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OBSTACLES TO BLUE-COLLAR PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION.

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WITH THE INCREASING LEISURE TIME OF BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS, CONCERN IS GROWING OVER THEIR LOW PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS. MYTHS ABOUT BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS WHICH STAND IN THEIR WAY INCLUDE--LOWER CLASS APATHY, INCAPABILITY OF SUSTAINED INTELLECTUAL EFFORT, AND LACK OF APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF EDUCATION. OBSTACLES INHERING IN SOCIAL CONDITIONS WERE REVEALED IN A STUDY MADE BY THE AUTHORS IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, AND INCLUDED--LOWER CLASS FEELINGS OF BEING TOO OLD OR TIRED, FEAR OF FAILURE, NEGATIVE PRESSURES FROM PEERS, AND AN UNAWARENESS OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS SPONSORING ACTIVITIES. THESE STEREOTYPES AND THE INABILITY OF ADULT EDUCATORS TO UNDERSTAND LOWER CLASS LIFE SITUATION HAVE FORESTALLED IMAGINATIVE PROGRAMING. IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS, ALSO, BECAUSE OF LITTLE FEEDBACK FROM THE LESS ARTICULATE BLUE-COLLAR WORKER. LOW SKILLED WORKERS TENDED TO PARTICIPATE IN ADULT EDUCATION IN ORDER TO GET A NEW JOB BUT MANY WHO WANT A NEW JOB WERE NOT PARTICIPATING. THE LABOR MARKET CONDITION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT MAY HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT FACTORS. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT ADULT EDUCATION COURSES WERE NOT MESHED WITH OPENINGS IN THE LABOR MARKET. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN BLUE COLLAR WORLD, EDITED BY ARTHUR B. SHOSTAK AND WILLIAM GOMBERG, WHICH IS AVAILABLE FROM PRENTICE-HALL, ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, NEW JERSEY. (PT)

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# Obstacles to Blue-Collar Participation in Adult Education*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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THE facts are plain and thoroughly established—the blue-collar worker is less likely than his white-collar peers to participate in adult education. There are differences within the blue-collar world, in the sense that skilled workers have a higher rate of participation than the unskilled laborer, just as there are differences in the white-collar world, where the professional groups have a much higher rate than small businessmen. Indeed, the two worlds overlap somewhat, so that the participation rate of the top blue-collar category is somewhat higher than the rate of the lower rungs of the white-collar groups. Nevertheless, it is generally true that the blue-collars participate less than the white-collar strata.

So what? Why should these facts be of concern to anyone? The answer lies in certain trends of the American economy, particularly the trend toward the continuing reduction in the number of hours spent at work. The amount of time available for leisure pursuits is growing, and it is growing proportionately faster for the blue-collar than for the white-collar segment of society.[1] The

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[16] Robert D. Herman, "Gambling Institutions: The Race Track," Unpublished manuscript presented at the 1963 Meeting of The Pacific Sociological Association.

* This is publication A-30 of the Survey Research Center, University of California, Berkeley.

[1] Harold L. Wilensky, "The Uneven Distribution of Leisure: The Impact of Economic Growth on 'Free Time,'" *Social Problems*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer, 1961), pp. 32-56.

increasing automation in industry will accelerate this trend, and the blue-collar worker is likely to be the major recipient of these reductions in work time.[2] The constructive use of leisure time is, then, one of the major dilemmas to be faced by blue-collar workers, and it is one for which they are, of all the groups in society, least prepared.[3]

Ironically, support for the occupational training or retraining of individuals is much more readily available than is support for aid in the fruitful utilization of one's time away from work. As Harry L. Miller has noted:

> It is a truly astonishing feature of present educational policy that public funds may be used to subsidize vocational training enabling individuals to benefit personally by increasing their incomes, but not for education devoted to raising either the cultural level of the society or the available and dangerously low supply of thoughtful citizens trained to make independent judgments on important public matters.[4]

Certainly, an emphasis on vocational preparation is a necessary feature of adult education and of formal education as well. However, the initiative shown by society's members is not based on narrow job qualifications alone, but also depends on the free use of broader perspectives. The most important resource of any society lies in its people, and societal progress requires the free thought and action of all segments of the population. If opportunities for education are readily available, if becoming educated has a high value in society, if there are adequate rewards and incentives for pursuing a program of learning for adults, and if there is a receptive climate for the need and importance of life-long learning, then we may expect an increase in the collective ability of the population, in contrast to other countries where such conditions do not exist.[5]

Adult education consists of the most diverse educational experiences, including in its province cultural, vocational, recreational, religious, and (minimally) political subjects. Regardless of the motivation which brings the blue-collar worker to adult-education courses (and such motivation is most likely to be vocational), the artificial distinction commonly made between vocational and liberal education tends to retard efforts to develop meaningful and vital educational experiences for adults that will benefit them as individuals, and not only in their social and work roles. Although vocational courses may attract blue-collar workers, and may thus be used as part of a broader strategy to obtain their minimal participation in adult education, such courses should be used not only for transmitting vocational information,

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[2] Robert E. Cubbedge, *Who Needs People?* (Washington: Robert B. Luce, 1963), and Gerard Piel, *Consumers of Abundance* (An Occasional Paper on the Role of the Economic Order in the Free Society) (Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1961).

[3] Dan Wakefield, "Labor Shudders at Leisure," *The Nation*, Vol. 196 (April 20, 1963), pp. 325-27.

[4] Harry L. Miller, "Liberal Adult Education," in *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*, ed. Malcolm S. Knowles, (Chicago: Adult Education Association, 1960), p. 510.

[5] Robert E. L. Faris, "Reflections on the Ability Dimension in Human Society," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (December, 1961), pp. 835-43.

but also for broadening social horizons so that their appetite is whetted for educational experiences which will enhance personal growth as well as develop vocational skills. It is our conviction that blue-collar workers, without possessing academic credentials in the form of diplomas and degrees, can learn and come to grips with great ideas if such material is presented in a manner that is both familiar and meaningful to them. This is, then, the basic task which confronts the adult educator vis-à-vis the blue-collar worker.

Our emphasis in this paper will be to identify some of the obstacles that inhibit greater participation by blue-collar workers in adult education. These obstacles are of two kinds: (1) myths about the nature of blue-collar life, about the learning process, about the blue-collar worker's interest in education, and so on; and (2) obstacles which inhere in the social conditions of the blue-collar world. Some of these myths and obstacles have been identified through the senior author's long experience with adult education in general and with workers' education in particular; the others were revealed in an empirical study concerned with the relations between social class and adult education, carried out in Oakland, California, of a sample of men between the ages of 20 and 60.[6]

## MYTHS RETARDING PARTICIPATION

### *Myth 1: Workers are naturally apathetic and uninterested in the larger society*

The myth of worker "apathy" is one of long standing, and has been used at least since the establishment of the early Mechanics Institutes in Great Britain, organizations which were originally intended to serve workers but which turned quickly into middle-class institutions.[7] The view associated with this myth assumes that no amount of effort will succeed in bringing working-class adults into adult education proportional to their numbers in the population, and it further assumes that the reason for this lack of success is the "natural" disinterest of the blue-collar worker in the important educational experiences of life.

The first thing to be noted about this view is the kind of assumption which underlies use of the word *apathetic*, because this word is symbolic for the attitudes which adult educators and others bring to the issue. *Apathy* is not a descriptive term, but a moral one. That is, its use implies a moral stance, from which judgments are made about what people *should* be doing, how they *should* be spending their time, and how what they are *not* doing is morally reprehensible. A good example of this kind of moral stance is to be found when *apathetic* is used to designate people with reference to other issues. For example, to say that the "masses" are "apathetic" about civil rights (or birth

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[6] Jack London, Robert Wenkert, and Warren Hagstrom, *Adult Education and Social Class*, Survey Research Center Monograph (Berkeley: University of California, 1963).

[7] C. Hartley Grattan, *In Quest of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Adult Education* (New York: Association Press, 1955), pp. 86-90, 152.

control or fluoridation or peace or federal and local elections) implies not only that they are inactive, but also that they should be active and concerned and spirited about the issues involved. In short, they should agree with the person who is characterizing them, with regard to both the importance of the issue and the suggested solution. Use of the word *apathetic* takes for granted the moral validity of the position taken by the persons engaged in characterizing other people.

In the context of educational institutions, the characterization of blue-collar workers as "apathetic" usually implies the moral position that workers should be middle-class, should fit themselves into the institutional structure which exists, and should take courses which educators deem to be important for workers to be informed about. The word thus hides what should be called into question, namely, whether it is the worker who should fit himself to the existing institutions or whether the institutions should fit themselves to the life styles of the blue-collar worker.

As Frank Reissman has argued with regard to children's education, the emphasis on the "cultural deprivation" of the working-class child has inhibited attention to the positive aspects of working-class life which are worth supporting and which can be used as steppingstones to the broadening of educational perspectives.[8] The same is true for adults: the methods, techniques, and content of adult education must be surveyed from the perspective of the blue-collar worker, to determine which are most congruent with his values and interests. Unfortunately, adult administrators and teachers are predominantly middle-class, and their "trained incapacity" to understand the worker's perspective restricts their ability to organize adult-education activities in a manner which will appeal to his interests and outlooks.

The myth of the "apathetic" lower socioeconomic strata is thus detrimental to efforts which might be undertaken for increasing the participation of these strata in adult education, because it finds fault with the potential clientele rather than with the serving institutions. The myth thus inhibits the use of imaginative programming, even though the literature hints at the types of programs which could increase participation. For example, Abraham Kaplan has pointed out that Negro participation was increased enormously in one New England town when a program relevant to Negro life was presented.[9] Similarly, we suspect that worker participation would increase substantially if labor unions could be persuaded to bargain for the inclusion of worker education during working hours. The British experience with day release classes for workers is an interesting model to follow in experimenting with ways of negotiating "educational time off" to attend classes. In Britain, programs vary from liberal studies to apprenticeship training, as well as job training and trade-union education.[10]

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[8] Frank Reissman, *The Culturally Deprived Child* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962).

[9] Abraham Abbott Kaplan, *Socio-Economic Circumstances and Adult Participation* (Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, No. 889), 1943.

[10] H. A. Clegg and Rex Adams, *Trade Union Education* (London: Workers' Educational Association, 1959), pp. 48-50; A. H. Thornton, "Liberal Studies for Factory Workers," *Adult Education*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (May, 1960); and F. J. Bayliss and J. T. Rhodes, "Courses in Factories," *Adult Education*, Vol. XXXV, No. 3 (September, 1962).

*Myth 2: Workers are not capable of sustained intellectual effort, and therefore are not able to benefit from continuing education*

This view stems from the common assumption that all members of society want to belong to the middle-class or the white-collar strata, and that those who do not get the requisite education as children simply do not have the ability or capacity to do passing work in school.

Like the other myths outlined here, this assumption is not supported by the facts. As a number of studies in the last decade have shown, a relatively high proportion of school children do not continue their education after graduation from high school even though their I. Q. scores indicate that they have the necessary ability to do so. Heavily represented in this group of "underdeveloped manpower" are the children from the lower socioeconomic strata.[11] It is also sometimes conveniently overlooked that, although the mean I. Q. for white-collar occupations tends to be higher than that for the blue-collar occupations, the range within each occupation is so large that there is considerable overlap between the various occupations. There are intelligent men in all occupations.[12]

Aside from the recent studies which undermine the myth that workers are not intellectually capable, history itself attests to the fact that, when sufficiently challenged, all men are capable of thought and deed beyond what are commonly imagined to be their limits. Over 100 years ago, when public argument raged over the question of providing free public education to the general population, one of the arguments against such a provision was that the mass of people were incapable of profiting from such education. A letter to the editor of a North Carolina newspaper in 1829 complained that:

> Gentlemen, it appears to me that schools are sufficiently plenty, and that people have no desire they should be increased. Those now in operation are not all filled, and it is very doubtful if they are productive of much real benefit. Would it not redound as much to the advantage of young persons, and to the honour of the State, if they should pass their days in the cotton patch, or at the plow, or in the cornfield, instead of being mewed up in a school house, where they are earning nothing? . . . Gentlemen, I hope you do not conceive it at all necessary that everybody should be able to read, write and cipher. If one is to keep a store or a school, or to be a lawyer or physician, such branches may, perhaps, be taught him; though I do not look upon them as by any means indispensable; but if he be a plain farmer, or a mechanic, they are of no manner of use, but rather a detriment. . . . Should schools be established by law . . . our taxes must be considerably increased . . . and I will ask any prudent, sane, saving man if he desires his taxes to be higher?[13]

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[11] Torsten Husén, "Educational Structure and the Development of Ability," in *Ability and Educational Opportunity*, ed. A. H. Halsey (Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1961), p. 127; Patricia Cayo Sexton, *Education and Income* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1961); Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden, *Education and the Working Class* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1962).

[12] Naomi Stewart, "AGCT Scores of Army Personnel Grouped by Occupation," *Occupations*, Vol. 26, (1947), pp. 5-41; Donald E. Super, *The Psychology of Careers* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957); pp. 38-39; Lawrence G. Thomas, *The Occupational Structure and Education* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 288, 310.

[13] From *The Raleigh* (North Carolina) *Register*, November 9, 1829, in Edgar W. Knight and Clifton L. Hall, *Readings in American Educational History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 341.

It seems highly unlikely that anyone of sound mind would make such an argument today, at least in its more blatant forms. Nevertheless, such assumptions seem to be prominent among self-righteous and self-satisfied educators who see no sense in making special efforts to attract and educate the lower strata of society.

The view that these strata are "naturally" incapable is also to be doubted on other grounds, when one reflects on the fact that a number of societies which were formerly colonies of European powers, and which have emerged as powerful and self-sufficient nations in their own right, were originally settled by malcontents, indentured servants, heretics, and (in the case of Australia) convicted criminals. Yet, these pioneers built total societies largely by their own efforts, a fact which should make one uneasy about facile generalizations regarding the "incapability" of the lower strata.

*Myth 3: The blue-collar strata do not have an interest in or appreciation of the value of education*

The apparent "apathy" and relative lack of participation in adult education by blue-collar workers is sometimes interpreted as stemming from lack of interest rather than lack of capacity. This is, again, one of those myths which support inaction and lack of effort on the part of adult teachers and administrators.

Actually, a substantial majority of the lower socioeconomic strata place a high value on education, as is indicated by national polls which have investigated this topic.[14] If the working class is negative, it is most likely to be so with regard to the schools, rather than toward education itself. This is no surprise, because the schools generally fail to deal effectively with the style of thinking, background, and values of blue-collar workers and their children.

Indeed, it is no wonder that many working-class children are disaffected by their schooling, because much of this schooling is simply irrelevant to their interests and their knowledge of social reality. This disaffection is supported by the reluctance of educators to revise their curricula so as to incorporate in it a realistic appraisal of American life as it actually exists rather than as the textbooks and the traditional methods of teaching pretend it to be. How can a history course be convincing or effective in attracting the interest of lower-class students when it neglects important facts about American life, such as the growth of the labor movement or the impact of racial and ethnic groups on the fabric of our society? The "melting pot" image, which is so popular when we wish to present ourselves to foreigners as a hospitable and democratic country, seems to have melted away by the time it gets to high school textbooks.

The schools, oriented to and administered by the middle class, and increasingly emphasizing their role as mere steppingstones to the colleges and universities, tend to assume that they know best what is needed to enable someone to "succeed" on their terms and with their values. School children who do not share such values, who are not neatly dressed and docile to the

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[14] Herbert H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in *Class, Status, and Power*, eds. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1953), pp. 426-42.

school's authority, are rejected as stupid, unmanageable, or tramps who just do not have the ability to profit from what the school has to offer. As a result of such experiences in school, workers and their children tend to suffer a loss of self-respect and self-esteem, and subsequently they shun existing opportunities for education.

Experiences in school affect, at least indirectly, participation in education during adult life. The published data on adult-education participation clearly indicate that the level of formal education achieved is more important than the occupational level in bringing people into adult education. Thus, at each occupational level, those with more formal education are more likely to participate than those with less formal education. In contrast, the participation rates of people in different occupational strata, but with the same level of formal education, are quite similar. Those who drop out of school early, because of disaffection with the school system or for other reasons, are therefore less likely than their more persistent and patient peers to engage in adult-education activities later in life.[15]

*Myth 4: Intellectual ability is demonstrated early in life—if it does not appear then, it will never appear*

A myth that works to the detriment of the blue-collar worker is the belief that all individuals mature in the same fashion. The system of age grading, whereby children are expected to progress at the same speed through elementary, secondary, and higher educational institutions, as if chronological age were a sure sign of intellectual maturity, serves to penalize the "late bloomer." And, we suspect, it is especially the children of working-class homes who are most likely to be "late bloomers," because they enter the school system without having had the benefits which many middle-class children have had. Some of these benefits are homes in which books are plentiful and widely read, in which children become acquainted with a relatively large vocabulary through listening to their parents and relatives, and in which children have broadening experiences by being taken on trips, to restaurants or other public places, and perhaps being taught to read prior to their entrance into the school. It is in this sense that the currently popular term "culturally deprived" has a clear meaning.

The problem is that early intellectual immaturity may be considered a sign of stupidity rather than an indication of a different pattern of growth. As Talcott Parsons has argued, children are "typed" in elementary school, and the attitudes of their later teachers depend to a great extent on the children's very early performance.[16] The school records precede children to the next grade; and even before a child enters the grade, his new teacher will be "prepared" for him according to his prior performance. Such typing affects not

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[15] Bert I. Greene, "Continuing Education and the High School Drop-Out," *Adult Education*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (Winter, 1962), pp. 76-83; Louis J. Cantoni, "Stay-Ins Get Better Jobs," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, Vol. XXXIII (1955); Ephraim Mizruchi and Louis M. Vanaria, "Who Participates in Adult Education?", *Adult Education*, Vol. X, No. 3 (Spring, 1960), pp. 141-43.

[16] Talcott Parsons, "The School Class as a Social System: Some of the Functions in American Society," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Fall, 1959), pp. 297-318.

only the efforts which the teacher may expend on the student, but also the image which the student has of himself. Thus, in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, a student who is treated as dull, stupid, or ignorant may react by fully meeting the expectations of those who treat him in this manner.[17]

The consequence of this early typing is that efforts are not made to raise the aspiration or achievement levels of the children involved. Thus, a vicious cycle is set into motion whereby improvements in performance are disregarded or unrewarded because they do not meet the low expectations of the teacher. Because the educational experiences of such children are a series of "failures," their motivation is adversely affected even if their abilities are equal to the tasks at hand. They continue to do inferior work, their work is properly acknowledged as inferior, and their next task will continue to be inferior, because they ordinarily do not perceive their own improvement or even what an "improvement" entails. As likely as not, they will subsequently engage in truant activities, delicately called "behavior disorders," because the school situation is patently unfair, and will thereby merely reinforce the teacher's previous conception of them.[18]

When something is considered impossible, this is in itself a barrier which a person will feel himself incapable of exceeding. A good example of such an achievement barrier is the four-minute mile run, which most experts conceived as the absolute limit beyond which an athlete could not penetrate. Since Roger Bannister accomplished the feat in 1954, the four-minute mile has been exceeded over 100 times. The moral of this story is that the individual who establishes his goal (or has it established for him) at a low level will be restrained by what he perceives to be his limits, and not by his innate capabilities.

Early school failure tends to follow a person throughout his lifetime because of the increasing tendency to characterize individuals as bright or dull according to the level of formal schooling which they acquired. Thus, if an individual drops out of school before obtaining a high school diploma, he is likely to be labeled unintelligent, ignorant, stupid, boorish, ill-mannered, and so on, without any efforts being made to know the individual more intimately. This is especially true if he applies for a job, because most jobs now automatically require a high school diploma. Thus, lacking the official *credentials* of "brightness," the person is treated with a lack of respect, on the easy assumption that his lack of an official degree indicates a lack of talent or ability. It is a saddening experience, and unfortunately a frequent one, to meet intelligent people who feel inferior (or have been made to feel inferior) because they do not have a college education or have not in some other way met some formal educational requirement. The blue-collar worker is, of course, most likely to be in this predicament, since he is also most likely

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[17] Orrin Klapp, *Heroes, Villains, and Fools* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962) is an interesting examination of how social types operate to categorize people in various ways. Klapp depicts how social typing operates to mediate relationships between people. Lewis A. Dexter, "On the Politics and Sociology of Stupidity," *Social Problems*, Vol. 9 (Winter, 1962), also points out how the characterization of an individual as being stupid serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy to determine an attitude of stupidity.

[18] Cf. Carl Werthman, "Delinquents in Schools: A Test for the Legitimacy of Authority," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VIII (1963), pp. 39-60.

to have less formal education (this situation being partly due to the fact that he tends to be older, and therefore reflects the average educational achievements of an earlier generation).

*Myth 5: People lose the ability to learn with increasing age.*

This view, contrary to the existing research evidence, declares that adults deteriorate mentally as they age, and that therefore the resources expended on them can be better utilized for the education of the young. The provision of opportunities for the education of adults commensurate with the need for such education is, thus, not forthcoming.

Although aging is accompanied by a deterioration in certain capacities, such as hearing, seeing, and the speed of reaction time, these physical changes do not extend to a slowing down of the ability to learn. On the contrary, the evidence shows that the loss of an ability to learn new materials results from disuse of one's intellectual faculties rather than from the physical fact of aging.[19] Nevertheless, the view that aging is accompanied by loss of learning ability continues to persist despite the evidence to the contrary, derived from longitudinal studies of the influence of aging and from evidence of the remarkable intellectual works which have been produced by older adults.

The internalization of an attitude that one's ability to learn deteriorates with age operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy which may actually retard the ability to learn or the motivation to engage in educational activities. Of course, an adult may fear learning for a number of reasons—because of prior unfortunate experiences with schooling, lack of success in intellectual activities, failure to acquire the requisite skills of learning, or not remaining mentally alert through a systematic program of lifelong learning. Each of these may serve as obstacles to perceiving adult education as a viable element in one's leisure activities.

## OBSTACLES IDENTIFIED BY EMPIRICAL STUDY

Individuals will not participate in adult education unless they know that educational opportunities exist and that there are organizations which sponsor activities to meet their interests and needs. Although the community we studied had a wide variety of organizations sponsoring adult-education activities, many men in our sample were not aware of them. This was particularly true of unskilled and semiskilled blue-collar workers—even those who expressed an interest in taking courses now or during the next few years. How can one account for this puzzling fact? One way to do so is by examining how those already participating learned about the courses in which they were enrolled.

By comparing the different occupational groups with regard to their sources of information, it became clear that personal sources—friends, neighbors, and acquaintances—are much more frequently used by the unskilled and semiskilled blue-collar workers than by the skilled blue-collar or lower

[19] Irving Lorge, "The Adult Learner," Ch. I in Wilbur C. Hallenbeck, ed., *Psychology of Adults* (Chicago: Adult Education Association, 1963), p. 109.

white-collar, professional, and managerial groups. The latter, in turn, relied much more frequently on the mass media, employers, supervisors, or being on a mailing list and receiving an announcement by mail, although a minority also relied on personal contacts.

Not only are personal sources relied on, although they are more important for the lesser skilled, but men also tend to participate in adult-education activities with their friends. That is, adult education takes place in a network of interpersonal relations. Yet, there are differences between the occupational strata with regard to the likelihood of having friends who are also participating in adult-education activities. Although the blue-collar worker is more likely to find out about adult-education courses through friends, acquaintances, or neighbors, he is less likely to know people who are participating in such activities. The upper white-collar participants are twice as likely to have participant friends as are the less skilled blue-collar participants. Similarly, because blue-collar participation is relatively lower than white-collar participation, the blue-collar nonparticipant is less likely to know a participant and is therefore also less likely to have friends who are good informants about adult-education opportunities.

The relative lack of information about adult education by blue-collar nonparticipants was also revealed on another question. Thus, a larger proportion of blue-collar nonparticipants than their white-collar peers felt that they could not afford to pay for the cost of further education, even though in most instances they were unaware of the exact cost of such programs. Mass-media reports about the congressional controversies regarding federal aid to education, or arguments when bond issues for schools are voted on, may create a popular image of the high cost of education. Vague and diffuse though these may be in the mind of the general public, such reports may contribute to the view that education is beyond the means of blue-collar workers, whose economic resources tend to be below those of the more economically advantaged groups in society.

Many individuals report that they do not participate in adult education because they feel too tired after a full day of work. Being tired is correlated with age, since those over 40 are twice as likely to say that they are "too tired" than those under 40. In addition, however, blue-collar workers are more apt to mention this reason for nonparticipation than are white-collar workers. This is so despite the fact that the white-collar groups tend, on the whole, to work longer hours, although the blue-collar workers may be engaged in more physically tiring work. It is also relevant to note, in this connection, that white-collar workers are more likely to be members of voluntary associations and to attend weekly meetings, so that the time they have available for adult-education participation tends to be more restricted than the time available to the lower occupational strata. In contrast, the latter are more apt to watch television and to engage in more home-oriented and neighborhood-oriented leisure activities, many of which are "relaxing."[20]

With regard to being "too old to go back to school," the blue-collar worker

[20] Jack London and Robert Wenkert, "Leisure Styles and Adult Education." Paper delivered to the session on The Sociology of Leisure at the national meeting of the American Sociological Association, August, 1963.

is much more likely than the white-collar to feel that this is an important reason for not participating. Similarly, blue-collar workers are more likely than white-collar workers to report that they would "feel kind of childish" going to evening classes, and the younger blue-collar workers are most likely to say that this applies to them. In addition, a larger proportion of blue-collar workers stated that their friends "discouraged or kidded them" about participating in adult-education activities. Thus, we may draw the general conclusion that blue-collar workers tend more than others to define education as something for children and adolescents. The widespread image of education as designed for preparing the young for adulthood—an image which the current labor and economic trends have largely destroyed in reality—is more nearly held by those who will be most affected by these powerful changes in the economy.

Blue-collar workers are also more likely than white-collar workers to agree that they are not "bookish" types. Similarly, older blue-collar workers are more apt than older white-collar workers to assert that they can learn what they need to know without attending classes. These two patterns of responses may stem from (1) a lack of skill with "bookish" activities because of inferior educational experiences in the past, or (2) a lack of prior success in school, leading to a rejection of school-like activities. Those with more success and greater experience in school are more apt to look upon schooling as an important source of information and knowledge. The responses to our questions in the manner reported above may be more a protection of self-esteem than an indication of a negative attitude toward education.

Among the adult-education participants, there is a tendency for the more educated to be more articulate about their reaction to adult-education courses than those with less formal education. That is, blue-collar workers find it more difficult to verbally appraise the value of their adult-education experiences. This suggests that the organizations which serve the educationally disadvantaged have less "feedback" in searching for program deficiencies than do the institutions which cater to the more educated adults. The importance of this deficiency is highlighted by the fact, mentioned earlier, that adult educators tend to have a middle-class orientation and are therefore less knowledgeable about working-class values and interests. Thus, the bias against the blue-collar worker tends to be compounded, because the adult educator serving a blue-collar clientele is not likely to get criticisms or suggestions about the kinds of educational experiences which his adult students find most rewarding.

This lack of visible reaction thus allows the educator to allocate blame for failures to the students, rather than assessing the extent to which such failures are caused by a lack of skillful teaching or competency in subject matter.[21] As W. W. Sawyer has noted, an inappropriate approach to a subject may be more influential in causing a failure to learn than any lack of ability by the students involved.[22]

It is evident that a student's satisfaction with adult education depends

[21] George Williams, *Some of My Best Friends Are Professors* (New York: Abelard-Schuman Limited, 1958).

[22] W. W. Sawyer, *Mathematician's Delight* (London: Penguin, 1943).

largely on how well he perceives himself to be doing. Participants were asked to compare their ability as students in adult education with their prior ability when they were in school as adolescents. By and large, participants who felt that they were now better students were more likely to report satisfaction with adult education than those who thought that they had been better when engaged in full-time schooling. Thus, a favorable attitude toward education may result both from prior educational experiences and from subsequent favorable experiences in adult education. Some success in learning serves to transform a prior feeling of inferiority to one of confidence and heightened interest. The person with poor experience in schooling may thus be helped to realize the value of education, if the educational experience engaged in as an adult is meaningful and effective.

In addition to acquiring information regarding gross participation rates, we also asked a number of questions about the reasons why participants enrolled in adult-education courses. These questions enable us to distinguish between those who enrolled for nonvocational reasons and those who enrolled for vocational reasons. Among the latter, we are also able to distinguish between the men who wished to get help on their present job and those who desired aid in getting a new job. About half of the men interviewed participated for nonvocational reasons, the proportion being somewhat higher among the lower strata, who were relatively overrepresented in religious instruction and in citizenship courses.

When examining the pattern of participation for vocational reasons, one is struck by the differences between the occupational groups. The blue-collar groups are much more likely than the white-collar groups to participate in order to get a new job, while the latter are much more interested in obtaining aid for their present job. Thus, while the low-skilled workers who want to change jobs constitute only 17 per cent of the matched sample, they constitute 47 per cent of those who have taken a course during the past year to help get a different job. On the other hand, the low-skilled workers who do not indicate a desire to change jobs are least likely to have participated in education of any sort during the past five years. Thus, the greater the degree of dissatisfaction with one's present job, the greater the likelihood of taking adult-education courses. Apparently the vocational motivation is very strong, especially among the lower occupational groups.

It is also true, however, that a considerable number of workers who desire to secure another job are not participating in adult education. An important factor for such a lack of participation may be the condition of the labor market and the availability of opportunities for employment. If unemployment is high and new jobs are difficult to secure, nonparticipants may not wish to devote the requisite time and effort to obtaining further education. This may also be partly caused by the fact that adult-education courses are not clearly meshed with the openings in the labor market, so that participation in adult education is no sure guarantee that a new and better job can be obtained. Current efforts to upgrade the skills of unemployed workers through retraining programs may fail unless the available and emerging employment opportunities are known and this information is used to improve the retrain-

ing curricula. In addition, a clearer image of existing opportunities must be portrayed to the potential clientele for such retraining.

Our study also revealed that men take courses to help them on their jobs if they hold positions which require continuing education. The prototype of such positions is found in the professions—almost all professionals had taken at least one adult-education course during their careers, a vast majority reported that they studied at home for their jobs, and a substantial proportion were engaged in current adult-education courses. In addition, those who held supervisory positions and who think their chances for promotion are good are also more likely to participate in vocational education in order to help themselves in their present job. Because most blue-collar jobs, particularly at the lower levels of skill, do not require continuing education and do not involve the supervision of others, one can readily see why blue-collar workers have a lower rate of participation than other segments of the labor force. Because job requirements for continuing education is one of the factors in participation, we may expect a continuing growth of adult education as the changes in the economy put a premium on jobs with high levels of skill and knowledge.

In conclusion, we have sketched a picture portraying some of the obstacles which inhibit the participation of the lower socioeconomic strata in adult education. Involved in this portrait are myths about the learning process and about the character of blue-collar groups, myths which detract from imaginative programming by adult teachers and administrators. The other dimension involves some of the aspects of the life situation faced by blue-collar groups —aspects which tend to detract from educational objectives. The task for the future is not to cast blame, but to rethink the objectives of adult education and to bring together the educators and the blue-collar workers in a dynamic harmony.