the time required to collect the data, the desired population size of forty was eventually achieved.

Location of Subjects

The study was centred in a medium-sized urban centre (population 225,000) in the industrial heart of Ontario. Prospects also came from other areas. The result is the following sample composition: members from the study's urban centre (8), urban centres (65-85,000) within a 30 mile radius (12), urban centres (250,000-2,000,000) in a 60 mile radius (12), an urban centre (100,000) at 900 miles (1), a small urban centre (15,000) at 180 miles (1), rural within 60 miles (5), semi-rural at 3,000 miles (1).

Selection Criteria

One set of selection criteria applied to all subjects while a second attempted to

differentiate among men according to income and employment record.

The first set of criteria included subjects' sex, age, and reading level. All subjects were to be male, aged thirty to fifty, and unable to read above the grade-four level. Two criteria were adhered to; one was not.

As mentioned, a male-only sample was adhered to with four advantages: first, it eliminated the variable of sex, allowing for a smaller sample size; second, it avoided the problem of a scarcity of women who could meet the criteria (given women's traditional role outside the workplace); third, it avoided women subjects' possible awkwardness with a male interviewer; fourth, it allowed for uniqueness and originality, since a study using women was nearing completion at the time this process was begun (Horsman 1990).

The age restriction was expected to allow for a more homogeneous grouping of men likely to have been steadily employed since leaving school and able to meet income requirements. Capping the top age at fifty allowed for the inclusion of subjects at their peak of earning power and family obligations. Financial security was thus based more on earning ability than on outgrowing the financial burdens of rearing a family. However, this expectation turned out to be inaccurate. Two of the wealthier men, in terms of continued earning power, were over sixty. In addition, it became obvious through interviews that men over fifty had a wealth of experience to share and their knowledge would provide a useful balance with younger men.

Also important was a way of determining that each person was reading below a grade-four level; reading level was measured by the <u>Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Essential Skills</u>. Even though the use of grade level equivalency is not recommended,

the Brigance test was the best, though not ideal, means of assuring that all men were at a low level of literacy. In Canada, an adult who reads below the grade-five level is defined as illiterate (Dickinson 1978, 84). In fact, no subject in this study was able to read beyond the grade-three level.

The second set of criteria was based on common expectations of career-oriented members of literate society, good income and steady employment -- values fostered by basic education programs (Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox 1975, 4).

Income. Literacy is believed to allow one access to better paying jobs (Coleman 1983; Hunter and Harman 1979, 36; Scharles 1970, 136,138). A minimum personal income requirement of at least $30,000 per year, the median Canadian family income, thus insured that the earning power of financially successful subjects was in the top half of Canadian society.

Employment record. Although literate adults are deemed less likely to be unemployed than illiterate adults (Dickinson 1978, 83; Wellborn 1982, 53), the financially successful subjects of this study were nevertheless to have been employed at least ninety per cent of the time since leaving school. This figure allows for any transition periods related to job or career changes. The ninety per cent figure was to be adjusted for work disruptions caused by illness or seasonal employment if the $30,000 criterion was met.

Sixteen of the financially successful men had consistent employment records; of the other four, two were recently retired though one continued to work on his own, one had been retired from working for others since age forty-five but was actively involved in

making an income through real estate and investments, and the fourth had recently been disabled.

The criteria for this study differ from those employed by Fingeret, Manning, or Wood, whose chief criterion was the subjects' lack of ability to read and write. Manning did include an income of $20,000 but, by and large, none of these previous researchers attempted to identify a sub-group of illiterate adults with as much specificity as in the present study.

Finding Subjects

For obvious reasons, groups of non-readers cannot be approached by conventional means, such as by running an ad in a newspaper. Methods used by researchers like Fingeret, Manning, and Wood included seeking referrals from literacy programs, social agencies, and neighbourhood groups and employing a blanket telephone campaign with a segment of the population likely to include illiterate people. Radio and television appearances were also considered.

After deliberation, the following methods for seeking subjects were employed. (The number of subjects identified through each method is included in parentheses.) Four radio interviews were aired, two on local stations (2) and two on the national network of the CBC (2), and one television interview was conducted on a local talk show. Nineteen literacy programs were contacted including two Laubach Literacy groups (2), four public school boards (15), two Roman Catholic school boards (2), one community college (4), one university/Laubach combination, and nine funded directly

from government ministries (8). Four of these latter contacts were the result of one literacy provider's hearing a national radio interview. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business was approached with no results. Several conferences were attended but no useful contacts were made. Finally, five contacts were arranged as a result of conversations with both casual and professional acquaintances.

Although literacy programs proved most useful in identifying subjects, radio interviews and discussions with acquaintances provided almost a quarter of all contacts, none of whom were attending literacy programs at the time of the initial contact.

Collecting Data

For the research proposed, interviews were deemed the best data-collection technique partly because illiterate subjects would be unable to fill out questionnaires and partly because an interview, with sufficiently open-ended questions, allows respondents to communicate perceptions without restricting them to narrowly focused questions and simple responses.

The interview technique chosen was a modified version of the unstructured interview described by Guba and Lincoln (1981, 153-57) and by Burgess (1982, 107-109). Part of each interview followed a structured format to gather basic personal information regarding the subject's eligibility for inclusion in the study.

The remainder of the interview process followed a less structured format. In advance, a menu of desired information was established and, as it was provided by the respondent, it was checked off against a standard list. This process allowed for the order

and formation of actual questions to be adapted to individual differences. In addition,

information arising out of the interview but not anticipated in the check-list was preserved

by tape-recording each interview. This information was then evaluated and, if it

appeared to have merit as a part of a collection of perceptions, was added to the

information menu and used during future interviews. Follow-up interviews took note of

these additional data.

Standardized questions elicit various responses from an assumed heterogeneous

population without having to be pilot tested on a similar but not identical small sample

group. The use of a partially structured format also increased the reliability of an

important part of the process -- establishing subjects' eligibility for inclusion in the

sample. By insuring that each respondent was asked the same qualifying questions, the

comparability of subjects was strengthened. Yet, even though the same basic information

was required, individuals could have different perceptions of questions and preferences

for the ordering of questions (Denzin 1970, 122-143). By allowing the interviewer to

modify questions and sequences according to the differing requirements of each

interview, while simultaneously tracking a check-list of desired perceptions, validity and

comparability of information were maximized.

Another problem addressed was researcher objectivity (LeCompte and Goetz 1982,

47). Since it was not a purpose of this study to gather respondents' views of the

researcher's perspectives, an adjustable format allowed respondents to express themselves

freely (Spradley 1979, 55-68). Tapes of the pilot-test interviews were checked for bias

and adjustments made. The results of this review process are presented later in this

chapter.

Finally, the somewhat flexible interview format heightened the perceived value of the responses (Spradley 1979, 55-68). Highly standardized and scheduled interviews might give the respondent the impression that he was just another statistic or that the interviewer had a great deal of information to gather and merely wanted to get the process over with. An adjustable schedule, on the other hand, reduced this danger considerably. The approach posed potential threats to reliability and validity so far as the order in which the questions were asked could influence responses. Nevertheless, the final decision was made to make the interviewee feel that his input was valued. This interview process was expected to increase the range of information available, to maximize opportunities of recording individual perceptions, and to assure the compilation of a common core of knowledge.

Also considered was the dilemma of establishing rapport with the respondent while maintaining objective distance (Cicourel 1964, 85-87; Denzin 1970, 122-143; Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 97-98; Spradley 1979, 55-68). The respondent had to feel comfortable with the interviewer because rapport tends to increase the validity of responses. Respondents at ease with the process are less likely to provide misinformation or hold back vital facts. On the other hand, 'over identification' of interviewer and respondent could influence responses and diminish objectivity when evaluating them (Cicourel 1964, 84). A balance had to be maintained. Pilot testing also obviously affected interview design, including ways of addressing unwilling respondents and sensitive issues.

Developing Questions

As mentioned, the first and highly standardized of two interview phases determined the eligibility of individuals for inclusion in the study. Information sought included age, sex, educational achievement, employment record, residence record, marriage and family statistics, home ownership, social relationships, financial status, and professed desire to become literate. At the end of the initial session, a brief diagnostic test of reading ability (the Brigance test) was administered with the interviewee's consent. The comparability of information collected at this stage was important; if a prospective respondent were unwilling to provide all of the personal information, yet otherwise seemed to fit the criteria, interviewing might proceed with a later attempt to obtain the missing details.

The second phase of the interviewing process gathered respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of literacy to personal success. Broad questions asked at this stage included these: What constitutes success? How does one go about achieving such success? Of what importance is formal education or the ability to read and write in the achievement of that success? What special skills or attributes are required for success? After pilot testing, these broad questions were abandoned in favour of categories of anticipated difference, described later in the chapter.

During preparation of the interview schedule, general questions were broken down into components. Interviews would be checked for completeness in relation to the following sub-questions: How do you define being successful? Do you have or use an alternative to reading or writing? How do you identify success in others or yourself? How do you believe that people become successful -- what experiences, skills, or

attributes are required? What do you feel a need for in your life? Do you feel you are missing anything? If you could make changes in your life, what would they be? What are your personal life goals? How do you define learning? How do you believe you learn? What do you believe is the role of formal schooling in the achievement of success? What role do you believe that literacy has in the achievement of success? How have you managed to be successful in relation to commonly accepted standards? and, What special skills or attributes do you believe you have?

Pilot testing indicated weaknesses. For one, the second interview seemed to lack structure. The interviews seemed to uncover perceptions, but responses were so scattered as to make categorization and analysis very difficult. As a result, categories based on anticipated factors of success were established and groups of questions planned for each category. (See "Determining Focus" below and Appendix A.) Other problems included the following.

Vague questions. Some questions on both the standardized and non-standardized interviews proved to be too vague. Respondents generally cited too broad an experience base and made it difficult for the interviewer to focus on an answer. Examples of revisions that sharpened the frame of reference implied by certain questions are the following: "Are there any people or things from that time [youth] that stick out in your mind?" was changed to "Who were your best friends from your early school days?" and "Who helped you the most when you were growing up?" "What were the most important things you learned during your youth?" was changed to "Did you learn anything when you were young that helped you in later years?" (For other examples, compare the two

interview protocols in Appendix A.)

Value questions. Some questions might have appeared to the interviewee to beg a specific response, for example, "Do you have any things that you try to achieve or things that you look forward to, sort of goals for yourself?" If the interviewee sensed the importance most people place on goals, he might be inclined to answer affirmatively whether he cared about goals or not. Questions such as these were dropped from the second interview.

Digression. Interviewees often wanted to digress during the scheduled, structured interviews or expand beyond the scope of the questions used in the first interview. This need appeared to arise out of a desire to talk about their feelings rather than respond to the questions asked. The wish to capitalize on this desire to open up was countered by the need to determine a subject's eligibility. The solution was to ensure that interviewees were aware of the purpose of the first interview, noting that ample time would be given in the second interview for the sharing of their views. Some firm direction was thus required during the first interview.

Anticipation. Some formal questions seemed to anticipate certain answers, tempting the interviewer to help the respondent reply in a certain way, thus skewing the results. A little of the interviewer's lack of experience showed here, but a tendency to coach the interviewee was amended after listening to tapes and reading transcripts of the first three interviews. In addition, questions for the unscheduled interviews were reformulated in order to make the interviewer less inclined to lead the respondents with their answers.

Longer questions. Some questions were longer than others, perhaps suggesting that they were more important. The longer questions may have resulted from a desire to leave the second interview open-ended, as well as from a perceived need to adjust questions for different interviewees. The problem was alleviated when the second interview was rewritten to permit different questions for different interviewees.

Determining focus. The focus of some of the questions in the unstructured interviews was unclear to the members of the dissertation committee. This problem appears to have resulted from spontaneous questions, some of them awkwardly posed. The solution involved the formulation of a list of probable factors of success in regard to skills, abilities, or attitudes. These factors arose partly from four test interviews, partly from common perceptions about the way illiterate people are supposed to act, and partly from reflecting on what might lead to success. The nine factors of success ended up including confidence, responsibility, pride, observation skills, alternatives to reading, oral skills, memory, sociability, and generalizing skills. Confidence and responsibility seemed logical attributes of successful people, while pride was taken as a sign of motivation. Observation, the tendency to notice detail and opportunity, seemed an important skill as well. An ability to compensate in various ways for the inability to read and write appeared likely to contribute to successful coping in literate society. Oral skills were also expected to be a consistent means of compensating for low literacy among subjects included in the study, as well as a means of getting along with others. Memory, an assumed attribute of illiterate people, provided both an additional measure of difference among interviewees and a check on common beliefs. Sociability was included to test the

Hunter and Harman observations concerning reputed difficulties in this area, as well as to provide yet another way of differentiating among subjects. Finally, the fairly advanced intellectual or perceptive skill of generalizing allowed a measure of the subjects' ability to decode literate society, thus determining in some measure their level of success. This whole process of defining expected factors of success helped to focus the second interview protocol.

A set of questions for each factor was then created ahead of time in order to clarify the focus and purpose of each question. This pre-ordering was not meant to prohibit the creation of new questions, but rather to limit the formulation of spontaneous questions to those moments in the interview when the respondent actually required amplification or clarification.

Abstractions. During pilot testing, interviewees had trouble understanding abstract concepts. Among the terms lacking clarity for many respondents was the word "success". To reduce confusion, the use of the word was postponed until later in the second interview. When it was used, it reflected a consistency of use such that most interviewees could determine its meaning. Other words that caused some difficulty, like "goals" and "education", were omitted.

One final adjustment to the second interview protocol occurred during the very first interview in the data-collection phase. Two questions were added under the heading of "generalizing" at the end of the second interview protocol. They were "What does it take to be successful in life?" and "How do you know when you are successful?" In the process of the interview, it became apparent that raising the issue of success late in the

interview was both appropriate and informative. As a result, these two questions were incorporated into all interviews.

Conducting Interviews

Interviews were conducted in two parts to limit the time spent at any one sitting. The first interview, including the reading test at the end, lasted forty to sixty minutes. If after the first interview the interviewee was deemed an appropriate subject, a subsequent interview was arranged. Or, both sets of questions were covered at one sitting if the interviewee preferred. (This occurred twelve times in all -- see Appendix F.) In most cases interviews were completed in two sessions. (Again, variations are explained in Appendix F.)

Further information was sought near the end of the analysis phase, an exercise that involved two further phone calls to the thirty-two subjects that could be reached.

Appendix F provides an analysis of the conditions for all interviews.

Recording Data

All but two interviews were taped. Excluded was a man who refused even to use his own name; the second exclusion was a phone interview: these interviews were transcribed by hand.

Reliability and Validity

"Validity, with its concern for what is being measured, and reliability, which points

to the stability of observations over time, are directly relevant to the interview" (Denzin 1970, 132). Goetz and Lecompte observed that ethnographers ignore this advice too frequently, claiming that their research is essentially descriptive and generative and need not comply with standard rules of validity and reliability (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 208-209). This argument is unsound, "because ignoring threats to credibility weakens research, whatever its goals may be" (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 209). While planning this research, an attempt was made to incorporate the recommendations of a number of writers so that the study would more closely conform to accepted standards of research design.

Reliability

Threats to reliability as defined by Goetz and LeCompte (1984, 211-220), together with the means of addressing them, are described here.

Role and Status of the Researcher

During an interview or set of interviews the relationship of interviewer and interviewee was kept cordial yet professional. Cicourel (1964, 88-93) and Denzin (1970, 124-143) discuss problems that arise when the roles and relationships between the interviewee and the interviewer are changed during the data-collection process. If the interviewer becomes too friendly, he may adversely affect both the reliability and the validity of his data. On the other hand, an overly cool demeanour can lead to the respondent's unwillingness to share his true perceptions. Trust was essential. To gain it

consistently, and to insure that respondents' true perceptions were shared, certain practices were employed. First, with the exception of five interviewees, initial contact was made and preliminary acceptance gained through an intermediary, a trusted person. Most frequently it was a literacy instructor; however, a daughter and a mother-in-law also acted as intermediaries. Of the five exceptions, three came directly to the researcher through a radio interview and the other two were referred and contacted directly. Each interviewee also chose a time and a place suitable to him. In addition, no pressure was ever applied for compliance, while the purpose of the interviewing process was always stated clearly before the first interview. Interviewees were also granted the privilege of dropping out at any time, and were allowed to skip overly personal or embarrassing questions; however, no question was ever refused. The value of the knowledge being offered to the interviewer was always stressed, and an atmosphere of mutual respect was always cultivated. Because most interviews were firmly directed by the interviewer, most followed a similar pattern of questioning, thereby stabilizing the interviewer-interviewee relationship over the course of the data-gathering process.

Choice of Respondents

For purposes of replication, a future researcher must be able to select informants similar to those obtained for this study (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 216). In order to standardize selection and to facilitate replication, the criteria for eligibility were clearly established and consistently adhered to, and a profile of all respondents was kept on tape and in chart form.

Social Situations and Conditions of Interviews

The circumstances of an interview may affect the type of information revealed; therefore, "delineation of the physical, social, and interpersonal contexts within which data are gathered enhances the replicability of ethnographic studies" (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 215). During the interview process, thus, an attempt was made to maintain a common type of social setting. The considerable travel involved meant that the interview environment could not always be controlled or pre-determined. The subject's selection of a comfortable place and convenient time took precedence.

Conceptualization

The concepts used to develop the research method must be clearly defined to make future researchers fully aware of the assumptions, values, and goals guiding the initial research (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 216). In this study, attempts have been made to establish working definitions and to describe fully the nature of the analytical process leading to the original proposal.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

"Replicability is impossible without precise identification and thorough description of strategies used to collect data" (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 217). In this study, tapes provide a thorough record of interviews. The interview protocol followed is presented in Appendix A, and the conditions of interviews are described in Appendix F.

"More serious than specification of data collection techniques for both external and

internal reliability is the identification of general strategies for analyzing ethnographic

data" (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 217). The data analysis employed in this study is

described here, while the method of categorizing and tabulating interview responses is

made evident through the reporting process covered in the following three chapters.

Peer Examination

Peer examination can be used to check the dependability of the researcher's data-

collecting process and to insure the reliability of his descriptions of it. In this study, pilot

test results were evaluated by the dissertation committee. The interview process was

rationalized for each new contact by consulting, where appropriate, literacy instructors

and coordinators, education administrators and professors, other interested parties, media

representatives, and the prospective interviewees. Follow-up conversations concerning

the work and its discoveries fulfilled a promise to contacts to keep them informed of both

the progress of the study and its final results. Finally, an objective reviewer verified the

transcription of data from the interview tapes by listening to two interviews and recording

data on charts. These charts were then compared to the researcher's and revealed little

variation.

Mechanical Recording of Data

The mechanical recording of data strengthens reliability and the possibility of

replication (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 220). Only two interviews were not taped: the

first as a result of the interviewee's fear of exposure; the second because the interview

was conducted by phone and could not be recorded.

Validity

Efforts to minimize threats to validity were also undertaken.

Changing Roles and Relationships

The interview is a special interaction and is governed by rules or traditions about

sharing information with strangers as determined by etiquette or culture. The interviewer

is then faced with deciding either to maintain a fixed, formal relationship and not risk

breaking any rules, thereby enhancing validity by assuring cooperation, or to allow a

more friendly, informal relationship to develop and perhaps increase the range and depth

of data volunteered.

The decision to allow the more friendly, non-formal relationship to develop

produced an atmosphere in which as much intimate information as possible could be

gathered. The following measures were taken to insure the validity of the approach:

pilot testing was employed to develop interviewing skills; interviews were taped to permit

comparisons of the interview process; and a consistent interviewee/interviewer

relationship was maintained throughout the initial interview for all subjects.

Representativeness of the Sample

Extrapolating results to a larger population has never been an issue in planning this

study. There is virtually no way of identifying enough people within the general

population of illiterate men to be able to employ statistical or random sampling. Consequently, the forty men interviewed could not be described as a sample. They were, however, systematically selected for this study.

The selection process used is best described as criterion-based (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, 73); specific attributes were defined (see Selection Criteria, this chapter) and attempts were made to locate men who met the criteria.

During selection, anyone who appeared to be a potential interviewee was contacted; not all those contacted completed the interviews. Four others not meeting the criteria had been notified by a contact person and were interviewed so they would not feel rejected. This group included two women and existed because contact people had misunderstood the selection criteria. These interviews have not been included in the study data.

The final sample group may have been biased by the selection process. For instance, only willing people were interviewed; no one was coerced. Consequently, those selected may constitute an unrepresentative sample of illiterate men, or they may be representative of a specific sub-set of illiterate men who are outgoing and unencumbered by the supposed stigma of illiteracy. On the other hand, all men were identified in the same way. All were selected according to how well they met the criteria established prior to selection. All prospective interviewees were asked to participate because their knowledge and abilities as illiterate adults functioning in a literate world could help others not functioning as well as they were. This rationale for involvement partially explains why the four prospects previously mentioned were interviewed even though they did not meet the criteria. If the population is biased, all members are biased in the same way.

It might also be argued that contacting potential interviewees through the media could have biased the sample in favour of more outgoing types. This is unlikely to have been a factor since only three of the forty men made direct contact with the researcher after a radio broadcast. The other four contacts attributed to radio broadcasts were established through a third person who heard the interview. Of the three direct contacts, no one had made anyone outside of his family aware of his illiteracy. These men did not appear to be publicity seekers. In summary then, although the men interviewed do not constitute a representative sample of all illiterate men, they were carefully selected according to a consistent set of criteria.

Time for Interviews

Only rambling or repetitive responses were cut short. Otherwise the time taken per interview involved only that necessary for specific answers to all questions in part one, and comfortable, unforced responses to all issues raised in part two. Forty such interviews then constitute the essential data-gathering time of this study.

Dissembling and Role Playing

At times, interviewees may respond as they suspect the interviewer wants them to. To counteract these types of responses, Spradley (1979, 55-69) stresses the importance of both the respondent's understanding of the nature and value of the research and the clarity of the relationship between respondent and interviewer. Ideally, the respondent clarifies his own perception of things for the interview rather than saying what he thinks

the interviewer wants to hear.

Steps were taken to counter the possibility of dissembling or role-playing. The unscheduled format was used in the second interview so that the interviewee would not feel that he was responding to a set of mechanically constructed questions formulated by a disinterested interviewer. The interviewer followed up on subjects' thoughts in part two, as long as the various categories of questions were addressed. Asking questions that appeared to beg certain specific or "correct" answers was avoided. Interviewees were allowed to choose the direction their answers might take. Questions put the onus on the interviewee to decide what to share and what to withhold. Finally, any doubts about the reliability of the information were checked with the contact people; similar questions were asked to determine the consistency of the interviewee's story.

Erroneous or Misleading Data

By making contact with prospective subjects through trusted referrals, and by assuring subjects of their anonymity in participating in the study, the likelihood of including poseurs or publicity seekers in the research sample was considerably diminished. A further control on possible erroneous information after candidates had been accepted was provided by the use of triangulation and probing follow-up questions.

Manipulation of Interviews

After problems arose in pilot testing regarding the interviewer's tendency to lead or help respondents with their answers, the rewritten interview schedules were more strictly

adhered to. Responses were patiently awaited. The first six interviews following pilot

testing were reviewed and the data charted. No serious problems with leading or

answering for interviewees appeared.

Researcher Bias -- Question Development

All interview questions were reviewed by the dissertation committee. Any new

questions addressed a need to clarify or expand.

Order of Questions

The question schedule for interview one was systematically followed. In most

cases, the second interview followed the concepts in the order provided in the protocol.

Effects of Setting or Interview Environment

To make the interview as natural and comfortable as possible, attempts were made

to allow the interviewee to choose the setting. The tape-recording device was a black,

noiseless micro-recorder the size of a cigarette box. Anonymity was guaranteed. The

interview was treated as an opportunity to share privately some ideas which could be

helpful to others.

Validity of Constructs

The validity of the constructs, that is, the extent to which abstract terms,

generalizations, or meanings are shared across times, settings, and populations was

checked in the following ways. First, pilot testing was employed to identify and then to remove difficult words and concepts. Second, responses were tape-recorded and then placed on charts: different responses to concept-based questions were dealt with at the same time and it was possible to determine if interviewees appeared to be responding to the same idea. In addition, charts plotting responses to certain questions and interpretations of specific concepts with related constructs were kept.

Counteracting the threats to reliability and validity is no less crucial to the kind of research proposed for this study than to more formalized experimental designs. Consequently, every effort was made to minimize potential threats.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the first interview, though formal analysis did not begin until all the interviews were completed. The first steps in the analysis occurred when, as a specific interview was proceeding, annotations were made of the subject's responses. Later, these annotations proved to be valuable in facilitating the formal analysis.

The major analysis was performed in two steps. First, two master charts were created to record data from each set of interviews. One computerized chart contained the biographical data collected from the first interview arranged under the following headings: age, siblings, education level, reading level, number of career jobs, type of work presently engaged in, yearly income, investment status, social roles, marital status, number of children, children's education, children's jobs (Appendix B). Additional areas were added after two later follow-up phone interviews. These consisted of data on

wives' education, parents' education, reading abilities and jobs, and attitudes concerning literacy programs. It seemed of interest to know about parents and wives since much is written about the support that wives give to their illiterate husbands and about such things as the cycle of deprivation and poverty. Since most of the men in the study had attended a literacy program at one time and yet were all still statistically illiterate (Dickinson 1978), it appeared worthwhile to explore more about how they perceived these programs.

The second set of charts (one set per person), on large sheets of paper, included spaces for all the question groups from the second interview and for information that could be extracted from the interviews even though not in response to specific questions. Examples of this latter group are cognitive strengths, communicative skills, organizing skills, role of the family, goals, neighbourhood, self-concept, values, and valued things. Such data represent aspects of character and perspective that can show up in an analysis of answers. Cognitive strengths were gauged by noting how a person answered or how well he grasped meanings. For example, one man noted that a particular question could be answered differently depending on how the question was interpreted. Communicative skills applied throughout, while goals, values, valued things, self-concept, and the role of the family could be mentioned at any time during the interviews as part of responses to questions having to do with pride, confidence, sociability, or responsibility. Finally, neighbourhood was added as a category of data because, late in the interview process, it was recognized that a wide range of environments existed.

The categories created from the interview questions are these: confidence, memory, observation skills, pride, satisfaction in the quality of his work, others' opinions

of him, reading alternatives, writing alternatives, being late, missing work, responsibilities, source of responsibility, greatest responsibility, social successes, personal successes, sociability, social roles, friends, trust, education, things affecting life, literacy problems, dealing with print, the value of being literate, keeping promises, skills worth improving, strategies for hiding illiteracy, defining success, and achieving success.

An additional category relates to the causes of unemployment. This question appeared at the end of the first interview protocol. It was used to capture a sense of the interviewee's willingness and ability to state an opinion and to get a sense of how the second interview might progress. For example, a subject feeling comfortable with the process might need less structured and probing questions than a shy and self-conscious person. The question produced answers from all of the interviewees and these responses were analyzed since they appeared to reflect fairly strong feelings.

After these charts were created, a specific part of each interview was reviewed and appropriate data entered. As well, all the interviewees' responses to a particular question were reviewed so that analysis could begin. Then, all interviews were carefully replayed.

The second stage of analysis involved the development of a comprehensible way of presenting data. This task was relatively straightforward with biographical data that could be added and averaged.

The qualitative data posed a different problem, however. The various perceptions, already gathered under categories based on the interview questions, were recorded on the handwritten charts. Separate charts, however, make analysis of the data difficult. The information from each personal chart was thus transferred to a single chart for each group

or sub-group of responses. Each new chart had forty responses for a question. For example, there was one chart for where responsibility was learned, another for sources of pride. Analyzing groups of answers in search of patterns could therefore begin. Recognized patterns became categories within the groups of responses. The categories for where responsibility was learned, for instance, are experiences, internally, other people, and don't know; and for sources of pride: others, self, and don't know. This process was completed for each group of perceptions with answers from all those interviewed. When the analysis was completed, the charts reflected qualitative data on the types of perceptions these illiterate people had and quantitative data on distribution among the interviewees.

Reporting the Results

Included in the reporting of this study are the origins of the concepts that gave rise to it, the definition of terms governing the selection of subjects, the focus for data collection, a complete description of participants and settings, a complete outline of the interview process plus sample responses from several interviews, a description of the analytical process with sample analyses, a description of the results of analysis including categories of perceptions and distribution over categories, and finally, suggestions concerning the relevance of the results regarding common perceptions of literacy and the work of program providers.

The following chapters deal with reporting the results of this study: Chapter 4 compares the interviewees with commonly held views about illiterate people; Chapter 5

explains how these illiterate men cope with the demands of living in a literate society; Chapter 6 explains how some men function quite successfully in this society; Chapter 7 provides a synthesized profile of a successful illiterate man and shows how this profile compares to both the common deficiency view of illiterate adults and the stream of research begun by Fingeret (1982a); and Chapter 8 suggests the implications of these results.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARING ILLITERATE MEN

WITH COMMON VIEWS OF THEIR DEFICIENCY

As mentioned, the common view of illiteracy is and has been that illiterate people

lack important abilities, a deficiency that precludes their taking full part in society. The

results of this study bring the validity of this view into question, and with it the whole

range of responses to illiterate people that are built on this notion of assumed deficiency.

This chapter examines two conclusions concerning the usual negative view drawn

from the Review of the Literature. The first conclusion is that the categories of illiterate

adults presented by Hunter and Harman (1979) are incomplete as a description of the

broad spectrum of such adults because these categories do not recognize illiterate people

who may feel little reason to rectify their inability to read. The second is that several

assumptions about illiteracy appear to be incorrect. If this is so, then the beliefs about

the solution to the problem being bound up with certain kinds of prescribed literacy

training must also be incorrect. What follows is a discussion of these two conclusions in

light of the findings of this study. Wherever appropriate or useful, reference to specific

responses is used to illuminate major points. The quotes presented reveal types of

answers, and demonstrate how the subjects in this study expressed their thoughts. In

each case the person quoted is identified by a number. The numbers indicate the

chronological order of first interviews and coincide with the biographical information

provided in Appendix B.

Categories of Illiterate Adults

Although the categories of illiterate adults outlined by Hunter and Harman appear to

subsume all the possible sub-groups within the illiterate population, they do not.

Underlying the categorization is the assumption that illiterate people see their illiteracy as

a serious problem they would like to solve. On the contrary, this study's results show

that some people have little concern for the effect of illiteracy in their lives, or for the

need to become literate; some question its usefulness:

> What could I do with reading that I can't do now? (Subject 6)

> When those other people go on the TV show, they have documents and everything, and when I go on, all I got is my brains. (Subject 27)

> I find that periodically I have to defend myself [against insults about lack of education] and basically I just say, 'I got here.' (Subject 25)

Some question its long-term effects:

> All my friends I grew up with knew I couldn't read and write. Only one has made more money. (Subject 27)

> If you got to do something, you put it on paper. Right off the bat, I can tell you but you have to look at the paper. (Subject 29)

Some question whether a person is better off:

> I never said, "because you've got an education, you're better than I am." (Subject 7)

> I may not have all the readin' but I'm still gonna stand up and be counted and I'm gonna be somebody." (Subject 15)

> Half of my friends are normal and half are well educated and famous. (Subject 27)

Educated people fail because they're afraid to make a mistake. (Subject 7)

I know it's very nice to have an education. I've always wanted it, but I just wonder if I had it, would I be as happy. Maybe I'd demand or want more, I don't know. (Subject 16)

Subject 22 is philosophical in his analysis, saying if it isn't one thing, it's another, that everyone faces some problem:

Most people have a problem one way or another and if they don't have that kind of problem [writing], they've got another kind of problem when the nitty-gritty gets down to the fine points. (Subject 22)

All but one interviewee has taken part in a literacy program at some time. Initially, this evidence appears to support the belief that illiterate people see illiteracy as a problem they must do something about, assuming these men have taken courses in order to learn to how read and write. Considered along with other data concerning participation, however, a different interpretation suggests itself.

Although at the time of the first interview thirty-nine of the men had attempted a literacy course at some time, not all had stayed, nor had anyone actually learned to read above the grade three level. Willingness to stay with courses, measured by active participation at the time of the first interview, is seventy per cent for the entire group. For men on the upper half of the financial continuum, this rate is only forty-five per cent while on the lower half, it is ninety-four per cent. The rate for the men on the lower half is skewed by the fact that only one of them was identified by means other than through a literacy program, whereas eight of the more successful men were identified outside of literacy programs.

A second set of data from call backs may be more reliable for measuring willingness to stay in courses. Tables C-22 and C-23 show that of those who had been registered in literacy programs at the time of the first interview, fifty per cent of the upper half of the group and twenty-eight per cent of the lower half had stayed through the one to three years between interviews. When compared to the numbers of those who have ever been in a literacy course, staying rates are twenty-five per cent over all. This number is considerably below the fifty per cent completion rate mentioned by Washington in 1983. In fact, only one of the men in the study had ever completed a literacy program and when his reading level was measured for inclusion in this study, it was at grade one.

These data suggest that perhaps these illiterate men are not as committed to becoming literate as might be expected of those who are troubled by their inability to read. Indeed, this interpretation is supported by the disinclination, especially among the more financially successful, to take more courses. Forty-four per cent say "no" when asked if they would sign up again, and only about twenty per cent are clearly interested in taking more courses in the future (Table C-24).

Also contradicting common belief is the fact that few subjects in this study register either embarrassment or outside pressure as reasons for participating in literacy courses. Instead, the most common reasons given for participating are related to personal growth rather than to practical necessity. For example, Subject 1 admits wanting to "read a good novel", while Subject 26 confesses that "there's got to be a lot of good books out there I want to read before I die." Subjects appear not to place much importance on learning how to read and write as a ticket to a better job or a higher income. Perhaps this is

because very little economic or intellectual benefit has been realized by any of the participants as a result of having taken the courses.

Finally, Table D-56 shows that these men mention one hundred and sixty-seven ways of achieving success. Although reading and writing are mentioned ten times, no one ever names literacy as the first prerequisite for success.

These responses, in short, do not substantiate the usual assumed motives of increased income, personal embarrassment, or the value of literacy among illiterate people. Based on the evidence of this study, therefore, it appears inappropriate to say that most illiterate adults have a concern for doing something about their illiteracy.

Groups outside of the Hunter and Harman categories (or sub-groups within the categories) ought therefore to be recognized. Such recognition would accommodate those people for whom illiteracy is not a major concern. Such a sub-group may exist within the Hunter and Harman Group 1, the group that most closely resembles literate society, and perhaps recognition ought to be extended through all the groups since some less financially successful illiterate men also do not seem especially concerned about their supposed deficiency.

If the individuals who do not fall neatly within the categories are recognized, a whole new perspective opens up; a new source of information about illiterate people and their needs becomes available. These people may always have existed but failure to recognize them has made it impossible to learn from them.

Assumptions About Illiteracy

Four basic assumptions inform the traditional view. They are that illiteracy causes

social problems like crime, unemployment, and poverty; that literacy is a necessary factor

in an individual's economic development; that literacy is a prerequisite for political

involvement; and that literacy makes a person superior to someone who is illiterate.

Each is discussed here in light of the results of this study.

Illiteracy Causes Crime, Unemployment, and Poverty

As cited in earlier examples, members of the press often refer to the relationship,

reputedly causal though based on correlational studies, between illiteracy and social

problems. In this they are echoing the prevailing view among governments, laymen and

experts alike that illiteracy causes social problems. Some commentators however, hint at

the opposite view -- that social conditions cause illiteracy.

This assumed causal relationship is not supported by the findings of this study.

None of the forty men interviewed is poor by common measure, and half of the less

successful financially live quite well. Some are married to women who work outside the

home, others own property, and some have reasonably good jobs that keep them above

the subsistence level, at least marginally. In addition, none of the men interviewed has a

criminal record. For Subject 24, this is a point of some pride: "I classify myself as a

good citizen; always respect the law and don't go against it." Eleven of the less

financially successful men are unemployed, but five are so due to injury and have been

placed in re-education programs. In each case, according to their own reports,

unemployment has not been a major problem for them prior to their injuries. In many ways, these men could not be distinguished from members of the larger literate society, a society with its own share of the poor, the unemployed, and the criminally inclined. In fact, the existence of several subjects making more than the national average income as well as several who were making two to three times as much as that average suggests that within the illiterate sub-group an income distribution profile may exist similar to what is expected of the literate society as a whole.

Closely related to the causal relationship between illiteracy and social problems are the concepts of the "cycle of transmitted deprivation" and "culture of poverty". According to these ideas, illiterate people are more likely to have come from illiterate family environments and are more likely to raise illiterate and hence poor children. These interpretations are not supported by the findings of this study.

Of the fifty adult children of the men in this study, seventy per cent have completed at least high school and ninety four per cent are working full time either at home or in the workplace. Furthermore, twenty-five per cent are professionally trained. Certainly the children of these illiterate men are showing few signs of "transmitted deprivation".

Call backs near the end of the analysis of data reveal interesting information about the parents of the men in this study. According to what men can remember, fewer than twenty-five per cent of their parents had less than a grade eight education. No one reports having siblings who are illiterate and only one person reports an illiterate parent. In terms of employment, only one person reports an unemployed father and fifty per cent

of the mothers worked outside the home. Again, little support exists for either a "culture of poverty" or "transmitted deprivation".

Literacy Is a Necessary Factor in an Individual's Economic Development

It is commonly thought that, without literacy, a person will find it almost impossible to do anything but the meanest and most unskilled of jobs. In addition, millions of dollars per year are claimed to be lost by industries employing those who cannot read or write well enough to decipher instructions. Employers will also state that employees must have a grade twelve education to function in their jobs and to meet the literacy requirements inherent in those jobs. In other words, the likelihood of a progressively higher earned income is arrested by illiteracy. Again, this study's findings do not support this view. In the first place, virtually all of the men have been involved in jobs that are normally assumed to require literacy. These jobs, listed in Table C-8, include chef, businessman, auto mechanic, dispatcher, politician, member of the library board, and welder. These men order supplies, operate machines, supervise workers, make schedules, deliver building materials, dispatch trucks, and read blueprints. Curiously, almost no one expresses any concern for being unable to deal with work-related reading, even though no one can read beyond the grade-three level and as many as fifteen of the group have to run complicated machines. In fact, most feel that the literacy requirements of their jobs are minimal.

Second, thirty per cent of the men have been elected to an office in some association. In order to receive that honour, one generally has to be perceived by one's

peers to be successful and responsible. Often this respect is based on achieving a level of economic independence and security. In addition, Subject 34 was elected to a town council and was then appointed to the library board.

Third, at least eight of the men in the study have been offered promotions in their careers, and six have accepted them in spite of an increased level of challenge in regard to their ability to deal with written language. Only Subject 8 failed to meet the demands of his job, and yet not all of his problems were literacy-related. He was the general manager of an Olympic swimming pool complex. After leaving that position, he bought a service station and eventually created his own pool-servicing business.

Fourth, as Table C-7 shows, six of the men in this study own and operate their own businesses. Two others had owned businesses prior to the time of the interviews. Of this total, only one had failed in his business venture. In addition, seven others have had business sidelines to supplement their regular incomes.

Fifth, twenty men own their own homes, twenty-four have investments, and twenty-five own life insurance. In addition, the average income of the men working full-time based on figures supplied by them is approximately $34,000. This figure places their average $13,000 higher than the average of Canadian men with a grade twelve certificate, $10,000 higher than those with a trade certificate and $10,000 higher than those with some university training (Canada. Statistics Canada 1986, 6-6 and 6-7). At the time of writing, 1991 census figures are not available. If only the twenty most successful financially are considered, the average income is $37,700.

These are not insecure, economically deprived people. In fact, Subject 22 had headed a consortium of investors that included lawyers, doctors, and other professionals. According to him, the members of the consortium were never aware that the financial mind behind their group could neither read nor write. It is erroneous to describe any of the people with like accomplishments as impoverished or deficient, at least in relation to the common measures of these things. In many ways, these men have accomplished exactly what literate people have managed to do, but without reading and writing. The question about means begs an answer, especially in light of the overwhelming tendency to deny such possibilities.

Literacy Is a Prerequisite for Political Participation

Being literate makes full participation in a democratic society possible according to prevailing views. For instance, being able to read newspapers allows a citizen to sort out what politicians are arguing about at election time or what the key issues are concerning some national crisis. In addition, being literate seems a factor in the development of individual freedom and potential since it allows a person to function freely and to take advantage of the rights and freedoms afforded him by the constitution. Accordingly, an illiterate person is therefore unaware of the political activities around him, unlikely to vote in elections, unable to deal with public service bureaucrats, unaware of his individual rights, an unlikely candidate for office, and probably unable to have any effect on the political functioning of his society.

If the above are characteristics thought to be common among illiterate people, then the men interviewed for this study do not conform to this stereotype. Almost all the interviewees say they vote regularly. Interest in current affairs, though not universal and overwhelming, does not appear to differ much from what might be expected among any other group of citizens. Four people have petitioned local governments. Subject 2 is involved in trying to insure that people in his situation -- disabled, unemployed, or on welfare -- can receive some assistance and respect from public servants and the government. Subject 27 tells of how he attempted to settle a dispute over a piece of Crown land near his home. He was stymied until he threatened to write to the Queen. His appeal was dealt with quickly. In addition, Subject 27 has been so active in his community that he recently received an achievement award for "distinguished contribution". The commendation states that he has had an effect on the preservation of the local environment in that, "through his lobbying efforts," he has helped stop the spraying of 2-4D and has saved one of the important local forms of animal life. Although a few men mention problems filling out forms when applying for jobs, and often take such forms home to fill them out, no one seems concerned about filling out forms for government offices and no one mentions being bothered by having to ask a government employee to help fill out a form. Most people appear aware of the rights and the opportunities afforded them by the political system. In fact, the years of having to figure out alternatives to literacy-related activities that most people take for granted may well have made them much better citizens and more aware of how to make the system respond. Since twenty-three of the men have rarely been out of work, their contact with

bureaucracy has probably been minimal. Finally, there is one man who has served as an elected representative of the people among the study group. Subject 34 served on the town council in his community and managed to deal with the literacy-related expectations of that position and still function without anyone's discovering his illiteracy. Having one elected representative in this group may not seem like much, but one in forty is probably higher than the ratio in the society at large. For instance, this researcher's teachers' federation has over one thousand members in the local school district and only two of them hold an elected political office. Presumably, all of the members are literate. At any rate, this one illiterate man's public position flies in the face of what would commonly be believed possible in today's world.

Literacy Makes a Person Superior to Someone Who Is Illiterate

The use of phrases such as "culture of poverty", "the cycle of transmitted deprivation", and "educationally disadvantaged" seems to increase the negative expectations many people, including researchers and teachers, have when they deal with illiterate people. This negativity can then override reality very quickly. In the past, it has not been uncommon for literacy leaders or teaching instructors to ask new teachers to make a list of all the things for which a person uses reading and writing in his or her daily life. This process, though not meant to be prejudicial, predetermines how inexperienced teachers think about illiteracy. Subtly the teacher is likely to take on the responsibility of rescuing people from their "deprived" state. The possibility of an equal

partnership is lost and so is the chance of the illiterate person's ever being treated as an effectively functioning citizen.

The results of this study suggest that to consider an illiterate person inferior to a literate person is to misjudge and misread existing evidence. Instead of seeing all illiterate people as inferior, it is important to see the strengths that many have. They often have to and are able to decode the rules of society without the benefit of reading books and newspapers. They must raise their children, purchase their homes, and function in daily activities if they are to succeed in life, and many of them do just that, quite well. In fact, a few illiterate people achieve high personal and material levels of success. As has been pointed out, twenty-one men in the study group own their own homes, twenty-four have investments, and twenty-three have life insurance. In addition, many are making a reasonable wage, and three are making over $60,000 per year. Their own words belie any notion of their seeing themselves as inferior:

When I'm dead and gone, I won't be forgotten. (Subject 27)

I'm proud of what I've accomplished with my life. (Subject 28)

I'm proud for who I am and what I've done in my life by helping people. (Subject 24)

If I changed anything, I wouldn't be what I am and I like what I am. (Subject 18)

Everything I've accomplished I get a lot of self-satisfaction out of. (Subject 22)

They would look at you and say 'How could a guy acquire that amount of stuff or what have you and work in a factory?' and I'm a manager and I can't even do any of that. (Subject 22)

My work, the places I've been, things I was able to do and I'm pretty well proud of everything so far. (Subject 23)

I know I can be down and still be able to get on top again. (Subject 37)

Just accomplishing what I've accomplished. Getting a job, having a house, being married. (Subject 13)

These men are proud of their lives, their accomplishments, and their standing in society. It is obvious they do not see themselves as inferior.

Inferences About Illiterate People

Five inferences about illiterate people appear to be inherent in the commonly held views about them, influencing not only how illiterate people are perceived but also how literacy programs are planned and operated. These five are that illiterate people have trouble with learning, thinking and problem-solving, that illiterate people are self-conscious and lack confidence and therefore are embarrassed and withdrawn, that illiterate people cannot be leaders, that illiterate people cannot lead normal lives or achieve a measurable level of success, and finally, and that all illiterate people need and want to become literate. These inferences are challenged by the results of this study.

Illiterate People Have Trouble Learning

Several men recall having bad experiences in school. They remember being segregated into special classes, having people call them names, and feeling that they were stupid and unable to do the things with their brains that everyone else could. Those memories persist and, for some, provide extra incentive to be better and to prove to others that they can achieve: "Everything you do must be better than the next" Subject 31; or "I had no education, but I had to work. I could make a buck where no one else

could" Subject 7. For others, the memories hinder future success. They fit the stereotyped image of the illiterate person.

This stereotyped image exists beyond the illiterate person because many members of literate society can not comprehend anyone's actually achieving anything significant without a skill deemed so fundamental to success. Learning to read and write is so universal an expectation that it is widely taken for granted. Thus, many people simply can not comprehend that some people do not read and write; if such were the case, it logically follows, there must be some brain deficiency making them "inferior" to the balance of the ordinary citizenry. The words of Subjects 27 and 7 describe this all-too-common view of the illiterate person:

> It's like he's [the illiterate person] got an arm missing or something because people automatically think because you can't read and write you're dumb. It's like your head's not balanced right. It's like they think very little of you. (Subject 27)

> A lot of people think you're dumb if you can't read and write. (Subject 7)

In fact, several of the interviewees do not appear to be inferior in thinking and problem-solving ability. Thirty have a plan for learning new things that involves more than one step. Several attribute at least part of their success to their ability to think and it is mentioned as one of the things an illiterate person must be better at, what several think they are better at. Subjects in this study are proud of this ability and it is obvious from the way they answer questions that their pride is not misplaced. An excellent example of this thinking ability is provided by the response of Subject 27 to the question, "What is your greatest responsibility?" He says, "That's a tough one. You could answer that ten different ways. Are you responsible to all mankind or just you and your family." For

him the answer appears to be both. He has successfully raised three children and has recently received a citizenship award from his city.

The men in this study generally are active learners. They want to learn new things and they have ways of doing so. Subject 16's words reflect the general mood of these men: "The day I don't learn something is a wasted day for me."

Illiterate People Are Self-Conscious and Lack Confidence

Literate society assumes that illiterate people are as concerned about their illiteracy as everyone else is. Literate society projects its own values, goals, and assumptions onto the process of achieving success. Since the literate society assumes that it got where it is through education, it can only assume that illiterate society will, through deduction, realize that failure, self-pity and despair will ultimately follow in the wake of so serious a deficiency as the inability to read and write.

For the subjects in this study, this description of their collective state of mind is pretty far from the truth. When asked what things have affected their lives, they mention personal strengths such as pride, hard work, and ambition twenty-seven times compared to only six times for weaknesses. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and shown in Table D-32, the subjects' only lack of confidence has to do with school-related concerns. "A sense of despair" and "not being confident of their abilities" are not accurate descriptions of their outlook. When asked if they think they can do things they set out to, twenty answer yes unequivocally while seventeen more give a qualified yes. They are generally confident about their prospects. Table D-30 shows that the sources of

confidence most frequently mentioned are related to their mental abilities (fifty-five per cent), while the sources of non-confidence have to do with schooling (seventy per cent). The following statements show how schooling and related activities are sources of non-confidence:

> When it comes to having to put it on paper . . . . (Subject 6)

> I just couldn't put it on paper so I was so thankful that I could do what I am doing. (Subject 6)

> I can do things as long as it doesn't have a book and a pencil. (Subject 29)

> I can get that attitude [positive] toward everything but spelling. (Subject 22)

> If you told me to take that dishwasher apart, I could do that no problem. But if you told me to write about that dishwasher . . . . (Subject 2)

> If they don't show me, I can't do it. (Subject 4)

> So far whatever I set my mind to do, I get it done away from readin. (Subject 31)

> It [whether or not I achieve what I set out to do] would depend on what it would be. Education-wise, no.' (Subject 35)

> Some of the education they're asking for is wrong. If I've got the ability, I should be able to go into a garage and have a chance. (Subject 35)

Finally, it is worth noting that social participation, as shown in Table C-10, is probably higher than many people might expect. Seventy-five per cent of the forty interviewees have participated in some group or association at some time, and fifty-five per cent have held an elected position -- a remarkably high percentage for a reputedly undereducated and unconfident group. These men do not diverge from what might be expected of the general population, nor do they appear to lack the confidence that is considered a result of a good education.

Illiterate People Cannot Be Leaders

In our modern bureaucratic world, the ability to manage and lead is often associated with forms, paper, and keeping records. Thus only the literate, presumably, are fit to manage the affairs of state or commerce. Literacy would seem a prerequisite for leadership.

Skills once important to leadership have taken a place secondary to those associated with record-keeping, the purview of passive literacy skills. Thus, it appears that the requirements of being a role model, a team player, a communicator, and a hard worker have been superseded by the ability to fill out forms and to keep things in proper order.

If a problem arises around this issue, it usually develops in the mind of the illiterate worker. He feels he cannot handle the paper work and turns down promotions. His boss is usually unaware of the reasons for his employee's unwillingness to climb the corporate ladder, thinking, if anything, that the man lacks motivation. Subject 28 explains how for six months he turned down a promotion with a trucking company. His bosses wanted him to move from the tire-repair area to become a dispatcher. Finally, his bosses made him sit in their office and explain his refusal. When he said that he thought he couldn't read and write well enough to do the job, they said they would teach him what he had to do and that they wanted him for his other skills and not for his literacy. This anecdote illustrates what often happens in the workplace. Illiterate men are offered better jobs and promotions not because they can read and write -- it is assumed that they can -- but because they exemplify the attributes the employer is looking for. These situations are tragic only when neither side knows a mutually satisfying solution is possible.

The fact that men in this study are able to run their own businesses, are offered promotions, and oversee workers suggests that perhaps the high priority on literacy skills for leadership may be misplaced. If illiterate businessmen can hire accountants and clerical workers to look after the literacy-based demands of their businesses, why would it not be possible for employers to hire clerical assistants for illiterate workers whom they have identified as superior employees worthy of promotion? Such people in positions of responsibility can be as effective as those who might be literate but lack the interpersonal skills and attitudes valued by supervisors.

Illiterate People Cannot Lead Normal Lives or Be Successful

It is said that people who are illiterate can not function in society (Calamai 1987a, 7). Presumably this means they can not cope with everyday activities such as shopping for groceries, driving, keeping informed about community events, voting, filling out applications, working where a job requires any reading or writing, going to restaurants, writing cheques, and conducting any business requiring a contractual agreement. Since all these activities appear to require literacy skills, someone who is illiterate appears unable to make his way without such skills. Outwardly, this argument seems logical enough. But it has weaknesses.

One presupposes that everyone must be able to perform each of these activities for himself, the ideal being a society of highly independent, self-motivated achievers. But some people -- literate and otherwise -- hire experts. No one needs to be able to do all things. In addition, the men in this study have many strategies for decoding and coping

with the literate world they live in. When asked what strategies they use to keep people from finding out they are illiterate, they mention thirty-eight different ways. In addition, twenty-one alternatives to reading and fifteen alternatives to writing are mentioned. Some of the more novel suggestions are using a black book to diagram control panels of machines, telling someone to read a document because you can think better when listening, asking people to fill out forms while you load your truck, simply asking someone to fill out a form as if it were perfectly natural to do that, tape recording discussions, and taking photographs.

A second weakness presupposes that all these activities are necessary functions within society and that these functions somehow relate to the idea of being successful. Again, this is not necessarily so. When asked what success is, no one mentions being able to carry out day-to-day functions and only three mention being able to read or write. Instead, frequently mentioned are having steady work, a good family life, secure finances, a balance between work and play, having possessions and friends, and feelings such as happiness and self-satisfaction. Literacy and related activities do not appear to be a big concern.

The financially successful illiterate men in this study have achieved a measure of success according to two standards generally accepted by society. They have a good income and they are rarely out of work. Yet, for all that, they are not able to do all of the above-listed daily activities themselves. Thus, many people would consider them to be hopeless at basic and commonly accepted routines.

The thinking here, however, is clearly literacy-biased. Accordingly, people's

success rests solely on their ability to perform literacy-based tasks, not on how well they

have kept a job, stayed married, raised a family, made investments, and prospered in life.

Perhaps these standards are the ones against which measures of success should be based,

since it appears that one need not perform all the literacy-based activities in order to

succeed. The following quotes are indicative of attitudes toward success commonly held

by the men of this study. They value friendship, marriage, family life, being able to

relax, satisfaction, balance, having a home, savings, and being happy:

> If you can help people . . . . (Subject 37)

> Success to me is not money; success is having friends, having a good marriage -- a good marriage is first no doubt about that, having a good family, having friends, having people you enjoy to be around a lot. (Subject 27)

> [Success occurs] when you feel comfortable where you're working and with people and with life. (Subject 16)

> I would say success is self-satisfaction, being able to live with yourself, being happy and contented. I wouldn't classify being rich [as being] success[ful]. Having a balanced type of life where you can go out and enjoy yourself and leave the work behind, and have a lot of fun along with your wife and family -- I would say that would be success. I wouldn't say success lies in being a millionaire. I never even intended to be one. But once you get your way of thinking changed or set in certain directions, well everything changes. (Subject 22)

> If you see that you are improving, you are successful. (Subject 29)

> When you are successful, a few things start comin' your way. I think I have been successful cause I got my house, I got my family, I got my car and I'm workin'. I got a little in the bank. (Subject 15)

> Success is just being happy. If the guy's happy at doing his job and making the money he's got, he's got his hobbies and what not -- he's happy, that's okay. (Subject 25)

Myself, I feel right now I've been quite successful in my life, my home life. I've got a good wife and kids. Myself, I feel quite successful because me with the lack of education that I know what I know and I feel good about what I know and I don't mind sometimes showing what I know to people. (Subject 35)

If you own your house and you have $10,000 [saved] over your career, you're pretty well off. (Subject 33)

All Illiterate People Need and Want to Be Literate

The perception that all illiterate people need and want to become literate is dangerous for two reasons. First, it reinforces the concept of the illiterate person's deficiency. Thus, researchers and teachers-in-training approach their dealings with illiterate people from this negative point of view, feeling that literacy is the solution to any problems the illiterate person might have. This narrow focus, with its reductive thinking, effectively eliminates the possibility that the strong positive aspects of an illiterate person's character can form the basis on which to build a successful life. It also eliminates the possibility of seeing that most human beings have needs beyond literacy. Second, this view makes it impossible for program providers to conceive of people who do not particularly care to become literate. Such people are simply lumped in with the other non-participants and assumed to be absent as a result of ignorance or some other barrier. Consequently, what non-participants could teach literacy providers about program needs is lost.

Several members of this study fit into the group of illiterate people who neither need nor want literacy skills. In their minds, they have been successful and they cannot see how literacy would change their lives for the better:

What could I do with reading that I can't do now? (Subject 6)

Education has no effect on the ability to work. (Subject 7)

If I had an education, would I be any happier or would I demand more? (Subject 16)

In fact for some, attempting to become literate could result in frustration and failure. Table C-25 shows that thirteen per cent of the men have difficulty learning in literacy programs; however, when the most successful are considered alone, twenty-seven per cent have difficulty. In addition, Table D-32 shows that most of the interviewees' anxieties are related to school. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, these men have very little success in literacy programs they attend.

By ignoring or failing to recognize the existence of these illiterate people, researchers and educators miss an opportunity to discover why some people (perhaps many people) do not attend literacy programs and how such programs could be improved for those who do attend.

Summary

The characteristics of the illiterate men involved in this study are compared to the perceptions of illiterate adults as being deficient. For the most part, the members of this study do not fit the stereotypes. They are not generally embarrassed about their illiteracy, nor are they particularly concerned about remedying it. Although virtually everyone has tried a literacy program at one time, only about twenty-five per cent have stuck with it, and no one has become literate to the grade-four level, a very minimal definition of literacy by today's standards. The men in this study are not prone to crime,

unemployment, or poverty. Many are financially successful and do not support the perception that literacy is a prerequisite for personal economic achievement. The members of this study report voting regularly; they are active in social groups, and one has been a political figure of some prominence. Evidence suggests their political involvement has been unimpaired by illiteracy. Many of the men interviewed for this study do not feel inferior to others; in many cases they have a great sense of accomplishment. They are not particularly shy, diffident or retiring; they are not easily distinguished from the general population in any way. In fact, they would be indistinguishable from any fully functioning member of society.

No solid support exists for the idea that illiterate people have trouble learning, thinking, or problem-solving. When they set their minds to learning, they achieve their goals. Subjects in this study deal effectively with problems related to literacy and literate society. They appear competent, capable, and confident. The idea that illiterate people are self-conscious and withdrawn is not supported by the evidence provided by members of the more successful group; their involvement in business and community activities suggests the opposite. Even those who make less money are involved in a wider range of activities than the stereotypes suggest. Being illiterate does not stop many from running businesses, running for office, or heading families. Their leadership potential stands unchallenged. Finally, it appears that illiterate people lead normal lives in a literate society by developing strategies based on oral not written fluency, thereby achieving success personally, socially, and financially.

CHAPTER 5

ILLITERATE MEN

COPING WITH LITERATE SOCIETY

The illiterate men in this study are indistinguishable from literate men. They show no physical signs of their illiteracy and even their children are usually unaware of their fathers' inability to read or write.

Their unobtrusiveness indicates that these men must have an array of coping strategies helping them to fit in with the literate society they are very much a part of. In fact, fitting in accounts for the greatest number of responses (forty-one per cent) to the question, "Do you find that you have to be better at things because you can't read and write?" Since another twenty-two per cent of the responses deal with competition and thirty-seven per cent deal with mental skills, it appears these illiterate men see coping as a large part of what they have to do in life, and certainly it would play a role in how successful they could become in a world dominated by print.

This chapter presents results of this study as they relate to how these men deal with literate society, or how they try to appear literate.

Coping Strategies

Although all the interviewees do not have all of the following coping strategies, all have some and as a group, the men in this study reflect a number of ways of dealing with literate society. Topics include successes like learning methods, alternatives to reading and writing, social activity, self-employment, and failure with literacy courses. Where applicable, special achievements and anecdotes are shared.

Learning Methods

Since educational systems are so closely tied to the print medium, it is easy to assume that learning is dependent on print. Yet this is not necessarily the case outside of formal institutions and with increasingly sophisticated special education methods is becoming less true inside as well.

The men in this study are conscious learners. Only two men respond "I don't know" when asked how they would learn something new. Typical first responses to this question are "find an expert", "ask", "watch". When questioned further about how they would set about learning something new, the men provide twenty-seven different ways with a total for all of one hundred and five or over two ways per man. Of the forty men, thirty commonly use more than one method of learning and appear to have a learning plan in place. Ten of the men have a well developed plan and nine of these are among the most financially successful of the group. Of additional interest concerning learning methods is that these men rarely mention spouses as factors in their learning processes, an unexpected discovery in light of common views of dependence among illiterate men.

The following quotes give some idea of the interviewees' own descriptions of their learning methods. They seek experts or experienced sources:

Most of the stuff is by watching how someone else did it. (Subject 25)

Always pay attention to others and hear what they say. (Subject 34)

I would go and watch somebody; pick it up that way. (Subject 11)

You can't learn if somebody don't show you things. (Subject 7)

In the first place, I try to get in contact with someone that has a knowledge of it and then I ask questions, and I'm a great learner. (Subject 6)

If I think someone else has done it well, I'll talk to them about it and then I'll get a manual and I'll go over. Usually, if it's a piece of equipment, I like to do it. If I have a problem or I can't figure it out, then I'll go to the guy that's experienced. I ask a lot of questions. (Subject 16)

Find myself someone that knows that subject and drill him or her about it. (Subject 27)

Older people have so much knowledge. If you don't talk to older people, you're really missing the boat, I find. (Subject 27)

They watch television:

I'm a great news watcher; I learn a ton from the TV. (Subject 27)

They ask questions:

You need to know what questions to ask. (Subject 5)

They experiment:

If I see something new and I want to learn, I see if I can get a few notes [notes may include diagrams, words, or symbols] on it or something I can study to make sure I know a few things about it. Then I try to put it all together. I sit down; I think about it and I try to work it all into one little bank for myself. Then I'd try to get a chance to play around with it. (Subject 15)

They find learning important:

The day I don't learn something new is a wasted day for me. (Subject 16)

In summary, these men are learners and cope with what they must to deal with life and work in literate society.

Alternatives to Reading and Writing

These men have defined ways of receiving and sending information normally requiring a print medium. Twenty-one alternatives to reading are identified with *asking* being mentioned thirty per cent of the time, *observing* sixteen per cent, and *television* fifteen per cent. *Wives* are suggested only eight per cent of the time. Fifteen different alternatives to writing are mentioned with the *telephone* rating twenty-one per cent, *wives* eighteen per cent, and *asking* others to write fourteen per cent; their oral strengths and preferences are obvious. The increased spousal influence can be traced directly to men whose jobs include club president, union steward, politician, owner of a mail-order business, and contracts' supervisor. Some examples of strategies and alternatives follow.

Getting information:

> Ask a lot of questions in a round about way and a lot of different people. It takes a long time but you make the big circle. And you don't ask too many questions to one person. Cause if you start that, they get inquisitive and that you didn't need, you see. (Subject 7)

> If you ask, people will tell you. (Subject 7)

> If I saw a new notice [being put up on the bulletin board] I'd go to this guy and I'd say, 'What the hell is all this bitchin' about now? Is that the same as last time?' (Subject 1)

> You read the letter to me cause I can concentrate better when you're reading. (Subject 27)

You pretend you're shopping and you listen to what they're talking about. (Subject 17)

If I don't really know how to do it and I can't put it in words, I'll take my camera and go down and take some pictures. (Subject 2)

Getting writing done:

For instance, I used to sell tickets and I would say, 'no you put your own name on. That way you'll know for sure it's there.' (Subject 7)

[I would get my customers to fill out my delivery forms by saying] 'I'm late for my next appointment. Could you fill this out while I load up?' (Subject 12)

I go along and I ask how to spell that one word. Somebody said, 'Look I want this at the store,' and I'd say, 'Write it down so I don't forget it.' (Subject 7)

I have learned to take the attitude, "Well, will you fill that out for me please?" and ninety-nine per cent of the time the people will do it. (Subject 22)

The black book:

I never had no system as far as A B C or something like that goes. Say for instance, I wanted some guy's name or a list of names. I have every guy's name in the department I worked in. If I had their names, then I could get their addresses in the phone book. (Subject 7)

Things that I had to know and wanted to know so's I wouldn't forget, I would write down in this book. The book had names of tires, foreman's name, appointments, addresses (to go to), names of people, and words for forms. (Subject 7)

Compensating:

Not being able to read and write sometimes makes you work harder. Not being able to read and write, it made me listen to people a lot more because I learned a lot by listening. (Subject 15)

Anything you do, you remember or I have to sit back and see it. I have to think a lot about it and think every angle. I think I spent more time doing this. I work harder -- it has to satisfy me and if it satisfies me, it will satisfy someone else. (Subject 16)

Well I've done a lot of things in terms of being creative. (Subject 22)

I try to memorize a lot of things . . . I can't put it on paper because I don't know what to write so I try to remember. (Subject 29)

You have to be better at working; you have to be better qualified. (Subject 20)

I think that's why I had to be number one, because I couldn't go out and get a better job. (Subject 31)

Strategies such as those above allow the men to function in a literate society without appearing illiterate.

Social Activity

As has been noted, these men do not shy away from social activity. Most have belonged to clubs (thirty-three) and several (twelve) have held elected positions. In addition, they participate in many activities -- camping, going to concerts, playing golf, bowling, and attending church -- which bring them into contact with others. Apparently their illiteracy does not hold them back or make them feel insecure.

Self-Employment

Six of the men in this study are self-employed while two others have been, and six have run side-line businesses at different times in their employment history. Self-employment can be a coping strategy since it allows one to by-pass some restrictions of a literate society. For instance, Subject 6 wanted to train as an auto mechanic but might have had trouble getting his papers in a traditional shop. His response was to buy a garage and hire a mechanic so he could apprentice in his own garage. He was successful. Another man has had three businesses including a restaurant, a paving

company, and a trucking operation. A third was so successful at his home renovation side-line he retired at forty-one to become a self-employed real-estate investor. All of these men have been able to achieve things through self-employment that might have been denied them otherwise.

Taking Literacy Courses

Worth repeating is the fact that studying to become a literate person has been considered by all save one of the interviewees; however, it has been a solution very few persisted with over the years. Of note is that only twenty-three per cent of reasons for taking literacy courses are task-related compared to fifty-three per cent for personal growth. Also important is that only eight per cent of reasons relate to outside pressure or fear of exposure. Clearly, these men have acceptable coping strategies in place.

Summary

The men in this study have a number of coping strategies and appear to be active learners with a variety of ways to learn new things. They are quite capable of receiving and sending information using oral techniques, without being dependent on their spouses; they have a number of alternatives to use; and they are socially active, suggesting that relating with literate people is not a real cause for concern since they have ways of dealing with potential problems. As well, self-employment may be a way of reaching levels of success which might otherwise be blocked by any forms or tests in the larger workplace. Finally, they have not persisted in attempts to become literate. This

disinclination for persistence suggests that they are not in great need of becoming literate for any task-related purposes. Thus it may be reasonably assumed they are coping successfully.

CHAPTER 6

SUCCESSFUL FUNCTIONING

IN LITERATE SOCIETY

Some of the illiterate men in this study have managed to be financially successful.

Most of the men in this study carry out normal activities in a print-dominated world even

though they can not read and write very well. Many of these men manage to appear

fully competent when such competence is often viewed by the larger society as

inextricably associated with being literate. These statements bear directly on the issue of

successful functioning by challenging the belief that literacy is a prerequisite for success

leading to improvements in the lives of illiterate people, and by prompting questions

concerning how competence is achieved.

Assessing the factors of financial and other kinds of success involves studying the

responses of interviewees related to expected factors of success -- confidence,

responsibility, pride, learning methods, work ethic, alternatives to reading and writing,

and perceptions of success -- and analyzing whether common types of views, attitudes,

values, or actions exist, especially among those who are more successful financially.

Interestingly, the more successful financially do share a number of common attributes

although the distinction between more and less successful is sometimes blurred. In

addition to financial success, also considered are other common measures of success --

social memberships, election to office, home ownership, steady employment, marital status, and the educational and work-place success of children. Thus the ideas and attitudes of men who have not made great amounts of money but who appear fully competent are considered.

By the end of this chapter, a clearer picture of factors contributing to success beyond those of reading and writing should exist. In this context, the terms more and less successful refer to those men on either the upper or lower half of the income continuum.

Confidence

Success and self-confidence seem inseparable companions; each breeds the other. Successful men in this study are confident about their abilities and often unafraid to face the demands of literate society on their own. The following sub-areas of confidence appear to bear upon the relationship between success and confidence: perceptions of abilities, sources of confidence, confidence-building activities or skills, and related business and social experiences.

Perceptions of Abilities

The more successful financially are more positive in outlook and seventy-five per cent of their responses are unqualified (optimism breeds optimism, regardless of results it seems); however, all interviewees give positive answers eighty-five per cent of the time

when asked if they think they can do what they set out to do, but the less successful men give qualified answers sixty-five per cent of the time:

If I try my best, I think I can handle it. (Subject 20)

Just about anything I want to do. (Subject 37)

Sometimes I guess if I really put my mind to it. (Subject 36)

Just depends on what I'm trying out. (Subject 24)

Contrast the above responses by less successful men with the confidence evident in the responses of more successful men:

If I want something and decide I want it, I'm going to get it. (Subject 5)

There is nothing I wouldn't try. (Subject 25)

If you can do it, there's no reason why I can't do it. (Subject 22)

If you make up your mind, you're going to do it. (Subject 7)

More successful men seem to have a commitment to doing well. They do not hedge with terms like "if", "about", "sometimes", or "depends".

Sources of Confidence

The different sources of confidence are summarized in Table D-30 and grouped to include mental ability, mental strength, suitable circumstances, physical ability, and faith in self or God. These men apparently see themselves as having control over their lives. Twelve of the more successful say that the source of their confidence lies within. Subject 16 describes this internal strength: "Well, I think everyone has a gift, eh. Before I do anything at all, I think it out and I can almost picture it . . . ." Among the less

successful men, only five mention this internal strength while an equal number see luck or chance as having a part to play in what happens to them. On the other hand, the one repeated response among the more successful men, "If I put my mind to it," seems telling. This view is clearly stated by Subject 7: "It's being able to sit down and say, 'Look, I'm going to do it'. . . . You've got to convince yourself there's nothing you can't do." Mental and psychological strength appear important contributors to being successful.

Confidence-Building Activities or Skills

Specific areas of confidence mentioned are summarized in Table D-31. They primarily involve working with one's hands. About twice as many of the more successful men (thirteen to seven) mention these activities. It appears that skills not requiring literacy are important confidence-builders and ways of achieving success. Most people would not be surprised by this connection between illiterate people and manual skills. In fact, many would suggest it is the only area of functioning open to illiterate people. Of note however, is that evidence described in Chapter 4 and later in this chapter suggests that these illiterate men also value thinking and are active learners. They are not limited to manual achievements although they have been successful there. A possible interpretation is that they have been driven to manual activities simply because literate society believes that mastering print holds the key to academic success.

Business and Social Experience

Seven of the men interviewed own a business; this count includes one man who owns a farm but works in a factory as well. Although two of the seven are in the lower half of the income continuum, they are in the upper half of the other continua of success mentioned earlier. Owning a business seems to support the idea that these men are confident in their abilities. Little security exists for independent businessmen; they are largely on their own. By contrast, only two of the less successful financially ever tried to run their own businesses, both unsuccessfully.

Membership in clubs is fairly consistent throughout the interviewee population but about twice as many of the financially successful men have been elected to leadership positions. Perhaps the more successful men find such people-oriented challenges less intimidating than do their less successful counterparts. Their being elected may also reflect how they are perceived by their peers, that is, as fully functioning, financially successful, and respected.

Evidence suggests that the men who have functioned successfully, financially and in other ways, have a sense of purpose and drive that motivates them. They have developed expertise and competence especially in manual skills, and appear willing to face the challenges of functioning in literate society as independent businessmen or members of clubs and associations. They are confident in what they can do and how they can fit in.

Responsibility

A sense of responsibility usually indicates a sense of commitment and succeeding against odds usually requires commitment. Thus expecting successful men to have a strong sense of responsibility makes sense in this context.

Interviewees' attitudes toward responsibility are grouped under categories reflecting the thrust of interview questions: where responsibility is learned, my greatest responsibility, responsible for whom, keeping promises, being late, missing work, and quitting a job.

Where Responsibility Is Learned

Table D-33 shows that most subjects agree on this, with almost seventy-five per cent of responses identifying either experience or other people as the major teacher and about ten per cent mentioning a certain inbred or inherent sense of personal duty. Of those unable to identify a source, five of seven are among the least successful financially. The following demonstrate types of answers:

> Leadership has to come from the house and discipline has to come from the house. (Subject 7)

> I think being responsible comes from all the things you want in life. If you want these things, you gotta work for them and you've gotta be responsible. (Subject 25)

> I always had to do my part in jobs. A lot of times they relied on you. (Subject 33)

> Everyday living. I'm self-taught. (Subject 2)

> I learned that myself. Not from watching my mother and father. (Subject 24)

Regardless of the source, these men generally have a sense of responsibility and know where they learned it.

Keeping Promises

Response is uniform here too; most subjects feel promises ought to be kept. Whether all are as good as their word is outside the bounds of the present investigation, of course. Exceptions to the rule are also mentioned by several men. Subject 27 tells an interesting story about the importance of a promise which he says, ". . . is like a golden handshake; you have to keep it."

> I always remember one time when my brother-in-law asked to borrow my four-wheel drive one weekend because he wanted to go on a special fishing trip and I said yes because I had to work that weekend. I said ya he could use it and geez if I find out on Friday that I didn't have to work and so I want to go up in the worst way. I didn't tell but I let him use my truck and I went and rented one.

Being Late

Again there is overwhelming agreement here; tardiness is unacceptable. Whether practice and intent are one and the same among subjects in the study is again impossible to know. Certainly no subjects were ever late for their interviews.

Missing Work

The small amount of work missed over the years is apparently always caused by illness, or in the case of several less successful men, by injury. All the men appear

highly committed to their work. Again verification is impossible. Examples of this

commitment and its rationale follow:

> In nine years I took only one day off. I gotta be either sick or hurt to miss work. (Subject 15)

> First thing is good attendance. Make sure he's there on time. (Subject 35)

> If you're reliable and dependable, people get to know. (Subject 22)

> I'm never late; I can't see any reason for being late. (Subject 38)

> If you've got a good job, I can't see you quittin it because you're just going to have to work no matter where you go. (Subject 7)

These men are aware of the importance of reliability and dependability in the workplace

and are committed to both.

Quitting a Job

Responses provided in Table D-35 suggest that personal satisfaction motivates most

decisions to change jobs. Categories of reasons include something wrong with the job,

wanting to improve, and already having a new job. Because this study is interested in

perceptions, these responses can only be taken as versions of the truth. Most interesting

here perhaps is the degree to which job satisfaction rather than financial security informs

these major decisions, something often suggested as typical of the workforce as a whole.

Two examples follow:

> I think if you're unhappy working and if there's an atmosphere . . . . you know, maybe money reasons. If you can't do it for health reasons or if you can better yourself. (Subject 16)

> You have to know you're moving into something else unless something really bugs you bad and then you just quit. (Subject 14)

My Greatest Responsibility

Family and self are the most frequently mentioned responsibilities of interviewees:

It's important to keep a happy home. We have lots of friends stopping by. (Subject 16)

To raise children with an education. (Subject 7)

Lookin after the wife and kids. That's the goal in life, I would say. To have a happy home. (Subject 33)

The importance of happiness and the need to provide are in evidence. To provide an environment for a family takes stability and an element of success.

Responsible for Whom?

Information concerning numbers of children and the marital status of the various interviewees is provided in Appendix C under Tables 11 and 12. Only one of the more successful men has no other person to be responsible for (two single men each have one dependent); in addition, one man cares for two or three young relatives. On the other hand, forty per cent of the least financially successful men have only themselves to look after. These figures verify an apparent tendency towards family responsibilities among the more successful men in general. Interest in others may be not only a factor of success but a cause as well; this reaching out may indeed be one of the signatures of a successful citizen.

Marital Status

Being married seems to reinforce other observations concerning levels of responsibility and commitment in more successful men. Seventeen of the more successful men have been married at least once while four of these are in second marriages. In addition, one has just ended a relationship and has a baby daughter to look after; one single man is looking after his mother. By comparison, of the thirteen men receiving social assistance (unemployment, workman's compensation, or welfare), five are single, one is divorced, and seven are presently married.

Among the men in this study, marriage seems to accompany financial success more often than not. The support of their wives may be instrumental in the dealings that successful men have with literate society although the men themselves seldom mention it. Family responsibilities may also motivate these successful subjects to a significant degree, though the married men among the less successful are not significantly better off than their unmarried counterparts. Traditional theories about supportive spouses therefore apply only occasionally.

Internal motivations, however, may be another matter. Increased responsibility among the more successful illiterate men may be linked to their ideas of fulfilment.

The men in this study give evidence of knowing the importance of responsibility and where a sense of responsibility comes from. They generally exhibit qualities of being responsible especially with regard to attitudes about keeping promises, being late, and quitting a job. In terms of acting responsibly, most do as witnessed by their relative

financial success and child-rearing practices. In this respect, the most successful

financially may appear to be more responsible.

Pride

In contrast to the hopelessness inherent in the Hunter and Harman categories,

subjects in this study seem generally infused by a sense of personal pride. Any

difficulties with schooling do not cast shadows on the balance of their outlook. Neither

does being unable to read provide any particular burden. These are typical, hopeful

citizens.

Evidence of their pride appears under things I am proud of, things I am not so

proud of, how I know I have done a good job, and what other people's opinions mean to

me.

Things I Am Proud of

First responses are considered here, and are assembled under internal categories --

qualities, achievements, and skills; external categories -- things, people, and associations;

and I don't know.

Table D-36 summarizes the first responses to the question "What are some things

you are proud of?" Seventy two per cent mention personal pride. This supports earlier

evidence of the importance of fulfilment. Four of the five "I don't know" responses

come from those least successful financially.

Table D-37 presents a summary of positive responses following initial answers.

Although personal sources of pride are only fifty-eight per cent, it appears evident that

these men generally feel secure about themselves. The fact that another thirty-two per

cent of responses deal with social interactions lends further support to the idea of

personal confidence. The following representative responses show the strong feelings

generated by personal achievements. Evidently, these men find pride in the ways most

people do. Sometimes pride comes from achievements such as acquiring possessions,

gaining financial stability, acquiring skills and learning, doing good work, or being first:

> My horses, my antique cars, and my tractors. (Subject 33)

> I saved over the years to buy my first truck and to do this, I worked pretty hard. (Subject 16)

> I'm proud of myself being able to get a job and to have the things I got today. (Subject 15)

> I would say this, I've been quite pleased with my lifestyle and, ah, . . . my way of life and my accomplishments. I don't feel my life has been wasted. I have done everything and anything that I ever set out to do and done everything that I ever wanted so I don't feel that I've had a wasted life in any way, shape, or form. (Subject 22)

> I can train a dog. I'm smart that way and I'm proud I always was a good swimmer. I'm proud about my lawn. I'm a good gardener; that just came natural. I'm proud of them because I picked them up on my own. Nobody showed me that. (Subject 38)

> I'm proud of trying to get myself an education. I'm proud of being able to walk around and have a clean record. (Subject 11)

> I love my cooking. (Subject 3)

> I'm proud of every building I've renovated; they were not slip-slop jobs. (Subject 22)

> I was the first mechanic in our family. (Subject 6)

I was likely the first fellow who tried to make a business by putting weddings on video-tape. (Subject 27)

Sometimes pride comes from positive character traits such as working hard, having drive, doing good work, or being unafraid:

I guess it's drive or pride, I don't know which. I've never been afraid to go and ask for a job. (Subject 7)

To be able to sit down with you. It takes a lot of guts. I'm very proud of this. (Subject 23)

No one ever said, 'You did a lousy job.' I never asked for anything unless I was pushed right to it. I wasn't afraid to work. I was never out of work. (Subject 7)

I always do a good job; it's nice and neat. (Subject 20)

Sometimes pride comes from helping others:

I was always involved with teenagers. We had clubs at the church. (Subject 16)

Finally, and importantly for many of these men, pride comes from recognition:

I like that feeling, you know, when you walk into the bank and they call you by your name. (Subject 1)

When I walk into a do, whatever it is, I really feel that the party livens up because I'm there. (Subject 27)

As I accomplish more, I am given more respect. I like the prestige of owning my own business. I do like to have people working for me. (Subject 25)

The best thing I'm proud of is that police citation. (Subject 24)

If you're good at something, there's ways of getting on TV. (Subject 27)

I'm proud that I make a success of myself in all ways. I can go anywhere with my head held high up in the world. When I'm dead and gone, I won't be forgotten. (Subject 27)

It appears that peer recognition is a source of pride for illiterate men too. This piece of evidence fits with their willingness to join groups and hold elected office. They

seem unafraid to face challenges and risk exposure. The risks of exposure may not be as great as literate people might think.

Things I Am Not So Proud of

Responses here are always personal and are grouped under the headings poor education, personal weakness, situations under my control, situations beyond my control, and denial. A summary of the responses is presented in Table D-38.

Less successful men have slightly more to say here, as might be reasonably expected. Poor education is mentioned a number of times by the men. Most think literacy advantageous, but none bemoan their lack of it. Typically, Subjects 8 and 21 are so satisfied with their lives now that they express an unwillingness to change anything about themselves, past or present.

Generally, these men are not burdened by guilt and are not about to let problems interfere with living their lives. An excellent example of this is their recognition of lack of education as something they are not proud of. Twenty-five per cent of the answers concern this problem, yet few have let it interfere with their lives in any serious way. In fact, as noted elsewhere, many see thinking and learning as personal strengths -- skills often associated with formal schooling.

How I Know I Have Done a Good Job

The question is a cross-check on sources of pride. Categories of response are self-recognition, recognition by others, and I don't know. A summary is provided in Table D-39.

Seventy per cent of the more successful men do not need outside recognition; their satisfactions are internal. Most frequently they mention fine workmanship as the source of that satisfaction as the following example demonstrates: "If it pleases me, it would please anybody because I'm a fussy worker and I want a thing done right if it's at all possible" (Subject 22). Less successful men are less confident; only forty per cent are willing to rely on their own judgement in such matters; their most frequent form of recognition is "if it felt good". Generally they appear either to require or accept supervision. These results most likely are not unique to illiterate men.

What Others' Opinions Mean to Me

Data presented in Table D-40 reveal that these men are affected by others' opinions. Over thirty per cent of responses indicate importance. In addition, a number of men offered that peoples' opinions can be evaluated and are significant according to usefulness or perhaps who is offering. These men do not shy away from contact. They value it and learn from it. It is not a source of fear or a reason for isolation. Their awareness of others ties in with the importance of recognition as a source of pride.

The men interviewed for this study are generally proud individuals. They are able to recognize their own strengths and achievements and value the recognition of their

peers. They appear to be fully functioning members of society, participating in normal levels of social interaction and benefitting from it. Thus they have the opportunities for success that any literate person might.

Learning Something New

Progressing in life usually means making changes and making change by definition involves acquiring new ways or learning. If learning is equated with having proper tools like being literate, then illiterate people would likely have trouble learning and hence with progressing and ultimately being successful. But the men in this study are successful in many ways; they have progressed. They must be capable of learning.

Data in this section reveal the number of ways used to learn, where help is sought, feelings about making mistakes, and learning plans. They reveal active learners.

Number of Ways

Table D-41 shows that these illiterate men have mastered a number of ways, including finding experts, asking, watching, listening, making notes, phoning, or getting books, to gather information which can contribute to successful functioning. They are not without the means for learning.

Who Helped?

The more successful men mention the use of an expert more frequently by a factor of almost three to one. A standard of excellence seems implicit in their responses:

If I think someone else has done it well, I'll talk to them about it. (Subject 16)

I find out the best guy doing what I want to know and I watch him. (Subject 18)

If I want information, I go to who I would consider to be the proper source -- the person who has the best knowledge. (Subject 22)

These responses fit well with the notion that pride of accomplishment results from the quality of workmanship. In addition, going to an expert implies an open admission of ignorance, something men with strong self-images might find easier to do. Recognizing someone as an expert and acknowledging that expertise also implies a certain skill in diplomacy.

Making Mistakes

Trial and error as a method of learning is the exclusive province of the more successful men in this study. Self-esteem is likely operative here, as is an innate or cultivated sense of confidence. Since mistakes are always part of learning, this is an important revelation. In fact, Subject 7's statement that "Educated people fail because they are afraid to make a mistake," seems to capture the essence of what is to them the relationship between success and the art of learning from mistakes.

Having a Plan

An analysis of all the answers related to learning something new indicates at least three distinct steps in learning: identifying a source of information, acquiring the information, and putting the information to use. This last step is mentioned by eight of the more successful men, six referring to it as the "trial-and-error" stage when they try

things out. Throughout the interview process, it is uncommon for anyone to speak of the acquisition of information for the sake of simply having it, rather than using it to do something.

Interviewees are usually expected to reveal all three stages of the learning process in order to indicate their possession of a plan. The results of the analysis are presented in Table D-44.

If the three stages of the learning plan as identified through the analysis of responses are valid, then the more successful men are much more likely to take an organized approach to learning (nine mention three stages compared to only one of the less successful men). All men appear well aware of the importance of finding a source of information and of having a way of getting information from that source. Why do the more successful men have a tendency to enunciate the third step more frequently than do the less successful? Perhaps they are more aware of the importance of implementation as a stage in the learning process. Most people would likely agree that until something newly learned is used, it is not in the learner's complete possession. The fact that the less successful men tend to leave this step out could account in part for their lack of success. In other words, they are less capable of finishing what they set out to do. They can get information but do not use it to full advantage. If this is an accurate assessment, it may provide insight into what ought to be included in a typical curriculum for the undereducated or illiterate learner.

The following responses provide an interesting overview of how these men view learning. They recognize the need of a source:

In the first place, I try to get in contact with someone that has a knowledge of it and then I ask questions, and I'm a great learner. (Subject 6)

Older people have so much knowledge. If you don't talk to older people, you're really missing the boat, I find. (Subject 27)

If I think someone else has done it well, I'll talk to them about it and then I'll get a manual and I'll go over. Usually, if it's a piece of equipment, I like to do it. If I have a problem or I can't figure it out, then I'll go to the guy that's experienced. I ask a lot of questions. (Subject 16)

[I] find myself someone that knows that subject and drill him or her about it. (Subject 27)

They recognize the importance of certain skills:

You need to know what questions to ask. (Subject 5)

Most of the stuff is by watching how someone else did it. (Subject 25)

Always pay attention to others and hear what they say. (Subject 34)

They use alternatives readily:

I'm a great news watcher; I learn a ton from the TV. (Subject 27)

Subject 15 summarizes the idea of a plan:

If I see something new and I want to learn, I see if I can get a few notes on it or something I can study to make sure I know a few things about it. Then I try to put it all together. I sit down; I think about it and I try to work it all into one little bank for myself. Then I'd try to get a chance to play around with it. (Subject 15)

They value learning:

The day I don't learn something new is a wasted day for me. (Subject 16)

In summary, the more successful illiterate men appear to have more ways to learn things, to be more inclined to seek expert advice, to make mistakes willingly as a part of

learning, and to employ a more complex and complete learning plan. They appear more experienced and adept as learners.

Work Ethic

One factor in achieving financial success would appear to be having a regular job. Most of the men in this study manage to keep busy most of the time. Most of the more financially successful rarely suffer being unemployed, while collecting social assistance payments is a more frequent occurrence for men at the lower end of the financial continuum. Responses to the question "Why are so many Canadians out of work?" reveal possible attitudinal factors in achieving financial success.

Table D-61 summarizes responses. Five more successful men mention that it is "easy to get welfare" while none of the less successful do, even though none of the former have ever collected welfare while at least twelve of the latter have done so at one time or another. The comment coming from more successful subjects thus seems pejorative; the idea of collecting welfare is unacceptable to them.

Perceptions of personal shortcomings also differ here. The more successful men cite laziness, arrogance, or diffidence as factors contributing to an inability to find work, while the less successful cite illiteracy as a major handicap. Interestingly, their blaming of illiteracy appears to reflect more the typical societal view that one needs literacy than any personal sense of illiteracy's being the cause of their own problems. Indeed, they see illiteracy more as someone else's problem. More successful men focus on internal causes: "They haven't got no pride in themselves, otherwise they wouldn't be looking for a handout"

or "You haven't got to be afraid to work" (Subject 7); the less successful often cite external factors or things beyond their control such as government policy.

The views expressed on this issue support the idea that these are proud men, unafraid of work and generally unwilling to relinquish their responsibilities to anyone else. By and large, people become successful, literate or not, by exhibiting these qualities.

Alternatives to Reading and Writing

Being successful in literate society means being able to function as an equal member. To do so requires the use of alternative ways of doing the things literacy facilitates, specifically communicating but also organizing ideas (thinking) and fitting in.

Interviewees' views on alternatives are presented under the following headings: Things an Illiterate Person Has to Be Better at, Things I Am Better at, and Strategies for Fitting in.

Things an Illiterate Person Has to Be Better at

Foremost among the things an illiterate person has to be better at, from the interviewees' points of view, are communicating and thinking; each accounts for twenty-five per cent of responses. A high priority is thus placed on abilities typically associated with literacy yet, in this case, clearly not dependent on literacy since although most of the interviewees have tried literacy courses, they have not learned to read very well.

A third ability involves fitting in and accounts for fifteen per cent of the responses. Considered in combination with the first two abilities, the implication is that to function, one must be good at things which allow one to blend in. People who can communicate would

not be suspected of being uneducated. Perhaps the appearance of literacy can lead to success as well.

Things I Am Good at

Asking interviewees what they are good at because they can not read or write seems a useful way of comparing their perceptions of ideal versus real. Of interest is that interviewees add positive attitudes and working with mechanical things when asked what they think they are better at (twenty-five and twenty-two per cent respectively). These abilities would appear to allow people to function successfully.

Categories of response here are working with your hands, positive attitudes, mental abilities, social skills, communicating (by necessity, primarily oral), observing, and specific job skills. Memory is included under mental ability but is isolated as a supposed attribute peculiar to illiterate people. The results are presented in Table D-46.

The more successful men suggest far more things that they are good at, implying either a greater mastery of the skills of life on their part, or at least a greater confidence in their use of them. In either case, they seem more likely to succeed as a result. The more successful say they are good at being positive, thinking, communicating, and working with their hands. The less successful have the same list minus thinking, and add specific job skills. The less successful men, who respond as often as their more successful counterparts that people who can not read and write have to be better at thinking, nevertheless do not claim to be as good at it as they would like to be. They recognize its importance while acknowledging their shortcomings. Obviously most interviewees see mental ability as an

important ingredient in success. Complementarily, less successful men more often make mention of job skills, perhaps reflecting overall their more practical, less abstract or academic, perspective on matters requiring improvement.

Strategies for Fitting in

If these men believe in the need to fit in and in the need to appear literate, it stands to reason they would have ways of doing so. Their strategies are presented as strategies for hiding their illiteracy, for acquiring information, and for transmitting information.

Strategies For Hiding Illiteracy. Twice during each interview subjects were asked how they keep other people from finding out that they can not read or write. Forty-three different strategies are mentioned in all and are grouped in Table D-47 under the following headings: unobtrusive strategies that capitalize on normal human interactions, including conversation; avoidance strategies that duck the challenge or intimidation of literacy-sensitive situations; deception strategies that involve lying; support strategies involving the use of notebooks; other people who help (this group is subdivided into those who know they are helping and those who don't); assistance strategies that allow one to ask for help without admitting weakness; and finally, guessing.

These men do not appear to have difficulty thinking of ways to keep others from recognizing their illiteracy. They should fit in easily. One difference of note exists between the more and less financially successful. Apparently the more successful men are more often called upon to keep their illiteracy hidden. Just over half of the less successful men, in contrast, say that they do not have to hide their handicap or do not bother to. Perhaps the

lives of the more successful men lead them into more frequent contact with literate society; they are challenged to adopt creative strategies as a result. This increased contact may be related to the higher confidence level among the more successful men.

The more successful men are also twice as likely to mention the use of notebooks, perhaps another aspect of their increased sophistication in dealing with their illiteracy.

Strategies For Acquiring Information. A summary of the alternatives to reading employed by subjects in this study is provided in Table D-48. A total of twenty-one alternatives are mentioned one hundred and seventeen times (one half involve direct oral communication). No shortage of access to information exists for these men. Interestingly, spouses figure into only seven per cent of suggested alternatives. Instead, most common among the most financially successful men include asking (twenty-seven per cent), observing (twelve per cent), and television and radio (twenty per cent). These figures are in disagreement with suggestions that illiterate men are often dependent on literate wives.

Strategies For Transmitting Information. Alternatives to writing employed by the interviewees are presented in Table D-49. Fifteen are mentioned fifty-six times (half require oral proficiency). Fewer alternatives exist for writing but generally speaking, the population as a whole is required to write less than to read. This is largely because literacy is primarily a passive activity for most people. Few people have access to ways of expressing themselves in a written form. Still, these men seem adequately able to transmit information although a greater tendency to depend on wives is evident. This is especially true among the more successful men. Notwithstanding the fact that the more successful men are more likely to be married, they also may logically have more frequent recourse to their wives for assistance

with necessary written communications (as compared to the more passive demands of reading). Table C-8 lists all jobs requiring literacy. The assistance of spouses would be helpful in jobs such as club president, union steward, and politician, as well as running a mail-order business and preparing contracts.

If one is not literate, it makes sense that in order to fit into and be successful in a literacy-based society, one would have to appear literate. The men in this study, especially the financially successful, have a good sense of what is required to fit in. In addition, they are aware of their competencies and have developed strategies for coping. They know how to function and be successful.

Success

Although conventional definitions of this elusive goal abound, the definitions key to this study are the ones developed from the collective perceptions of the subjects themselves. The criteria of steady employment and an annual income above the Canadian average of $30,000 are adopted because they reflect commonly perceived views of success; however, any interpretations of success intended to justify literacy programs need to take the views of the program clients into account.

Two questions aim directly at collecting interviewees' interpretations of success. They are "How does one achieve success?" and "What is success or being successful?"

How to Achieve Success

Table D-56 groups the responses according to ends (what success is) and means (ways of achieving success, attitudes, mental abilities, physical abilities, and other people who help).

Working hard, being honest, being ambitious, trying your best and having drive are the attitudes most frequently mentioned by the most successful men. Their tendency to accept responsibility is supported by the fact that three-quarters of their suggestions (as against half for the less successful men) deal with attitudes towards self and others. They believe in quality of work:

> Ah, because I do my job, I've not been threw out yet. You know, I do my job the best way I can and if nobody likes the way I do it, well they can shove it. (Subject 1)

> You have to have a good product that the public wants. The person you're selling to has to believe you. You have to be an expert at what you're doing. (Subject 27)

> You have to be known as a worker. He have to make up his mind what he want to do. If he goin' out lookin' for a job with the attitude that he want to make $15 an hour, that's gonna be bad for him cause a lot of times it's hard to find a job where a person's gonna pay you right off the street $15 an hour. I think that's the bad attitude. Cause if you get started into a place first, I think the first thing to my point of view is that you gotta get in the door first. You can work yourself up to makin' the money that the person next to you is makin'. I always figured that if he'll start me off at $10, I'm sure I'm gonna to get a raise. Take the job and work on it to get some experience. Down the road you can apply for a job. I would never turn down a job if I needed it. You need the experience and you're makin' money while you're there. (Subject 15)

> I try to do it just like I would want somebody to do it to me. (Subject 6)

They believe in respect:

> Treat people right and you'll have return business. (Subject 6)

If you respect the guy you work with and try to help him, in return he'll do the same for you. I can give advice and I can take. [You have to be] fairly honest and . . . try to put in a day's work. (Subject 16)

You've got good manners, you can get along anywhere . . . and look like a man not like some of these things that go out on the road. (Subject 7)

They believe in ambition:

You've gotta have ambition if you wanta work. You gotta have a little drive behind you. There's a job there and if you wanta work, you'll take the job regardless of what it is. You take what you can get and look for a better job. You've gotta make up your mind that you want to do something, and then go do it. I'll try to do anything; I don't care what it is. (Subject 7)

It takes ambition and will power to get on in life. Somebody to encourage you. If you've got strength and health, and you have ambition, I don't see why you couldn't [achieve what you want to achieve], because the whole world is there for everybody. No matter rich or poor, there is a place there for everybody. (Subject 29)

I said, "Dad, I'm just gonna to do it and that's all there is to it." (Subject 22)

They believe in working within their own abilities:

Your best friend is the guy in the mirror. Don't go beyond yourself. (Subject 26)

Don't overstep your boundaries. (Subject 29)

They believe in reliability and honesty:

Be reliable and dependable and I would say basically honest. (Subject 22)

I guess you gotta just have a goal in life and with a bit of help from others, you meet it. Be honest for one thing, not cheat anybody and you can always go back and do business. (Subject 33)

The importance attached to internal qualities supports suggestions made earlier in this chapter about the apparent willingness of the more successful men to take responsibility for who they are and what they do. The emphasis on attitudes suggests that these men see achieving success as something removed from the consequences of

previous schooling. Factors other than literacy are more important in achieving success.

The views of the more successful men, in fact, harmonize with the positive and confident

way they present themselves in interviews. By comparison, responses by less successful

men are more tentative:

Find it someplace else because I wouldn't be able to explain it. (Subject 20)

That's something I couldn't tell you. If somebody offered me a thousand dollars, I still wouldn't know. (Subject 17)

I couldn't answer that cause I don't know if I got skills or what. (Subject 24)

And although follow-up questions receive answers in most cases, the less successful

men seem not as often to respond from their own experience. Some sense of giving the

right answer is evident in their responses:

To start off to be successful, you'd have to have a home and a wife and kids. That'd be the first thing I think. (Subject 14)

Live life to the fullest -- enjoy yourself though when asked how, the response was 'I don't know'. (Subject 13)

Mostly what anybody would say: money, brains, and looks. (Subject 17)

First you need an education. That'd fix everything up right from the start. (Subject 17)

Gettin a good education. Especially learning how to read and spell right. Today, you gotta have the readin skills. Without them you're not going to get a good job. (Subject 11)

You have to be smart and read. (Subject 20)

You have to know how to read a little, have a little bit of education. Have a little bit of knowledge. (Subject 35)

Make sure you get a good education. Don't get in trouble and stay out of jail. (Subject 39)

The first three responses typify the focus on ends over means that sometimes comes from less successful men. Some can not immediately distinguish between success and how one achieves it. Responses recommending education, moreover, seldom touch on themes of personal growth or even immediate practicality. Of note is that even though many of the less successful men view success in a fairly detached way, they show few signs of depression or fatalism, contrary to popular expectations.

What Success Is

Responses to what success is appear in Table D-57 and are grouped under stability (things that hinted at balance and lack of pressure or tension), possessions, opinions of others, friends, feelings (generally characterized as a state of mind or overall outlook), and being able to read and write.

Interviewees provide sixty-nine responses, with stability accounting for forty-six per cent, feelings for twenty-five per cent, and possessions for only twelve per cent. Being able to read and write accounts for a mere four per cent as do others' opinions. By and large, it appears that the interviewees measure success more on the basis of what they feel they have done than on what other people might think they should have done. It could be argued however that being concerned with stability reflects having accepted society's measures. On the other hand, these men, if they have accepted societal standards, have certainly been quite successful in meeting them in spite of their illiteracy.

The more successful men seem to place a higher value (one and a half times) on

financial stability and possessions:

> When you are successful, a few things start comin' your way.
> I think I have been successful cause I got my house, I got my family, I got my car
> and I'm workin'. I got a little in the bank. (Subject 15)

> Success is just being happy. If the guy's happy at doing his job and making the
> money he's got, he's got his hobbies and what not -- he's happy, that's okay. (Subject
> 25)

> If you own your house and you have $10,000 [saved] over your career, you're pretty
> well off. (Subject 33)

> Everything's going well; you don't owe nothing, and you make a good profit; I'd say
> you're successful. (Subject 38)

They also place much more emphasis (four to one) on feelings like happiness and

self-satisfaction than do less successful men:

> Success to me is not money; success is having friends, having a good marriage -- a
> good marriage is first no doubt about that, having a good family, having friends,
> having people you enjoy to be around a lot. (Subject 27)

> [Success occurs] when you feel comfortable where you're working and with people
> and with life. (Subject 16)

> I would say success is self-satisfaction, being able to live with yourself, being happy
> and contented. I wouldn't classify being rich [as being] success[ful]. Having a
> balanced type of life where you can go out and enjoy yourself and leave the work
> behind, and have a lot of fun along with your wife and family -- I would say that
> would be success. I wouldn't say success lies in being a millionaire. I never even
> intended to be one. But once you get your way of thinking changed or set in certain
> directions, well everything changes. (Subject 22)

> If you see that you are improving, you are successful. (Subject 29)

The more successful men seem higher up the pyramid of Maslow's hierarchy of needs,

clearly focusing on matters of self-actualization and self-fulfilment. If, in the end, the

definition of success (coming from those who, in conventional terms, seem to have it) is

unique to the individual, any causal connection that links basic literacy to success needs to be rethought.

The men in this study appear to have a clear picture of how one achieves success and what it is when you have it. They realize that hard work, ambition, and honesty are the best ways to be successful and their belief in these methods is demonstrated by their achievements. Their sense of being successful includes living comfortably, being stable, having friends, and being happy. They give the impression in most cases, especially among the more successful financially, that they have achieved these to some degree. They do not give the impression of being unable to achieve or of fearing they can not because they are illiterate. These men appear well adjusted and functioning successfully.

Summary

Data analysis reveals the following factors of success: having a great sense of pride in personal accomplishment, highlighting attitude as a key ingredient in success; having a willingness to take on greater responsibility, including independent businesses and family; feeling in control of life, confident, enthusiastic and optimistic; basing satisfaction on internal factors; emphasizing the importance of mental skills; attaching little importance to formal schooling (or the lack of it); seeking help frequently when faced with difficult problems; having alternatives for obtaining necessary information and being able to use it once obtained; being socially active and likely to take leadership roles in clubs and organizations; dealing often, confidently and inventively, with literate society; behaving as a competently functioning individual.

CHAPTER 7

THE SUCCESSFUL ILLITERATE MALE -- A PROFILE

This chapter brings together, in profile form, findings that appear to show how economically successful illiterate men differ from those who are less successful. It compares the profile of the successful illiterate male to the commonly held deficiency view of illiterate people (struggling to perform basic life skill activities, unable to learn, and suffering from embarrassment and withdrawal from society) that existed when this study was planned and that persists to this day. In addition, it clarifies the relationship of these findings to an established stream of research into the perceptions of illiterate people begun by Fingeret (1982a) and added to by various researchers since, including Manning (1984), Sisco (1983), Heisel and Larson (1984), Wood (1984), Beder and Quigley (1990), Horsman (1990), and Ziegahn (1992). This list of related research is larger than that presented in the literature review for two reasons. First, earlier researchers such has Sisco and Heisel and Larson were not considered models for the research being conducted in this study; however, their findings have added to the knowledge base of this stream of research. Second, the works of Beder, Quigley, Horsman, and Ziegahn are contemporary to this study with results appearing only slightly ahead of those reported here. This brief review provides a reminder of the research that appears to belong in the stream of research finding its origins in Fingeret (1982a).

This chapter presents these findings and comparisons in the following way. First, a brief description of the stream of research presents the contributions of various researchers from Fingeret's beginnings to this researcher's findings. Second, the findings of this study are presented under three main headings: attitudes, coping skills, and differences from the deficiency view. The first two deal primarily with factors which appear to contribute to economic success. Under *attitudes* pride, confidence, and responsibility are discussed while sub-topics of *coping skills* are learning, alternatives to reading and writing, and social involvement. The third main heading includes discussion of how the findings of this study differ from the common deficiency view about illiterate people. Sub-topics include being untroubled by illiteracy, the non-functional nature of literacy, and the lack of evidence to support the concept of cyclical poverty and deprivation. For each sub-topic, findings will be presented in profile form, a comparison to the deficiency view will be made, and the relationship of this study to the stream of research into illiterate peoples' perceptions will be established. By the end of the chapter, the relationship of this study to both the deficiency perspective and the Fingeret-based stream of research should be clear.

The stream of research begun by Fingeret has awakened many researchers to the values of speaking directly to illiterate adults in order to determine how they relate to programs planned for them and to determine their personal perceptions of need. The following is a brief review of some of the key discoveries of this research. Not all of these researchers acknowledge a connection to Fingeret's work; however, through an analysis of the literature, this writer has recognized similarities, especially since all were

involved in interviewing undereducated and illiterate people and in making discoveries about their views and actions.

Fingeret's seminal study (1982a) of illiterate people and their perceptions introduced four ideas to the literature of illiteracy and to this stream of research. The first concerned the existence of "cosmopolitan illiterates". On a continuum of involvement with literate society, "cosmopolitan illiterates" represent those who are most involved; they are adept at decoding the social world. For all intents and purposes, they appear to be literate and would best fit into Hunter and Harman's Group I (see page 14). Second, she found that most illiterate adults are involved in "social networks" which include literate and illiterate members in a reciprocal relationship. These networks are important for the competent functioning of most illiterate people. Within these networks exists a sense that illiterate people have a perfectly acceptable alternative tool to book learning called "common sense" and they are unwilling to risk losing that by becoming literate. Finally Fingeret found that "cosmopolitan" illiterate adults engage in the creation of social networks, take responsibility for their actions, and recognize their potency for effecting change. They are not dependent. She further identified seven possible competencies for functioning in life: parenting, controlling social agencies, controlling deviant behaviour, meeting economic needs, identifying and meeting learning needs, being mobile (getting around town), and becoming literate. One need not achieve all to be competent and literacy is clearly not considered fundamental, only helpful in a literacy-dominated world. Fingeret's findings have provided the base from which this stream of research has proceeded.

Although he did not claim to be expanding on Fingeret's line of research, Manning (1984) did augment Fingeret's findings and expand knowledge of a different group of illiterate adults. He identified a group of "prosperous" illiterates (mostly black businessmen), and concluded that among other things, "knowing the ropes" was a competency vital to the economic success of his population. He was able to support the hypothesis that illiterate people can get ahead and that literacy is not essential for economic success.

Although Sisco (1983) did not refer to Fingeret's work, he did make a contribution to this line of research, albeit unintentional. He set out to test Allen Tough's ideas about self-directed learning activities by interviewing people having less than a high school diploma. He found that even undereducated and supposedly illiterate people carry on learning activities which they organize themselves. This discovery reinforced the idea that literacy is not a pre-condition for learning.

Heisel and Larson (1984) did not acknowledge a relationship to Fingeret's work; however, while studying the literacy behaviour of elderly blacks, they found that seventy-five per cent of those deemed illiterate because of their grade level achievements considered themselves average or better readers and were relatively satisfied with their personal achievements. These discoveries further questioned the belief that illiteracy is a major problem which limits the ability to function in society.

Although recognizing the importance of Fingeret's work, Wood (1984) primarily intended to discover a learning theory of intelligence through defining concepts common to illiterate adults. She did however verify that some illiterate people are proud, hard

working, and involved in their communities and that they do not all experience the shame that illiterate people reportedly suffer from.

Beder and Quigley (1990) conducted research into resistance to participation in Adult Basic Education classes in Iowa and Pennsylvania. Although their primary lines of research dealt with participation, they refer to Fingeret and their findings present useful information about how undereducated people feel about the use of returning to school. Beder found that people tend to resist ABE programs because they see no need for more education while Quigley found that people seem to be resisting because they do not accept the normative, middle class orientation of formal schooling. Both of these findings are in agreement with some of Fingeret's findings concerning the value of "common sense" and the usefulness of schooling.

Horsman (1990) makes numerous references to Fingeret and employs a similar approach for gathering her information. Conducting a study of illiterate women in Nova Scotia, she found that while these women exhibited many of the qualities Fingeret had discovered (membership in networks, pride in common sense and experience-related solutions, as well as a range of competencies), they were often isolated and held back by a gender-driven social environment which made it difficult for them either to find work or to participate in upgrading programs. Horsman verified what other researchers in this line have discovered: the shame illiterate people feel is one that is forced on them and not one they feel is justified; it is not from within. Horsman's work is especially timely in that in combination with this researcher's study, it helps illuminate not only the factors of success but also the difference which may exist within the sub-group of illiterate

adults. For instance, it suggests that illiteracy may not be as crucial a factor in successful functioning in society as gender.

Ziegahn (1992) employed an interview process with an illiterate study sample to explore the motivations of adults with low literacy skills toward literacy and learning. In interviewing twenty-seven illiterate adults, she found that learning was not necessarily associated with schooling and that, in fact, illiterate people had little desire to return for more schooling in the form of literacy classes. Moreover, they did not readily associate literacy with any particular functional need they faced. Her findings corroborate the findings of Fingeret and others that illiterate people do not necessarily accept the common belief that being literate is a key to success.

In many ways, Fingeret's work remains the most authoritative and comprehensive in this stream of research. Others have either validated ideas or provided a closer look at a particular sub-group. With this in mind, most references of comparison will involve Fingeret's work although Manning's study of "prosperous" men is also closely related. As other references are justified, they will be employed.

The research reported in this dissertation is very much a part of the stream of research begun by Fingeret (1982a), but it focuses on a smaller group within the sub-group of illiterate adults, and it primarily presents a profile of an economically successful illiterate adult. As a result, it provides, in one place, a snapshot of the qualities and practices that appear to lead to economic success apart from being literate. Thus, the qualities and practices defined here should provide useful information for those who would plan programs primarily aimed at improving people's opportunities for income and

job security. Some of the findings support those of earlier researchers while others appear to suggest a different direction; all of the findings challenge the too commonly held belief in the deficiency of illiterate adults.

The composite picture of the typical, successful illiterate male that emerges from the data collected for this study is not one that would appear within the "broad spectrum" of illiterate adults described by Hunter and Harman (1979); nor does it reflect the profile of an illiterate person created by the popular press, government, or business (Wellborn 1982; Washington 1983; Calamai 1987a; Ontario Ministry of Skills Development 1988; and Wood 1988). Instead, it is a profile of a person very much in control of his life, with a great sense of pride and responsibility, and an awareness of the expectations placed on him by a literate world. It is also a profile of a person with exceptional oral skills and inventive and effective strategies for living, working, and succeeding in this challenging environment. Indeed, this typical successful illiterate male is one whose ability to succeed in a world dominated by literate people has much to teach others about what it takes to be successful. A picture of the successful illiterate male as he emerges from this study is therefore fashioned here.

Attitudes

Attitude appears to be a major factor contributing to economic success. The successful illiterate man in this study has a positive outlook based on a sense of self-control and awareness of his place in society as a whole. He is not withdrawn, but an

active participant. Three attitudes apparently affecting his approach to life are pride, confidence, and responsibility.

Pride

In contrast to the hopelessness inherent in the Hunter and Harman categories, the successful illiterate man in this study seems generally infused by a sense of pride. Any difficulties with schooling do not cast a shadow on the balance of his outlook. Neither does not being able to read provide any particular burden. He is a hopeful citizen.

His life has had its ups and downs and has included mistakes but he does not appear at all eager to change anything about it. He is quite satisfied with the person that he has become. He can judge what he does according to his own standard of excellence and does not depend on others for verification or justification. His ability to both recognize and achieve excellence gives him the initiative to embrace new challenges and attain new goals. He is proud of his accomplishments and possessions, his family and personal achievements, and his special qualities and skills.

The deficiency view. The successful man in this study does not fit the description of illiterate people common among those who accept the deficiency view. He is not embarrassed except insofar as he can determine that other people might think less of him because he is illiterate. This however is entirely due to a realization that he is the victim of a type of stereotyping. He knows he has no real reason to be embarrassed. He is proud of what he has achieved and counts himself as worthwhile as any other person.

Because he does not accept this deficiency interpretation, he is unlikely either to acknowledge or respond to pressure to learn to read or complete any program he joins.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Although not all of Fingeret's subjects were proud to the same degree as the men in this study, their belief in the value of "common sense" indicates a valuing of their views and values as compared to those of the literate society, the "book learning" group. Certainly her group of "cosmopolitan illiterates" would be similar. Manning found this sense of pride in his men as did Wood who saw considerable pride in home, family, friends, learning, community activities, and work.

This study shows that this sense of pride continues to be constant among illiterate people. Moreover, since even the less successful felt it, it would appear to be unrelated specifically to being well off. It would appear that illiterate people are unlikely to return to school if they are told they are inferior, as many ads for literacy classes tend to do.

Confidence

Success and self-confidence seem inseparable companions; each feeds the other. The successful man in this study is confident about his abilities and often unafraid to face the demands of literate society on his own.

He possesses a sense of purpose and an awareness of who he is and how he fits in. His confidence stems from a belief in his intelligence, his strength of will, and his experiences. As he reviews his life, he sees a complex interrelationship of events, people, and personal qualities that have affected him. He realizes that no one thing is responsible for shaping his life, but he tends to emphasize his own attitudes believing that

through his pride, ambition, and strength of will, he has control over his life and is not simply shaped by the impact of events or the actions of others. Negativity is rarely a part of his perspective. He is confident that he can meet any challenge and has a wide range of interests and corresponding skills.

He is capable of a variety of jobs, from general labour, to skilled craft work, to independent entrepreneur and is willing to work at or try virtually anything to get ahead. Yet while willing to bend in order to create opportunity and make sure that his family's basic needs are met, he is aware of the importance of job satisfaction. He is a hard worker and often receives and usually accepts offers of advancement and does well in spite of the apparent literacy requirements that a new position may entail. His work is frequently complex and may involve having to run complicated machines, follow manuals, fill out forms, study memos, collect dues, fill orders, or deal with literate professionals.

If challenges are not forthcoming, he seeks them out. In these endeavours he is not bothered by shortcomings customarily thought of as limitations. As a result, he often plays a leadership role in the organizations to which he belongs and is not inhibited by memos and letters or constitutions and minutes. In addition, he is often involved in his own business where he hires accountants, lawyers, secretaries, and salespeople who provide, on his behalf, the crucial functions that the literate world demands. Here too, he is usually successful. In both his social and workplace involvement, he is called upon to interact extensively with members of the community-at-large. In this respect, his

network of social contacts is wide and varied. It may include people with far greater literacy skills than he.

The chief threats to his confidence are his fears concerning public opinion about his formal schooling and the difficulty he might have in acquiring literacy-related skills. His complicated strategies for hiding his illiteracy would seem to indicate that he is aware of how society in general views illiterate people; however, even though he acknowledges other people's opinions and sometimes takes them into account as useful, seldom do external requirements dictate his behaviour.

The deficiency view. According to the deficiency view, illiterate people are often withdrawn, secretive, and unable to do the things that literate people do. Most of the men in this study are fairly confident and far from withdrawn and most survive handily in everyday life. The successful are exceptional in their confidence. There is nothing outside of schooling they will not try and they are active in society to the extent that they run for office in social associations and sometimes political ones. They are not reflective of the deficiency view.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Fingeret found that on a continuum of dependence, the "cosmopolitan illiterates" were very independent; however, their independence was enhanced by their "social networks". At the same time this group was most able to accommodate change in their network system and could even accommodate its breaking down if necessary. Strength seemed to come from the belief that "common sense" would stand them in good stead when dealing with the literate world. Both Manning and Wood echo the importance of confidence with Manning pointing out that his

"prosperous" men knew they were competent and found their confidence helped them deal with the negativity they sometimes faced from outside.

This research on successful illiterate men supports earlier discoveries of the importance of confidence and offers some insights into its nature and cause. First, the nature of the successful man's intellectual confidence is more clearly defined. It is apparent he has a systematic plan for learning that involves three to four steps. He is an excellent problem solver. Perhaps the best evidence of his confidence in mental capacity is his willingness to make mistakes. Typically, people must have a strong sense of trust in their ability to allow themselves to grow through making mistakes. Finally, the successful men frequently mention their mental powers as something they were proud of. Apparently they do not suffer from any decrease in mental power simply because they do not read and write. As a result, adult education planners might recognize this ability to think and act when designing programs. Typically literacy programs are built on the assumption that becoming literate is a prerequisite to other forms of learning. Perhaps this is why competent, thinking illiterate people drop out so frequently.

Responsibility

A sense of responsibility usually indicates a sense of commitment and succeeding against odds usually requires commitment. The successful man in this study is responsible in all aspects of his life.

He is responsible to himself and to his needs and knows that to be otherwise will threaten his stability and happiness. In spite of his failure with literacy programs, he has

a highly cultivated sense of personal responsibility and is well aware of the combination of experiences and people in his life that have contributed to that sense of responsibility. This sense of responsibility extends naturally to those he considers important in his life, making him a caring husband and father, a trusted friend, and a valued employee.

He is married and is a family man. If he has experienced a marriage break-up, he is likely to have re-married. He has a slightly larger than average family by today's standards and will sometimes help his extended family by looking after nieces and nephews who live in less advantageous circumstances. He covers possible family emergencies through insurance and investments.

This typical successful illiterate male meanwhile has rarely, if ever, been unemployed and is likely to have a stable work record. If faced with a choice between working for less to get started or being out of work, he will work for less; he believes in his ability to prove his worth given the opportunity. Through his hard work, consistency, and skill, he manages to impress his employer, thereby making him a likely candidate for periodic promotions. Regardless of his employment, he takes his work seriously and strives to be the best that he can be at whatever he does. However, if he finds his job inadequate to meet the needs of his family or his own potential, he will seek something new but would rarely, if ever, place his family in financial difficulty in the process. He does not become a slave to a job even though he will work at most anything to avoid being without one. At times, he will carry two jobs to meet a family need.

He considers it important to keep his promises, tries not to be late or to miss work if at all possible, and quits a job only if he has another, or if he finds the one he has

intolerable. Even if he quits a job before having obtained another, his confidence and commitment are such that he could never imagine himself unemployed for any length of time. Typically his view of the Canadian unemployed is that they are too lazy and that welfare is too easy to get.

The deficiency view. Although literacy workers and program planners do not openly suggest that illiterate people are irresponsible, the suggestion that they somehow need to become literate to function in society implies that it is something they should have done before. Thus it puts blame squarely on their shoulders. It asks them to accept responsibility for this past error in judgement and to correct it now. The successful men in this study are nothing if they are not responsible. Their range of responsibility includes being responsible to themselves, to family, to work, and to the community at large. They accept their responsibility for past actions and for future directions. Interestingly, this sense of responsibility does not translate into acceptance of their having missed something terribly important by not becoming literate. Nor do they accept the necessity of becoming literate.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Fingeret found that her population generally felt that each person should be responsible for his or her actions and attitudes. She also found that those who were less responsible were not very successful within their respective networks. Since the networks were based on reciprocation, this seems a logical result. Manning's "prosperous" men believed hard work and making a good impression by being honest, conscientious, and trustworthy were important to success in life.

Corroborating Fingeret's and Manning's findings, this study shows that the successful illiterate man has a highly developed and extensive sense of responsibility that he carries with him wherever he goes. Being responsible is clearly important to successful functioning, at least economically. What this study adds is a comprehensive range of attitudes related to being responsible not found in the other studies. As a result, it offers several possible values that might be incorporated in programs expecting to help people get jobs and become economically independent.

Summary Comments on Attitudes

The findings of this study not only corroborate the findings of earlier studies on the attitudes of some illiterate people, but also they expand and enlarge the understanding of the complex of attitudes. As a result, this study offers a clearer and more detailed picture of what is associated with the economic success of illiterate men.

Coping Skills

No matter how confident an illiterate person may be, the reality of the dominance of literacy in society must be faced. The successful man in this study deals with the expectations of literate society effectively through his learning abilities, his alternatives to reading and writing, and through his active involvement in the larger society.

Learning

Progressing in life usually means making changes and making change involves learning. The successful man in this study has progressed and has made many changes; he is an able learner with proven strategies at his disposal.

It appears that he has an especially fine, even subtle, awareness of how individuals learn through observation, listening, and practice, and consistently embraces these methods in his own learning experiences. A good learner, his habits in gathering the information he needs involve three conventional steps: finding the source, acquiring the knowledge, and applying it to the task at hand. Perhaps his greatest strength as a learner is a willingness to make mistakes, trial and error are his most useful and comfortable methods of learning. In addition, his problem-solving skills are superior. He learns quickly in the work environment and most of the time, he will try to do or learn virtually anything. Through all of this, his learning methods are practical and action-oriented; he seldom contemplates returning to school to learn.

The deficiency view. Common belief is that literacy precedes effective learning; it is a precondition. This belief is demonstrated by the existence of literacy training at the beginning of a child's education and by the forced enrolment of returning adults in basic literacy or English classes if their literacy skills are not deemed sufficient for enrolment in higher level courses. The successful illiterate man in this study is a learner but one who functions outside of the restrictions of formal schooling and literacy preconditions. The fact that he organizes complicated learning strategies and seems quite capable of the complex thinking required for problem solving would appear to indicate that society's

belief in the essential nature of literacy as a precondition for learning is incorrect. At best, literacy may be a precondition for learning in formal school-based settings, but this may be so only because those systems have been developed on that very assumption.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Fingeret found that illiterate adults were able to identify learning needs and then find a source for the information they required. Manning suggested that his "prosperous" men preferred to observe experts and practise or learn on their own using trial and error. Sisco found that uneducated learn on a regular basis outside of the school setting and Ziegahn found that learners were actually enthusiastic as long as learning was not associated with schooling. For Fingeret's group, the "network" was an important learning resource with illiterate people receiving and giving instruction alternately. Learning on the job was a regular occurrence.

This study endorses the findings of previous studies and also suggests that the more successful man has a definite learning plan including at least three of the following steps: finding a source, gathering information, practising, and using the skill or idea. This finding suggests that the learning of successful illiterate men is not haphazard or serendipitous but orderly and carefully planned.

Alternatives to Reading and Writing

Being successful in literate society means being able to function as an equal member. The successful illiterate man's important and continual interactions with literate society, based on oral forms of communication, are ingenious and sophisticated and so

personable is his style that one would find it impossible to distinguish him in a group as having ever been touched by the stigma of illiteracy.

Particularly inventive in this process are the means by which he disguises his illiteracy including note books, card indexes, tape recordings, photographs, spelling lists, and expert advice. His range of alternatives in seeking out information and his planned approach to learning keep him generally well informed; unafraid of admitting ignorance, he has access to many sources and wants to have the best ideas available. While his alternatives to reading include seeking help, working harder, being independent and absorbing information from radio and television, his alternatives to writing include seeking help and using the telephone.

Ultimately, his illiteracy has caused him to develop a number of alternative skills and abilities. Prominent among these are oral facility, observation, high standards of workmanship, and critical thinking. Though many consider the first and last of these to be the exclusive purview of literate society, such is not the case. His illiteracy well disguised, his awareness of cause and effect well learned, his social skills finely honed, he works hard at assimilating.

The deficiency view. According to the deficiency view, illiteracy is a handicap that most illiterate people find overwhelming thus rendering them unable to cope with the demands of literate society and even their own daily lives. The results of this study suggest this is far from the case for the successful illiterate man. He develops many alternatives to literacy and functions well in an often hostile environment. He sees his illiteracy as having benefitted him in that it has forced him to learn new things and made

him a more balanced learner. As a result of his many alternatives he has become virtually indistinguishable and moves comfortably among his numerous literate associates. Far from overwhelmed, he faces life's challenges with anticipation.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Both Fingeret and Manning speak in general terms of how illiterate people read or "decode" their social environment or "learn the ropes". Manning suggests that when his men found illiteracy a problem, they sought an alternative. He suggests they had a number of these. Both agree that speaking skills stand their "cosmopolitan" or "prosperous" people in good stead.

This study identified and recorded twenty-one potential alternatives to reading and fifteen potential alternatives to writing used by illiterate men as substitutes for literacy skills. With these skills in hand, the successful illiterate man is able to read his world and act competently according to its rules. It is unlikely that people with these capabilities will turn up for literacy classes and even the less successful men have some alternatives. Literacy program planners might attract more participants if they could recognize the skills these potential learners could bring to courses and not be adamant that literacy is a prerequisite for either learning or functioning in society.

Social Involvement

Active social involvement would appear to be indicative of the existence of successful coping skills along with a heightened sense of confidence and responsibility.

This typical successful illiterate male is socially involved in church, community, or service groups where he often plays a leadership role and is not inhibited by literacy-

related requirements. He appears to have strong ties within the community and is well respected by his peers. He participates in the political process as a voter, a lobbyist, or a politician. He genuinely enjoys being with people and sharing ideas; his illiteracy is irrelevant. While he enjoys a wide range of recreations, with a particular focus on the outdoors and a preference for solitary or small group activities, he also enjoys outgoing people, has mostly literate friends, and appreciates the freedom that a degree of financial success has brought him.

The deficiency view. The deficiency view would not accommodate men who are highly functional as citizens and as leaders at the societal level. The successful man in this study is at ease in a social context and is not troubled by potential problems his illiteracy might cause. In this respect he is unlike the withdrawn and embarrassed individual mentioned earlier in this dissertation.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Fingeret alone made extensive reference to the social involvement of the people in her study. Her primary reference was to the existence of "social networks"; however, she also found that a person's status was dependent on his or her personal qualities and actions and that the "cosmopolitan illiterates" had extensive interaction within the communities they were a part of. Surprisingly though, she found many of them tended not to vote in elections.

On the other hand, this study found that the successful illiterate man is not only active socially but also takes a leadership role. If he has an identifiable network, and this is not clear from the data, it is similar to that Fingeret described with her "cosmopolitans". It was wider and more varied and unrestricted by geography. If

networks exist for the men in this study, they are made up exclusively of literate people except for those met at literacy courses. In addition, the successful man in this study claims to be more active politically than did the members of either Fingeret"s or Manning"s groups. Not only does he vote but he may run for office or become an advocate for either himself or some group.

Summary Comments on Coping Strategies

The coping strategies identified in this study validate those found by previous researchers and add the following: an apparent plan for learning, a list of alternatives to reading and writing employed by successful men, and a sense of political activity not found in past studies.

Differences from the Deficiency View

The deficiency view describes illiterate adults as ashamed of their illiteracy and wanting to eliminate it, as realizing the usefulness of literacy as a path to success, and as being the result of or contributing to the persistence of cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and deprivation. The findings of this study face these beliefs head-on, and find them wanting.

Untroubled By Being Illiterate

Generally, illiterate adults are assumed to be aware of their illiteracy and to want to eliminate it (Hunter and Harman 1979). In addition, it is expected they will have difficulty functioning without being literate.

In fact, though the successful illiterate man in this study may not be proud of his lack of education and inability to read and write, he rarely expresses concern about any negative effects this might have had on his life. Although he remembers his educational experience as having been uncomfortable and is somewhat unwilling to repeat that experience, he does not see illiteracy as having influenced his ambition or achievement. He is likely to see his lack of education in fact as having made a positive contribution since through compensating for his shortcomings he has become a stronger and more capable person.

Most often, he works in a job that many would consider impossible for an illiterate person although he might find the literacy requirement minimal. He plays a leadership role in the organizations to which he belongs, and is not inhibited by literacy requirements he may face there.

Once he has joined a literacy program, he will be unlikely to stay with it, and will rarely become literate as a result of any program. His leaving will, however, probably be the result of other commitments, though he is also likely to admit to his own lack of aptitude before complaining about the teaching or other aspects of the course. His ideas of success are, in the end, very personal and untouched by the general belief in the necessity of literacy.

179

Research into illiterate perceptions. All of the researchers in this line of research found that generally, illiterate people were less troubled by their illiteracy than might be expected. Fingeret found that many feared losing their valued "common sense" if they became literate and that as they aged, their perception of need grew less. Those who were embarrassed were mainly so because of their perceived devaluation by literate society. Finally, when they chose to join literacy classes, it was because their lives had changed. Manning's "prosperous illiterates" found that illiteracy was only a slight annoyance and if they needed help with reading, it was just part of life. They were not embarrassed by their illiteracy and would simply farm literacy work out if they owned their own business. If they were working for others, they rarely found the literacy requirement beyond their ability. Heisel and Larson found that only twenty per cent of their population would bother to take a literacy course. Although Wood found some people who were embarrassed, their reaction was to others' opinions and not an internal feeling of inadequacy. Finally Beder found that many felt no need to become literate and that as in Fingeret's study, perceived need decreased with increased age.

This study corroborates the findings of earlier studies in this line. What it adds is information on how this successful man reacts to literacy courses he is involved in. Fifty-five per cent of those who left did so because they felt no compelling reason to stay. Thirty-two per cent left because of poor teaching. Finally only twenty-one per cent would take another course. It appears that these men are making a considered decision about the role of literacy or at least literacy programs in their lives. They are not acting out of ignorance or because they are misinformed. It is well known that many illiterate

people do not avail themselves of literacy programs and thanks to researchers like Beder and Quigley their reasons are being revealed. The findings of this study offer new insight into the inadequacy of courses from the words of people who have attempted to complete them. Simply put, they do not meet the needs of some illiterate people.

Non-functional Nature of Literacy

Literacy programs are usually offered because of what is perceived by the literate society to be their inherent functional value. The typical successful illiterate man does not share this popular view. Since his lack of literacy has not noticeably impaired his progress, and since he uses oral communication extensively and well, he has trouble seeing ways it could make things better. Clearly, he does not see a strong relationship in his life between literacy and getting along in the workplace. Still, he tries literacy programs, but his aims in studying to become literate are more likely to satisfy a desire to read for sheer pleasure than for some instrumental reason.

Research into illiterate perceptions. Generally, previous researchers have found that illiterate people do not perceive an essential functional use for literacy. Many of Fingeret's people felt literacy was an inflated currency. Manning, Heisel and Larson, and Wood found that most people felt they were functioning well enough without literacy. If people did join classes they tended to do so because, as in Fingeret's case, they had already begun the process of change in their lives or had other supporting competencies that literacy could complement or, as in Ziegahn's case, because they wanted to read for pleasure not functionality.

This study found that the successful illiterate men resist completing literacy programs or re-enroling in them because they see no apparent need for literacy. Instead, they are more inclined to want to read for pleasure. Along with the findings of earlier researchers, this would appear to indicate that courses are still primarily offered in the instrumental mode and may not be meeting the perceived needs of groups of illiterate people who are functioning well enough without being literate.

No Cycles of Deprivation, Illiteracy or Poverty

Frequently illiteracy is thought to be the result of cross-generational cycles of poverty or deprivation (Levine 1982). The successful man in this study does not validate this assumption.

Most often he has fond memories of his family. Although neither of his parents is very likely to have completed high school, he believes that both are able to read and write reasonably well, certainly well enough to function competently in literate society. Although this man remembers his mother primarily as a homemaker, he also recalls her occasionally working outside of the home in order to supplement the family income. This income is earned by his father who is usually a labourer, skilled craftsman, or businessman.

His children are likely to complete high school and often go on to complete college or university. Even though he himself has little formal education, he sets an excellent example for them through his commitment to seeing things through to completion, his leadership skills, his community involvement, his mastery of life skills, his values, and

his interest and ability in learning new things. In addition, he is able to function competently in literate society and therefore does not give them excuses for accepting failure or embracing any conventional stigma unworthy of them. Once they have completed school, his children usually do well in the workplace. They are rarely unemployed and frequently seek jobs in service areas, as skilled workers, or as professionals. A number often follow their fathers and become entrepreneurs. These children appear inclined to be self-motivated with an initiative and desire to fulfil their potential. They therefore reflect their fathers' talents and attitudes.

Research into illiterate perceptions. None of the earlier researchers in this stream of research addresses the issue of cycles of deprivation, illiteracy, and poverty directly; however, Fingeret and Manning discuss some of the related factors. Fingeret reports that her interviewees claim most parents could read as could most of their siblings. In addition, these people provided supportive homes for their own children. Manning found that most of his men came from poor but very supportive homes where they were taught to be confident and responsible. None of their own children were dropouts.

In this study, the successful illiterate man exhibits no evidence of cyclical deprivation of any kind. He comes from a supportive environment where both parents read and in turn has created a supportive environment for his children most of whom are high school graduates and have regular work. It would appear that cycles of deprivation may not be directly related to illiteracy as a causal factor. This study documents in a much more specific way the way these men do not fit the stereotyped image of cycles.

As a result, it should point those who would explain recurring poverty in different directions away from the easy answer of illiteracy.

Summary Comments on Differences from the Deficiency View

The findings of this study contradict three common aspects of the deficiency view. First, successful illiterate men are generally untroubled by their illiteracy but even a number of the less successful men are relatively unconcerned; this lack of concern is supported by the research of others. Second, very few illiterate men consider literacy to have an important functional value; instead, they are more interested in learning to read for the pleasure it might provide, and choose to employ oracy as their main instrumental communication form. Third, the evidence from this study contradicts completely the concept of cross-generational cycles of deprivation, poverty, and illiteracy.

Summary

The profile of a successful illiterate man presented in this chapter offers a distinct contradiction to the image of illiteracy that is the deficiency view. Contrary to this too common view, the successful illiterate man identified in this study is proud and unembarrassed by his illiteracy and sees no particular reason for joining literacy courses in the future since he has already attended a literacy class and has concluded that it will be of little practical use to him. He is confident, outgoing and active and feels a strong sense of responsibility to himself, his family, and his community. He is often a leader in

society and in his work. An active, organized learner, he has many alternatives to literacy that help him meet the demands created by a literate society. As a result he is unworried about being illiterate except for a possible desire to read just for pleasure. He is clearly not the result nor the cause of a cyclical state of poverty or deprivation.

This study, in relation to the line of research begun by Fingeret, confirms some of the earlier findings of related researchers and offers some new insights into the views of illiterate people as well as some useful ways of organizing data for future researchers or writers who are interested in aspects of the profile of the successful illiterate male. Findings of others confirmed by this study include verification that illiterate people are proud, confident in their abilities to work and learn, responsible for their own lives and actions, able to learn, able to employ alternatives to reading and writing (most requiring some form of oral communication), socially involved, untroubled by their illiteracy, unconvinced of literacy's value to them, and generally not mired in cyclical poverty.

The following are the new insights offered by this study. First, a clear definition of how these successful men organize their learning process is provided. These men usually have a plan for learning which involves at least three steps from among identifying a need, finding a source of information, gaining information, and employing that information. Second, an extended picture of the range of responsibilities affecting their outlook on life, including being responsible to self, family, friends, work, and community is drawn. Third, a comprehensive list of alternatives to reading and writing corroborates, in one place, many of the alternatives identified by other researchers but also provides some idea of the popularity and usefulness of specific alternatives. This information

might help learners who may never be able to learn to read or write. Fourth, this study indicates that successful illiterate men are more socially and politically active than other researchers have found to be the case among illiterate people. Fifth, an analysis of reasons why successful illiterate men either drop out of or may choose not to enrol in literacy courses is provided. This information combined with data on why successful men are economically successful provides insights into what may be missing in present literacy interventions if a goal is to attract all illiterate people to these courses. Sixth, an indication that successful illiterate men may value reading as a source of pleasure over its instrumental functions is presented here. This suggests that perhaps all illiterate people do not accept the literate society's view of the innate functionality of being literate. Thus, they are unlikely to respond to advertising that suggests this as a primary reason for learning to read. Seventh, this study denies the possibility that illiteracy must lead to cycles of poverty and deprivation or vice versa. Finally, this study brings together in one place data on the perceptions of illiterate people and arranges these data on a continuum of economic success. As a result, for the first time, other researchers and program planners have easy access to an overview of factors that may lead to success in employment and gaining income. The implications of these data are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study's purpose and conclusions will be well served if they challenge squarely and credibly traditional views about illiterate people; contribute to the field in a positive and qualitative way; suggest new directions for literacy research and planning; and present clear implications for interest groups concerned with the issue, especially media and government personnel, literacy workers, researchers, and the general public.

The Broad Perspective of the Popular View of Illiteracy

Though illiterate men in this study tend to be relatively untouched by the need for literacy, the literate world around them continues its urgent mission. A recent article in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record (Swart 1990), for instance, still emphasizes the negative: "More tutors are needed: Volunteers can stem the tide of illiteracy" reads the title, followed by text that emphasizes the social costs of illiteracy. Written by a member of the K-W Literacy Council and placed on their behalf in a special continuing education supplement intended to advertise programs for fall sessions, the text goes on to say that

> It [illiteracy] has burst through the fabric of our society, revealing itself in millions spent on remedial education, in employment compensation for dismissed, functionally illiterate workers, in accidents caused by drivers who cannot read signs, and hospital care because medication instructions are beyond the comprehension of many. . . . and let us not forget the demoralizing shame and bitterness. (C2)

The consequences of allowing illiteracy to continue are many, the article goes on to say, from business costs to general and individual demoralization. With unfortunate exaggeration, it states that large numbers of people are unable to live ordinary lives, so deficient are they as citizens, workers, and family members.

Not surprisingly, public policy and programming continue to describe illiterate people as inferior. As a result, literacy programs are presented as instrumental solutions to basic difficulties, unhelpful to the kind of person met in this study: one whose level of success and self-esteem lead him to literacy courses as an optional act of self-fulfilment, where reading for pleasure is a personal, recreational goal. Were program planners to be more informed, courses might meet with responses beyond the current levels. The priority in research and planning must clearly be with the increased awareness of a new image of illiterate people and a new way of serving them.

The Study: Summary, Contributions, and Limitations

This section briefly summarizes the research process, describes contributions made, and points out some of the study's limitations.

Summary of the Research Process

Forty illiterate men (with a reading level below grade three), having achieved varying degrees of success based on fairly conventional criteria of income and employment records, were identified and interviewed. Identification was carried out through media contacts, referrals from literacy educators, and personal contacts. Each

two-phased interview collected biographical data first and then data on individual

perceptions of self-confidence, responsibility, pride, observation skills, alternatives to

reading, oral skills, memory, sociality, and mental ability.

Once interviewing was complete, subjects were arranged on a continuum of success,

the data tabulated and, if appropriate, comparisons made; where possible, qualitative data

previously sorted into a number of pre-selected categories were quantified.

Finally, conclusions were drawn concerning the relationship of subjects to

prevailing views of them, how they managed to cope with the demands of literate society,

and how they managed to be successful financially as well as in other ways.

Contributions to Knowledge in the Field of Literacy Studies

The research described in this dissertation owes much to previous studies completed

by Arlene Fingeret (1982a) and Allen Manning (1984). Fingeret has been instrumental in

encouraging the study of the illiterate adult's point of view and in creating a more

positive view of the illiterate adult in general. Her work has made it clear that illiterate

adults often see themselves in ways that differ markedly from traditional views.

Manning's study brought into focus certain "prosperous" illiterate adults who are

somewhat related to the financially successful illiterate men identified in this study. An

attempt has been made in this study to expand upon the pioneering efforts of Fingeret and

Manning and to make changes in the methods employed by them.

Identifying the population. Attempts were made ahead of time to identify and

describe the population to be studied by using a set of selection variables, thereby

focusing on a specific group within the body of illiterate people in order to begin to identify characteristics of that group. Both Fingeret and Manning identified groups of illiterate adults, but Fingeret's group arose from her data and were not identified beforehand, while members of Manning's group were never totally described despite his beginning with two selection criteria. As a result, no one until now has carefully defined and described a sub-group of illiterate adults. Identifying the financially successful illiterate male now makes it possible for research to expand into other groups. Perhaps future studies can embrace a broader sample.

Employing a formalized analysis procedure. Neither of the two previous studies appeared to have had a formalized method for dealing with the data gathered. Thus, it was difficult to tell how the data were analyzed and whether the analysis was accurate. In addition, the results lacked focus; it was hard to know what to do with them. The method used in this study to categorize and quantify people's perceptions makes it possible to identify common views among study subjects. These data can then be used to determine the factors that may contribute to success, knowledge that can now be applied to literacy practices, government policies, publishing plans, and research initiatives.

Having a focus. The two previous researchers sought to investigate a broader group called illiterate adults. One result of their studies was the identification of apparent sub-groups within that general population. This study differs in that its purpose is to find and describe a sub-group of illiterate adults identified as successful according to pre-determined criteria that reflect fairly popular standards of success in our society.

Knowledge about illiterate people. This study reinforces the belief that valuable

information can be gained about illiterate people through the use of the interview. The tapes collected from the interviews conducted for this study contain information about how these men live, view their lives, and make decisions. In fact, more information exists on the tapes than can be applied solely to this study. Potentially interesting information could likely be gleaned on such topics as language usage and patterns, thought processes, and social interactions if the tapes were to be analyzed by specialists in these fields. Future studies of illiterate people might be organized and funded by several groups in order to insure that the information collected is used to its full potential.

Limitations

Sample size and selection, however, limit the extent to which general conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Sample size. The size of the sample is too small to represent adequately and credibly the total population of illiterate men. The exact numbers of illiterate men cannot be identified since the only data available in the national census files are limited to grades completed at school. These data are highly unreliable for predicting levels of literacy. As this study shows, the grade that a person completes does not necessarily reflect either the grade level of reading ability achieved (then or later) or the subject's ability to cope with literacy-oriented activities in later years. In addition, this study lacks elaborate control mechanisms and has never been intended to be a definitive study of the sort that experimental designers attempt to create.

<u>Sample selection</u>. The selection of the sample was not conducted randomly because to identify the total population of either illiterate men or successful illiterate men is not, and may never be, possible. Early in the preparation stages, finding successful illiterate men willing to talk about their lives was forecast to be a difficult task, a prediction fulfilled by the experience of the process itself as outlined in Chapter 3 and Appendix F.

The existence of the two limiting factors described above means that general conclusions for the broad group of illiterate men cannot be drawn; however, this study was designed to increase the general awareness of the value of collecting the perceptions of specific groups of people and then categorizing those perceptions so that a more complete view of what motivates and influences them can be described. The results of the process in this case appear to be useful and gratifying.

Conclusions Based on the Findings of This Study

Two broad conclusions are suggested by the findings of this study, one concerning the inadequacy of the traditional view of illiterate people and the other concerning the ways illiterate men cope with and achieve success in society. Each is built on several findings and each may have implications for the broader issue of illiteracy.

Weaknesses in the Traditional View

The findings of this study suggest that not all illiterate people may be characterized as deficient. Making a living, functioning in society, learning, thinking, raising families,

and maintaining dignity and self-respect are not impossible tasks for the majority of the men interviewed. Many hardly differ from their literate counterparts. These are not inadequate or inferior citizens, nor do they perceive themselves as such. Neither do many perceive any great need to become literate, other than for the possible pleasures of reading for enjoyment.

If illiterate people are not deficient, then the assumed causal relationship between illiteracy and social problems such as crime, unemployment, and poverty is incorrectly ascribed. The existence of illiterate people not suffering from these social evils must surely lead one to question the assumption that illiteracy is generally a cause of social ills. If no causal relationship exists between illiteracy and social problems, then the assumption of the essential value of literacy for achieving the good life and avoiding social evils is also incorrect. Further, if the essential value of literacy comes under question, then programs assuming its importance may be inappropriate, and factors other than literacy, such as instrumental, value-laden attitudes and perceptions, are more useful.

It is important to distinguish in passing, however, between literacy as a need and literacy as an advantage. No one in this study disavowed the usefulness of literacy skills, only their necessity for survival and prosperity. It is at least possible to conclude that there is a population of illiterate people much larger than that sampled in this study for whom illiteracy is simply not a significant concern.

Moreover, if the definitive cause of poor participation in literacy programs has not been identified in this study, then it has surely been illuminated to a greater degree. People not perceiving themselves afflicted by any deficiency are unlikely to respond to

programs purporting to address it. Were programs designed imagining them as confident, successful, able, assured, adept at learning and appreciative of certain pleasures in reading and writing, a whole new wave of participation might follow. Ascribing rather than discovering clients' needs, in any case, is unlikely to meet with any degree of success greater than it has already.

Coping and Achieving Success

Among the possible characteristics of success highlighted by this study are not only things like self-confidence, pride, responsibility, and social skills, but also degrees of ability in coping with literate society, from learning new things, accepting challenges and encouraging promotions, to exploiting oral skills and alternatives to reading and writing and providing leadership. None are literacy-related -- none could be, by virtue of the definition and selection process for subjects included in this study. Programs that introduce literacy as a factor of effectiveness in the above activities will have to be redesigned given the relative success of subjects identified here in these areas.

Recent personal experience in the training of literacy tutors was enlightening on this point. One exercise asking students to highlight skills necessary for illiterate people to cope led to a vision of them as exceptional people with remarkable gifts that they had undoubtedly developed in light of their handicap. When some of the results of this study were then shared, positive views of the capabilities of illiterate people formed in the minds of these future tutors as they left the meeting.

As in all teaching situations, future literacy counsellors and researchers will learn from, as well as teach, their clientele. Less narrowly defined bases for programs, moreover, may reach a wider audience, allowing programs to have more remarkable social effects. If client's strengths and value-laden perceptions about success are incorporated into program design, the results may be rewarding indeed.

Implications of the Conclusions

If conclusions drawn about the illiterate men who were the subjects of this study can be applied to a wider population of illiterate adults, then real progress may result. Some of the implications of such conclusions for the various interest groups involved with the literacy issue are suggested here.

Paying Attention to the Views of Illiterate Adults

As a rule, people are moved to action more by what they feel they know than by what they are told to do or by what others think they ought to do (Marton 1981, 182). The prospect of help, such as that offered by literacy programs, is only sought if deemed important. Since illiterate adults are considered to be in identical predicaments, program planners have inadvertently designed unsuccessful services and wasted resources. If however the target clients are not as a group homogeneous, then a great deal of fine tuning -- of listening to rather than dictating needs -- is required. Additional knowledge about client perceptions, such as that offered by this study, will therefore be crucial.

Paying attention to the perceptions of illiterate adults can also help shape program planning in adult basic education (ABE). Programs can respond to needs, many of which may have heretofore been unidentified, like the one uncovered in this study concerning the desire to read for pleasure. Practical reasons for literacy training may as a result be downplayed, with new purposes having to do with new satisfactions sought by already happy and successful illiterate adults. Since programs aimed at integrating workers into the workplace better seem doomed to failure anyway (Berlin 1983), new programs based on legitimate needs may be less likely to lose their funding by reason of their lack of effectiveness. The final advantage, undoubtedly, will be an improved relationship between tutors and students. Building on strengths such as oral fluency rather than weaknesses in reading and writing is certain to enhance classroom environment.

As well, companies providing pre-packaged curriculum materials based on currently defined purposes will have to respond to the new classroom agenda. Publication costs as weighed against a variable, multi-faceted, heterogeneous target audience may make for less attractive financial returns and more work for marketing staff, unless inventive new ways of responding to needs can be established.

Teachers and volunteers, in turn, are sure to need additional training, regardless of available materials. A new level of professionalism among literacy providers may result, along with a new flexibility of approach in the classroom.

New assessment tools must be developed to aid program providers in assessing the strengths and desires of their clients along with their varying levels of ability. Guidelines for preparing useful, learner-centred teaching materials will now be essential. But

experienced and independent literacy teachers, no longer tied to traditional models, will, in the long run, surely result, while learning resources that accommodate differences are likely to have enormous constructive impact.

Media coverage will also change; perspectives embracing success-oriented participants will constitute more positive and therefore balanced reporting. The voices of successful illiterate adults need to be heard if proper allocation of ever-shrinking resources is to result. Illiteracy will no longer be associated with shame.

Governments will ultimately benefit. The voices of illiterate adults will be heard in public debate, informing the design of initiatives that affect them, insuring that tax dollars are wisely spent. Business too will be led to a new way of screening job applicants based on their strengths; new levels of quality and production may result, along with new opportunities for all citizens.

Paying Attention to the Strengths of Illiterate Adults

As this study illustrates, learning ability is not dependent upon literacy. Many other facets of the learning process that come into play need now to be included in a future and potential-oriented model of education. Various kinds of mental ability may in fact be totally unrelated to literacy and should be analyzed. Whole new definitions of and perspectives on intellectual capacity may emerge from this analysis.

Personal experience suggests the various means of information gathering open to the student are key in learning. Print need not be the classroom's sole communication medium. To assume it superior to picture and sound seems also unsupportable.

Maximum participation in classroom activities can best be ensured through the provision of a wide variety of educational media and communication methods.

The relationship between literacy and thinking and learning will thus be a useful area of future research. If the mental processes of readers and non-readers can somehow be compared, for instance, useful revelations about literacy-based learning could occur. If non-literate means of information gathering, thinking, and problem solving turn out to be as efficacious as literate ones, no ground will exist for current prejudices. Support for this idea already exists in the work of Scribner and Cole (1981, 132). Whole new areas of opportunity for non-readers may result. In fact, many institutions of formal learning have begun to provide alternatives for the partially blind and physically impaired who may never be able to read or write by traditional methods. Audio tapes, video tapes, and scribes are available. Perhaps these services could be extended to illiterate people in general or at least to those who may lack the ability to process print. One of the interviewees in this study was allowed to use a scribe when writing final examinations for his high school credits, including English.

Complementarily, prerequisite skills for adult basic education courses would then have to embrace thinking and learning skills in general rather than literacy skills in particular. Learning how to learn, in short, will provide the helpful new focus for ABE initiatives. The end results of this new generation of literacy courses would be the development of adaptive behaviour and the acquisition of creative problem-solving skills. Dropout rates should diminish, since teaching methods will now address a variously talented and heterogeneously able student clientele.

Business will also benefit from a focus on variable communication skills and strengths among its workers, including the ability to adapt to retraining, as well as a new reliance on values like co-operation and responsibility. A subtler and more malleable assessment process would help the dependable worker, the personnel specialist, the committed manager, the eager producer. Motivation and leadership may reach new levels. New perspectives on essential retraining, an increasingly urgent need in the currently competitive global economic environment, will also be crucial to the whole reshaping of the workplace.

The potential for change may rest almost entirely with the research community. Ignorance of the illiterate citizen's potential strengths is no longer affordable. Serious, credible studies are required to support new perspectives and program expenditures. No longer should the assumption of weakness among illiterate adults be allowed to win by default.

Of course, the research community itself, through the importance it attaches to published findings in books and journals, is itself biased towards literacy, as are its funding bodies.

Slow readers in high school might also be allowed to meet higher intellectual challenges and no longer be shunted aside in remedial classes. Reading ability may indeed not have been their real handicap in regard to past difficulties involving their integration into the workplace, but rather their having been held back from exercises in higher-order thinking. With a better understanding of learning without reading, students generally doomed to inferior education and workplace opportunity could, through

improved programming, find themselves better suited to the demands of society at large. New levels of confidence that result may feed into a new faith in their ability to read and write at much improved levels. Government funding aimed at enhancing the opportunities of non-readers could complement these other strategies.

Identifying and Incorporating Factors of Success

If literacy-based adult basic education programs are aimed at improving the chances of success for their clients, then values and attitudes that appear to lead to that success need to be incorporated into their design. A more varied clientele will result, a student body both engaged and motivated. As clients' strengths are used as classroom resources, a helpful integration and sharing process will inform the learning agenda.

Identification of crucial factors leading to success will be an important focus for the research community, and qualitative methods of data collection, despite their shortcomings, will be crucial to the new revelations. Factors identified by this study, if relevant to the larger population of illiterate and literate people alike, need further research support in order to allow more broadly-based conclusions to be drawn. The implications of such research would no doubt be relevant to the entire educational system. Members of literate society, moreover, may be more likely to acknowledge research results that also embrace them.

The business community will also be interested in these results. Values and attitudes having a direct relation to profit can take on a new focus. Retraining, competitive businesses will find, may be wholly redefined. Non-technical emphases may

apply to the workforce in general, in fact, while technical and literacy-based curricula, despite the attention currently being paid to them, may be of only secondary importance. De-emphasizing the importance of literacy as a qualification for employment may actually increase the opportunities for hiring people with the potential to learn and perform well once new screening and interview processes are used to identify such candidates.

Success-oriented ABE curricula will also remove the fear felt by many candidates in this study about formal schooling and literacy training. Returning to school, thus, can become a pleasurable and inviting prospect for illiterate people, without the devaluation now experienced by many students. Successful illiterate adults may even be able to act as peer tutors, enhancing classroom confidence and insuring continued participation.

Such moves will also enhance the likelihood of productive and successful literacy programs, helping to ensure their continued funding. As long as governments allocate money on the basis of immediate results, the argument in favour of sensible and attractive course improvements seems to make more sense than ever now. The success of the new ABE curricula will give governments the rationalization they need for continued support.

The democratic government's ideology in favour of equality of educational and employment opportunity, requires that the stigma long attached to illiterate workers be removed. The modern social agenda is one where able and willing workers of varying backgrounds and abilities are considered for suitable placement in the mainstream workforce. Since no causal link between literacy and effectiveness has ever been shown to exist, literacy requirements should not control access to the workplace. Governments developing and adopting policies aimed at securing and guaranteeing equal opportunity

for all workers, literate or not, perhaps through the enactment of stricter requirements for fair hiring practices, will be of greater value to all of their constituents.

However, the responsibility of providing the rationale for change lies with the research community, whose task it is to demonstrate to governments and the public that conventional success need not be restricted to certain groups in society, but is available to all. With one less scapegoat to blame, governments may be more likely to act.

Summary

It has not been the intention of this study to argue against the usefulness and advantages of literacy, only against the insistence on it as an essential requirement for successful living. Literacy is one of an array of skills contributing to successful functioning in life, and needs to be seen by society at large in this context. The stories of illiterate people, therefore, need to be heard. Their dignity, resourcefulness and commitment can teach about the means to survival and prosperity. It is time to recognize strength and reward ability, to embrace the many ways of learning, and not restrict the process to a single strategy.

Change will be slow; old prejudices are deeply ingrained and power groups tend to be self-perpetuating. Nevertheless, it is the time for concerned members of the media and government, adult education teachers, the research community, and the general public to break with tradition and work to insure that one of society's devalued groups receives recognition for creative adaptation to an often hostile world and equal access to the rights and freedoms accorded any individual in a free society.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Two interview protocols were developed for this research. The first protocol was employed during the pilot testing phase and the second was the result of modifications made after pilot testing.

Pilot Testing Phase

Scheduled Standardized Interview

1. When were you born?

2. Where were you born?

3. How long did you live there?

4. Can you remember any other places you have lived in?

5. Are there any experiences from when you were younger that stick out in your mind?

6. How many people were there in your family?

7. When did you leave school? Can you remember the year?

8. Why did you leave school?

9. How did you feel about school at that time?

10. Are there any people or things from that time that stick out in your mind?

11. What was the best thing that you remember from your youth?

12. What was the worst thing that you remember from your youth?

13. Who were the most important people from this growing up period?

14. What were the most important things you learned during your youth? Why?

15. How did you learn them?

16. Did you have any paying jobs while you were still at school?

17. What jobs have you had since you left school?

18. What kinds of responsibilities have you had at these jobs?

19. Have you ever been in charge of other people?

20. Have you ever been out of work?

21. Do you own your own home?

22. Approximately how much do you earn per year?

23. Are you or have you ever been married?

24. Do you have any children?

25. Do you have money invested or saved?

26. How many close friends do you have right now? How did you meet them?

27. How long have you known your closest friends?

28. What kinds of work do these friends do?

29. How much do your close friends know about you?

30. Who helps you the most? How?

31. Who are your most important employees or associates?

32. Do you belong to any clubs, churches, or political organizations?

33. Have you ever held an elected office?

34. Can you read or write?

35. Have you ever taken any courses to learn how?

36. Do you plan on taking any other courses?

37. Here are some situations in which a person would normally be expected to use

   reading or writing. Could you explain what you would do in these situations?

   (a) Getting a driver's licence

   (b) Income tax

   (c) Dealing with lawyers

   (d) Business records

   (e) Application forms

38. How many people know that you have trouble with your reading and

   writing?

39. Do you know any other men or women who have trouble reading or writing?

40. Why do you think there are so many Canadians out of work?

41. Would you mind taking a short test so that we can check your reading level?

Final Version

Scheduled Standardized Interview

1. When were you born?

2. Where were you born?

3. How long did you live there?

4. Can you remember any other places you have lived?

5. How many people were there in your family?

6. When did you leave school? What was the last grade you completed?

7. Why did you leave school?

8. Can you remember how you felt about school at that time?

9. Who were your best friends from your early school days? Do you still see any of them regularly?

10. Who was your best teacher? Why?

11. Who was your worst teacher? Why?

12. Who helped you the most when you were growing up?

13. Did you learn anything when you were young that helped you in later years?

14. Who taught you that?

15. Did you have any paying jobs while you were still at school?

16. Where have you worked since you left school?

17. What kinds of work have you done at these jobs?

18. Have you ever been in charge of other people?

19. Have you ever been out of work? When? How long?

20. Do you own your own home? Have you ever owned a home?

21. How long have you lived where you do now? How long have you lived in this area?

22. Approximately how much do you earn per year?

23.   Do you have any insurance policies?

24.   Are you married? How long have you been married?

25.   Have you ever been divorced or separated?

26.   How many children do you have? Do they live at home?

27.   What do they do?

28.   How much schooling do they have?

29.   How many close friends do you have? How did you meet them?

30.   How long have you known your closest friends?

31.   What kinds of work do these friends do?

32.   How much do these friends know about you?

33.   Do they know that you have trouble reading and writing?

34.   Who helps you the most? How?

35.   Who are your most important employees or friends? Why?

36.   Do you belong to any clubs, churches, or political organizations?

37.   Have you ever held an elected office?

38.   Can you read or write?

39.   Have you ever taken a course to learn how, other than when you first went to school?

40.   Do you plan on taking any such courses? Why or why not?

41.   How do you deal with situations in which you are supposed to read and write?

    (a) Securing a driver's licence

    (b) Filling out income tax forms

(c) Writing letters

(d) Dealing with legal matters

(e) Keeping business records

(f) Filling out application forms

42. How many people around you know that you can't read and write

very well?

43. Do you know any other men or women who can not read and write? What kind

of work are they doing?

44. Why do you believe there are so many unemployed Canadians today?

45. Would you mind taking a short test so that we can establish your level of reading

and writing?

Unscheduled Interview

The questions for the unscheduled interviews are divided into two groups. The first

group is made up of questions of a general nature which may serve as good warm up

questions in an interview or as questions which allow interviewees some freedom to

digress should more pointed questions cause discomfort at any time during the interview.

The second group of questions are questions which deal with specific perspectives that

are being sought.

General and Introductory Questions

Could you describe a typical day at work for you?

If you were asked to give someone starting out on a job some advice, what would
you tell him?

If you were asked to give a young man some advice about life, what would you say?

What do you think are the things which had the greatest effect on what you are
today?

Confidence

Do you believe that you can be successful at things that you do? Why or why not?

Do you have people working for or under you? Are they well educated? Do you
have any difficulty dealing with them?

Are you or have you ever been in business for yourself? Could you explain why?

Do you have people who can read and write working for you? How do you deal with
that?

Do you ever have to deal with professional people such as lawyers or accountants?
How do you deal with them?

Are you actively involved with any volunteer organizations?

Responsibility

How much time have you missed from work over the years?

How do you feel about being late?

How important is it to keep your promises? Is it ever possible to break a promise?

When is it okay to quit a job?

Do you have to look after anyone besides yourself? What do you have to do in that situation?

Where did you learn how to be a responsible person?

What is your greatest responsibility in life? Why?

How much do you feel that you can trust people? How do you know if a person is trustworthy?

Pride

What are some of the things in your life that you are proud of? Why?

What are some of the things that you are not so proud of?

How do you know if you have done a good job?

How important are the opinions of others?

When you are proud of something, how do you feel?

What makes a person feel proud?

Observation Skills

How do you learn new things when you have to?

Have you ever had a time when you had to go out and learn something new? How did you handle that?

How good are you at noticing things?

Do you keep up with local affairs and political activities in your community and in the country as a whole? How do you do that?

Alternatives-to-Reading Section

Do you find that you have to be better at certain things because you can not read and write? Could you explain?

People who can read and write use those skills to receive and send information. What do you do?

Do many people know that you can not read or write? How do you keep them from finding out?

What ways for getting information, other than reading, have you used?

What ways of sending information, other than writing, have you used?

Do you think that not being able to read and write has forced you to become better at other things? Can you give any examples?

Oral Skills

Can you tell me how to get to where you work?

How do you teach new workers or others who come to you to learn?

Memory

Who were some important people in your life? Why?

Can you recall any events in your life which had a great effect on you? Can you explain why they did?

How much do you have to remember in your daily work? How do you do it?

What ways do you have of remembering things that are important?

Sociality

What do you do for fun or entertainment? Why?

What kind of people do you enjoy being around? Why?

How much formal education do most of your friends have?

Do your friends know that you have trouble reading and writing?

Do you belong to any service clubs or other organizations? If so, what role/roles do you play in them?

What part of town do you live in? What kind of neighbourhood is it?

Do you enjoy parties and other social activities? Why or why not?

How would you describe yourself at a party?

What do you think makes a person successful socially?

Generalizing

Today, there is a lot of information that we have to deal with. What do you do to handle it all?

What kinds of problems does a person who cannot read and write have to deal with?

How can a person deal with them?

What are some important skills which a person needs to survive in life today?

What is success?

How do you know when you are successful?

Miscellaneous

Do you have any tricks that you use to keep people from finding out that you don't read and write very well?

How much reading and writing do you have to do at work?

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL CHARTS AND SKETCHES

The biographical data presented in this appendix are provided for readers who wish

to see how the various subjects compare. The headings under which comparisons are

made are age, number of siblings, birth order, reading grade level, association

membership, being elected to an office, number of jobs, present work type, home

ownership, investments, life insurance, marital status, number of children, and education

and employment of adult children. Within the charts, subjects are listed in descending

order according to self-reported income. The identification numbers were assigned in

chronological order at the first interview for each subject and are the same as those used

to identify those who are quoted throughout the dissertation. Three main charts are used.

They are "Background and Social Involvement", "Employment and Economic Status",

and "Marital and Family Status". In addition to the biographical charts, a biographical

sketch of each subject is provided. These sketches are intended to give the reader a

better sense of the kinds of people who were interviewed and whose vital statistics are

presented in the charts.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - BACKGROUND AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

ID	AGE	SIBLINGS	B.O.	L.G.C.	R.G.L.	ASSOC	E.O.
25	35	7	2	11	3	Yes	Yes
6	60	12	4	0	0	Yes	No
22	66	2	2	7	0	Yes	No
26	46	4	2	7	2	Yes	Yes
34	49	3	1	5	3	Yes	Yes*
29	38	7	4	5	1	Yes	No
5	42	10	11	5	3	Yes	No
1	37	4	4	9	2	Yes	No
19	39	4	1	8	2	Yes	Yes
23	43	4	5	3	2	Yes	No
16	56	4	2	6	3	Yes	Yes
40	30	3	3	10	2	No	No
28	38	5	2	9	3	Yes	Yes
15	39	7	7	7	1	Yes	No
38	62	7	6	6	3	No	No
12	32	7	2	10	3	Yes	No

18	31	3	4	10	3	Yes	Yes
27	49	5	6	7	0	Yes	Yes
21	57	4	1	?	0	Yes	No
30	35	2	3	10	1	Yes	No
8	45	0	1	10	3	Yes	No
33	48	3	1	7	1	Yes	Yes
7	65	9	3	3	0	Yes	No
3	32	12	2	6	2	Yes	No
39	46	8	8	6	2	Yes	No
36	44	1	1	8	0	Yes	No
31	34	9	6	4	1	Yes	No
35	40	6	1	6	3	Yes	No
11	45	3	2	2	3	Yes	No
24	51	3	3	3	1	No	No
32	43	7	1	?	0	Yes	No
4	54	7	4	3	3	Yes	Yes
37	41	2	1	9	3	No	No
2	45	8	2	4	3	Yes	Yes
13	44	1	1	?	3	Yes	No

17	55	9	6	3	0	No	NO
10	30	2	3	10	3	No	No
9	34	2	1	9	3	Yes	No
20	50	4	5	8	3	Yes	Yes
14	58	*	*	2	3	No	No

B.O   =   Birth Order   * = claimed no family

L.G.C.   =   Last Grade Completed   ? = unsure of last grade

R.G.L.   =   Reading Grade level   < = political office

Assoc Member =   Association Membership   E.O. = Elected Office

		BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STATUS				
ID	JOB#	WORK TYPE	INCOME	HOME OWNER	INVESTMENTS	INSURANCE
25	7	Business	$100,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	2	Business	$100,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
22	7	Investor	$ 65,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
26	7	Business	$ 50,000	No	Yes	Yes
34	10+	Welder	$ 40,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
29	7	Factory	$ 33,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	9	Factory	$ 31,000	No	Yes	Yes
1	5	Factory	$ 30,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	6	Factory	$ 30,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
23	5	Cook	$ 30,000	Yes	No	Yes
16	7	Mechanic	$ 30,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
40	4	Factory	$ 28,000	No	No	No
28	6	Dispatch	$ 28,000	Yes	Yes	No
15	5	Factory	$ 27,000	Yes	Yes	Yes

38	1	Factory	$ 26,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	2	Trucker	$ 25,000	Yes	Yes	No
18	2	Welder	$ 25,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
27	9	Business	$ 25,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
21	7	Factory	$ 25,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
30	1	Janitor	$ 25,000	No	Yes	Yes
8	5	Business	$ 20,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
33	8+	Factory	$ 20,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	11	Pension	$ 20,000	No*	Yes	Yes
3	9	Cook	$ 20,000	No	Yes	Yes
39	6	Janitor	$ 20,000	No	No	No
36	10+	Welfare	$ 18,000	No	No	No
31	9	W.C.	$ 17,000	No	Yes	Yes
35	4	U.I.C.	$ 14,000	No	No	Yes
11	10+	Busboy	$ 12,000	No	No	No
24	7+	Welfare	$ 12,000	No	No	No
32	15+	Welfare	$ 12,000	No	No	No
4	8	W.C.	$ 12,000	No	No	No
37	7+	Welfare	$ 12,000	No	No	No

2	10+	W.C.	$ 10,000	No	No	No
13	5	Security	$ 9,600	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	6	Welfare	$ 9,600	No	No	No
10	10	Welfare	$ 8,000	No	No	No
9	3	Welfare	$ 8,000	No	No	Yes
20	4	Welfare	$ 8,000	No	No	Yes
14	5	Welfare	$ 7,000	No	No	No

*   This man had owned his own home prior to retiring

Dis.   =   Disability

U.I.C.   =   Unemployment Insurance

W.C.   =   Workman's compensation (usually for injured workers)

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - MARITAL AND FAMILY STATUS

ID	MARITAL STATUS	# OF CHILDREN	CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL		
			#	EDUCATION	EMPLOYMENT
25	Married	1	1	Drop Out	Mechanic
6	Married	4	4	Drop Out	Self-employed
				High School	Clerical
				High School	Clerical
				College	Dental Assistant
22	Married	2	2	High School	Driver
				High School	Armed Services
26	Married	2	2	High School	Factory
				High School	Nursing
34	Married	2	2	College	Butcher
				High School	Legal Secretary
29	Married	4	0		
5	Married	4	0		
1	Married	0	0		
19	Married	1	0		

23	Single	0	0		
16	Married	2	2	High School	Management Trainee
				High School	Waitress
40	Single	1	0		
28	Married	1	1	High School	Mechanic
15	Married	2	0		
38	Divorce	2	2	High School	Factory
				High School	Housewife
12	Married	2	0		
18	Married	1	0		
27	Married	3	3	High School	Welder
				High School	Factory
				High School	Stock Manager
21	Married	7	7	High School	Waitress
				High School	Waitress
				High School	Factory
				High School	Nurse
				High School	Nurse
				High School	Disability

				High School	Unemployed
30	Single	0	0		
8	Married	2	1	Drop Out	Self-employed
33	Married	2	2	Drop Out	Factory
				College	Nurse
7	Married	8	8	High School	Nurse
				Drop Out	Self-employed
				High School	Banker
				University	Buyer
				High School	Teacher's Aid
				University	Nurse
				High School	Makeup Artist
3	Married	2	0		
39	Divorce	1	0		
36	Married	3	0		
31	Married	2	0		
35	Married	2	0		
11	Divorce	4	4	Drop Out	Aesthetician
				Drop Out	Housewife

				Drop Out	Housewife
				Drop Out	Janitor
24	Married	3	3	Drop Out	Housewife
				Drop Out	Housewife
				Drop Out	Housewife
32	Married	6	0		
4	Married	3	3	High School	Factory
				High School	Welder
				Drop Out	Housewife
37	Married	1	0		
2	Divorce	2	2	High School	Labourer
				High School	Nursing Assist.
13	Married	0	0		
17	Single	0	0		
10	Single	0	0		
9	Single	0	0		
20	Single	1	1	Unknown	Unknown
14	Single				

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

The following biographical sketches are supplementary to the charts which provide a comparative view of the biographical data collected during the interviews. The sketches are primarily written to create a snapshot of each candidate so that the reader will be able to relate to him as a person and not just as a statistic.

The biographical sketches are listed chronologically, according to the order of interviews. The identification code is the same employed with quotations placed in the text of the dissertation. Throughout these sketches, reference is made to the home base of the researcher. This home base refers to a medium-sized city of about 250,000 in Central Ontario.

1. **One** is thirty-seven years of age, married, and has no children. He lives in a large town about two hundred miles from the researcher's home base. He has no debts and owns his home outright. His wife is a semi-invalid who requires special attention and is pretty well confined to a wheel chair. He is proud of his accomplishments and of his ability to acquire and keep a secure job in a major food-processing plant. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and the outdoors. He has had a literacy tutor but her eyesight has failed her.

2. **Two** is forty-five and attends a literacy program regularly. He is divorced and has two adult children. He is a recovering alcoholic and is on welfare due to a back injury. He works odd jobs as a disc jockey and as a Mall Santa at Christmas time. He appears to have a modestly comfortable life-style although he often goes to the local soup kitchen for lunch. He speaks of lobbying his member of parliament on behalf of disabled people and has spoken to convicts about alcoholism. He has never really had a consistent period of employment. He lives in the research-base city.

3. Three is thirty-two, re-married, and has two daughters, one from each marriage. Only the second daughter is living with him. He lives in the research-base city and works as a cook in a half-way house for ex-convicts. He has had other better jobs as a chef in the past. He is quite a philosopher, something he might have picked up from his preacher father. His interests include music and weightlifting. He is attending a literacy program sporadically.

4. Four is fifty-four years of age, married, and has three adult children. He lives in a city of about 70,000 about twenty miles from the research base. He left home, with his parents' blessings, at age thirteen so that he would not have to work in the coal mines of his native province, and over the years has worked on lake freighters and in factories. Finally, bad health ended his working days. He has been actively involved in bringing a men's softball league to his city and served as the president of the softball association for a time. He is an interesting man who has only ever been happy on the lakes. He is attending a literacy program.

5. Five is a forty-two year old workaholic type. Almost every day he works an extra half shift. He admits that this does not make him particularly popular with his fellow employees. However, his ability to work hard and long is a source of pride. He is proud of the speed with which he and his partner can produce the auto parts he works on. He often says, "If my boss is happy, then I am happy." He is married to his second wife and has one of his children living with him. The other three live with his first wife. He and his family live in an apartment in the research-base city. This man loves to talk and as a result his interviews are the longest of the entire group. He attends a literacy class sporadically -- when work allows.

6. **Six** is sixty-one years of age and is in semi-retirement. He lives on a farm about thirty miles from the researcher's home base. He is married to his second wife and has four grown children and several grandchildren. **Six** is one of the two most creative entrepreneurial types interviewed. He gives the impression of being a man who was once driven to achieve but is now relatively at peace. Still, he continues to work on machines in his spare time and is designing and building a truck for purposes of moving large objects. He is a proud man who has every confidence in his ability to do whatever he sets out to do. A good example of this pride and confidence is that he once purchased a service station and then hired a licensed mechanic to work there so that he would have someone to supervise his apprenticeship. He attempted to take a literacy course once with no success.

7. **Seven** is married and lives with his wife and one daughter in an apartment in the research-base city. All eight of his children are adults. He is sixty-five and recently retired, having worked over thirty years for a major tire manufacturer where he dealt with many complicated machines. While raising his family, he also had a few extra jobs on the side. His wife has never worked outside of the home. He is a man of strong opinions but one who thinks before he speaks. Since having retired, his hobby seems to be travelling. He is seeing a literacy tutor weekly.

8. **Eight** is forty-five years of age, married, and has two young adult children. He lives in the research-base city. At one time, he managed a major swimming facility in a metropolitan centre about sixty miles away. After leaving that job, he purchased a service station but a customer drove her car into him and broke both of his legs. After his recuperation, he started a pool-servicing business. This man is very talkative and has an

excellent vocabulary. Most people would take him for a man with considerably more education than he has. He has attended literacy classes in the past but has not persisted.

9. Nine is thirty-four years of age and single. He has never really had a job and is living in a town of 75,000 about twenty miles from the research base. He is a paranoid schizophrenic and pretty much keeps to himself although he does go out to some organized activities and even tries to work at very low-risk jobs. He is very interested in ham radio operation and spends most of his time on that hobby. He is a very depressed and unsure individual. He is seeing a literacy tutor weekly.

10. Ten is thirty years of age, single, and lives in the same city as **Eleven** and **Fourteen**. He seems to have a limited circle of friends and is very dependent upon them for support, especially emotionally. He is unemployed and is unsure about what he should do with his life. He seems not to have much of an idea of what it takes to be a success. He is involved in an upgrading program for arithmetic and reading.

11. Eleven is forty-five, divorced, and lives in the same city as **Fourteen** and **Ten**. He has four adult daughters whom he sees only rarely. His hobby is weightlifting and he is a faithful church-goer. He is unafraid to admit his illiteracy and has become somewhat of a celebrity in his city having been on TV as well as having been the subject of several newspaper articles. He works as a busboy cum kitchen helper in a restaurant and is proud of his ability to work with keeping the stock and storing products. He has been involved in literacy programs for a number of years and is making little progress.

12. Twelve is remarried and has his son from his first marriage living with him. His daughter lives with his first wife. His new wife, a university graduate, and he live in their own home in a city of 75,000 about fifteen miles from the research base. His job involves

delivering steel girders to building sites and setting them in place on buildings. This job

requires that he run an expensive and sensitive piece of machinery. He has had a number of

difficulties in his life but at thirty-two years of age he maintains confidence in himself and

the future. He is meeting a literacy tutor weekly.

13. Thirteen is forty-four, married with no children. He lives in a small house in the

same city as the previous three men. He makes a very low wage as a security guard and

really has no clear idea of how to improve himself. He has been attending a government

sponsored literacy program at the library. This man is one of the three most depressed

individuals in this study, along with **Nine** and **Fourteen**.

14. Fourteen is fifty-eight years of age, single, and claims not to have a family that he

wants to remember at all. He is a Native Canadian and lives in a large steel-producing city

about sixty miles from the research base. **Fourteen** has almost no idea of what it would take

to get ahead in life. He frequently responds with "I don't know", is extremely pessimistic,

and has not had any work for about three years. He is involved in a government-funded

literacy program.

15. Fifteen is thirty-nine and married with two pre-school children. After a number of

years of working summer relief in a large steel company, he has finally gained secure

employment at another factory. His work requires that he use high-tech equipment. **Fifteen**

is also a peaceful person who believes that it is not good to accept unemployment insurance.

Each year when he was laid off from his summer relief job, he sought out part-time and odd

jobs to get through the winter. He believes that it is necessary to work at whatever the job

in order to get a start. **Fifteen** is a minor sports coach and is active in his church. He lives

in a large city about sixty miles from the research base. He has completed a literacy course

and is supposed to be reading at the grade eight level. Testing shows he is reading at the grade one level.

16. Sixteen is fifty-six years old and is married with two adopted children. He married late in life. He works as a mechanic in a city of about 70,000 within fifteen miles of the research base. **Sixteen** is a very peaceful person who seems to take things in stride. He holds leadership roles in his church even though he has a mild speech impediment in addition to being unable to read and write. He is a quietly efficient achiever. He attends a literacy class but is making little progress.

17. Seventeen is fifty-five, single and lives in a city of 30,000 about twenty miles from the research base. He has never really had a job and has become worse off since his parents died. He lives in fairly bad conditions and can only get odd jobs working where mentally handicapped people work. He appears to be bright enough in conversations but can not seem to get ahead in the literacy program in which he is registered. He admits that the program is mainly a social outing. His main hobbies are bingo and riding the bus or talking to people.

18. Eighteen is thirty-one and married with one daughter. He is a welder by trade and works at auto body repair in his spare time. He enjoys sports and plays both baseball and hockey. **Eighteen** is proud of what he has achieved thus far in his life. He lives in a small city about twenty miles from the research base. He is attending a regularly scheduled literacy class.

19. Nineteen is the only successful interviewee who expresses any fear at the possibility of being exposed. He is afraid that he will lose his job if his boss finds out that he can not read. As a result, he uses a pseudonym and refuses to be taped. He works in a factory. He

is married with one child. He and his wife own a home and a cottage. They live in the same city as **Fifteen.** He has had a literacy tutor in the past.

20. Twenty is fifty and lives in the same city as **Four.** He is divorced but lives with his adult son. He has not had serious work for a number of years and has no immediate prospects. He is involved in a government funded program to help the working poor but has never registered in a literacy program.

21. Twenty-one is fifty-seven years of age. He is married and has six children. He works in a factory where he runs a machine press. **Twenty-one** is also a very peaceful person who does not appear to become upset easily. Over the years, he has had a number of jobs but is confident that he can always prove his worth if given an opportunity. He lives in the same city as **Eighteen** and attends the same literacy class.

22. Twenty-two is sixty-six years of age and has been retired from the workplace for twenty-one years. This is not to say that he has not been working all those years. He is an investor in real estate. He has homes built, then rents them until they are paid for and then he sells them. This investing began a number of years ago when he purchased older homes and renovated them. **Twenty-two** is very confident in his abilities. He has converted an old truck into a motor home, has built his own cabin cruiser, and has recently completely redone his home's exterior with stone. At one time he headed up an investment consortium of lawyers and doctors and made each member about a quarter of a million dollars in real-estate investment. None of the members of the consortium was aware that he could not read or write. In addition to these other duties, **Twenty-two** has also managed to stay married and to raise two daughters. He lives beside a lake about thirty miles outside of the research

base. His only attempt at taking a literacy course was unsuccessful. He feels that reading represents the one thing in life that he might not be able to master.

23. **Twenty-three** is forty-three and a single man. He was recently injured but until then served as chief chef for a major mining company in the far north. He has been responsible for feeding up to one thousand men per day. His responsibilities were not just for cooking but also for planning and purchasing. He learned to use a secretary effectively and was not unwilling to tape conversations (secretly) in order to be sure that he had all of the details under control. At the time of the interview, he is living in the research base city and becoming exceedingly frustrated by bureaucratic bumbling of his compensation claims. He has tried a literacy class once.

24. **Twenty-four** is fifty-one, married, and has three grown daughters. He is not working and is involved in a community literacy program in the metropolitan centre where both **Nine** and **Eleven** live. However, whereas they live in the suburbs, he lives in the core area. It appears that he has pretty well accepted the unlikelihood of getting work again.

25. **Twenty-five** is a highly motivated entrepreneurial type. He married into a family transmission business and has risen to manager fairly quickly. Eventually, he purchased his own franchise and is now opening up his third branch. There does not appear to be a limit to the amount of work which he will do to get ahead. He is married and has one child and lives in a city of 250,000 about sixty miles from the research base. He is just beginning a literacy class.

26. **Twenty-six** is forty-six years old, remarried, and has two children by a previous marriage. He is a recovering alcoholic and is putting his life back together. He has started an earth-moving company and is doing well. He is an avid movie fan and has an extensive

collection of musicals. He also sings with the local Barbershop Association. He lives in the research-base city. His one attempt at taking a literacy class was unsuccessful.

27. Twenty-seven is forty-nine years of age and unable to read anything other than his name. He is married and has three grown children. He lives in a medium sized city about one thousand miles from the research base. This man is self-employed and has done a wide range of things over his lifetime. He is a self-trained naturalist and has lectured at the local university on his specialization. In the past year, he has been awarded a special citizenship award for his work in preserving wildlife and has been commended for his lobbying activities. He is politically active in this way. His only attempt at taking a literacy course was a failure.

28. Twenty-eight is thirty-eight, married and has two children. He lives in the same city as **Twelve**. He is working as a dispatcher for a major trucking company. The position is new for him and he seems to be doing well even though he was unwilling initially to take the position. Finally his bosses confronted him concerning his repeated refusal of the promotion. He admitted to them that he could not read or write and they simply said that that did not matter and that they could teach him what he needed to know. They were not hiring him because of his literacy skills. He is a very conscientious man. He has just begun to meet with a literacy tutor on a weekly basis.

29. Twenty-nine is thirty-eight, married and has four children. Two of the children are adopted from a brother who can not provide for them. He works in a factory and is quite satisfied with what he is doing. He has no desire to move higher because he believes that one has to work within one's abilities and he has determined that a higher position would

require more literacy skills than he has. He lives in a major metropolitan centre about sixty miles from the research base. He is attending a regularly scheduled literacy class.

30. Thirty is thirty-five, single, and lives with his parents. He has an excellent job with the board of education as a janitor and is very secure in his position. Even though he is doing well financially, much of his success seems to be attributable to parental care. He has some learning disabilities and it appears that he will not be successful in the literacy program in which he is registered. There is also some concern over how he might fare once his parents who are beyond retirement age are not there to help. He enjoys golf as a hobby.

31. Thirty-one is thirty-four, married, and has two children. He is working full time and attending a literacy course during the day. He lives in the same metropolis as **Nine, Eleven,** and **Twelve**. He feels that he has not been too successful even though he is making a good wage. He feels that his illiteracy makes him too dependent on others. He is not too confident that he will be able to learn to read and write.

32. Thirty-two is forty-three, re-married, and has six children by two marriages. Two children from his second marriage are living with him. He has been unemployed for a year and a half and has no prospects for a job. He is attending a literacy program in the city in which he lives. This is the major metropolis about sixty miles from the research base.

33. Thirty-three is forty-eight, married, and has two adult children. He lives in the country about sixty miles from the research base. He works in a small factory making garage doors and owns a small farm. His hobbies include restoring antique cars and farm machinery. He also is a quiet and peaceful person. He works with a one-to-one literacy tutor on a weekly basis.

34. Thirty-four is forty-nine, married, and has two adult children. He has lived most of his life in the north and is living in a small town about two thousand miles from the research base. Over the years, he has been quite involved with the literate community. He worked as a welder, ran his own fuel supply business on the side, and served as a local politician. His community work involved a stint on the library board. He is totally undaunted by the threat of literacy partially because he has a literate spouse who recently completed her university education. On the other hand, the times that he was in the spotlight at council meetings and such, he was totally on his own. He has taken one literacy class.

35. Thirty-five is forty and married with two daughters. He has recently been unemployed and is seeing a literacy tutor weekly. He is skilful with his hands but seems to be suffering from his lack of paper-evidence of ability and is becoming frustrated with the system that rejects him because of his illiteracy. He has a small bicycle-repair business on the side. He lives in the same city as **Nine**.

36. Thirty-six is forty-four, married, and has three children living with him. They are all his wife's by a former marriage. He is not working and like **Thirty-five** is seeing a literacy tutor weekly. He lives in the same city as **Nine** and **Thirty-five**. He has almost no sense of what he has to do to get ahead.

37. Thirty-seven is forty-one and married with one son. He lives in the country about forty miles from the research base. Prior to his developing back problems, he was a relatively prosperous man owning a trucking business and travelling extensively. He has not been able to work for about five years and is on workman's compensation. He is attending an adult high school and is quite confident that he will eventually be able to find a new career. He believes that his main purpose in life is to help people.

38. **Thirty-eight** is sixty-two years of age and is expecting to finish his working days at sixty-five having spent fifty years working for the same company. He is divorced and has two grown children. He owns his home outright and also owns a trailer which he keeps on a nearby lake. He is proud of his achievements which include learning how to fix complicated machinery at the factory where he works. His company has sent him on courses to learn this. He took a literacy course once with little success. He tends not to be very confident about things and has a bit of a drinking problem. He lives in the same city as **Four** and **Twenty**.

39. **Thirty-nine** is forty-six and divorced. He has one son by his third wife but the boy lives with his mother. He has been married four times with three marriages ending in divorce while his first left him a widower. He has recently gained a probationary position as a janitor with the school board in the research-base city and is attending a literacy program regularly. Although his life had been pretty confused, there seems to be reason to be optimistic.

40. **Forty** is thirty. He lives in the research-base city and works for a major tire company. He does not have a regular position with the company but has regular employment filling in for people on vacation or who are ill. He is in a state of depression because his fiancee has left him after having given birth to a baby girl. He is also contemplating joining a literacy program. He seems to be very unclear about where his life is leading or what he might do to improve things.

APPENDIX C

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Table 1

Ages of interviewees

	Average	Mode	Median	Range
n=40	44.7	45	44	30-66

Table 2

Age cohort groupings of interviewees

	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
n=40	14	16	6	4

Table 3

Self-reported years of schooling of interviewees

	Average Yrs.	Mode Yrs.	Median Yrs.	Range Yrs.
n=37*	6.4	6	6.5	0-11

* three men had been educated in British systems, in either England or Jamaica

Table 4

Reading levels of interviewees as established with the Brigance test

	Average	Mode	Median	Range
n=40	2.1	3	2.5	0-3

Table 5

Number of jobs held and periods of unemployment over the careers of interviewees

	n=40
Job Median	7
Job Mode	8
Job Range	1-30+
Never Unemployed	10
Rarely Unemployed	11
Regularly Unemployed	5
Seasonally Unemployed	4
Occasional	4
Occasional Long	3
Regular Long	1
Recent Long - Injury	4**

+ this sign after these numbers indicates an indefinite number of jobs over the number listed

** the plus 2 here indicates two members who appear elsewhere on the list as seasonal unemployed. They had both had seasonal jobs in the past but both had recently been unable to work because of illness.

Table 6

Types of work done by interviewees at the time of the interviews

	n=40
Factory	10*
Skilled Trade	6
Self-Employed	6 +
Disability	5 **
Welfare	8
Other	5 ***

*   one man was a farmer as well; another had recently retired after 35 years
**   one man was a cook by trade
***   one dispatcher, one security guard, one bus-boy, and two janitors
\+   includes all businessmen from Employment/Economic Status chart-Appendix B

Table 7

Work experiences of interviewees

	n=40
Offered Promotions	8
Accepted Promotions	6
Self-Employed	6
Have Business Sideline	7
Run Complex Machines	9

Table 8

Interviewees' work experiences appearing to require literacy skills

---

Warehouse Stocking	Disc Jockey
Filling Orders	Chef
Running Hi-Tech Machines	Janitor
Sending and Receiving Letters	Preparing Estimates
Preparing Estimates	Machine Operator
Reading Reports	Stock Boy
Shipping/Delivering	Ship's Wheelsman
Auto Repair	
Welding	
Transmissions Repair	
Investing	
Preparing Contracts	
Chef	
Dispatcher	
Politician	
Serving on a Library Board	
Businessman	
Union Steward	
Club President	
Owning a Mail-Order Business	
Designing and Building a Special Use Truck	

Table 9

Investment status of interviewees

	Homeowner	Rent	Investments	Insured
n=40	20	20	24	25

240

Table 10

Social roles played by interviewees

	Associations	Elected Office	Public Office
n=40	33	12	1

Table 11

Marital status of interviewees

	1 Wife	Divorced	Re-married	Single
n=40	22	11	6	7

Table 12

Number of children of interviewees who have ever had a child

	Average	Mode	Range
n=34*	2.3	2	0-8

* one of the single men had a daughter

Table 13

Education levels of interviewees' children over sixteen and no longer in school

	n=52	
Dropout	17	33%
High School	29	56%
College	5	9%
University	1	2%

Table 14

Jobs of interviewees' adult children

	n=52	
Labour	7	13%
Service	11	21%
Skilled	8	9%
Professional	12	23%
Housewife	7	14%
Business	3	6%
Armed Forces	1	2%
Unemployment	3	6%

Table 15

Education levels of interviewees' wives

	n=27
University	2
High School	8
Partial High School	12
Grade Eight	4
Less Than Grade Eight	1

n = 27 five men could not be reached on call-backs, seven were single, and one could not remember

Table 16

Education levels of interviewees' mothers

	n=32
University	0
High School	4
Partial High School	2
Grade Eight	6
Less Than Grade Eight	9
Unknown	11

n = 32 eight men could not be reached on call-backs

Table 17

Education levels of interviewees' fathers

	n=32
University	1
High School	2
Partial High School	1
Grade Eight	10
Less Than Grade Eight	8
Unknown	10

n = 32 eight men could not be reached

Table 18

Reading ability of interviewees' mothers

	n=32
Reads Well	31
Can Get By	0
Can Not Read	1

n = 32 eight men could not be reached

Table 19

Reading ability of interviewees' fathers

	n=32
Reads Well	27
Can Get By	4
Can Not Read	1

n = 32 eight men could not be reached

Table 20

Jobs of interviewees' mothers

	n=32
Labour	5
Service	6
Skilled	1
Professional	4
Housewife	16
Unemployed	0

n = 32 eight men could not be reached

Table 21

Jobs of interviewees' fathers

	n=32
Labour	13
Service	2
Skilled	11
Professional	1
Self-Employed	4
Unemployed	1

n = 32 eight men could not be reached

Table 22

A completion profile for participation in literacy courses at time of initial
contact -- in descending order by income

Subject	Took Course	# of Times	Completed	Why/Why Not
25	yes	1	still in	
6	yes	1	no	tutor unfriendly
22	yes	1-2	no	not interested
26	yes	1	no	work
34	yes	1	no	busy
29	yes	1	still in	
5	yes	1	still in	
1	yes	1	no	teacher quit
19	yes	1	no	busy
23	yes	3	no	busy
16	yes	2-4	still in	
40	yes	2	beginning	
28	yes	1	still in	
15	yes	1	no	busy
38	yes	1	still in	
12	yes	1	no	too busy
18	yes	2	still in	
27	yes	1	no	no gain
21	yes	1	still in	
30	yes	2	still in	

Table 22 cont'd

Subject	Took Course	# of Times	Completed	Why/Why Not
8	yes	1	no	too busy
33	yes	1	still in	
7	yes(1 year)	1	still in	
3	yes	1	still in	
39	yes	1	still in	
11	yes	1	still in	
13	yes	3	still in	
10	yes	1	still in	
9	yes	1	still in	
31	yes	1	still in	
35	yes	2	still in	
37	yes	1	still in	
2	yes	1	still in	
32	yes	1	still in	
36	yes	2	still in	
20	no			
24	yes	1	no	little tutor time
4	yes	1	still in	
17	yes	1	still in	
14	yes	1	still in	

Table 23

A participation profile comparing time of initial interviews with time of
call-backs -- in descending order by income

Subject	Interview 1	Status	Call-back	Status	If not, why?
25	Oct. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
6	Apr. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
22	Sept. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
26	Oct. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
34	July 88	no	Nov. 90	no	
29	Feb. 88	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
5	Mar. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	work interfered
1	Nov. 86	no	Nov. 90	no	
19	Aug. 87	no	not found		
23	Nov. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
16	Aug. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
40	July 89	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
28	Jan. 88	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
15	Aug. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
38	May 89	no	Nov. 90	no	
12	July 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
18	Sept. 87	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
27	Nov. 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
21	Sept. 87	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
30	Feb. 88	yes	Nov. 90	yes	

Table 23 cont'd

Subject	Interview 1	Status	Call-back	Status	If not, why?
8	June 87	no	Nov. 90	no	
33	Mar. 88	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
7	May 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
3	Jan. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
39	June 89	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
11	July 87	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
13	Aug. 87	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
10	July 87	yes	not found		
9	June 87	yes	not found		
31	Feb. 88	yes	not found		
35	Mar. 89	yes	Nov. 90	no	no tutor time
37	May 89	yes	Nov. 90	no	too busy
2	Dec. 86	yes	Nov. 90	no	lost teacher
32	Feb. 88	yes	not found		
36	May 89	yes	Nov. 90	no	critical tutor
20	Aug. 87	no	not found		
24	Oct. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	little tutor time
4	Feb. 87	yes	Nov. 90	no	no reason
17	Aug. 87	yes	Nov. 90	yes	
14	Aug. 87	yes	not found		

Table 24

Interviewees' responses to whether they would take another literacy course

	n=32
Yes	21%
Maybe	35%
No	44%

Table 25

Problems with literacy courses identified by interviewees

	n=32
Outside Pressures	25%
Poor Teaching	32%
Trouble Learning	13%
Don't Need to Learn	6%
Little Gain	24%

Table 26

Interviewees' reasons for taking literacy courses

	n=32
Personal Growth: not specifically instrumental, i.e., to read for pleasure	53.5%
Instrumental: to get a job	14%
do a better job	9%
Changing Circumstances: e.g., more free time	14%
Outside Pressures: direct suggestions or fear of exposure	8%
Not Sure	2.5%

APPENDIX D

DATA ON PERCEPTIONS

Table 27

A summary of responses of interviewees to questions dealing with things that have had a great effect on their lives

	Weakness	Strength	Experience	Others
n = 40	3	11	11	13

Table 28

A summary of the initial responses of interviewees to, "Do you believe that you can be successful at things you set out to do ?"

	n=40
Outright yes	20
Qualified yes *	17
Qualified no **	1
Outright no	2

* for example, "within limits", "sometimes", or "I guess", or "not totally".
** for example, "I can do better but I don't know how".

Table 29

A summary of responses of interviewees concerning why they do or do not believe that they can do things they set out to do

	n=40
Qualifying conditions	13
Confidence Sources +	28
Sources of Anxiety + +	13
Non-response	10

* all of these qualifiers were positive
** two of these qualifiers were positive
+ includes things such as mental ability, God, and desire
+ + includes things such as age, intelligence, and education

Table 30

A summary of sources of confidence as mentioned by interviewees. Sources of confidence are things, other than success, that give strength.

	n=40
Mental Ability (e.g. intelligence)	3
Mental Strength(e.g., set my mind)	12
Suitable Circumstances	9
Physical Ability	1
Faith in Self	1
Faith in God	1

Table 31

Areas of confidence mentioned by interviewees. Areas of confidence are things that a person feels he can do well.

	n=40
Mechanical work	13
Working with hands	2
Making things/carpentry	3
My job	2

Table 32

Areas of anxiety mentioned by interviewees

	n=40
Education/School	3
Spelling/Writing	4
Reading	5
Arithmetic	2
Paperwork-Business	1
Bookkeeping	1
Dealing with Professionals	1
Driver's License	1

Table 33

Responses of interviewees concerning where they learned to be responsible

Sources	n=40
Experiences	20
Internally	6
Other People	18
Don't Know	7

Table 34

What interviewees considered to be their greatest responsibility

	n=40
Immediate Family	15
Outside Responsibilities	4
Personal or Self	10
Don't Know	5

* as can be seen by the totals for each group, some mentioned more than one thing

Table 35

Reasons why it is acceptable to quit a job mentioned by interviewees

	n=40
Something Wrong With Job	37
Wanting to Improve	9
Already Have a New Job	13
Miscellaneous *	4

* indicates, health, retiring, and moving

Table 36

Sources of pride of interviewees as mentioned in first responses

	n=40
Others	6
Self *	29
Don't know	5

* this heading includes personal achievements, qualities, and possessions

Table 37

A summary of the things that interviewees were proud of

	n=40
Personal Qualities	14
Personal Achievements	43
Special Skills	<u>14</u>
Total Internal/Personal	71
Possessions	12
People	30
Associations with others	<u>9</u>
Total External	51

Table 38

A summary of the things that interviewees were not so proud of

	n=40
Poor Education	14
Personal Weaknesses	14
Controllable Situations	17
Uncontrollable Situations	3
Denial	5
Total	53

Table 39

A summary of how interviewees knew if they had done a good job

	n=40
Self Recognition	22
Recognition by Others	15
Don't Know	3

Table 40

A summary of how interviewees feel about other people's opinions

	n=40
#	
Important	15
Not Important	4
Qualified Yes/No	<u>25</u>
Totals *	44

* some people offered more than one response while others did not respond
These responses were not tied to specific people very often. A wife was mentioned once, a boss twice, seniors once, and a paying person once.

Table 41

A summary of first responses to questions on how these interviewees learn something new

	n=40
Find an Expert	11
Ask	7
Watch	6
Don't Know	2
Listen	1
It Depends	2
It Comes Naturally	2
Wife	2
Friend	2
Get a Book	1
Make Notes	1
Phone	1
Avoid Reading/Writing	1
Get the Basics	1

Table 42

A summary of the different methods which interviewees use to learn something new

	n=40
Find an Expert	15
Ask	15
Observe	18
Trial and Error	6
Practise	1
Wife	7
Listen	3
Phone	2
Solve Problems	3
Read	5
Friend	2
Pay Attention	1
Analyze	3
Television	2
Make Mistakes	1
Avoid Reading	4
Use A Manual	2
Make Notes	1
Symbolic Drawings	1
Brother	1
School	1
Use Pictures	2
It Depends	2
It Comes Naturally	2
Prepare in Advance	1
Put Information in Own Ideas	2
Volunteer	1
Don't Know	1

Table 43

A summary of the number of learning methods per person mentioned by interviewees

	n=40
None	2
One	9
Two	11
Three	9
Four	5
Five	5

Table 44

A comparison of the steps interviewees employ when learning something new

Steps Mentioned	n=40
Source Only	1
Acquisition Only	4
Source + Acquisition	22
Acquisition + Use	0
Source, Acquisition + Use	10
Don't Know	1
Never Tried	1
Learned on My Own	1

Table 45

A summary of the responses of interviewees to what a person has to be better at because he can not read or write

	n=40
Communicating	9
Fitting In/not Being Obvious	6
Deception	1
Being Careful	1
Thinking Skills	9
Memory	3
Noticing	3
Hard Work/High Standards	7
Being More Qualified	1
Protecting Your Rights	1
Total Responses	41
Can't Think of Anything	9
Nothing	7

Table 46

A summary of things interviewees felt they were personally good at

	n=40
Hands/Mechanical	20
Positive Attitudes	18
Mental Abilities/Memory	13/5
Social Skills	5
Communication	12
Observing	3
Specific Job Skills	4
Totals	70

Table 47

A summary of the strategies employed by interviewees to keep people from discovering their illiteracy

Strategies	n=40
Total	68
Never Had To	2
I Don't Use Any	13
I Just Tell People	1
Unobtrusive *	15
Avoidance - wander off, take home	7
Deception - e.g., forgot glasses	16
Support Materials **	12
People-Voluntary - wife or secretary	4
People-Involuntary ***	8
Asking For Help	4
Guessing	2

* examples would be casual conversations, or staying in the background.

** using the black book, phone book, card index etc.

*** asking for a summary, asking someone to write their name down. You are getting someone to do it for you even though he or she does not know what is going on.

Table 48

A summary of the alternatives to reading employed by interviewees

Alternatives	n=40
Asking	31
Observing	16
Television	15
Wives	8
Radio	11
Telephone	9
Listening	4
Talking	5
Trial and Error	4
Having a Meeting	1
Using Tapes	2
Using Pictures	2
Manuals	1
Analyzing	1
Making Notes	1
Being Shown	1
Brother	1
Tricking Others	1
Secretary	1
Preparing in Advance	1
Memory	1

Table 49

A summary of the alternatives to writing employed by interviewees

Alternatives	n=40
Wife	10
Others do Forms	8
Little Black Book	3
Talk	5
Phone	12
Short Notes	6
Secretary	2
Others make models	2
Memory	1
Trick Others	1
Photos	1
Ask for Spelling Help	1
Make a Spelling List	1
Tapes	1
Check-off sheets	2

Table 50

A summary of the importance of memory as reported by interviewees

	n=40
Do You Have a Good Memory ?	
Yes	32
Fair	6
No	2
What Are You Good at Remembering ?	
Past	6
Work Things	14
Only What is Needed	1
How Much Must You Remember ?	
Not Much	6
Vague Responses	14
Do You Have Ways of Improving Memory ?	
Symbols	4
Word Associations	2
Rhymes	2
Limiting Amounts	2
Using Notes	4
Labelling	1
Colour Coding	1

Table 51

Responses and numbers of different responses of interviewees to the question "What do you do for fun or entertainment?"

	n=40
Total Responses	127
Different responses	74
Activities for 1 or 2	46%
Activities for 3 to 10	33%
Activities for 10 or more	21%
High cost activities	27%
Medium cost activities	34%
Low cost activities	39%
Exclusive activities	camping
	weights
	hunting
	wrestling on TV
	cottage
	drinking
	concerts
	church
	dining out
	coin collecting
	mini golf
	stamp collecting
	bowling
	motorcycling
	long drives
	listen to wife play piano

Table 52

Types of people interviewees prefer to socialize with

	n=40
Total responses	84
Different responses	57
Ordinary/Plain Folks	7
Serious Minded	12
Humorous/Happy	12
Outgoing/Extroverted	15
Quiet/Introverted	2
Treat Others Well	7
Avoid Trouble	9
Variety	4
Doesn't Matter	3
Age Matters	6
Similar	4
Miscellaneous	3

Table 53

Interviewees' reported involvement in clubs and groups

	n=40
Any Involvement	31
Presently Involved	16
Church	18
Legion	5
Sports	8
Service Clubs	5
Business Clubs	2
Investment Clubs	1
Support Groups	2
Antique Cars	1
Union	2
Ethnic Club	1
Radio Clubs	1
Barbershoppers	1
St. John's Ambulance	1
Community based	
Library board	1
Food Bank	1

Table 54

A summary of responses of interviewees to questions about the problems faced because of illiteracy

	n=40
Can't Read for Pleasure	7
Reading/Filling Out Forms	15
Everyday Things *	20
Being Embarrassed	8
Fear/Avoidance	14
Dependence	6
Hard to Get Work	5
Can't Reach Goals	3
Extra Costs	1
Going Out Socially	3
Tests	2
Being Uninformed	3
Totals	87
Total Different	51
Total Exclusive	33

* includes shopping, prescriptions, getting around, giving information, recipes, and measuring

Table 55

A summary of the solutions to illiteracy problems mentioned by interviewees

	n=40
My Wife Helps	17
I Avoid It	14
Others Help	10
Take It Home	1
Ask	1
Go Out With Friends	1
Fake It	1
Pay Costs	1
Take a Literacy Class	1
Go Slowly	1

Table 56

A summary of the views of interviewees concerning how success can be achieved

	n=40	
Total Number of Ways	167	
Product	12	7%
Process	37	22%
Attitudes	90	54%
Mental Abilities	17	10%
Physical Abilities	5	3%
Outside Help	6	4%

Table 57

A summary of the views of interviewees concerning what success is

	n=40
Stability	
- steady work	5
- family life	11
- financial	13
- balance work/play	3
Possessions	8
People's Opinions	3
Having Friends	6
Feelings	
- happiness	8
- self-satisfaction	7
- comfort	1
- confidence	1
Can Read and Write	3

Table 58

Involvement of interviewees in literacy programs

Tried	Have Tried	Presently In	Never
n=40	34	26*	6

* 1 is presently in a grade 12 diploma program

Table 59

A summary of the locations of the neighbourhoods of the interviewees in this study

	n=39*
Rural	9
City under 30,000	4
City - 30-300,000	
- core	3
- 1st ring	5
- 2nd ring	6
City over 300,000	
- core	4
- suburb	5

* one interviewee lived in a city over 300,000 but would not indicate where

Table 60

A summary of "I don't know" respondents

	n=40
One "I Don't Know" Response	7
Two "I Don't Know" Responses	1
Three "I Don't Know" Responses	1
Four "I Don't Know" Responses	2

Table 61

A summary of the views of interviewees concerning why so many Canadians are unemployed

	n = 40
Government	1
Easy to get welfare	5
The system	2
Immigration	4
Automation	3
Businesses closing	1
Low pay	1
Unions	1
Hard to get experience	1
Imports	1
No work	2
Laziness	14
Won't work for low wages	2
Scared to ask for help	2
Illiteracy	10
TOTAL	50

APPENDIX E

INFORMATION ARISING FROM THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The process of conducting this study has uncovered much useful information for prospective researchers interested in working in the literacy field. The following brief accounts provide an explanation for setting up and conducting interviews.

Setting up Interviews

The process of setting up interviews provided some interesting information about literacy-work gatekeepers, attitudes concerning keeping appointments, where people feel most comfortable being interviewed, and the problems of scheduling.

Gatekeepers. In this study literacy-work gatekeepers were those people who were providers of literacy education or who, because of their work in the literacy field, had knowledge concerning who was illiterate and who might prove to be candidates for interviewing. Since this group was perceived to be one of the primary, initial contacts with the illiterate community, several literacy education providers were contacted during the course of this research. In all, fifteen groups or individuals were contacted. Of these, thirteen appeared to be quite willing to facilitate contact with illiterate candidates; however, only eleven actually produced contacts. The two who did not provide contacts appeared outwardly to be very supportive.

Several reasons for an apparent unwillingness to cooperate appeared. First, many providers were very protective both of the privacy and of the self-esteem of the illiterate people with whom they worked. Arlene Fingeret (1982a), encountered the same attitude. The gatekeepers may regard illiteracy as a shameful condition about which one must always be defensive. If the gatekeepers believe that their students should be ashamed and defensive, the students could find this out over time and it could influence their attitudes toward the program. It may also be that the gatekeepers are simply being kind and protective. Sadly, the result may still be the same. Instead of emphasizing the strengths of the illiterate person, they are emphasizing the weaknesses. In the end, the illiterate adult loses because of too little encouragement to participate in the literate world. Second, providers in large centres often receive requests from researchers and have found it practical to have a blanket policy of saying no. Third, many people may have been unable to understand what the research was about. Several times during the course of this research, prospective interviewees were identified by providers and then proved to be ineligible because they did not meet the criteria of the study. Part of this confusion may have been caused by the fact that many literacy providers were volunteers and had had little if any experience with research at any level. Fourth, it appeared that making face-to-face contact with gatekeepers was important. People seemed to be more willing to cooperate if they could actually see the researcher and make a judgment on his honesty and sincerity. It is worth noting that as a group, the gatekeepers were far more concerned about the privacy and self-esteem of the illiterate group than were the illiterate adults themselves.

Attitudes. Prospective interviewees were usually good about keeping appointments; however, there were instances when this was not the case. Each involved the interviewer's driving over sixty miles and involved the loss of several hours of possible interview time. In the first instance the man failed to show up at the appointed place and time and when called said that he was on his way to church. This failure to show up was attributed, by the interviewer, to not keeping a record of the interview. When attempts were made to re-schedule the interview, it proved to be impossible and this person was lost as an interviewee. The second instance involved driving to the same general area again to meet another man. When he did not show up, phone calls were made and he refused to come to the phone. When the help of the contact person (his literacy coordinator) was sought, she received the same treatment. The man had seemed very keen when he had initially been contacted, yet he acted very strangely later. It was never possible to find out the cause of these actions.

The attitudes described here seem to run counter to those expressed in Chapter 6 concerning attitudes toward keeping appointments and being late. On the other hand, they reflect actions by a small group. These actions may well reflect the actions of people who became afraid of the possible contact for whatever reason. It seems unlikely that their tutors had anything to do with promoting their fear since there were several other members of the same program who continued and were valuable and dependable interviewees.

A second interesting attitude involved how the interviewees felt about being interviewed. With only one exception, interviewees warmed to the experience very quickly. In fact, they appeared to feel a certain honour at being asked to share their opinions on

things. It is true that some people had very little to say but it seemed that this was more a result of their having few opinions than of their being loathe to talk.

Interview locations.   Of the forty interviews conducted, twenty-three were conducted in the interviewees' homes; twelve were conducted in a neutral area; two were conducted in the interviewees' offices; one was conducted in the interviewer's home; and two were conducted over the telephone (one of these men lived 900 miles from the interviewer and the other about 3,000 miles).   Of the twelve conducted in a neutral area, nine were conducted in quiet spaces at the learning centres which these men were attending.   In most cases, this was done because the time that they were at their courses was the most convenient time to get together with the interviewer.   Except for two interviewees, who absolutely did not want to be interviewed at home, it did not really seem to matter where the interview took place although it would appear that most people preferred to be in familiar surroundings such as at home or at school.   Other locations used for interviews were the interviewees' personal offices (2) and a public library (1).

Scheduling.   The scheduling of interviews proved to be much more difficult than expected.   Perhaps an early bias on the part of the interviewer assumed that illiterate adults, especially those who were less successful, would be less busy than other people.   In fact, this was not true at all.   They conducted their affairs much the same as all other people do. They had work schedules, shopping activities, social activities, and children's activities.   In addition, several people were trying to fit literacy classes into this maze of daily life (fifteen less successful and ten more successful).   Consequently, when it came to coordinating the

interviewee and interviewer schedules, there were often problems. In some cases, this may even have led to the loss of candidates.

One important thing that was noticed was that too long a gap between the initial contact with the prospective candidate and the actual first interview increased the chance that the interviewee might change his mind. This happened once and may have been a factor in two or three other instances. The first of these situations arose quite early in the interviewing process and care was taken to avoid this kind of situation; however, it was not always possible to be sure that the first interview would either coincide with the initial contact or would come sufficiently soon after to eliminate the potential for losing the candidate.

Conducting Interviews

While interviews were being conducted, some interesting but unanticipated observations were made. These observations concerned the length of interviews, the general feelings of candidates, the way the interviewees tended to treat the interviewer, and candidates' ways of interpreting questions.

Because an important goal of the interviewing process was to allow the interviewee to set the pace and to tell what it was that he wanted to say, it was both impossible and undesirable to make all of the interviews uniform in length and content. As much as was possible, the initial interview followed the same course and took approximately the same amount of time; the second interview varied considerably. The second interview ranged in length from two and a half to six hours and the average was about three and one half hours.

The more successful financially tended to use more time for interviews for a number of reasons. They appeared to have more to say in general and specifically had more to say when talking about work and other personal achievements. They also appeared to be much more outgoing and positive. Indeed, none of the elements of despair which were sometimes evident among the less successful ever showed with the more successful. All men were generally willing to cooperate in the interview; the more successful group though tended to treat it almost as a social activity and seemed to enjoy the experience. Of the ten less successful men interviewed in their own homes, only three offered any kind of refreshments to the interviewer. Of the fifteen more successful men interviewed on their own turf (either home or office), twelve offered refreshments ranging from coffee or tea through to a midnight snack and a restaurant dinner. All in all, the more successful men tended to be more outgoing than did the less successful.

It did not appear that the interviewees interpreted questions differently as a whole. What did appear to happen was that men tended to respond to questions in ways that appeared to be more dependent on their experiences than on their ways of decoding or their ability to think. For example, some gave highly organized and specific responses to the question "How would you describe a typical day at work?" These responses came from men who generally had had more interesting jobs which allowed for a certain amount of self-motivation. Conversely, those who tended to be very vague about time and organization were either self-employed or unemployed.

The above comments are the result of this interviewer's observations throughout the course of conducting interviews. Some are based on objective data and some are the result

of sensing what was going on. Whatever their source, they constitute perceptions which may be worth pursuing further.

APPENDIX F

EXPANDED METHODOLOGY NOTES

The notes in this appendix provide expanded information on aspects of the research methodology and may be helpful to anyone interested in conducting a similar study.

Methods of Identifying Subjects

The following notes describe the various methods employed for identifying subjects for this study, the results of each method, and some of the problems identified with each approach.

<u>Media sources</u>. Newspapers, television, and radio were used to recruit subjects.

The first two contacts were with local newspaper reporters. One, a business columnist with a human interest focus, wrote a short piece explaining who was sought for the study plus a name and number to contact. It was felt he might have contacted successful illiterate businessmen even though claiming to be unaware of any. No candidates resulted from this contact. The second reporter wrote human interest columns mainly concentrating on rural areas around the study centre. He provided the name of a man who had run a family business for years and never attended school; however, when contacted, this man claimed that he was quite capable of reading and writing and did not wish to be part of the study.

The third and fourth contacts involved a local radio station and the local television station. It was hypothesized that if illiterate people were willing to talk about their views, they might not fear calling a person offering them an opportunity to express their opinions. It was felt also, that this exposure would indicate the usefulness of these contact methods. The radio phone-in show was a local middle-of-the-road station. Although not the most popular station, it was expected to have an audience more likely to include those sought for the study than the local rock station. The interview took place at about 11:00 AM on a Monday morning for about ten minutes. A lack of response was attributed to three things: first, most successful illiterate adults would be working then; second, the apparent network (Fingeret 1983, 133-46) was either not listening or being protective; and third, the station simply had a small audience. The fourth contact involved appearing on the local television morning talk show. This interview lasted about seven minutes and left the interviewer with an impression of having been used as filler. No responses occurred, probably for similar reasons.

The fifth contact was on another radio talk show with a much larger audience (2-4 million) on the provincial network of the national radio station. It was hoped that the larger audience and the preferable time (12:55 PM) would bring better results. The interview itself, about five minutes, was tagged onto the issue of increased government funding for literacy education. Two responses resulted: first, a lady listening in her car said she rushed home to say she wanted to help teach illiterates; second, a man in a large city called to say he could read well enough but had trouble writing. He managed a small company at the time. It did not appear worthwhile following up with this man since he was convinced that

he could read; to pursue him would cast doubt on his credibility and not lead to a positive relationship for interviewing.

The sixth attempt involved writing to a small town weekly newspaper. Reaching illiterate adults directly was a remote possibility, but this newspaper was worth an attempt because it differed significantly from traditional newspapers. This small-town newspaper was developing a national bi-monthly edition to be sold across Canada. This paper might reach people otherwise without access to large city media, and people with different interests from the readers of the large, self-proclaimed national newspapers. No responses resulted.

Three months into the data collection, an attempt was made to increase awareness of the study by getting on a nationally broadcast interview show. Accordingly, letters were sent to the host of a Saturday morning interview show with a regular and long-standing audience broadcast on the national network and to the host of a west-coast late night phone-in show broadcast widely in the country by independent networks. These shows might reach a wide, varied audience. The west coast station management were not very positive; they had little interest in hooking up with an Easterner and it was not possible to travel west or find a substitute to do so. The national network was different; a very reasonable ten to fifteen minute interview was broadcast at about 8:45 AM on a Saturday morning. This was the most successful of all of the media contacts; several responses resulted. One came from a man living approximately two hundred miles away who had been diagnosed as learning disabled. A second came from a woman heading a new literacy initiative in a near-by city (this contact eventually led to a number of interviews). A third came from over five hundred miles away from a man who could read only his name, yet owned a thriving business. A

fourth came from a woman with problems remembering things that she tried to learn although she could read and write. A fifth came from a literacy tutor in the local area. An interesting coincidence was involved with this response. Both he and the man he was tutoring heard the interview; however, neither had been able to get the proper phone number written out. The tutor was driving on the highway, and the man learning to read was sitting in his car outside of a supermarket waiting. He was talking to a friend during the interview and only caught part of the number. Between them, they pieced together enough information to reach the researcher. This took one month even though everyone lived in the same city. In total, this one radio interview led to five interviewees. The increased success was likely attributable to a number of factors such as the increased audience, the day of the week, the warmth of the host, and the particular type of person which this show attracted. The audience tends to be middle-aged and very interested in human-interest stories.

The eighth media contact involved a longer radio interview coinciding with International Literacy Day. It was arranged by the woman who responded to the national radio interview, and who had set up a literacy program in a nearby city. The interview lasted over twenty minutes and was broadcast live at about 12:00 noon. The interview involved a general discussion of literacy concerns as well as a discussion of the research study itself. This interview led to two immediate contacts and a referral. One of the two initial calls proved quite useful, while the second came from a man who could read and write quite well but who was interested in my research since he had been unable to find a job for about six months and was being told that he was over-qualified. The referral almost five months later came from the contact person who set up the interview initially. This man had

heard the Literacy Day interview and had called her to sign up for tutoring. He was then referred to the researcher for the study.

Three other attempts to make contact through the media were made. The first was with a new FM station in a small city about forty miles from the interviewer's home. The contact person at the station lost interest. The second involved contacting Peter Calamai, author of the Southam report (Calamai 1987a) in the hope that he might be able to refer candidates since some identified in the survey appeared qualified as successful according to the study's criteria. He was unable to offer any help since the biographical information indicating a "successful illiterate adult" was unavailable (Calamai, telephone interview Nov. 4, 1987b). The third attempt was made at the national radio station again with a different talk-show host. The producer of the show, which airs nationally Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM - 12:00 noon was not interested in interviewing the researcher but wanted three or four successful illiterate adults to come on the show. This idea was dropped since without the researcher, there would be little likelihood of acquiring interviewees.

The media approaches proved moderately successful: seven subjects were contacted, five of whom were fully employed. Within the general category of media contacts, those involving radio were the most useful, producing all of the above contacts. Within the radio category, the national coverage proved best. In terms of timing, it is difficult to say which time was better since the 8:45 AM time produced six candidates and the 12:00 noon shows (local and provincial) produced one and no candidates respectively. The longer interviews (fifteen and twenty-five minutes) conducted on the shows with more relaxed interviewers produced all the contacts.

<u>Literacy programs</u>.   The most commonly used and most successful method in terms of

total numbers was the teacher-contact method (30 of 40 contacts).   Key teachers or

coordinators of literacy programs throughout an area within sixty to eighty miles were

contacted to see if they could refer either candidates for interviews or other teachers who

might have contacts.   Admittedly, the initial intention had been that literacy programs might

prove useful sources of illiterate adults who might know others not attending programs

(Fingeret 1982a, 376-384).   In this way, people who were not particularly concerned about

becoming literate could be identified.   However, it became apparent quickly that it was going

to be extremely difficult to identify people not attached to literacy programs.   In the first

place, the earliest attempts at using media contacts provided no responses.   Second, the first

contacts among those attending literacy programs were not forthcoming with names of

illiterate non-attenders.   Finally, the other two contact methods, personal acquaintances and

professional associations, were providing sporadic leads in the case of the former and none in

the case of the latter.   In addition, it was determined that the more crucial qualifications for

inclusion would be a good income and a good employment record as clearer measures of

success than not attending a literacy class.   Thus a decision was made that, from a practical

standpoint, not being involved in a literacy program was not an essential criterion for

inclusion.   Consequently, literacy programs were viewed as possible sources of candidates.

Nineteen literacy programs were contacted.   Their support or associations were as

follows: two with the Laubach system, four public school boards, two Roman Catholic

school boards, one with a community college, one a combined university/Laubach project,

and nine by government ministry(ies).   Their responses varied and the results are indicative

of the level of support. Public school programs provided ten candidates, separate school boards two, Laubach two, the community college four, and the government programs six.

No obvious patterns emerged within the literacy-program group in terms of what kind of organization was most helpful or what kind of organization had the most useful candidates, but some statements can be made concerning experiences and knowledge gained when contacting potential sources.

The best support came from board of education leaders, trained educators, and people familiar with the researcher.

Meeting people directly improved the cooperation level. One Laubach leader seemed supportive but never offered anything concrete until met in person.

Many literacy leaders and teachers are overly protective of the learner's privacy as Fingeret found (1982a). This protectiveness seems to arise from three sources: first, illiterate adults being ashamed must be protected from having to reveal weaknesses; second, some leaders are sensitive about the issue of embarrassment because of their being former illiterates; third, many literacy centres, especially those in larger cities with universities, are pestered by researchers whose intentions may not serve the learners' needs. If this study is any indication, illiterate adults, especially successful ones, appear quite willing to talk. In truth, they most often prefer to remain anonymous, but they seem to want to share their stories and help others.

Apparently, it is not a good idea to contact a potential candidate far ahead of the expected interview time. In this study, four candidates were lost possibly because they had time to change their minds or they perhaps felt that the time lag indicated a lack of interest

by the interviewer. In one case, the man's son told him to not get involved. It is difficult to determine why; however, the son taught school for the local board and perhaps feared that exposure of his father might affect him. In all cases, anonymity was guaranteed to the extent controlled by the interviewer.

Some people pay no attention to descriptions or do not write them down. Several times, at the first interview the candidate was found not to meet the age criterion. This became frustrating especially when two to three hours of driving had been required.

Four times during the course of the interviewing, prospective interviewees failed to keep appointments. Once the missed interview was only ten to fifteen miles away but three times the drive was over sixty miles. None of the men included in the study was ever late.

Sometimes people within the same organization had different points of view regarding student contact with outsiders. Negotiation with the boss was necessary in order to avoid embarrassment for any party.

Offering to provide feedback to the instructor seemed to help those who saw this study as dealing with legitimate concerns both of illiterate adults and of literacy providers. This offer appeared to assure the teacher that this project was not intended to be a quick in-and-out to benefit only the researcher. Literacy instructors cared deeply about what happened to their students and to their programs.

People were most cooperative generally; only a small minority were obstructive or uncooperative.

It appeared helpful to make the initial contact through a third person except when interviewees were identified through radio interviews. The third person, usually a trusted

friend or teacher, appeared to lend credibility to the researcher and fostered a mutual understanding from the outset.

Related organizations.   One related national organization, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, was approached. It acts on behalf of small businesses lobbying with various governments on various issues. This association might have some successful illiterate adults owning their own businesses. But, the leaders knew of no discreet way to contact people without causing them to feel that they or some of their colleagues were suspect. As before, when potential contacts were uneasy, the issue was not pursued.

Casual and professional acquaintances. This source of interviewees is worth noting even though it did not result from a carefully planned strategy. It arose almost serendipitously from an expanding network of people hearing of the research project either through direct conversations with the researcher or with other members of the network. This approach provided several possible contacts, four of them useful. One came from a dental appointment, one from a member of the church the researcher was attending at the time, one from long-time friends whose former neighbour could not read, and one from the researcher's family.   Perhaps if there is a moral to this story, it is that sometimes it is good to talk about one's work, even to people thought to be uninterested.

Professional associations.   From the time that the researcher began to develop the concept and then the proposal, a plan was implemented to present papers at conferences. Papers were presented at The Midwest Research-To-Practice Conference in DeKalb, Illinois, in September of 1984; The Commission on Adult Basic Education Conference (COABE) at Montreal, Quebec, in April of 1985; and The Literacy Now ! Conference in St. John, New

Brunswick, in November 1985. At each conference, the pending research was well received, especially Montreal where an additional session was scheduled to meet the demand. Besides presenting papers, the researcher also attended conferences to meet literacy experts and seek advice: the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) in Syracuse in 1986, the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference (AAACE) in Washington, DC in 1987, and the COABE Conference in Atlanta in 1989.

The process of identifying a population was a complicated and frustrating affair; however, the methods employed did lead to sufficient numbers to meet the original expectation of forty subjects. Because of this experience, using a blanket telephoning approach was not employed.

Possible identification or selection bias is treated in "Representativeness of the Sample" in Chapter 3.

Collection of Data

This section includes a complete description of interview conditions for this study.

Interview Conditions

The foremost concern at the outset was for the comfort of interviewees with the location and interview conditions. As much as possible the interviewer attempted to control interview conditions but, if an interviewee expressed concern, it was more important to retain the interviewee than to worry about risks to comparability of data created by small

variations in setting. The comfort and confidence of the interviewee were deemed to play greater roles in bringing out true feelings than would a carefully controlled environment.

Aspects of the interview environment being identified are here described.

Length. The average length of the interviews was three and one half hours with a range of two and one half to six hours. Generally the more successful financially appeared to elaborate more frequently.

Number of visits. The number of visits per interviewee ranged from one to four.

An attempt was made to complete one of the interviews per visit; however, this was not always possible for various reasons such as distance, the interviewee's working schedule, the lack of a place to conduct the interview other than in an empty classroom or office, or an interviewee's desire to complete the process. Twelve times, the interviews had to be conducted back-to-back.

Four times, interviews could not be completed in one or two visits, as when only small amounts of time were available to meet or when the interviewee had a lot to say.

Flexibility turned out to be a useful quality for an interviewer; it meant responding to an interviewee's needs and schedule plus setting up a schedule that precluded rushing away when an interviewee showed a need or an interest in talking. It became apparent interviews with different interviewees should never be set up back-to-back. In fact, it was best not to plan anything immediately following an interview to eliminate pressure on the interviewee/interviewer relationship.

Location. Twenty-three interviews were conducted in interviewees' homes, six in empty classrooms, six in neutral offices, one in a library, one in the interviewer's home, one

in an interviewee's office, and two by phone. Neutral and classroom sites were used either because the interviewer was not invited to the interviewee's home or because interviews took place during working or school hours. The two conducted by phone resulted from the interviewees' being 900 and 3,000 miles away.

Order. All interviews were conducted in the order intended: the structured interview was always first and all the structured interview questions were asked in the same order.

Taping. All interviews except one were taped. This exception occurred because the interviewee did not trust the interviewer entirely. Half way through the interview, he admitted that he feared the interviewer might be a spy for his boss, that he might lose his job if his boss found out his illiteracy. Having admitted this, he was still unwilling to be taped.

Interruptions. Almost all the interviews were free of interruptions except for those expected to occur in a domestic setting -- phone calls, children, or wives. These interruptions did not appear to put any interviewee off at any time.

Involvement by others. In five of the interviews someone else was present for some time. The range was from about ten minutes to the about two hours. In no case did any observers offer any information; however, the odd time a man might seek verification of a point from his wife. Usually these involved things such as dates or events in the past. In one case an interviewee actually sought information from his wife who was not in the same room during the interview. When the one wife stayed the entire time, two factors might have affected this. One, the interviewer conjectured that the couple had a very close relationship. The other was an unassailable fact. The kitchen in which the interview

occurred was the only room where there was a heating stove; the interview was in early

March.

Conducting Interviews

The first interview covered the questions in exactly the order determined; during the second

interview, some liberties were taken with the order of the questions. Each area of possible

difference was probed.

Information requested on call-backs included wives' and parents' education and

reading abilities, parents' employment, and attitudes concerning literacy programs. Contact

with literacy programs among subjects interviewed had occurred more often than had been

originally predicted, so motives among those attending were investigated.

Among weaknesses made obvious after pilot testing were these:

Objective distance. Initially, objectivity was difficult to maintain because the

interviewees were so friendly. An eye towards the primary purpose helped here:

friendliness toward the interviewees did not detract from the gathering of the necessary

information.

Interviewer interruption. The interviewer's urge to fill the silence when respondents

took time to answer intermittently handicapped the interview process. A little patience had

to be learned in order to allow people to respond at their own pace.

Interviewer interpretations. Also a sign of impatience was the interviewer's initial

tendency to offer interpretations to interviewees when they appeared perplexed or engaged in

thought. This was inappropriate and unnecessary. Mustering a little patience or returning to the question were the eventual ways of avoiding this kind of built in bias.

Third person interference. On one occasion a third person present for the interview actually answered for the interviewee. Having a third person in the room during an interview was undesirable from the point of view of objectivity, even if such a person were a subject's literate guide or moral support. The presence of third parties was therefore discouraged, but not forbidden if the interviewee seemed set on having the person there. This happened five times.

Synonyms. Words not understood by interviewees were replaced with others similar in meaning. The use of synonyms, especially in the scheduled, structured interview, made comparisons difficult, perhaps influencing responses in relation to what they might have been had the synonym not been offered. Language that proved to be problematic was changed. The word "success", for instance, could be replaced right from the beginning of the interview, using it only later in the questioning. In the meantime it would be possible to use the term as an adjective at different times in the interview. Another word dropped from use in questions was "goal".

Social greeting. The sometimes awkward cordialities on first meeting were not always captured on tape, especially if the interview took place in the subject's home. A partial solution evolved from the fact that initial contacts were eventually made most often by phone. In the end the taping usually began shortly after meeting.

Pressing questions. Questions finding awkward or unwilling respondents were not always pursued in deference to the subject and in recognition of the open-ended nature of the
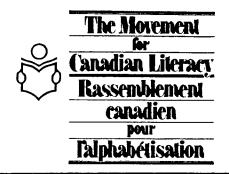
second interview. An acknowledgement of the importance of the information sought and a willingness to assure shy or diffident respondents helped alleviate this problem. Also, the standardizing of initial questions in the second interview allowed for further elaboration and subsequent questions if necessary.

APPENDIX G

MOVEMENT FOR CANADIAN LITERACY

LETTER

This appendix includes a copy of a mailing sent to members of The Movement for

Canadian Literacy in July of 1987. The "Open Letter" on page 296 appeared in

Maclean's magazine on page 3 on November 9, 1987.

**The Movement
for
Canadian Literacy
Rassemblement
canadien
pour
l'alphabétisation**

P.O. Box 6366, Station A
Saint John, New Brunswick
E2L 4R8

20 July 1987

Dear Friends:

We invite you to join forces with hundreds of other Canadian organizations and concerned individuals to send an important message to our governments on the subject of adult literacy.

Who are we? We are a coalition of national organizations [see attached] who have agreed to collaborate to promote adult literacy under the leadership of The Movement for Canadian Literacy.

The enclosed *Open Letter to the Prime Minister, the Premiers and Territorial Government Leaders* will be placed in full page advertisements to appear in September in the *Globe & Mail*, in *Macleans* magazine, and in various newspapers in the Southam Press chain [depending upon the availability of funds]. While the newspapers will carry the names of signatories in alphabetical order, the *Macleans* insertion will carry the message only, indicating that the signatories can be identified in newspaper ads appearing the same week. Individual names will appear only as space permits.

In order to allocate the cost of this message fairly among supporting groups and individuals, we have agreed upon the following *minimum* contribution for each signatory:

Canada-wide organizations	$100
Provincial organizations	75
Community-based organizations	50
Individuals	25

To confirm your participation, please send your cheque, payable to "The Movement for Canadian Literacy" and indicate exactly how your organization should be listed in the open letter. If you are able to recruit additional signatories, please do so.

We look forward to your favourable and early response!

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Wright, President
The Movement for Canadian Literacy and
Chair of the Coalition

A Challenge for Action on Literacy!

An Open Letter to the Prime Minister, the Premiers and Territorial Government Leaders:

We write you on an urgent issue.

Millions of Canadians cannot participate fully in our society because they cannot read and write well enough.

Literacy is a right for all Canadians!

Citizens read newspapers, books and ballots, and write their elected representatives. Parents read to their children, and read their children's school assignments. Workers fill out job applications and work orders; they read instruction manuals and health and safety materials.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that all Canadians have the same rights, regardless of age, sex and place of residence.

We believe that adults should have free access to basic education, just as children and youth do.

Many adults are studying literacy now, in schools, colleges, community centres and workplaces. But the ones who study are only a fraction of those who need a second chance to learn.

Literacy must be a priority in Canada. The actions needed are clear.

- More literacy programs must be provided

- Every level of government must have a policy for literacy, and carry it out.

- Learners and literacy workers must help shape policy.

- Programs should be learner-centred and diverse.

- Literacy programs must have stable funding.

- Literacy must be included as part of all government training programs.

- Business, labour and government should provide workplace literacy programs.

- Literacy Resource Centres are needed across the country.

- Government documents must be readable.

- The Canadian public must be made aware of the problem and challenged to act.

These actions will assist in extending the right to literacy for all Canadians.

Add your name to the list of those who support this challenge.

Association of Canadian Community Colleges
Canadian Association for Adult Education
Canadian Association for Community Education
Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation
Frontier College
Laubach Literacy of Canada
The Movement for Canadian Literacy
World Literacy of Canada

We wish to add our name to the *Open Letter to the Prime Minister, the Premiers and Territorial Government Leaders* on literacy.

Name [to appear in ad]: _____

Address: _____

_____

Postal code: _____

Telephone: [_____] _____

We fall into the following category:

Canada-wide organization [$100 min.] _____

Provincial organization [$75 min.] _____

Community-based organization [$50 min.] _____

Individual [$25 min.] _____

Our cheque, payable to "The Movement for Canadian Literacy" is enclosed.

Tick here if you need a charitable receipt for tax purposes _____

We suggest you contact the following other groups:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone: [_____] _____

REFERENCES

Beder, Hal and Allan Quigley. 1990. Beyond the classroom. Adult Learning 1, no.3 (February): 19, 20 and 30.

Berlin, Gordon. 1983. The Role of Remedial Education in Improving School Achievement, Job Training and Future Employment. Ford Foundation.

Bhola, Harlan S. 1979. Evaluating Functional Literacy. Tehran: International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods.

_____. 1981. Why literacy can't wait: issues for the 1980's. Convergence 14: 6-27.

Bormuth, J.R. 1978. Value and volume of literacy. Visible Language 12: 118-162.

Brigance, Albert H. 1981. Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Essential Skills. North Billerica, Mass.: Curriculum Associates Inc., 43-51.

Brockett, Ralph. 1983. Self-directed learning and the Hard-to-Reach Adult. Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years (April): 16-18.

Burgess, Robert G. 1982. The Unstructured Interview as a Conversation. In Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual. Robert G. Burgess, 107-110. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Business Council for Effective Literacy. 1989 and 1990. Adult Literacy: Programs, Planning, Issues. 20 and 22.

Cairns, J.C. 1977. Adult functional literacy in Canada. Convergence 10: 43-45.

Calamai, Peter. 1987a. Broken Words: Why Five Million Canadians are Illiterate. Southam News Service: The Southam Literacy Report.

_____. 1987b. Interview by author, 4 November. By telephone from Waterloo.

Canada. Statistics Canada. 1981. Population: Total Income Canada. Catalogue 92-928.

Canada. Statistics Canada. 1986. Total Income: Individuals. Catalogue 89-8337.

Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. 1988. Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy.

Chisman, Forrest P. 1989. Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy. Southport: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.

Cicourel, Aaron U. 1964. Method and Measurement in Sociology. London: Collier-Macmillan.

Clark, Roger A. 1984. Definitions of literacy: Implications for policy and practice. Adult Literacy and Basic Education 8, no. 3 (Fall): 133-146.

Coleman, E. Thomas. 1983. The stigma of illiteracy, The Washington Post, 9 September, A 17.

Colvin, Ruth J. and Jane H. Root. 1987. Tutor: Techniques Used in the Teaching of Reading. 6th ed. Chicago: Follet Publishing Company.

Cross, K. Patricia. 1981. Adults as Learners. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Denzin, Norman K. 1970. The Research Act - A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Dickinson, Gary. 1978. Educationally disadvantaged adults in Canada. Adult Literacy and Basic Education 2, no. 2 (Summer): 83-89.

Fingeret, Arlene. 1982a. The illiterate underclass: Demythologizing an American stigma." Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University.

_____. 1982b. Through the looking glass: literacy as perceived by illiterate adults. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting,New York, N.Y. March. ERIC ED 222698.

_____. 1983. Social network: A new perspective on independence and illiterate adults. Adult Education Quarterly 33, no. 3 (Spring): 133-146.

_____. 1984. Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse.

_____. 1986. Interview by author, 24 May. Syracuse, New York. At AERC Conference.

Forer, Lucille K. 1976. The Birth Order Factor: How Your Personality Is Affected by Your Place of Birth in the Family. New York: David McKay Company, Inc.

Forlizzi, Lori A. 1989. Adult Literacy in the United States Today. The Pennsylvania State University: Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy.

Fox, Michael. 1986. A Look at Literacy in America Today -- the Problem, the Solutions, the Alternatives. Washington D.C.: Push Literacy Action Now.

Frontier College. 1988. Information Brochure. Toronto: Frontier College.

Galtung, Johan. 1981. Literacy, Education, and Schooling - For What ?" In Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader, ed. Harvey Graff. (Cambridge: University Press), 271-285.

Gibb-Clark, Margaret. 1989. Study finds illiteracy affecting third of firms. The Globe and Mail, 28 November.

Glustrom, Merrill. 1983. Educational needs and motivations of non high school graduate adults not participating in programs of adult basic education. Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research. 6 (April): 19-21.

Goetz, Judith P. and Margaret D. LeCompte. 1984. Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research. Toronto: Academic Press.

Goody, Jack and Ian Watt. 1968. The Consequences of Literacy. In Literacy in Traditional Societies, ed. Jack Goody, 27-68. Cambridge: University Press.

Government of Canada. 1988. Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada, On Literacy. Delivered at Casa Loma, Toronto, Canada, 8 September.

Graff, Harvey J. 1978. Literacy past and present: critical approaches in the literacy/society relationship. Interchange 9, no. 2: 1-21.

_____. 1979. The Literacy Myth - Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City. New York: Academic Press.

_____. 1981. Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader. Cambridge: University Press.

_____. 1986. The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Graves, F.L. and B. Kingsley. 1983. Functional and elective illiteracy in Canada. Canadian Journal of Education 8: 315-331.

Green, Karen Reed and Stephen Reder. 1984. Taking the vs. out of the qualitative/quantitative debate; a methodological case study." Paper presented at the Fifth Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum, Center for Urban Ethnography, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 30 March.

Griffith, William S. 1990. Beyond the Old Rhetoric. Working draft of a paper in progress. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Griffith, William and Ronald Cervero. 1977. The adult performance level program: a serious and deliberate examination. Adult Education 27: 209-224.

Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1981. Effective Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Guthrie, John T. and Irwin S. Kirsch. 1984. The emergent perspective on literacy. Phi Delta Kappan 65: 351-355.

Harman, David. 1987. Illiteracy: A National Dilemma. New York: Cambridge, The Adult Education Company.

Heath, Shirley Brice. 1980. The functions and uses of literacy. Journal of Communication 30: 123-133.

Heisel, Marsel and Gordon Larson. 1984. Literacy and social milieu: reading behaviour of the black elderly. Adult Education Quarterly 34 (Winter): 63-70.

Holmes, John. 1976. Thoughts on research methodology. Studies in Adult Education 8, no.2: 149-163.

Hoopes, Janet L. 1982. Prediction in Child Development: A Longitudinal Study of Adoptive and Nonadoptive Families. New York: Child Welfare League.

Hoopes, Maragaret M. and James M. Harper. 1987. Birth Order Roles and Sibling Patterns in Individual and Family Therapy. Maryland: Aspen Publications.

Horsman, Jennifer. 1990. Something on my Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy. Toronto: Women's Press.

Hunter, Carman and David Harman. 1979. Adult Illiteracy in the United States. New York: McGraw-Hill.

_____. 1985. Adult Illiteracy in the United States. Paperback edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hymes, Dell and Claire Woods-Elliott. 1980. Issues in literacy; different lenses. Paper commissioned by the Functional Literacy Project. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Illiteracy becoming a biz problem. 1987. Toronto Sun, 28 April, 77.

Irwin, Don and Paul Houston. 1983. Reagan kicks off drive to lower illiteracy rate. Los Angeles Times, 9 September, Part I-7.

James, Michael D. 1990. Demystifying Literacy: Reading, Writing, and the Struggle for Liberation. Convergence 23: 14-25.

James, Waynne B. and Michael Galbraith. 1985. Perceptual Learning Styles: implications and techniques for the practitioner. Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research 8 (January): 20-23.

Kidd, J. Roby. 1981. Research needs in adult education. Studies in Adult Education 13, no. 1: 1-14.

Kozol, Jonathan. 1985. Illiterate America. New York: Doubleday.

LeCompte, Margaret D. and Judith P. Goetz. 1982. Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. Review of Educational Research 52 (Spring): 31-60.

Levine, Kenneth. 1982. Functional literacy: fond illusions and false economies. Harvard Educational Review 52: 249-266.

_____. 1986. The Social Context of Literacy. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

MacNeil, Theresa. 1987. An Open Letter to the Prime Minister, the Premiers and Territorial Government Leaders, Canadian Association for Adult Education, 15 July.

Machalaba, Daniel. 1984. Hidden Handicap. Wall Street Journal, 17 January, 1, 17.

Magoon, A. Jon. 1977. Constructivist approaches in educational research. Review of Educational Research 47, no. 4 (Fall): 651-693.

Manning, Allen. 1984. Prosperous Illiterates. Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University.

Marton, Ference. 1981. Phenomenography - describing conceptions of the world around us. Instructional Science 10: 177-200.

McLaughlin, Ann, William J. Bennett, and C. William Verity. 1988. Building a Quality Labour Force. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Mezirow, Jack, Gordon G. Darkenwald, and Alan B. Knox. 1975. Last Gamble on Education. Washington D.C.: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

Moore, Allen B. 1978. Relating literacy development to career development. Adult Literacy and Basic Education 2, no. 3 (Fall): 190-200.

Moss, Michael. 1988. Reporting On Literacy: Soft-Selling a Complex Political Story. Washington, D.C.: Education Writers Association.

National Alliance of Business. 1984. Literacy and the workplace. Work America (March): 4.

Northcutt, Norvell. 1975. Adult Functional Competency: A Summary. Austin Texas: University of Texas.

Ontario Ministry of Skills Development. 1988. Literacy: The Basics of Growth. Toronto.

Otto, Wayne. 1986. My father, my self. Journal of Reading 29, no. 5 (February): 476-478.

Pattison, Robert. 1982. On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock. Oxford: University Press.

Powell, William R. 1978. Levels of literacy. In Perspectives on Adult Literacy, ed. Donald Moyle, L 3-8. Lancashire: Ultragraph Limited.

Rigg, Pat and Francis E. Kasemek. 1983. Adult literacy in the U.S.A.: problem and solutions. Convergence 16, no.4: 24-30.

Roomkin, Myron. 1973. Economic effects of basic education for adults: the Milwaukee MDTA experience. The Quarterly Review of Economics and Business 13: 87-96.

Saunders, Barbara, Coordinator of the Waterloo Region Literacy Network. 1990. Interview by author, 21 March. Waterloo, Ontario.

Scharles, Henry. 1970. Overview of illiteracy economics. In Adult Basic Education: The State of the Art, eds. William S. Griffith and Ann P. Hayes, 135-139. Chicago: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Scribner, Sylvia and Michael Cole. 1981. The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sellers, Arlene and Alex Winitsky. 1989. Stanley and Iris. Los Angeles: Metro Goldwyn Meyer.

Sisco, Burt. 1983. The undereducated: myth or reality? In Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research 6 (April): 14-15 and 24.

Smith, David M. 1986. The anthropology of literacy acquisition. In The Acquisition of Literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin and Perry Gilmore. Vol. XXI in the series Advances in Discourse Processes (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Company), 261-275.

Smith, Frank. 1989. Overselling Illiteracy. Phi Delta Kappan 70, no. 5 (January): 353-359.

Smith, John K. 1983. Quantitative versus qualitative research: an attempt to clarify the issue. Educational Research (March): 6-13.

Soltow, Lee and Edward Stevens. 1977. Economic aspects of school participation in mid-nineteenth century United States. Journal of Interdisciplinary History 7: 221-243.

Spradley, James P. 1979. The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Swart, Diana. 1990. More tutors needed: Volunteers can help stem the tide of literacy." Kitchener-Waterloo Record, 14 August, C2.

Thomas, Audrey. 1983. Adult Illiteracy in Canada - A Challenge. Ottawa: Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

Tripathi, Virenda. 1970. A Guide to Functional Literacy for Literacy Administrators and Workers. Lucknow, India: Literacy House.

UNESCO. 1976. Recommendation on the development of adult education. Report of Programme Commission II. Paris, France.

U.S. Congress. House. 1989. A Bill To Establish the National Center for Adult Literacy, and for other purposes. 101st Congress, 1st sess. H. R. 970.

Wagner, Serge. 1985. Illiteracy and adult literacy teaching in Canada. Prospects 15, no. 3: 407-417.

Washington, Laura. 1983. Programs reach few unskilled adults despite new literacy push. The Chicago Reporter, 12 (July): 1-5.

Wellborn, Stanley N. 1982. Ahead: a nation of illiterates? U.S.News and World Report, 17 May, 53-56.

What's it like when you can't read or write? 1982. U.S. News and World Report, 17 May, 57.

Wood, Bertie Dawes. 1984. Concepts crucial to understanding nonliterate American adults. Proceedings of the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Continuing Education. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 161-166.

Wood, Dianne. 1988. Views of illiteracy outdated, seminar told. Kitchener-Waterloo Record, 3 June, B3.

Wright, Cathy. 1987. A letter to members of the Movement for Canadian Literacy. St. John, New Brunswick: The Movement for Canadian Literacy, 20 July.

Yarmol-Franko, Karen. 1990. Listening to the voices of the marginalized: International Literacy Year, an interview with Dame Nita Barrow. Convergence 23, no. 1, 9-13.

Ziegahn, Linda. 1992. Learning, literacy, and participation: sorting out priorities. Adult Education Quarterly 43, no. 1 (Fall): 30-50.