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Attitudes Toward Adult Education Among Adult Learners Without a High School Diploma or GED

Andrea Rose Bennett
University of South Florida, arbennett@mail.usf.edu

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Attitudes Toward Adult Education Among Adult Learners Without a High School Diploma or GED

by

Andrea Rose Bennett

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in
Adult Education
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career and Higher Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: William H. Young III, Ed.D.
Waynne B. James, Ed.D.
Jeffrey D. Kromrey, Ph.D.
Janet Richards, Ph.D.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, Carnetta Rose Morgan. Thanks for always being there. Also, to my husband, Christopher S. Bennett and daughter, Chris-Ann D. Bennett, for their love and support. This degree would not have been possible without you.
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I would like to start by thanking God for His guidance and leading during this process. To my mother, who has been a constant source of support; thank you for teaching me never to give up in the face of adversity. To my husband, Christopher, for his encouragement, sacrifice, and support along this journey. To my daughter, Chris-Ann, my inspiration. You are a blessing and because of you, I want to be a better person every day.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED). In this study, adult learners without a high school diploma or GED completed the Attitudes Toward Adult Education Scale (AACES) and selected respondents volunteered to participate in a face-to-face interview in conjunction with the mixed methods section of the study. For this study, I used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the responses on the 22-item AACES survey.

Three hundred and fifty respondents participated in the study. Descriptive statistics and a three-way ANOVA revealed attitudes toward adult education were not very favorable among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Overall, there were no significant differences among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. However, age was statistically significant, as older adult learners had more favorable attitudes toward adult education than younger adults did. Race/ethnicity and gender showed no significant differences. The qualitative data revealed interviewees valued adult education and thought it was important for them to obtain their GED or high school diploma. Those interviewed believed they needed to obtain their GED or high school diploma in order to acquire meaningful employment. The interviewees
did not express any immediate plans to participate in adult education or post-secondary/GED studies upon completion of the GED program.

Based on the results, adult learners without a high school diploma or GED recognized the importance of obtaining a high school diploma or GED, but their attitudes toward the perception of participation in adult education were not favorable. The respondents believed participation in adult education is important and necessary to gain employment, but they did not show much enthusiasm for participation in adult education beyond the GED program.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Cardoza (2013) notes “for the millions of adults with low literacy, the ability to read, write, and speak English might offer them the most important opportunity of all: a chance to emerge from the shadow and participate as equals in society” (National Public Radio Education section, para. 2). Berger and Fisher (2013) explain, “inadequate investments in education weaken the ability of a state to develop, grow, and attract businesses that offer high-skilled, high-wage jobs” (pp. 2-3). Notably, the foundation for a solid society and economy of any country will depend on its value of an educated society (Ingrum, 2006; Inoue, 2007; Livingstone & Raykov, 2008; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Schwerdt et al., 2012, Smith, 1983).

A high school diploma (HSD), or its equivalent the General Educational Development (GED), serves as a barometer for graduates’ readiness to enter college, the US workforce, and their ability to participate meaningfully in society (Sparks, 2010). Achieve, Inc., Education Trust, and Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (2004) explain a high school diploma lays the basic framework for its recipients who should be able to clearly articulate ideas and problems, clearly think, absorb data, and effectively read in the workplace. However, the US Census Bureau (2013) reports there are over 30 million American adults between the ages of 18 and 54 years who are without a high school diploma or GED. The figure balloons even wider to almost 40 million Americans without a high school diploma or GED when adults over the age of 55 are added to the previous figure. Additionally, the numbers given by the US Census Bureau in the report
do not account for adolescent high school dropouts under the age of 18 years, which could inflate the number closer to 45 million Americans without a high school diploma or GED. While there are several studies conducted on high school dropouts and its impact on the student and society (National Education Association, 2013), limited research has been conducted to track or follow-up with dropouts into adulthood. Therefore, those in the field of adult education know very little about the attitudes, experiences, and participation in adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED.

Adults without a high school diploma or GED make up the largest portion of the unemployed in the United States of America (US Department of Labor, 2012). The Brookings Institute (2012) published the findings of a study conducted during May 2012 and revealed:

The unemployment rate for workers with a high school diploma or less education was 9.9 percent, whereas the unemployment rate of workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 3.9 percent. More educated adults are also, much more likely to be in the labor force. (para. 3)

The huge unemployment gap between adults without a high school diploma and adults with a bachelor’s degree is indicative of the need to educate, retrain, and retool that section of the labor force to be better prepared to meet the demands of the current workplace in an information and technology age (Schwerdt et al., 2012; US Department of Labor, 2012). As noted by Boberiene (2013), young adults lack certain basic skills, such as critical thinking needed in today’s workplace, but not emphasized in the education system. Giguere (2006) argues:
Pressures to enhance productivity and to meet changing business needs in a knowledge-based economy are increasingly driving home the need to upgrade the skills of low-qualified workers. At the same time, governments are realizing that very little is in place to tackle this challenge. Not only are policies ill adapted to the new situation; the governance framework is often inadequate. Higher degrees of policy coordination, adaptation to local conditions, and the participation of business and civil society are required to generate satisfactory outcomes. Both government and local actors have an important role to play in implementing innovative and effective mechanisms. (p. 23)

The most effective method to prepare and engage any workforce is through active participation in adult education and lifelong learning (Cardoza, 2013; Giguere, 2006; Gouthro, 2011; Hidalgo-Hidalgo, 2014; Inoue, 2007; Livingstone & Raykov, 2008; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam et al., 2007; Schwerdt et al., 2012). This can be achieved by helping individuals to develop positive attitudes toward education and learning (Garry, 1977; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Houle, 1961; Hughes, 2005; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Seaman & Schroeder, 1970; Tough, 1971). Merriam and Brockett (2007) argue lifelong learning whether formally or informally has become necessary for adults as they adjust to the continuous changes in the workplace and the society in general. Therefore, adult education and lifelong learning are key components to maintaining a skilled and knowledgeable workforce (Cookson, 1986; Formosa, 2012; Inoue, 2007; Jansen, 1970; Livingstone, 2004; UNESCO, 2013) and lifelong learning will become commonplace among individuals as their education attainment increases (Formosa, 2012; Merriam and Bierema, 2014; Tuckett & Sargant, 1996).
UNESCO deems adult education through lifelong learning critical in the 21st century and explains “principles of lifelong learning in education and broader development policies should take on a more urgent tone than ever before. Lifelong learning principles, if systematically implemented, will be able to contribute to a more just and equitable societies” (Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013, para. 1). Proponents, especially those in European countries suggest lifelong learning is a way of life (Formosa, 2012; Inoue, 2007; Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Tuckett & Sargant, 1996). Merriam and Brocket (2007) state “lifelong learning and lifelong education actually refer to a concept of education broader than adult education; both terms cast learning or education as a cradle-to-grave activity” (p. 13).

While there are several barriers to participation in adult education and lifelong learning (Darkenwald, 2008; Hughes, 2005; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007), understanding the attitudes of adults towards continuing and adult education can help educators to identify and develop programs to address the barriers to participation in these programs. Evans (2003) notes adult education and lifelong learning “cannot be turned on at will. Enthusiasm for learning comes when there is some reason to learn, whether it is necessary for employability or fear of unemployment, a way of getting additional enjoyment or escaping into another world” (p. 13). Knowles et al. (2005) and Tough (1971) asserted adults need to know the importance of their learning projects and their benefits to the individual’s life.
Formosa (2012) suggests, “educational opportunities improved members’ abilities of understanding the world as a whole by aiding them to better grasp global development and social progress” (p. 283). Some argue, “adult education is expected to satisfy social needs such as equality, citizenship, employment, and social cohesion” (Porras-Hernandez & Salinas-Amescua, 2012, p. 312). Consequently, individuals with the lowest educational attainment are more likely to suffer poor health, higher mortality rate, and more likely to be incarcerated (Daley, 2011; Sparks, 2010; School Library Journal, 2008). It is, therefore important to encourage and drive participation especially among individuals classified as low educated, which includes adults without a high school diploma or GED. In order to determine who will participate in adult and continuing education, it is necessary to examine individuals’ attitude toward education (Adolph & Whaley, 1967; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Garry, 1977; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Blunt & Yang, 2002). Adults with the highest levels of education are more likely to participate in adult education (Cookson, 1986; Courtney, 1992; Dunphy & Wilson, 2009; Garry, 1977; Hidalgo-Hidalgo, 2014; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Livingstone & Raykov, 2008; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Coombs’ (1985) views on who participate in adult and continuing education 30 years ago has remained true where

In virtually all nations, today children of parents high on the educational, occupational, and social scale have a far better statistical chance of getting into a good secondary school, and from there into the best colleges and universities, than equally bright children of ordinary workers or farmers. The children of less-educated, lower income parents are
heavily overrepresented in the vocational training schools and grossly underrepresented in programs for university entrance. (p. 230)

Moreover, employers overlook individuals with the least formal education training for professional development programs (Dunphy & Wilson, 2009; Livingstone & Raykov, 2008; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Schwerdt et al., 2012; Schuller & Watson, 2009). Employers reserve their training and development programs for “their most educated staff, the most highly paid receives the most training; and the unskilled and low-paid employees receive the least” (Schuller & Watson, 2009, p. 65). Therefore, the workplace and society marginalize adults classified as uneducated because of their social standing in education. Dunphy and Wilson (2009) encourage that “through training and development opportunities all staff can make an important contribution to business competitiveness and quality service” (p. 71). Educating and engaging adults will require help from all key players including employers, policy makers, and adult educators.

However, Schwerdt et al. (2012) in their study determined that widespread untargeted policies and intervention programs are not effective in increasing participation among low-educated adults. Schwerdt et al. (2012) further suggest programs and policies should target groups of individuals who are most in need of help educationally. The researchers noted adults with higher levels of education benefit the most from government policies and programs intended to drive participation especially among low-educated adults and marginalized groups of individuals (Schuller & Watson, 2009; Schwerdt et al., 2012). Hence,
policy makers and educators should take the needs and attitudes of adult learners seriously in an effort to develop effective programs.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) explain the construct of attitude is important to the current theory on participation in adult and continuing education. Nevertheless, Darkenwald and Hayes (1986) argue, “very few attempts have been made to assess adults’ attitudes toward further education” (p. 2). Existing research in adult education has not adequately examined attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED, which perhaps could prove useful in explaining why participation in adult education might not be appealing or a priority to this group of adults.

**Statement of the Problem**

Over the last four decades, researchers in the field of adult education have conducted extensive studies on participation in adult and continuing education (Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Garry, 1977; Hughes, 2005; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990; Tikkanen, 1998; Yang, 1998). In spite of the widespread research in the field, limited data and research are available on attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Yang (1998) acknowledged, “although adult education participation has been studied extensively for the past several decades, our knowledge about participation in adult education is surprisingly limited” (p. 247), as researchers mostly have focused their attention on participation patterns,
barriers, and motivation (Cookson, 1986; Hughes, 2005; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Sanders & Conti, 2012; Tikkanen, 1998; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990). White (2012) asserts most of the research has been large-scale surveys providing empirical data that fail to provide insights and rationales for participation behaviors and learners’ attitudes toward adult education.

Valentine and Darkenwald (1990) explain

> The central problem with analyses of this type is that they stop at the point of identifying the broad dimensions of deterrence among the population as a whole (or among a specific subpopulation as a whole), thereby masking individual differences and leaving the answer to a quintessentially practical question on an unnecessarily abstract level. (pp. 29-30)

Notably, while there has been extensive research in participation in adult education, the research is limited especially on attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. In reality, research in participation in adult education, barriers, and motivation far outweighs studies on attitudes toward adult education (Adolph & Whaley, 1967; Blunt & Yang, 2002; Boshier, 1973; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Garry, 1977; Hughes, 2005; Stamouli, 2010). The paucity of data leaves researchers, educators, and practitioners with limited knowledge about attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Therefore, educators and providers are not fully equipped to develop programs and curriculum that would motivate this group of adults.

In the 21st century “employers expect low-skilled workers to possess an array of capabilities: to have learning skills and decision-making capacities, to
be able to work in a team, and to display entrepreneurship and leadership” (Giguere, 2006, p. 27). Further, Boeren, Nicaise, and Baert (2010) argue in a knowledge-based society, employees should come to the workplace with a high level of knowledge and skills, as they are more trainable and productive on the job. Hence, developing strong and positive attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED will likely increase participation which will serve to benefit both the individual and the society (Adolph & Whaley, 1967; Boshier, 1973; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). Smith (1983) suggests it might be necessary to reorder the undereducated perceptions of the world and the potential of the undereducated prior to them engaging in education. Mezirow (1991, 1997) argues there needs to be a shift in attitude toward learning whether formally or informally and further calls for individuals to develop strong self-awareness, become conscious of their world, and embrace different ways of thinking in order to increase their knowledge base.

While researchers and educators have studied high school dropout and its impact on the society (National Education Association, 2013), there has been limited research on dropouts’ attitudes, experiences, and participation in adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Further, there have been numerous studies conducted on attitudes towards adult and continuing education among adults with education beyond post-secondary
studies, but research conducted among adults without a high school diploma or GED is limited.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. Based on prior studies, participation in adult education is substantially lower among adults with the least education (especially adults without a high school diploma or GED), when compared to adults who have at minimum completed post-secondary education (Adolph & Whaley, 1967; Garry, 1977; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam & Darkenwald, 1982; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990; Wikeland, Reder, and Hart-Landsberg, 1992). However, none of those studies has examined the attitudes of adults with limited education, especially among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Adolph and Whaley (1967) explained, “an individual’s favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward the idea of adult education may in part aid him in making decisions to support or reject adult education programs” (p. 152). I conducted statistical analysis on participants' attitudes toward adult education to determine differences in gender, age, and race/ethnicity among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. Additionally, I interviewed eight participants to establish their level of participation in adult education, and their perception of the value and importance of adult education.
**Research Questions**

The following questions guided the development and data collection for this study:

1. What are the attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
2. What are the differences in attitudes toward adult education among the subgroups (age, gender, and race/ethnicity) of adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
3. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED participate in adult education?
4. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?
5. How do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the value of adult education to their professional development?

**Significance of the Study**

The field of adult education has not adequately addressed the problem delineated in this study. It has long been shown adults with limited education are less likely to participate in adult education but little is known about their attitudes—beliefs and values in adult education. Adolph and Whaley (1967) advise, “it is of interest for professional adult educators to investigate the attitudes toward adult education of various social groupings as a partial indication of support for adult education programs” (p. 152). Interestingly, over
forty years later and researchers have conducted limited research to ascertain attitudes toward adult education among individuals without a high school diploma or GED. A major concern in the field of adult education is the lack of information about why more adults, especially those who might benefit the most do not participate (Boeren, 2011; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Boeren (2009) explains participation is best understood when “attitude and self-respect interact with the values and expectations of participation” (p. 159). The research will benefit several stakeholders, such as adults without a high school diploma or GED, educators, practitioners, organizations, and researchers in the field of adult education. Information about attitudes might help stakeholders to understand barriers to participation. “Fostering a spirit of inquiry and curiosity enhances the learner, leaving behind positive residues in addition to the information acquired” during the process (Smith, 1983, p. 54). Participation among adults with the least education is almost non-existent (Merriam & Brockett, 2007); and researchers have not pursued the reasons for this oversight. With these data, educators and researchers can be better equipped to develop curriculum and instruction more aligned to the needs of adults without a high school diploma or GED.

Importantly, findings can help educators and practitioners to develop strategies to increase positive attitudes among adults without a high school diploma or GED, and thereby, increase participation in adult education whether formally or non-formally. Darkenwald and Hayes (1990) reaffirmed the
argument put forward by Adolph and Whaley (1967) who suggested “since attitudes are sociogenic or learned by individuals and groups, adult educators can make appropriate compensation for existing attitudes and attempt to modify them in order to increase readiness for adult learning activities” (p. 152).

I employed a mixed methods design for this study. First, participants responded to the AACES to determine their attitudes toward adult education. In addition, I collected demographic data to ascertain differences for age, gender, and race/ethnicity on attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Second, I interviewed eight participants using 13 open-ended, semi-structured questions about their attitudes toward adult education and participation in adult education.

**Theoretical Framework**

An important construct in adult education participation theories is attitudes toward adult education (Adolph & Whaley, 1967; Blunt & Yang, 2002; Garry, 1977; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Jansen, 1970; Yang, 1988). According to Knowles’ (1970) theory of andragogy, adults by nature are motivated and have positive attitudes towards learning activities whether formal or non-formal. Attitudes, Cross (1981) suggests, fall under the category of dispositional barriers to participation in adult education. Internal or dispositional barriers to participation in adult education are associated with personal attitudes, such as thinking, education is not important to self-actualize (Falasca, 2011). Research over the last 30 years have examined Cross’s theory
on situational and institutional barriers to participation in adult education (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Falasca, 2011; Stamouli, 2010; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990), but additional research needs to be done on attitudes especially among individuals with low-education attainment.

The Adults’ Attitudes Toward Continuing Education Scale (1986) and Adults’ Attitudes Toward Adult Education (1990) developed by Darkenwald and Hayes to measure the construct of attitudes. The researchers developed the scale to assess adults’ attitudes toward adult education. They divided the construct of “attitude” into three sections: enjoyment of learning, importance of adult education, and intrinsic value of adult education. Note, “attitudes are significant not only in affecting adults’ participation in adult and continuing education, but also are of potential importance to determining their support of adult education programs” (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988, p. 2). The enjoyment of learning aligns with the individual; this is the personal level of attitudes. The enjoyment of learning can be situational or contextual—where the enjoyment comes from learning about topics within the individual’s interest. The individual’s environment shapes the perceptions and beliefs, which influences the importance and intrinsic value placed on adult education that will help to drive one’s attitudes toward adult and continuing education.

Rubenson’s (1977) Expectancy Valence Model resonated with Darkenwald and Hayes and led to their development of the AACES instrument
in 1986. Rubenson’s model was building on Vroom’s 1964 Valence-Expectancy Theory (Howard, 1989). Vroom (1964) points out there are three assumptions in determining valence and expectancy: first, anticipation of reward energizes individual behavior; second, perceived value of various outcomes gives direction to individual behavior; and third, learned connections develop between behavior and outcome expectancy. In Figure 1, the individual learner is at the center of Rubenson’s (1977) model where the individual’s perception of their environment, personal value, and the value of participating in adult education will influence their decision to participate in adult education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1980). Boeren et al. (2010) explained Rubenson’s (1977) Expectancy Valence Theory Model as follows:

Rubenson’s model is an interaction between the individual and his environment. On a personal level, previous educational experience, individual needs, and personal characteristics play a role. As for the environment, the most important variables are the individual’s own welfare, the standards of that person’s reference group, and the availability of educational opportunities. The valence in the model refers to the value that an individual attaches to the participation, and the expectancy refers to specific hopes with regard to successful participation in an educational activity. A combination of valence and expectancy can lead to a motivational force, which can in turn inspire participation in an educational activity. (p. 54)

Jarvis and Griffin (2003) explained “education, like work, appears to be an achievement-oriented activity, meaning that people who want to “get ahead” will put effort into personal achievement in school or on the job” (p. 44). Figure 2 shows how attitudes bounded by value of education and expectancy of
outcome (positive or negative) will influence the individual’s educational intentions and participation in adult education.

The strength of the intention will determine if the individual will participate or not participate in adult education and learning activities. Therefore, adults will participate or have strong attitudes towards education because of their environment and life experiences (Knowles et al., 2005).

![Diagram of Attitudes Toward Education](image)

**Figure 2.** Attitude is a dispositional force. Expectancy of outcome may impact individuals’ attitudes toward adult education, which might help to determine whether they participate or not participate.

**Delimitations**

While there are several other factors that contribute to adults’ without high school diploma or GED participation or lack of participation in adult and continuing education, the current research is only interested in the participants’ attitudes—values and beliefs toward adult education. I examined attitudes as
outlined in the AACES survey instrument by Darkenwald and Hayes (1990). Therefore, this study did not examine the impact of socioeconomic levels and parents’ education attainment. Also, I understand that there are several factors that shape and affect adults’ attitudes toward adult education; however, in this study I did not examine the factors that shape or impact attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. In this study, I did not look at the relationship between attitudes and participation in adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED.

**Limitations of the Study**

Shortcomings in the research methodology contributed to the limitations discovered in this study. First, while the participants were GED students, I did not assess reading level of adult learners without a high school diploma, as I did not have access to the students’ reading levels and TABE score. Second, for this study, I elected to use convenience sampling and I sought only the participation of adult learners from within Hillsborough County, Tampa, Florida. Hence, the recommendations provided in this study for the sample studied should be understood within that context. Finally, the self-reported data collected during the face-to-face interviews and the surveys may contain potential biases. Although, I assured the participants their responses were anonymous, they might still feel the needed to provide responses that would align with the values and expectations of the institutions where they are studying.
Definition of Terms

I used the following terms and their definitions in this study:

**Adults:** For the purpose of this study, adults are individuals over the age of 18 years.

**Adult Basic Education (ABE):** refers to programs designed for adults over the age of sixteen who do not have a high school diploma and who no longer attend traditional secondary education programs. Learners are instructed in basic skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and other skills necessary to function in society (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy [NCSALL], 2003).

**Adults’ Attitudes Toward Continuing Education Scale or Adults’ Attitudes Toward Adult Education Scale (AACES):** The study utilized the Adults’ Attitudes Toward Continuing Education Scale, survey instrument to collect the data. The scale measures the construct of attitudes toward adult education, and continuing education (Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990).

**Adult Education:** Houle (1972) defined adult education as

The process by which men and women (along, in groups, or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge, or sensitiveness; or it is any process by which individuals, groups, or institutions try to help men and women improve in these ways. (p. 32)
Attitudes: Attitudes for the purpose of this study refer to the individual’s positive or negative (favorable or unfavorable) feelings, beliefs, perception and value of adult education and education systems (Hayes & Darkenwald, 1986).

Continuing Education: “Any credit and non-credit classes, workshops, seminars, discussion groups, conferences, training programs, any other intentional or organized learning activity for adults who have completed or interrupted their formal schooling” (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988, p. 5).

General Educational Development (GED): The GED is the high school equivalent certificate for individuals who did not earn a high school diploma. The GED consists of five tests: mathematics, social studies, science, interpretation of literature and essay writing (NCSALL, 2005).

High School Dropout: A high school dropout refers to an individual who did not graduate from high school or completed a state-or-district approved K through 12 education program. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011)

Participation in adult education: Adults’ engagement in adult education, continuing education, and lifelong learning whether formal, informal or non-formal (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the study, and presents the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and the significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations, limitations of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 includes a review of related literature concerning education statistics,
dropouts, participation in adult education, barriers and deterrents to participation, adult learning principles, and attitudes. Chapter 3 presents the procedures I utilized in this study, including the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and the data analysis. In chapter 4, I offer the findings of the study. Chapter 5 supplies a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter offers a review of the extant literature and research as they relate to adult education and adults who have not completed high school or acquired a GED certificate. The parts of this chapter include education statistics, dropouts, and participation in adult education, barriers and deterrents to participation, adult learning principles, attitudes, and attitudes toward adult education scale (AACES). Educational attainment statistics provide data on the enormity of the problem where a large portion of the US adult population is without a high school diploma or GED. Additionally, this problem can be attributed to the low graduation rate experienced by several high schools in recent years (Child Trends, 2014). Also, researchers in the field of adult education have examined participation in education among adults for more than 40 years (Merriam & Bierema, 2014) and have found participation and values varies based on individuals’ educational attainment.

Education Statistics

The OECD 2012 report asserts the United States of America (USA) was ranked 22nd among 27 countries in education. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014), in its report the Condition of Education, reported that 3.1 million high school students graduated with a regular diploma in 2011 – 2012
school year, a graduation rate of 81 per cent. Florida's graduation rate for the same period was 75 per cent (Ed Data Express, 2014). As seen in Figure 3, over 2.5 million (approximately 13%) Floridians between the ages of 25 and 64 years do not have a high school diploma or GED (Statista, 2015). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) argued the US economy could have benefited from almost 320 billion in income had the 2008 drop-out cohort graduated from high school. Both the economy and society might be able to salvage something (Burrus & Roberts, 2012) if adults without high school diploma or GED are encouraged to participate in learning activities.

Boberiene (2013) explains almost 12 million Americans are unemployed and almost 3 million have stopped looking for work as long-term unemployment remains at an all-time high. The US Department of Education (2009) reports individuals without a high school diploma or GED will suffer from lost wages of approximately $700,000.00 over their lifetime. Lamm et al. (2005) note

These are sobering statistics when contrasted with the reality of a workplace that continues to require increased literacy, more education, enhanced technical skills, and the ability to embark on careers that require lifelong learning. Without the skills and training that schooling should provide, those who do not complete their education face a lifetime of limited opportunities or even possibly a life of delinquency and crime. (p. 1)

Oesch (2010) explains, “unemployment disproportionately affects low-skilled workers and there is a decline in the demand for low-skilled workers” (p. 39). Similarly, Boberiene (2013) argues
Despite high levels of unemployment, nearly a third of American companies had positions open for more than 6 months that they could not fill. This is often explained by a skill mismatch—many graduates are not specializing in manufacturing and engineering. However, results of employer surveys provide nuance. The Manufacturing Institute found that the most commonly reported skill deficiency among manufacturing workers was inadequate problem-solving skills, followed by a lack of basic employability skills. (p. 351)

A 2008 brief published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) speaks to the growing problem of low-level education among the adult population and agrees these adults often lack the skills needed to succeed in
the labor market. The NCES Institute of Education Sciences (2008) suggest “one way to overcome this skill disadvantage is to participate in learning activities offered through the formal education system, at the workplace, or by other organizations” (para. 1). For some adults, financial burden is the biggest barrier to participation in adult education. The NCES (2008) cited cost as a barrier to participation, for adults with low-level education. Hence, it might be necessary for the federal government to invest in adults with low education, with an expected return on investment of lower unemployment rate and an educated society (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Cardoza, 2013; Hollands, Bowden, Belfield, Levin, Cheng, Shand, Pan, & Hanisch-Cerda, 2013). Furthermore, as individuals make more money they spend more, thus, driving the economy.

Drop-outs

In 2012, the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) reported approximately 15% of the US population dropped out of high school and had not achieved a high school diploma or its equivalent. Dropping-out of high school or prior to high school has negative consequences for future employment, life outcomes, mortality and they are generally less healthy with a greater need for medical care (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Child Trends, 2014; National Dropout Prevention Center, 2015). “Young people who drop out of high school are unlikely to have the minimum skills and credentials necessary to function in today’s increasingly complex society and technology-dependent workplace” (Child Trends, 2014, p. 2).
The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) contends

Fifty years ago, the nation could afford to lose large numbers of students before graduation because high school dropouts could still land well-paying jobs and support their families. However, times have changed. Today, jobs that require relatively little education are increasingly done by machines or shipped overseas, and individuals who fail to earn a high school diploma are at a great disadvantage. (p. 5)

In 2014, 3,030,000 adolescents dropped out of school, on average 8,300 per day and one every nine seconds. Of the 3,030,000 students who dropped out of school in 2014, 36% dropped out at ninth grade (Statistics Brain, 2015).

Researchers found there is a hefty price tag attached to the group of students who drop out annually, the economy will miss over $200 billion dollars in lost income and unrealized tax revenue (Hollands et al., 2013; National Dropout Prevention Center, 2015.) Not only do dropouts affect the country economically, but also there are serious implications for crime, health, and the school system (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Cardoza, 2013; National Dropout Prevention Center, 2015; National High School Center, 2007).

The Justice Policy Institute (2007) reports there are links between crime rate and educational attainment. In a report, Education and Public Safety, researchers found a “relationship between high school graduation rates and crime rates, and a relationship between educational attainment and the likelihood of incarceration” (Justice Policy Institute, 2007, pg. 1). National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (n.d.) asserts, “high school drop outs are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime.” Of the over 2 million prisoners in America, 75% in state prisons did not complete high
school and 59% of those incarcerated in US federal prisons did not complete high school (Harlow, 2003; National Dropout Prevention Center, 2015; Statistics Brain, 2015). Individuals without a high school diploma were more likely to be repeated offenders—77% had served a prior sentence (Seattle Job Initiative, 2012). Harlow (2003) and Bureau of Justice (2014) note educational programs were being offered to prisoners while incarcerated but serious efforts should be made to prevent individuals, especially high school dropouts from entering the correctional system.

While crime and unemployment seem to pose the greatest hazard for students who drop out of school and society, health factors are also alarming. It should be noted that researchers in health care are sounding the alarm about the negative impact low-education can have on one’s health over a lifetime. Education has been added as a predictor in determining health outcomes by researchers and based on the research it is one of the strongest predictors as better health is associated with more schooling (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Freudenberg and Ruglis (2007) further suggest education has the greatest impact on health and having a high school diploma does make a difference. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2013) in its report claims

Improved academic achievement can lead to better health outcomes at all levels of education. The City University of New York School of Public Health’s Nicholas Freudenberg offered surprising data about the impact of the dropout crisis on life expectancy. In the year 2000, lack of a high school diploma was associated with nearly 245,000 deaths. High school graduation is connected to lower stress, better access to health care and improved cognitive capacity—all key elements of health protection. (para. 5)
Unfortunately, not many researchers and policymakers highlight the health risk associated with low literacy as much as economy and crime but “improving literacy would not only make for a safer and more prosperous country, but also a healthier one” (Cardoza, 2013, para. 14). The National Bureau of Economic Research (2015) presented compelling data to support the need for adults to have at least a high school diploma as “an additional four years of education lowers five-year mortality by 1.8 percentage points; it also reduces the risk of heart disease by 2.16 percentage points, and the risk of diabetes by 1.3 percentage points” (para. 1). “The less schooling people have, the higher their levels of risky behaviors such as smoking, being overweight, or having a low level of physical activity” (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007, p. 1). Hence, the disadvantage of not having at minimum a high school diploma goes beyond a good economy and personal income.

Furthermore, parents or guardians with low educational attainment are more likely to perpetuate generational poverty and low education attainment in future generations; as the children are more likely not to complete high school (Bertrand, 1962; Ingrum, 2006; Tierney, 2002; Vargas, 2013). The OECD (2012) indicated, “the odds that a young person in the U.S. will be in higher education if his or her parents do not have an upper secondary education are just 29%—one of the lowest levels among OECD countries” (para. 2). Further, studies conducted on student success revealed if parents have limited education, their chances of making it to college is significantly lower to those students whose
parent have earned a college degree (Cardoza, 2013; Ingrum, 2006; Vargas, 2013; Vernez & Mizell, 2001). The reason is intuitive as “parents who place a low value on high school education transfer this low value to their children, thereby increasing their chances of dropping out of high school” (Ingrum, 2006, p. 73). Cardoza (2013) explains that educating adults have a multiplier effect, as “parents who are literate are more likely to be involved in their child’s schoolwork. And research shows this in turn results in higher test scores, better attendance and improved graduation rates” (para. 27). Therefore, actively engaging adults without a high school diploma or GED will serve as a method of prevention for their children becoming high school dropouts.

**Participation in Adult Education**

It is important to examine participation in adult education. Participation in adult education has been an important area for researchers and studies in participation has increased in recent years (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Adult education researchers over the last three decades have focused their attention on participation in adult education and the barriers to participation. White (2012) explains participation in adult learning has been “well documented over the last two decades, with researchers using large scale survey data from several sources to compare the characteristics of those who participate in episodes of learning during adulthood with those who do not” (p. 155). Understanding participation patterns and barriers among adult learners is
necessary in the field of adult education (Boeren, 2011; Courtney, 1992). Bariso (2008) explains

Widening participation in lifelong learning and the learning society have become policy watchwords in many countries since the early 1990s. Many educationalists and policy makers believe that learning throughout one’s life span has a key role to attain governments’ policy ambitions and citizens personal objectives in what is variously referred to as the ‘information’, ‘knowledge’, or ‘learning’ society. (p. 111)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2002) participation patterns vary and adults participate in adult education for various reasons, the most common types of adult education are work-related courses, non-work related, adult basic education and credential programs. Data collected by NCES (2002) indicated an upward trend in participation between 1991 and 1999 and NCES further explains “participation rates increase among the following: all age groups except those ages 35-44, both men and women, all racial/ethnic groups, all education levels, all labor force groups, and all occupation groups except those in professional or managerial positions” (p. 8). "A starting point for understanding the adult learner is to look at who actually participates in adult learning and what they learn” (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 130). Research in participation in adult education has been extensive and well documented over the last three decades. To the researchers’ credit, several valuable large-scale surveys are now available to all the stakeholders interested in further improving the work being done on the behavior of adult learners. (Merriam & Brockett, 2007; White, 2012).
Jurmo (2010) states basic adult education over the years had focused on preparing individuals for the workforce. Jacobs (2006) argues the “emergence of human resource development (HRD), in the late 1980s, which generally emphasizes the workplace side of adult education, has forced many Adult Education professionals to reexamine their field and in some instances, reexamines their affiliation with the field” (p. 21). There are several calls for Practitioners and policymakers to adopt a worker-centered approach to adult basic education, where the needs of the workers are met as they align their learning with the organizational needs (Jurmo, 2010). According to Doray and Rubenson (1997),

In the contemporary context of economic and technological change, implementing this “lifelong learning approach” is considered by many political, economic, and educational agencies to be a necessary educational development. Adult education resources must be mobilized to meet the shift to knowledge-based jobs and retain people whose jobs have changed or disappeared. Adult education resources must help make the passage from bureaucratic organizational paradigm to a flexible organizational paradigm. (p. 39)

Livingstone and Raykov (2008) conducted a study with 2,895 non-managerial employees aged 25 to 64 using the Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL) Survey. The researchers analyzed general demographic data such as age, gender and education attainment. The researcher hypothesized that workers who had more power in the workplace were more likely to participate in workplace learning. In addition, these workers were more likely to participate in adult educational courses and informal learning. In this study, the researchers also examined the relationship between
participation in adult learning and workers who are union members and non-union members. The researchers further hypothesized that workers who were involved in decision making of the organization would be more able to participate in learning activities.

The findings of the study revealed that union members were more likely to participate in adult education and some aspects of job-related informal learning. In addition, workers who were involved in decision making of the organization were more likely to participate in learning activities. Livingstone’s study illustrates the impact membership with a union and decision making have on workers participation in adult education. Workers who felt valued and supported in the workplace were more likely to participate in adult education. The findings have implication for both researchers and practitioners who are interested in increasing participation in education among adults especially in the workplace. A limitation of Livingstone and Raykov’s research was the failure to analyze the level of educational achievement of the workers. An analysis of these data might better serve the field of adult education and provide information on how to help motivate and engage those who are less educated.

Smith and Smith (2008) investigated participation in education among low-educated adults. The researchers examined the relationship between low-education adults’ and informal learning activities. The study used data collected for the 2005 National Household Education Survey (NHES). The researchers asked respondents about their informal learning activities. They
responded to six questions relating to reading and computer activities one year prior to the data analysis. The six activities included using computer software, reading books/manuals/TV, reading how-to magazines, attending book club, attending a convention, and other types of informal learning. For the study, they collected data from 8,904 adults, ages 16 and older. Three thousand five hundred and eighteen adult took part in the study. The participants included adults without a high school diploma who had not taken GED classes, adults without a high school diploma but who had taken GED classes within the past year, and adults with a high school diploma or GED certificate as the highest educational attainment. The researchers contacted participants by phone and administered computer-assisted interviews. They collected demographic data such as gender, age, and ethnicity from the respondents.

The results revealed adults with the lowest educational attainment were least likely to participate in informal learning activities. The adults without a high school diploma or GED, who did not participate in adult basic education (ABE), were less likely to participate in informal learning activities. There was a significant difference between gender and participation in informal learning activities. Males were more likely to use books, manuals, video tapes, and television. Females were more likely to attend convention or conferences and to attend book clubs, sport-related club, health related support groups. The findings from the study revealed significant relationship between ethnicity and four of the six learning activities. White adults were more likely to participate in
computer software tutorials or the internet, reading how-to magazines, attending a book or sport-related support group, participating in arts and crafts groups, and attending a convention or conference than other ethnicities. Finally, analyses revealed significance by age. The older adults were more likely to use computer software tutorials or the internet for learning; read books, manuals or use TV; and attend conference or conventions than the younger adults.

The findings from Smith and Smith (2008) revealed similar findings to a study conducted by Johnstone and Rivera (1965) and White (2012) which revealed adults with higher education attainment were more likely to participate in adult education. This study however, specifically investigated participation patterns of adults who are low educated. One limitation of the study, the researchers did not collect data on the participants' access to computer, internet and other technologies. Access to technology and internet connection would provide more information about individuals' lack of interest or failed to participate because the variables measured were not available to them. The lack of high school diploma or GED does not provide the reading levels of the participants. Individual differences in reading level could be a barrier to participation.

Taylor’s (2006) research investigated informal learning engagement of adults with low literacy skills in Canada. In Taylor’s (2006) study, the researcher more far reaching that Smith and Smith (2008) confirmed access is a barrier to
participation among adult learners but argues researchers need to investigate further the specific barriers to adults with little formal education. Taylor (2006) argues adults with less than a high school diploma; below a 12th grade-reading level would require educators to develop learning strategies appropriate for their reading level. The researcher used an ethnographic approach in the study.

Ten participants took part in the study, six male and four females. Data collection spanned over a three-month period. Data collection methods included an informal learning survey, an in-home observation, observations in the community and work, semi-structured interviews and collections of artifacts. The researchers employed modified version of the Informal Adult Learning Survey (IALS) to administer the oral survey. The Canadian IALS measures reading level of adults. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between informal learning activities among adults with low or limited literacy skills and engagement in literacy activities and practices. The researcher wanted to examine the types of learning activities low literacy adults participated in outside of formal and non-formal learning.

Based on the demographic data and IALS, the researcher categorized four adults as IALS level 1 and 6 were IALS level 2. The IALS levels one and two readers fall in the range of non-readers to readers who can only read simple print materials. The ages of the participants were between 30 and 45 years. The findings revealed adults with limited literacy performed essential life roles such as
parenting, supporting partner or family members, volunteering, and working in the same way adults that are more literate do. The data collected indicated adults with low literacy participated in informal learning in their roles as volunteers and while engaging in hobbies and leisure activities. Findings from the research revealed participation in informal learning started as a means of strengthening and maintaining quality of life. Also, an emerging pattern seen from the results was most of the informal learning took place at home, in the community and in the workplace. Researchers found that most of the learning in the homes was shorter, intentional, conscious, and self-directed. Again, the data revealed informal learning in the community and neighborhood was self-directed and incidental. While informal learning in the workplace was unintentional but conscious.

The investigators found in the practice of everyday literacy activities participants most often practice oral communication skills. In addition, the study revealed low literacy adults informal learning activities included numeracy and problem-solving skills. Taylor’s (2006) study has implication for research, practice, and policy. The findings outlined informal literacy practices of adults with limited literacy skills. Practitioners and educators can use this type of information to determine learning styles of low literacy adults and develop programs better suited to their learning needs. These data sheds light on information that those concerned can use in decision-making and policies as they relate to the future and value of informal learning in the workplace and formal education.
In a study conducted by Parsons and Langenbach (1993), the researchers investigated why prisoners participate in educational programs in the prison system. The researcher used Houle’s typology as a framework for the study. The researchers explained the correctional system acknowledged and believed rehabilitation is as crucial as punishment. Parsons and Langenbach (1993) further, pointed out several studies have been conducted on the need for educational programs in the penal system and the importance of those programs for rehabilitation. Boshier’s 40 item Educational Participation Scale (EPS) and Prison Educational Participation Scale (PEPS) were used to measure participants learning type. The researchers recruited 150 volunteers from 350 male prisoners within minimum to medium security facilities. The researchers noted the number of participants was less than the 200-400 needed for reliability. The volunteers were enrolled in General Educational Development (GED) classes. Researchers used a four-factor analysis (cognitive control, goal orientation, activity orientation, and avoidance posture) to assess the type of learners.

Based on the statistical data collected, mean score for goal orientation, activity orientation, and learning orientation were higher than avoidance posture. Data revealed some prisoners used educational programs to avoid unpleasant features of their environment. However, the findings indicated avoidance posture was not a strong motivation for participation in the educational programs when compared to the other three factors.
The first limitation of the study, the researchers did not collect data on the age and race, which could provide understanding of the learners. Second, the researchers did not collect data on the reason for the prisoner’s detention. This information would be useful to determine the relationship between crime and the type of learner. The researchers suggest using a 30-item instrument for this population and sample size for further studies.

The previous studies examined participation patterns and the type of learners who participate in adult education and lifelong learning. Kyndt, Dochy, Onghena, and Baert (2012) for their study looked at learning intentions. The researchers examined the learning intentions of low-qualified employees. Kyndt et al. (2012) explained, “learning intention is considered a proximal determinant of participation in education and training” (p. 168). This was a cross-sectional, survey-based study. The study included 246 low-qualified employees from eight different organizations in Belgium. The researchers selected the participants from 17 organizations and 301 employees. Organizations included in the study had 10 or more respondents to the survey. None of the participants was qualified to apply for higher education; some had vocational certificates, which are not equivalent to a secondary diploma.

The researchers constructed a two-part questionnaire instrument developed by Kyndt et al. in 2011. The first part of the questionnaire was used to collected data on participants’ demographic, employment, and educational attainment information. The second part captured the learning intention data.
The instrument also measured self-directedness, financial satisfaction, perceived task variety, job retention, and perceived support of the organization. The human resources departments of the participating companies distributed the questionnaires to the participants in the study. The study investigated the relationship between learning intentions of low-qualified employees and perceived support from the organization, self-directedness, job retention and satisfaction and financial satisfaction of employees. The researchers examined 11 hypotheses for this study using ANOVA and factorial analysis.

The results for learning intentions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean learning intention was not statistically significant. On average, the learning intentions for low-qualified workers were low. The low-qualified employees also had low perceptions of organizational support. The data revealed organizational support, self-directedness and financial satisfaction positively predict learning intentions. Again, the results gained from the analysis indicated job retention predicted learning intentions when interacted with financial satisfaction and organizational support. The findings of the study revealed organizational level serves as a predictor for the relationship between learning intention and participation behavior. Further, the research revealed women had less expansive learning intentions than men did. There was no evidence of age difference for learning intentions.

The study conduct by Kyndt et al. (2012) looked at a marginalized group of the adult population where research has been limited. The study however,
did not look at the barriers to participation for low-qualified adults in this study. Also, the study examined learning intentions for formal learning. For low-qualified workers it would be good to get data on their learning intentions for non-formal learning and their current participation in informal learning. Kyndt et al. (2012) argue

The need to enhance this learning intention comes to the fore since learning and training can improve the vulnerable labor market position of these employees. In addition, the perceived support of the organization to learn is also quite low, meaning that low-qualified do not feel supported by their employers to participate in formal learning opportunities. (p. 181)

Research in adult participation over the last four decades supports the notion that adults with initial formal training in the early phase of an individual’s life are more likely to participate in adult and continuing education continuously or periodically throughout adulthood (Courtney, 1992; Ingrum, 2006; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). In 1994, Belanger’s study of seven industrialized countries, which included 200 million adults under the age 65 revealed that approximately 75 million participated in organized learning activities over a 12-month period. But, “precisely because initial education is closely correlated to adult education participation, the general tendency towards an increase in the level of the initial formal education of adults" (Belanger, 1997, p. 5). Further, “those who have had access to better and longer initial education tend, throughout their lives to participate more in organized learning activities” (p. 5). The research supports the need to find new
ways to increase motivation and change attitudes towards adult and continuing education among those who have limited formal education.

Data collected in participation in adult education have shown that individuals from lower socioeconomic levels and individuals with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to have less positive attitudes toward education and are least likely to participate (Cardoza, 2013; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Wikelund et al., 1992). Therefore, the individual’s need for and the value of learning can be influenced by their environment. According to Darkenwald (1981) adult education, theorists over the years have seen the value and the significance of expectancy theory in understanding barriers (internal and external) in predicting high school dropout rate.

**Barriers and Deterrents to Participation**

Over the last 30 years, the studies in adult education reveal the extensive research carried out on barriers and deterrents to participation in adult and continuing education (Blunt & Yang, 2002; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990; Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Researchers want to have a clearer understanding of how to increase participation in adult education and encourage learners to become lifelong learners. Valentine and Darkenwald (1990), admit adult educators and practitioners face one of the toughest challenges in the field to help adult learners overcome difficulties that prevent them from participating in learning
activities. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) posit barriers can be broken into two main categories, external barriers (situational) and internal barriers (dispositional). External barriers are defined as “influences more or less external to the individual or at least beyond the individual’s control” (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965, p. 214) and internal barriers are the individual’s “personal attitudes such as thinking one is too old to learn or not capable to learn” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 57). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) further break down internal/dispositional barrier into sub categories of psychosocial and informal obstacles. Cross (1981) posits a third category to participation barrier, institutional barrier—“all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in education activities” (p. 98).

These three categories can be further broken down into six areas: lack of confidence, lack of course relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, cost, and personal problems (Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990). The field of adult education has available well-defined and extensive data on barriers and deterrents to participation in adult education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), but research conducted to examine psychosocial barriers (dispositional) which assess beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions about education or about oneself as a learner is limited. Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory emphasizes the importance of individual’s meeting their psychological needs before they can address the individual’s need for self-actualization (Figure 4), which includes participation in adult education. That is, individuals first want to
fulfil their basic needs for safety, survival, and belonging before moving up the hierarchy of needs’ ladder.

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](image)

Figure 4. Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory, steps to self-actualization.

However, Cross (1981) suggests there are several factors that influences human behavior, see Figure 5 for Cross’ chain response model. According to Cross (1981), the decision to participate in adult education is complex and the learners must consider the dispositional and situational barriers before they can make a commitment to participate in adult education. Once, the adult learner
weights cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors, the individual will determine whether to participate or not to participate. Based on the Chain Response Model the adult learner’s decision to participate in adult education is deliberate, as the learner must take into consideration skill set, benefits of participation, impact on family, and access to providers. Cross (1981) in the Chain Response Model suggest social and psychological factors can influence an adult’s participation in adult education.

Figure 5. Cross’s (1981) Chain Response Model.
In addition, Cross (1981) asserts, adults who are motivated to participate in adult education are more likely to seek out opportunities to overcome less resistant barriers, such as situational barriers. Cross (1981) agrees the adult learner has high expectation of positive outcomes for participating in adult education. While Rubenson’s (1977) expectancy-valence model emphasis the benefits of participation outcomes, Cross (1981) frames a holistic approach taken by the adult learner. The adult learner might be able to overcome all the barriers to participation but the learner will seek to find a good balance before deciding to participate.

Rubenson (1977) agrees with the notion individuals want to provide for their basic and psychological needs as theorized by Maslow (1970). Rubenson (1977) considers education to be an achievement-oriented activity, which individuals expect a positive outcome once completed successfully. Based on Rubenson's (1977) expectancy-valence model, the adult learner will engage in adult education if he or she expects a positive reward from the successful educational achievement.

As shown in Figure 6, the likelihood to increase intention to participation in adult education lies in the individual’s expectancy of a positive outcome from participation in adult education. While, the adult learner takes into consider the social and cognitive barriers to participation in adult education, it is the perceived benefits of participation that will have the greatest impact the individual’s decision to participate or not to participate (Boeren, 2009).
Figure 6. Expectancy of positive outcome from participation in adult education increases the likelihood of participation in adult education among adult learners

**Adult Learning Principles**

Many consider Malcolm Knowles as the father of Andragogy (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Fisher & Podeschi, 1989; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Andragogy is the art and science of adult learning (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1975). Andragogy models differ from pedagogical model because adults’ instructional needs differ from children’s instructional needs. The pivotal point of Knowles’ theory is adults learners want to exercise autonomy and independence as they develop and plan learning activities (Knowles, 1980; Sanders & Conti, 2012; Tough, 1971). Knowles (1980) proposed six basic principles and assumptions for adult learners: (a) adults are ready to learn: adult learners come to their learning experience ready to learn. They are
prepared for the challenges and understand that they need to meet certain requirements to complete a task successfully; (b) adults are motivated: when adults decide to participate in learning activities they are motivated to learn. Most learners are motivated by the course and topic being studied; (c) adults are self-directed: adult learners come to the classroom or learning environment with an aware self-concept.

Not only are they motivated, they also are self-directed. They plan and direct their own learning experience; (d) adults need to know: adult learners differ from young children, as they have a deep desire to know why. They need to know why they are learning and getting the information presented. They need to know how participation will affect their personal and professional life. Learning has to be relevant for the adult learner; (e) adults have experience: educators for adult learners need to be aware that adult learners come to the classroom with a lifetime of experience. Some have more experience than others do. The adult’s experience varies based on age or based on knowledge gain at school or work. The facilitator should consider those experiences when teaching adults; and (f) adults have an orientation to learning: adult learners are far more prepared in solving problems—problems relating to work, personal matters or problems in the classroom. Problem solving skills developed over time and experience gained by adult learners make them more prepared to solve problems. Overall, adult learners take a problem solving approach to life and learning.
The principles provided by Knowles et al. (2005) lay the general framework of how adult learners approach learning and offer educators a template for the development of curriculum and instructions for adults. However, Cross (1976) maintains

People see and make sense of the world in different ways. They give their attention to different aspects of the environment; they approach problems with different methods for solutions; they construct relationships in distinctive patterns; they process information in different but personally consistent way. (p. 115)

Cross supports the position of Freire (1993) and Mezirow (1990, 1991) who believe the learner should be at the foremost center in a learning environment and facilitators should seek to meet the needs of learners in order for true learning to take place.

Attitudes

The attitudes individuals develop toward an object or data will cause them to behave in a consistent way towards the object or data (Asiegbu, Powei, & Iruka, 2012). Siegel and Ramanauskas-Marconi (1989) explained attitude is “a learned tendency to react in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner toward people, objects, ideas, or situations” (p. 28). An individual can develop or grow their attitudes towards an object or a situation and by extension an objection in a particular situation. Therefore, an individual may develop a positive or negative attitude toward learning in a virtual world. Rokeach (1968) explains

We have in mind an attitude-object, which may be concrete or abstract, involving a person, a group, an institution, or an issue. Then the attitude is
focused on a specific situation, an event, or an activity. To say that a person has an enduring attitude toward a given object is to say that this attitude will, when activated, somehow determine his behavior toward the attitude-object, across situations; conversely, to say that a person has an enduring attitude toward a given situation is to say that this attitude will, when activated, determine his behavior toward the situation, across attitude-objects. (p. 530)

One’s attitude toward education (the object) and learning in a particular environment (the situation) can shed light on factors that might determine participation in adult and continuing education but when analyzed together it serves as a better predictor for participation. Additionally, evaluation of attitudes toward adult and continuing education, should take into consideration both formal and informal learning environment.

The learning experience and environment of adult learners should be friendly and stress-free. Merriam and Bierema (2014) suggest a key element of promoting favorable learning attitudes involves eradicating learner anxieties toward failure, public humiliation, disrespectful interpersonal dynamics, or inadequate feedback” (p. 157). Kennedy (1994) states theories of participation are rooted in concepts of motivation, deterrents and attitudes. Further, “an individual’s beliefs, perceptions, values, and attitudes influence a negative or positive attitude toward participation in continuing education programs” (Kennedy, 1994, p. 27).

Attitudes toward education can be understood as having positive or negative feelings toward educational activities. The challenge faced by educators and researchers is to determine whether attitudes predict or
influence participation in education. Brookfield (1986) explains, “as adults we are generally enclosed within our own self histories. We assimilate and gradually integrate behaviors, ideas, and values derived from others until they become so internalized that we define ‘ourselves’ in terms of them” (p. 19). However, values and attitudes change over time, as noted by Rogers (1969), “values are not held rigidly, but are continually changing” (p. 249). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) define adult education as a process where adults engage in organized learning activities in an effort to increase or make changes in their knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills. Hence, as individuals participate in educational activities, they are likely to experience a shift in worldview and reflect on past and present experiences through new lenses (Kolb, 1984). It has been known that adult learners are more likely to engage or participate in learning activities if they believe the journey will improve their lives (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Courtney, 1982; Wlodkowski, 1985).

Therefore, participation among adults is motivated by external factors or because of ingrained values of the importance of learning (Gover & Gavelek, 1997; Houle, 1961; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Smith, 1984; Tough, 1971; Vroom, 1964). Prior learning is the best predictor for participation in adult and continuing education (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965) but importance of prior learning stems from the attitude and value placed on education and learning in early development (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988, Freire, 1993). Wiklund et al. (1992) put forward
The direction of the educational attainment variable as consistently the most powerful predictor of participation indicates the strong relationship of adult education and schooling in people’s experience. Individuals with low educational attainment who may well have had negative experiences with their formal schooling will be unlikely to place themselves voluntarily in school-like settings again unless the reward they perceive clearly outweigh their negative expectations for experience. (p. 9)

Lack of or low motivation to participate in adult learning is best understood in how an individual views and values education, and their overall attitude towards learning. The experiences of the individual and his or her paradigm will influence the way learning in a formal or informal setting is viewed (Boeren, 2009; Freire, 1993; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997).

While the research in adult education participation has been wide, Valentine and Darkenwald (1990) identify a major problem with the level and the extent of the research being done in the area. Whereas, the research is wide, it falls short of “identifying the broad dimensions of deterrence among the population as a whole (or among a specific subpopulation as a whole), thereby masking individual differences and leaving the answer to a quintessentially practical question on an unnecessarily abstract level” (Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990, p. 30). The concept of attitudes is just one area that has not been widely studied as it relates to participation in adult and continuing education (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). Because attitudes are intrinsically tied to an individual’s values and beliefs (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Rokeach, 1968), it is necessary to have a better understanding of its impact on lack of participation in adult and continuing education. Boeren (2011) explains, “attitudes and
beliefs about the behavior, in our case of participation in adult education, will lead to the development of an intention or non-intention to participate” (p. 371). Individuals’ over time become comfortable with their lives as they are well engrained in their values and beliefs unless they are forced to by circumstances or external forces to examine new way of thinking, behaving, and living (Brookfield, 1986; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1990).

**Attitudes Toward Adult Education Scale (AACES).** Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) submitted that scales used to measure attitudes failed to accurately predict behavior in adult education. Further, the researchers noted

> Surprisingly, very few attempts have been made to assess adults’ attitudes toward further education. In order to gain a better understanding of these attitudes and their relationship to behavior, such as participation in adult education there is a need for a valid and reliable means of assessment. (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988, p. 2)

The developers created the AACES after failed attempts by Adolph and Whaley (1967) and Blunt (1983) to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure adults’ attitudes to continuing and adult education (Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990). The previous two scales did not differentiate between the factors of attitudes such as attitude-to-object and attitude-to-situation among adult learners (Blunt & Yang, 1990; Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). Hence, Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) developed their scale to study the factors of attitudes and drew upon the definition of attitudes offered by Rokeach (1968) as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner” (p. 112). Darkenwald and Hayes (1988,
1990) wanted to measure the construct of attitudes with the factors of participants’ attitude-to-object and attitude-to-situation. The AACES developed by Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) and Hayes and Darkenwald (1990) have been used in several studies and recommended as a reliable and valid instrument to measure adults’ attitudes towards adult and continuing education (Blunt & Yang, 2002). Blunt and Yang (2002) conducted a factor structure analysis on the AACES and suggested changes to the instrument but their study concluded the instrument was reliable and valid. A panel of experts evaluated the original 80 items on the AACES 80 and validated 22 items on a five point Likert scale as adequate to measure adults’ attitudes toward adult and continuing education (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) tested the 22-item scale in 1986 for reliability and validity with a sample of 275 participants. The final scale included two factors of attitudes, attitudes-to-situation (seven questions) and attitudes-to-object (fifteen questions). The researchers further decomposed the AACES to reflect three factors in the construct of attitudes: enjoyment of learning activities; importance of adult education; and intrinsic value of adult education.

**Summary**

The need for positive or favorable attitudes toward adult education among the population is necessary to increase and maintain participation in adult education. Seaman and Schroeder (1970) suggest active participation in adult education increases when there are favorable attitudes toward adult
education among various groups in adult educational activities. In 2009, at the beginning of his presidency, Obama emphasized the need for an educated workforce and argued, “every American will need to get more than a high school diploma” (Miller, 2013, para., 1). The president further stated, “America cannot lead the 21st century unless we have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world” (Miller, 2013, para., 1). The country can address the problem first, if leaders develop programs and adopt a school system that prevents students from dropping out before completing K-12 education. Second, educators and government need to find ways to engage the section of the population with low-education (less than a high school diploma). Perin, professor of psychology and education, Columbia University argues “adults can learn new skills at any age and there are adult-geared programs around the country. The challenge is ensuring the programs have quality teaching and that adults regularly attend classes” (New York Post, 2013, para., 22).

The research provides clear evidence of the benefits of participating in adult and continuing education (Child Trends, 2000; Jurmo, 2010; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007) and the pitfalls of not participating and attaining a certain level of education (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Mezirow, 1997; Sparks, 2010). A person with limited or minimal education is likely to encounter challenges that will impact him or her
personally and spill over into the society (economically, and socially). The organization, World Education (2015) argues

A robust adult education system is an economic imperative for the economic prosperity of individuals and the nation. The US is falling behind other countries and cannot compete economically without improving the skills of its workforce. High school graduates and dropouts will find themselves largely left behind in the coming decade as employer demand for workers with postsecondary degrees continues to surge. (para. 10)

The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (2013) published by UNESCO argues “adult education is recognized as an essential element of the right to education, and we need to chart a new and urgent course of action to enable all young people and adults to exercise this right” (p. 40). In the report, leaders call for countries to establish policies on adult education, thereby recognizing the need and the value of learning from cradle to grave (UNESCO, 2013), especially in an informational and technological environment.

Researchers suggest stakeholders should spend more time and effort to reach parents without a high school diploma or GED in an effort to stymie or avert the problem of low educational attainment (Cardoza, 2013; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Ingrum, 2006). As parents' literacy and skills improve, they will be likely to transfer those skills and new values to their children (Cardoza, 2013; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Ingrum, 2006). The impact of not obtaining a high school diploma at minimum has several negative implications for both the individual and society, hence, there need to be more aggressive interventions
programs and effective systems to change attitudes which will likely increase motivation to participate in adult and continuing education.
Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. The chapter offers the design of the study, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Design of the Study

I employed a mixed methods research design for this study in which I used a survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data and semi-structured interview protocol to collect qualitative data. With the mixed methods design, I used the sequential explanatory technique for data analysis. The sequential explanatory design consists of two distinct phases, the quantitative section, and the qualitative section (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). With this design, I first collected and analyzed the quantitative data using descriptive statistics and factorial ANOVA. In the second phase of the study, I analyzed the qualitative data, which provided some insight and explanation for the quantitative results examined in the initial phase (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006).

I utilized the AACES (Appendix A) survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data from the sample. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009)
Survey research involves collecting data to test hypotheses or answer questions about people’s opinions on some topic or issue. A survey is an instrument to collect data that describes one or more characteristics of a specific population. Survey research can be used to gather information about a group’s beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and demographic composition. Survey research requires the collection of standardized quantifiable information from all members of a population or of a sample. (pp. 176-177)

In the second phase of the sequential explanatory design, I conducted face-to-face interviews with eight participants for the qualitative data collection. The sequential explanatory design allowed me to search for connections between the findings of the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study. The rationale for the sequential explanatory design is that the analysis of the quantitative data, followed by the analysis of the qualitative data provide a general understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). The findings of the qualitative data and results of the statistical data provide a clearer and deeper understanding of the participants’ views about attitudes toward adult education (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006; Rossman, & Wilson, 1985).

First, I surveyed 350 adult learners without a high school diploma or GED with the Adults’ Attitudes Toward Adult Education Scale (AACES) by Hayes and Darkenwald (1990) to the collect quantitative data. Second, I interviewed eight adult learners without a high school or GED who volunteered to participate in the face-to-face interviews after they completed the survey. Participants responded to 13 semi-structured questions (Appendix B) for
approximately 8 to 45 minutes. The interview protocol developed for this study adopted the interview format by Meletiou-Mavrotheris, Lee, and Fouladi (2007).

**Population and Sample.** The study included 350 adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. For this study, I recruited participants from the Hillsborough County Public School District (HCPS) and Hillsborough Community College (HCC) - Operation College program (GED Program). Both institutions are located in Tampa, Florida. I received written approval (dated October 22, 2015, approval # RR1516-33) to survey and interview adult learners within the District’s Adult Learning Centers by HCPS’ Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation office (Appendix C). The 350 study participants surveyed were adult learners from HCPS, eight Adult Learning Centers and the HCC GED program. The participants are adult learners currently taking GED classes at either of the two institutions. There are eight central adult centers in the District: Bowers/Whitely Adult School; Brandon Adult School; Chamberlain Adult School; Gary Adult High School; Jefferson Adult School; Lennard Adult School, Leto Adult and Community School, and Plant City Adult School. Hillsborough County Public Schools’ administrators lead and govern the adult learning centers at HCPS and HCC. The adult learning centers offer morning, afternoon, and evening courses. Seven of HCPS’ eight adult learning centers operate between the hours of 1:00 pm and 9:30pm, Monday through Thursday and 7:00 am and 3:00 pm on Fridays. The eighth center opens during regular school hours (between 7:30 am and 4 pm). The HCC, Operation College program offers classes Monday
through Thursday between the hours of 9:30 am and 8:00 pm. Hillsborough Community college designed the College Operation (GED program) to accommodate the varied schedule of the adult learner.

Hillsborough County Public School District offers Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Credits/GED programs for adults without a high school diploma, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for non-native English speakers. Adult learners are required to take the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to determine their math and reading/language art levels in order to place them in appropriate programs. The institutions offer adult education programs designed to improve students’ basic skills in math, reading, and language arts. The objective of the GED courses is to prepare students to complete successfully four subject areas, Language Art Writing, Language Art Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies tests leading to a State of Florida High School Diploma. HCPS and HCC structure the GED programs to accommodate the busy life of adult learners and, therefore, learners can have the flexibility to take classes in the traditional setting or online. The School District has an open policy and the program is open to all adults within the district.

Hillsborough Community College is the seventh largest community college in the State of Florida with a student population of over 46,000. As part of its workforce development program, HCC offers a GED program, Operation College. Operation College is an adult education program offered only at its Ybor City campus. The objective of the program is to prepare students to get a
high school diploma or GED and then transition into HCC or into the career path of their choice. Students are prepared to sit the GED test and classes are conveniently offered in the day and evening to meet the needs of the working adult. Instructors are current or former HCPS teachers. HCC Operation College administrators reviewed the study proposal and agreed to have the adult learners from their GED program participate in the study. I informed HCC administrators that HCPS had approved to have their adult learners included in the study also.

HCC-Operation College and HCPS adult learning centers provided me the best opportunity to locate adults without a high school diploma or GED as both institutions enrolled this population at least three times per year for the GED program. For the purpose of this study, I only solicited adults without high school diploma or GED to participate in the surveys and interviews. Participants’ responses were anonymous, as I did not request any personal identification from them for the surveys. I interviewed eight students to collect data for the qualitative exploration in this research. With the permission of selected HCPS center administrators; I discussed the qualitative portion of the research with the survey participants upon completion of the AACES instrument. I provided the participants with the relevant details pertaining to the face-to-face interviews and solicited their participation. I informed the participants, the research was divided in two parts and I needed to conduct face-to-face interviews for the second section of the study. Further, I gave the participants information on the
amount of time needed to conduct each interview and how the data would collected, and stored. I informed the participants, they are not obligated to participate in the second part of the research and they should only volunteer if they were comfortable in talking about their attitudes and participation in adult education. I explained, the interviews would be conducted at HCPS Adult Learning Centers and they would be reimburse for their time. In addition, selected administrators informed participants about the face-to-face interviews to which interested participants volunteered to participate. On the last night of data collection, one participant volunteered to participate and I agreed. Therefore, I employed convenience sampling to select the eight participants to select interviewees for the qualitative data collection. I compensated interview participants with $10 gift cards for their time. I interviewed all eight participants, who responded to 13 questions as outlined in the interview protocol and the interviews lasted between 8 to 45 minutes. I interviewed participants one to two weeks after they completed the AACES surveys.

Of the eight participants, three were females and five were males. In the group, there were four blacks, one Hispanic, one other, and two whites. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 32 years. The eight interviewees signed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved consent forms prior to the face-to-face interviews. The IRB waived signed consent for those completing only the AACES surveys.
For this study, I needed at least 196 survey respondents on the AACES to conduct a 4 x 4 x 2 factorial ANOVA (Table 1). Cohen (1977) proposes a medium effect size is .30. For the purpose of this study, I elected to use a standard alpha (α = .05) and power of .95 to analyze the quantitative data. Eight participants volunteered for the face-to-face interviews. My goal for the interviews was to get a clearer understanding of participation patterns and perception of adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. I wanted to determine if the qualitative data provided any explanation for the results from the quantitative data.

Table 1

A Priori Power Analysis to Determine Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>α err probability</th>
<th>Power (1-β err probability)</th>
<th>Numerator df</th>
<th>Number of groups</th>
<th>Sample Size (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. f = effect size for F-test in ANOVA; df = degrees of freedom

In qualitative research, the emphasis is on the depth, and therefore, a sample size of eight allowed me to delve into and analyze the views and beliefs (Bonde, 2013; Patton, 2002) of the participants as they relate to attitudes toward adult education and participation in adult education. After interviewing the sixth participant, I realized no new information was unearthed and going
beyond eight would not necessarily reveal any new information or insights, of which “theoretical data saturation can be said to have occurred” (Bonde, 2013, p. 1). According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), a sample of 6 to 12 is sufficient when the research scope is narrow and the target audience has similar background. After interviewing the fifth participant, I realized I had reach the point of saturation.

**Instrument**

I collected quantitative data with the Adults’ *Attitudes Toward Adult Education* Scale (AACES) developed by Darkenwald and Hayes (1990) for this study. I received permission from Hayes (Appendix D) to use and modify the instrument (electronic communication, dated April 14, 2015) as needed for the current study. Hayes currently serves as Chair of the Delbert and Jewell Reading and Literacy and Professor at Arizona State University Teacher’s College. Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) first developed the scale to measure Adults’ *Attitudes Toward Continuing Education* (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). The researchers later modified and validated the scale to measure Attitudes Toward Adult Education (Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990). This study utilized the later version of the AACES to collect quantitative data. The later version uses the phrase Adult Education only. Both versions of the instrument use the acronym AACES (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990). Included on the survey instruments are demographic questions (age, gender, race/ethnicity, education attainment, and family income) about the subjects. Both versions of the
instrument had the Participation Behavior Index (PBI) to measure participants’ participation patterns. However, the current study did not require the use of the PBI. The qualitative data collection methods were face-to-face interviews with eight adult learners from three adult learning centers within HCPS who volunteered for the interviews. The interview protocol I used to collect the qualitative data completed the data collection for the mixed methods study.

In this research, I used a 13-question interview protocol to collect qualitative data. I used the Participation Behavior Index (PBI) by Darkenwald and Hayes (1988) as a guide to develop the interview protocol for this study. Two professors reviewed the interview protocol. Both professors are trained in education research, one specializes in literacy and the other specializes in adult education. Darkenwald and Hayes used the PBI to assess participation in adult and continuing education in both studies. However, I replaced the PBI with the 13-question protocol developed for this study. I developed the questions to capture the themes covered in the PBI and AACES survey.

**Reliability.** The developers of the instrument conducted a reliability test with an initial pool of 80 items to assess attitudes toward adult education. Eleven doctoral students and faculty members in the field of adult education evaluated the items. The panel selected 30 items for the instrument. The researchers conducted a pilot study with 93 participants from diverse sociodemographic backgrounds with a two item analysis procedures as recommended by Likert (1932). The researchers analyzed the instrument for
reliability by using exploratory factor analysis to identify underlying dimensions of attitudes toward continuing education. Analysis included measure of reliability and t-test of the differences between items means for high and low scores of the sample studied (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1988). The researchers dropped eight items after the pilot study. For the study, 275 participants responded to the 22 items questionnaire. Based on the study with the 22 items, alpha reliability was .90 for internal consistency (how closely related the items for measuring attitudes toward adult education) for attitudes as measured by the scale. The researchers categorized the 22 items on the instrument as follows: 15 questions were associated with attitudes towards the object and 7 questions with attitudes towards the situation.

In the second iteration of the AACES (Hayes & Darkenwald, 1990), the researchers conducted cluster analysis and “factor analysis of the data which led to the identification of three main factors of attitudes. The three factors were Enjoyment of Learning, Importance of Adult Education, and Intrinsic Value of Adult Education. The five-cluster solution was the most satisfactory in the evaluation.

**Validity.** A group of doctoral students and faculty members in the College of Education at Rutgers University evaluated the survey instrument for content validity. The panel evaluated attitudes toward adult and continuing education for three constructs: enjoyment of learning activities; importance of adult education; and intrinsic value of adult education. Developers of the
AACES survey divided the 22 items as follows: 7 enjoyment of learning activities; 9 importance of adult education; and 6 intrinsic value of adult education. The research evaluation panel assessed the items for content validity. The AACES' predictive validity was demonstrated by a significant correlation ($r = .39$) between attitude scores and the Participation Behavior Index (which was not be included in this study).

**Data Collection**

I collected the data using the ACCES survey instrument and 13-question interview protocol to answer quantitative and qualitative research questions respectively. Data collection took place over a five-week period, February 4, 2016 to March 8, 2016. I sent email communications to learning center administrators, principals or counselors, which provided an overview of the study with the relevant documents (HCPS approval, IRB approval, and ACCES instrument). I offered the principals and administrators the option to have the survey completed by pencil/pen and paper or electronically. All nine administrators elected to have the survey completed by pencil/pen and paper, which they explained would yield the highest number of participants. I did not use electronic survey, as school administrators agreed to have adult learners complete the surveys during regular school hours. With the permission of seven administrators, I distributed and collected completed surveys during regular class time. Two administrators opted to distribute the surveys over a one-week period and they returned the completed surveys in sealed envelopes after the
one-week period. Both school administrators and I advised adult learners it was not mandatory to participate in the study, as participation was voluntary. For the qualitative data, I chose convenience sampling as the method by which to obtain participants for this exploration. I reimbursed the interview participants for their time with a $10 gift card from either Wal-Mart, Publix, or Burger King.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the eight participants. I asked 13 open-ended questions following the interview protocol in Appendix B as an exemplar for the qualitative data collection. The audio recorded interviews lasted between 8 to 45 minutes. I adopted the interview format developed by Meletiou-Mavrotheris et al. (2007) in my interviews with the eight participants. I did not steer or guide the participants in one direction or another but I presented the questions and provided guidance while not restricting participants’ answers (Meletiou-Mavrotheris et al., 2007). I told the interviewees there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, therefore, they should provide answers that reflected their personal experiences, and beliefs. I used the 13-questions interview protocol for all eight participants to ensure each participant was exposed to all the same questions but the order varied based on the participants’ responses. I gave each participant adequate time to think about their responses to each question. I ensured each participant was comfortable and more importantly, they chose to participate. I asked participants to choose a pseudonym, as I did not use their real name in the study.
At the beginning of each data collection session, I read the instructions to the interviewee and explained the purpose of the study. Also, at the beginning of each session, I gave the interviewees an opportunity to ask questions or address any concerns they had about the study. For the purpose of this study, only adults 18 years and older without a high school diploma or GED were surveyed and interviewed. The instructions for the AACES explicitly stated: (a) completing the ACCES and participating in the face-to-face interview is voluntary, (b) information is not collected for or by Hillsborough County Public Schools, (c) there are no right or wrong answers, (d) participation in this study is confidential, and (e) they must sign a consent form prior to taking the AACES or participating in face-to-face interview.

I collected demographic information from all participants. For this study, the participants were not required to provide their name, school identification or any other personal identification. However, the eight interviewees self-assigned pseudonyms for analysis purposes. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data between February 4, 2016 and March 8, 2016. With the exception of the two administrators who collected the surveys and returned them to me in sealed envelopes, I was the only person who had access to the participants’ surveys. I was the only person who had access the audio recording and transcribed data from the face-to-face interviews. However, I agreed upon completion of the study to provide HCPS and HCC, Operation College with a copy of the findings from this study.
Data Analysis

I analyzed the quantitative data using SAS (V.9.4) statistical software. I conducted descriptive statistics and factorial ANOVA to analyze data collected with the AACES. Descriptive statistics allows the researcher to describe and summarize the data set (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). In this study, I employed a three-way factorial ANOVA to ascertain statistical differences between the independent variables. For the purpose of this study, I analyzed the dependent variable, AACES as a total composite score of the 22-item survey. I did not include survey questionnaires missing three or more questions in the data analysis. Three questions accounted for almost 15% of the questionnaire. Also, I excluded surveys with incomplete data such as age, race and gender from the data analysis. I used thematic coding to analyze the transcripts of the face-to-face interviews with the eight participants.

The following questions guided the development and data collection for this study:

1. What are the attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
2. What are the differences in attitudes toward adult education among the subgroups (age, gender, and race/ethnicity) of adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
3. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED participate in adult education?
4. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?

5. How do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the value of adult education to their professional development?

I calculated a total composite AACES score for each participant by summing the score for each question. I used the Likert Scale to score the AACES survey. Each item had answer response of: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. The scoring for the survey responses were as follows: strongly disagree – 1 point; disagree – 2 points; undecided – 3 points; agree – 4 points; and, strong agree – 5 points. Participants had a possible composite score between 22 points to 110 points from the 22 items. I calculated participants’ mean scores to answer research question one, to determine the average and the range of attitude scores of the sample population. In this study, the frequency distribution shows the range of the participants’ scores. The scores were analyzed using confidence interval of 95% (-1.96, 1.96) for the normal distribution of the sample mean. I conducted a 3-way factorial ANOVA analysis (means and interactions) to assess the score for the sample based on the age groups of participants; percentage of males and females; and percentage of the racial/ethnic make-up of the participants to answer research question two.

For the qualitative data analysis, I transcribed the data from the face-to-face interviews of the eight participants to evaluate the various ways in which
they participate in adult education for research question three. I analyzed the qualitative data for emerging themes to assess how adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of participation in adult education for research question four. Finally, I explored the qualitative data to evaluate how the eight adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceived the benefits of adult education to their professional development.

Qualitative researchers consider a theme as a “phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 139). According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a process of “encoding qualitative information and this may be a list of themes, a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms” (p. vii). I followed all the prescribed procedures to ensure confidentiality of the interviewees’ responses. I was the sole researcher and custodian with access to the data collected from the eight participants interviewed. I removed the names of the participants and all personal information, such as the school and home locations, and names of individuals shared by the eight participants for data analysis. In the study, I replaced interviewees’ names with pseudonyms to protect their privacy.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. In this chapters I present: a) the research questions; b) demographic characteristics of interviewees; c) analysis and rationale of the research questions; d) research questions One and Two; e) discoveries; f) research questions Three, Four, and Five; and g) summary. In this study, I employed a mixed methods design. The first two research questions addressed the quantitative section and the last three research questions addressed the qualitative section of the study.

In this research, I utilized a two-phased mixed methods design to conduct the data analysis. To begin I analyzed and reviewed the quantitative data prior to analyzing the qualitative data. Researchers refer to the two-phased approach used in this study as the sequential explanatory design. I followed the steps outlined in this method; I analyzed and assessed the quantitative data, after which I coded and analyzed of the qualitative data. The rationale for the sequential explanatory design is to determine if the discoveries from qualitative data might provide any explanation, or insight about the results of the quantitative data. Sequential explanatory design allowed me to provide some
explanation and/or build upon the results of the first phase – the quantitative results.

**Research Questions**

The following questions guided the development and data collection for this study:

1. What are the attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?

2. What are the differences in attitudes toward adult education among the subgroups (age, gender, and race/ethnicity) of adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?

3. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED participate in adult education?

4. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?

5. How do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the value of adult education to their professional development?

**Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees**

For this study, I surveyed and interviewed adult learners without a high school diploma or GED from Hillsborough County Public School (HCPS) Adult Learning Centers and Hillsborough Community College (HCC) GED Program – Ybor Campus. Approximately 600 adult learners registered for the GED/high school credit program for Spring 2016 between both institutions, HCPS and HCC.
This number does not include ABE and ESOL learners at the institutions. Registration was ongoing and students could withdraw at any time. HCPS and HCC do not have mandatory attendance policies for their programs; therefore, the adult learner is free to decide when he/she attends classes. Commitment to work, family, and other personal obligations might prevent the learner from attending classes on a regular basis or even completing the program. Approximately 60% of the adult learners registered attend classes on a regular basis. The centers offer Math and English classes twice per week. Three hundred and sixty-five participants responded to the survey, but I only included 350 surveys in the data analysis. Fifteen surveys had incomplete demographic information and/or participants had missed three or more questions on the AACES, and therefore, I did not include them in the analysis of the data. The eight participants interviewed took the AACES prior to their participation in the face-to-face interviews. The interview responses were anonymous to ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, and therefore, it would not be possible to trace data or information back to an individual respondent.

The data presented in Table 2 include the demographic information of the respondents of the Adults’ Attitudes Toward Adult Education Scale (AACES) used in the study. Of the 350 participants, 193 (55.10%) were females, and 157 (44.90%) were males. Of the group, 202 (57.70%) were between the ages 18-24 years, 96 (27.40%) participants were between the ages 25-38 years, 24 (6.90%) participants were between the ages 39-45 years, and 28 (8.0%) participants
were 46 years and above. There were 121 (34.60%) participants who identified themselves as Black, 145 (41.40%) participants identified themselves as Hispanics, 32 (9.10%) participants identified themselves as Other, and 52 (14.90%) participants identified themselves as White.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristic of Adult Learners Without a HSD or GED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>55.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>44.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24 Years</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>57.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 38 Years</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 – 45 Years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 and Above</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>34.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>41.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 350. HSD = High school Diploma; GED = General Educational Development
Analysis and Rationale of Research Questions

I present the data analysis in two sections. In the first section, I address the quantitative analysis pertinent to questions one and two. In the second section, I present the discoveries relevant to the qualitative analysis pertinent to questions three, four, and five.

Based on the initial study carried out by the developers of the Adult’s Attitudes Toward Education Scale (AACES), (Darkenwald and Hayes, 1986), a score of 85 or higher indicates favorable or positive attitudes toward adult education. Darkenwald and Hayes (1986) also collected data to measure participation behavior, however, I did not include the behavior index this study. For this study, I surveyed 350 and interviewed eight adult participants without a high school diploma or GED.

Research Question 1. What are the attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?

For research question one, I conducted descriptive statistics using SAS 9.4 to obtain the mean attitude score for the 350 respondents to the AACES survey. The descriptive statistics provide basic numerical information on the results of the sample and the sub-groups in the study. In addition, I calculated the mean scores for each of the sub groups to show a breakdown of the mean scores within the sample. To begin, I computed a total composite attitude score for each participant based on his or her responses to the 22-item AACES survey on
a 5-point Likert scale. The participants' scores (Table 3) ranged from 48 (lowest observed value) to 92 (highest observed value) points out of a possible score between 22 and 110 points. On the AACES survey, the 350 adult learners without a high school diploma or GED had a mean score of 66.32 (SD = 5.55) and median of 66.00. Scores of 63 (Q1), 66 (Q2), and 69 (Q3) represented the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles respectively. Based on the findings, the measures of central tendency provide the most typical of a single value that accurately describes the center of the distribution of this sample. The measures of central tendency represent the entire distribution of the attitude scores among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED in this study. It also provides the descriptive findings in a concise and simplified manner. For some surveys, the participants had neglected to respond to one or two questions/statements on the AACES. In those cases, I assigned a score based on their mean response score. Therefore, I calculated the mean response for the respondent and used that mean score to replace blank questions/statements.

Table 3

Descriptive Analysis of Attitudes Toward Adult Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Adult Education</td>
<td>66.32</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>92.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350
Table 4 reveals the mean scores (95% confidence interval) for the three independent variables analyzed in the study. The mean attitude scores for the female participants \((n = 193)\) was 66.27 and 66.38 for the male participants \((n = 157)\). Mean attitude scores by age indicated a mean score of 65.78 for participants between the ages of 18 to 24 years \((n = 202)\); 66.62 for participants between the ages of 25 to 38 years \((n = 96)\); 66.21 for participants between the ages of 39 to 45 years \((n = 24)\); and 69.32 for participants age 46 and older \((n = 28)\). The attitudes scores by race/ethnicity revealed Black participants had a mean score of 65.89 \((n = 121)\); Hispanic participants \((n = 145)\) had a mean score of 65.96; Other participants \((n = 32)\) had a mean score of 68.13; and White participants \((n = 52)\) had a mean score of 66.21.

Table 5 provides a descriptive analysis of the 32 sub-groups represented in this study. It should be noted, the analysis revealed four cells with wide confidence intervals: Other females ages 39-45 years, \(n = 2, 95\% \text{ CI} \{4.88, 101.12\}\); Hispanic male ages 39-45, \(n = 2, 95\% \text{ CI} \{46.59, 97.41\}\); White male ages 39-45 years, \(n = 2, 95\% \text{ CI} \{24.03, 112.97\}\); and White male ages 46 years and over, \(n = 2, 95\% \text{ CI} \{38.73, 102.27\}\).

As shown in Table 5, the cells were unbalanced, with 12 cells having three or less observations. Therefore, in analyzing the data of unbalance cells, I used Type II Sums of Square to ascertain p-values and interactions. No confidence intervals were provided for three cells as they had only one observed value (White female ages 39-45 years; Black male ages 39-45 years; and Black male
ages 46 years and older). Evans (2012) explains “as the sample size increases, the width of the confidence interval decreases, providing a more accurate estimate of the true population parameter” (p. 122).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Adult Learners Without a High School Diploma or GED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Intervals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>66.27</td>
<td>65.40 67.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>66.38</td>
<td>65.63 67.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 Years</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>65.78</td>
<td>64.98 66.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-38 Years</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>66.62</td>
<td>65.65 67.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-45 Years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>66.21</td>
<td>64.02 68.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 &amp; Over</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>69.32</td>
<td>66.91 71.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>65.89</td>
<td>64.86 66.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>65.96</td>
<td>65.06 66.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>68.13</td>
<td>66.06 70.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>52</td>
<td>67.21</td>
<td>65.79 68.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350
Table 5

Participants’ Mean Attitude Scores by Gender, Age, and Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>65.17</td>
<td>62.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65.11</td>
<td>63.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65.44</td>
<td>62.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67.42</td>
<td>64.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65.50</td>
<td>62.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66.64</td>
<td>65.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>74.60</td>
<td>69.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64.43</td>
<td>60.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-38</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64.43</td>
<td>60.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.88</td>
<td>61.45</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>63.00</td>
<td>24.88</td>
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<td></td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>68.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39-45</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>66.46</td>
<td>62.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>68.20</td>
<td>62.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>73.33</td>
<td>55.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>74.33</td>
<td>61.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>66.46</td>
<td>64.95</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>68.20</td>
<td>63.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73.33</td>
<td>55.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74.33</td>
<td>61.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66.34</td>
<td>64.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>65.14</td>
<td>63.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67.44</td>
<td>62.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66.52</td>
<td>63.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-38</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>67.36</td>
<td>65.74</td>
</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>65.62</td>
<td>63.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.33</td>
<td>62.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67.25</td>
<td>64.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39-45</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>72.00</td>
<td>46.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>68.50</td>
<td>24.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46 &amp; Over</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72.33</td>
<td>54.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70.50</td>
<td>38.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350
The wide confidence interval indicates the sample size is too small, and therefore, the descriptive analysis provided for those cells makes it hard to infer and generalize to the population. With larger sample sizes, the results would provide a more precise estimate of the population. The sample sizes of some sub-groups were relatively small and unbalanced. Small sample size and unbalanced cells can affect the statistical power of the ANOVA test. Although the sample size was relatively large, the smaller sample size in some sub-groups prevented the statistical tests from meeting certain assumptions such as homogeneity of variance on the constant variable. To address the statistical limitation of small cell size and unbalanced design, I used PROC GLM instead of PROC ANOVA in SAS software used for data analysis.

**Research Question 2.** What are the differences in attitudes toward adult education among the subgroups (age, gender, and race/ethnicity) of adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?

In this question, I sought to determine statistical differences in attitudes among adult learners for Gender, age, and race/ethnicity. I conducted a three-way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) to ascertain the effect of the subgroups (independent variables) and their interaction or joint impact on the response variable (dependent variable).

As explained by Mendenhall and Sincich (2003), “factorial experiments are volume-increasing designs conducted to investigate the effect of two or more independent variables (factors) on the mean value of the response y” (p.
The factorial ANOVA provides statistical data for the main effects (Gender, age, race/ethnicity) and the interactions (Gender x age; Gender x race/ethnicity; age x race/ethnicity; and Gender x age x race/ethnicity). A 2 (Gender) x 4 (age) x 4 (race/ethnicity) ANOVA was conducted on attitudes toward adult education (AACES) for 350 adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. The ANVOA result of the attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
ANOVA Summary Table for Attitudes Toward Adult Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1243.76</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41.46</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.0885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>9508.40</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10752.16</td>
<td>349</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350; \( \alpha = .05; p < 0.05 \)

Table 7 provides a summary of the factorial ANOVA test. The results of the three-way ANOVA revealed only age was statistically significant, \( F(3, 319 = 3.17, p = .0083 \). There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between Gender, age, and race/ethnicity, \( F(8, 319) = 1.10, p = 0.3637 \) (Table 7). A post hoc analysis using Tukey-Kramer test indicated that the mean attitude scores were significantly higher for older adult participants \( p = .0259 \). The attitude
scores for older adults increased with age. Mean attitude scores for Gender and race/ethnicity were not statistically significant when compared using the Tukey-Kramer post hoc test.

Table 7
ANOVA Summary Table of Attitudes for Participant Gender, Age, and Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type II SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>.5193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>356.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>118.75</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.0083*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Age</td>
<td>27.13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>.8229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>173.79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57.93</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.1225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>38.03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>.7350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age*Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>336.53</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37.39</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.2612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender<em>Age</em>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>261.98</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32.75</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.3637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350; α = .05; *p<0.05

**Outliers.** Outliers refer to observations/data points that do not follow the usual pattern of the data set and sometimes they are radically different from the rest of the data (Evans, 2012). Analysis of the descriptive statistics revealed a minimum observed score of 48, a maximum observed score of 92. Statistically attitude scores of 48, 83, and 92 are outliers as they were more than three
standard deviations away from the mean. While scores of 48, 83, and 92 were statistical outliers, for this study they are not radically different from the rest of the data as the highest possible score for attitudes toward adult education is 110.

Hence, I removed the three outlier-data points from the analysis to determine what impact they had on the overall results of the ANOVA test. Prior to a second run of the data, I deleted observation number 1 (score = 83 points), observation number 64 (score = 92 points), and observation number 212 (score = 48 points) from the data set and the three-way factorial ANOVA was conducted without the three outliers. As seen in Table 8, the results of the three-way factorial ANOVA without the three outliers, the mean score was 66.25 and standard deviation was 5.23. When I removed the apparent outliers, the difference was not statistically significant for the data set. Again, age was the only statistically significant main effect, $F(3, 316) = 3.71, p = .0120$ as outlined in Table 9. There was no statistically significant difference in three-way interaction between Gender, age, and race/ethnicity, $F(8, 316) = 1.31, p = 0.2392$.

**Assumptions of ANOVA.** An ANOVA statistical analysis should meet certain assumptions in order to obtain valid results for the three-way factorial ANOVA. Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) note the importance of meeting some principal assumptions for ANOVA technique, such as: independence of observations; normality of the distribution for each group; homogeneity of variance for each sub group of the three independent variables; and no significant outliers.
**Independence of observations.** To meet this assumption, each participant completed surveys separately and independently. Although, I did not use random selection to select participants for the study, the participants completed the survey anonymously since no personal identification was required for the completion of the survey. There was no relationship between the observations in each group.

**Normality of the distribution.** As part of the data analysis, I conducted a test for normality on the three-way factorial ANOVA to determine whether the sample drawn was from a normally distributed population. To determine normality, I conducted Shapiro-Wilk’s W test. Furthermore, as seen in Figure 7, I created a quantile-quantile (Q-Q) Plot, a graphical to demonstrate the distribution of the data set. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk’s W test revealed the null hypothesis was rejected ($W = 0.9670$, $p < W = 0.0001$) and based on the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov’s ($D = 0.0953$, $p > D = 0.0100$), the null hypothesis was rejected (seen in Figure 7). Hence, the findings suggest the data were not normally distributed and, therefore, the assumption of normality was not satisfied. However, Hair et al. (2010) argued normality is less likely to achieve with larger sample size. Also note, even after removing the outliers, I did not achieve normality in the data set. After removing the three outliers, the results of Shapiro-Wilk’s W revealed the null hypothesis was rejected ($W = 0.9800$, $p < W = 0.0001$), further results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov’s D ($D = 0.0867$, $p > D = 0.0100$)
revealed null hypothesis was rejected. Normality was not satisfied with and without the outliers.

Table 8

Descriptive Analysis of Attitudes Toward Adult Education Without Outliers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Adult Education</td>
<td>66.25</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>82.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 347

**Homogeneity of variance.** The test for homogeneity of variance compares variances of two or more groups on the same categorical variables (Hair et al., 2010). I ran the Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances. Levene’s test (see Table 10) showed the analysis of attitudes among adults without a high school diploma or GED was not statistically significant ($p = 0.7650$) and there were no significant differences in the variances between the groups. Based on the results, the null was not rejected and, therefore, the ANOVA satisfied the homogeneity of variances assumption. As indicated in Model Summary (Table 11), 7% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the model, $R^2 = 0.0700$. 
Table 9

ANOVA Summary Table of Attitudes by participants’ Gender, Age, And Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.6741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>286.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95.58</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.0120*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Age</td>
<td>37.55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.52</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.6923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>153.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>51.22</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.1156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>45.74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.6207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age*Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>246.29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.37</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.3905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender<em>Age</em>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td>269.28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.66</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.2392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=350; α = .05; *p<0.05

No significant outliers. In an effort to identify outliers, Evans (2012) suggests the researcher should consider data point that is “more than three standard deviations from the mean” (p. 50). The analysis of the three-way factorial ANOVA indicated three outliers, which were more than three standard deviation points away from the mean. For this study, I did not treat the three data points as radically different from the rest of the data and, therefore, they were included in the data set and analyzed in the analysis. Possible attitudes scores were between 22 and 110 and the maximum score for the data was 98 points. There were no statistically significant differences in the result after
removing the outliers from the data set. Therefore, attitudes scores of 48, 83, and 92 were not be considered as significant outliers in this study.

Figure 7. Test for normality shown on a QQ plot. The label Total of the y-axis represents the dependent variable (AACES Scores)
Table 10

Levene’s Test for Factorial ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>343.12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11.44</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.7650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>4558.22</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4901.34</td>
<td>349</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350; \( \alpha = 0.05; p<0.05 \)

Table 11

Model Summary of Factorial ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R-Squared</th>
<th>Coefficient Variance</th>
<th>Root MSE</th>
<th>Total Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0700</td>
<td>101.072</td>
<td>3.780</td>
<td>3.740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350

Discoveries

*It is fun to me because I do like learning and the lessons aren’t really boring so they are like. . . They are interesting especially if you don’t know certain information about it, it tells you more about it and once you get it, you feel better cause you will know exactly what it is. Lala*

In this section, I provide a brief background and demographic data on the eight adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who volunteered for the study. I provide the information for the eight interviewees in Table 12. Their varied backgrounds shed light on their beliefs and value of adult
education. I employed thematic coding for the analysis of the qualitative data collected during the face-to-face interviews with the eight participants. I used direct quotes from the interviewees that best describe their beliefs and values about attitudes and participation in adult education. I interviewed eight students from three of the eight HCPS adult learning centers. I interviewed seven participants at their respective adult learning centers and I interviewed one participant at University of South Florida (USF), Tampa. The eighth participant chose a different venue as it was more suitable to his schedule.

Table 12

Demographic Information of Eight Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees' Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Drop-Out Age</th>
<th>Time out of school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lala</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jada</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiki</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight adult learners participated in the face-to-face interviews. The interviewees represented three of the eight HCPS’ Adult Learning Centers. None of the eight participants interviewed were from HCC GED Program. The eight interviewees selected their pseudonyms for the purpose of this study.
I interviewed the participant at the USF, Tampa library. All eight interviewees signed IRB approved informed consent forms. In addition, I asked the participants to provide me with pseudonyms, as I did not include their real names in the study. All the interviewees agreed and provided pseudonyms of their choice for the purpose of the study.

In this section, I outlined the findings discovered from the eight participants interviewed for this study. Based on the review of the data, I identified the following themes from the interview responses: participation in adult education; importance and value of adult education; benefits of adult education to professional development; and support and respect received in adult education environment. I connected the themes to the research questions as follows: participation behavior in adult education is addressed in research question three; importance and value of adult education is addressed in question four; and the benefit of adult education to professional development is addressed in question five. Support and respect from teachers emerged from the interviewees' responses and I included this in research question four. As I reviewed, examined, and analyzed the qualitative data, the responses felt like short narratives. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain narratives are the oldest and most natural form of sense making of stories or accounts of individuals, groups, societies, cultures. However, they could not be classified as narrative inquiry as the participants’ responses did not cover their life stories but the information collected looked at only one aspect of their life, albeit, a very
important aspect of their life. As I listened to the interviewees, I had to withhold my personal thoughts and views as they gave an account of their educational path. While it is hard for qualitative researchers to separate their personal thoughts from the research, I am aware the researcher should not guide or lead the participant in one way or another.

I took an inductive approach to the data analysis as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest, the researcher collects data to build concepts or theories especially when existing theory fails to adequately explain a given situation or phenomenon. As I recalled our conversations and read about the interviewees’ educational journey, it became apparent the participants had not given much thought to the fact they were participating in adult education. I had the opportunity to listen as they spoke about their beliefs and value of adult education. As I listened, I got a glimpse into the unique journeys of each interviewee. I got a clearer understanding of the myriad reasons individuals can become high school dropouts. In no way did one person’s story mirror another, as each person had a unique story about his or her educational journey. They travelled different paths, but it was clear they wanted to make a change, if only for the short term. As I collected the data from the interviewees, I experienced their varied emotional dispositions, some were excited about their new path, others seemed frustrated with education, and some seemed to have resigned themselves to what they must now do.
**Research Question 3.** In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED participate in adult education?

**Participation in adult education.** With this question, I sought to assess the extent to which the eight adult learners without a high school diploma or GED engaged in adult education activities. All eight adults without a high school diploma or GED had registered for the GED program with a Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) Adult Learning Center for the Spring 2016 semester. I did not include adult learners from HCC in the face-to-face interviews, as the administrator only agreed to participate in the survey. The GED program offered by HCPS is a formal Adult Education program. Only one participant, Justin had been participating in a formal educational program outside of the GED program. Justin was taking an Air Conditioning (AC) and Refrigeration course within HCPS system to obtain a certificate in the course. The HCPS partner school offers skills and vocational training programs. The AC and Refrigeration program is part of HCPS’ Workforce and Career Development program. None of the other seven interviewees had participated or registered in any other formal adult education program within the last year. When asked if they had plans for future participation in adult education programs upon completing the GED program, none of them had any immediate plans.

One interviewee, Jada spoke about a career path later in life. When I asked, the interviewee said, ‘Yes. I want to, um, um, after this I want to study for criminal justice.’ Jada is interested in the Criminal Justice profession but she did
not have any immediate plans about when she would pursue that profession.

None of the eight interviewees had any immediate plans to participate in formal adult education program in the near future.

When asked about their informal learning activities, two of the interviewees, Lala and Kiki said they received tutoring prior to starting the GED program at HCPS. Of the eight participants, Ben was the only one who reported actively participating in informal learning. Ben is a self-taught photographer. Ben’s interest in photography started as a hobby, but he later turned it into a side job. Ben regularly conducts research on photography and educates himself on photography techniques. Ben said he was a self-taught photographer.

Yeah, I have embarked on my experiences with my photography business. Um... I am completely self-taught. I have never taken a class. Never, um, really have anybody standing next to me showing how to do stuff. Ben

I’m learning every day. I step out of my house. Whether it is something just coming into my mind, I am curious about it. I will pull my phone in the middle of a class just because my mind wanders. Um... and just sit there on google reading about...uh...reading about the most obscure things that no one knows or thinks about. And my mind... just full of useless information, like 24/7 but it, it’s, it’s empowering to me because I know that I know more than some people about most things. I understand a whole lot of not pointless subjects, but stuff that doesn’t really get you anywhere and I can see the point in that. Ben

Another participant, Jeff, said he had developed an interest in chiropractic and physical therapies. Jeff said he became curious about the practices of
chiropractic treatment and physical therapy after accompanying his mother to her appointments.

I believe, occasionally, uh, I’ll accompany my mother to the chiropractor or physical therapist and I’ll learn what I can from them and see how they do things, look at all the charts and everything. Jeff

Jeff had not conducted any meaningful research on either of the professions, but he was interested in learning more about them. Therefore, only two of the eight interviewees reported engaging in informal educational activities. In both instances, the interviewees investigated areas that could possibly lead to a career path. Overall, participation in adult education among the eight participants within the last year was their participation in the GED program at HCPS.

**Research Question 4.** In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?

Data collected from the eight interviewees about how they perceived the importance of adult education revealed not only that the adult program was important, but support and respect from teachers was necessary to their persistence in the program. First, I will present the information from the data about why adult education is important to them, followed by information about support and respect from teachers.

**Importance and value of adult education.** This question examined the perceived importance of and how much value the participants placed on adult
education. The interviewees said adult education was important for them now. Seven of the eight interviewees expressed appreciation for adult education, as the adult education program gave them an opportunity to pursue a high school diploma or its equivalence, the GED. They consistently spoke about the importance of having a high school diploma or GED to *succeed in life*. The interviewees said adult education was important, because it give them an opportunity to learn in a respectful and adult friendly environment.

If I knew about a program like this when I was in high school. It is definitely important. It’s a tool that you need in life to be able to succeed. Very good, helpful. Um, more one-on-one. It’s like having your personal tutor with the help of everybody here. Very helpful, very useful and I feel like their, um, us, giving me tools that I can use in an everyday basis. George

George and Ben said they tried to find jobs of interest to them but they were unsuccessful because they did not have a high school diploma or GED.

It’s really, just to, to meet requirements of everyday. You can’t get a job anymore without having a high school diploma at least. And adult education has given the possibility just to go ahead and focus only on what I have to get done at one given time, at one point in time. Ben

Jada was scared about going back to school. She did not believe she could be successful at school. Jada made the decision to engage in learning, as a mean to motivate and teach her children the importance of completing high school. She wanted to set the right example for them, that is, to finish high school.

It has been great. Like I said, I feel more... when I first started, my level was really, really low. It was like in elementary, and so, now, it is... I am higher, at the high school level. So, I feel more confident. And I am not so scared anymore. Jada
The interviewees placed high value on their adult education experience and the adult education environment. The interviewees valued their adult education experience because they were more confident as adult learners and they felt some sense of accomplishment for the opportunity to acquire their high school diploma or GED. Seven of the eight interviewees seemed hopeful about their prospect for the future once they obtain their GED certificate. John was the only interviewee who did not show much enthusiasm and he had very little to say about how he felt. The others agreed they might not have embarked on obtaining a high school diploma or GED had it not been a program geared toward adult learners. The interviewees were grateful to have a program developed and tailored to meet the needs of individuals in their situation.

Well, I would think, when I first got here, I thought it was going to be embarrassing, you know, being in a classroom with others . . . with kids actually. But, the teachers are down to earth, the teachers here and instructors are down to earth. They give you that one-on-one, so you can understand information that you need. And pretty much everybody is here doing the same thing you are doing, so it's, I guess, it's the way that you um, look at it. George

The most knowledge I have gotten is here. To be honest, because in high school, a mean, the teachers are really, some just slide you by, others don't tell you more information about it. They just let you go with the grade and whatever. They don't really try to help you. But these teachers, they help you get better at it. They help you get a better grade. You know exactly what you are learning. Jada

John, a 32-year old participant, was expelled from middle school at the age of 16 years. John said he did not have any thoughts on participation in adult education. He did not know if adult education was important and he did
not know if it was valuable. When asked what he thought was the purpose of going back to school as an adult he said, *for education and be successful in life*. John said he did not want to comment on the benefits of adult education. John was nonchalant in his responses and in his attitude. He did not seem focused and he seemed uncomfortable. Due to his indifference and seemingly lack of interest, midway into the conversation, I asked him if he wanted to continue the interview, to which he gave a resounding, ‘yes’. While he had very little to say verbally, his body language communicated a lot. He slouched in the chair and did not make much eye contact. He laughed when he spoke about being expelled from middle school and his demeanor was the same when I asked him about the importance and value of adult education. He emphatically said he would not encourage anyone to go back to school.

*One-on-one support and respect from teachers.* The theme of teachers’ support and respect emerged from the conversations. Most of the interviewees spoke about the high level of support and respect they received from the teachers/educators in the adult education program. The interviewees credited their persistence in the program to the high level of support and respect they received from the teachers/educators in the adult education program. The interviewees said the one-on-one assistance received from the teachers/educators in the adult education setting was valuable and it made the GED course more manageable.
Based on the data, adult learners without a high school diploma or GED valued the one-on-one support, and attention they received from teachers/educators. The interviewees said that this level of support and respect was lacking from their educational experiences while in the K-12 education system. The interviewees said the support and respect received from teachers created a non-threatening learning environment, and they were no longer afraid or embarrassed about going back to school.

It is better. Well, for me, I think like the one-on-one with teachers. Or, I think that’s the main thing for me cause, sometimes I can’t focus or it takes me a longer time to understand things. Jada

Jada explained her inability to focus for long period sometimes prevented from finishing her work during the class period. However, the teachers worked with her to get her work completed before end of class.

The class loads are a lot smaller. The teachers, they help you within 2 or 3 minutes of me needing help. I already have a teacher right next to me helping me with that and they are not going to walk away until I am satisfied, that I’m satisfied. They are satisfied more that I actually grab that material. Ben

The experience is very wonderful because it, cause I am a hands-on person. The instructors and them, if you don’t understand, they will be with you one-on-one. They will show you how to and explain. Justine

Teachers’ support! Well, I wouldn’t have known the answer to that question if you had asked me a year ago but coming here, having Ms. Teacher (not the real name) actually sit down and help. Has made it so much better and so much easier. Jeff

One participant, Kiki, did not believe she was getting enough help. She especially did not like when she had to read and do research for information on
her own. She said she wished the teachers/educator would play a more active role in guiding the students' learning.

It is not like I am learning. It is just reading and reading, reading. If I am not actually going through it, not really like understanding it. But, I am understanding it. But, it is not how it was when I was in regular school. Not always on the computer. Just, if I had like paperwork, doing it would have been easier too. Kiki

Kiki did not want to work on her own; instead, she wanted the teachers to provide her with the content necessary to pass the GED test. While she acknowledged the teachers would explain and provide guidance, she was not interested in reading to get information.

Overall, those interviewed valued their experience in the adult education program offered with HCPS. Adult education programs were perceived to be important to the interviewees, because it helped them to achieve their personal goal of attaining a high school diploma or GED, which would eventually help them to obtain meaningful employment.

**Research Question 5.** In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?

*The benefit of adult education to professional development.* With research question five, I wanted to determine if the participant responses would reflect a connection between job growth and development and participation in adult education. All eight interviewees said the main objective of their participation in adult education, the GED program, was to get a "good job."
Some of the interviewees further explained they would not be able to get “good” jobs without getting their high school diploma or GED. Hence, their motivation for participation in adult education was to become employable. All eight interviewees had clear and definite responses to the perceived benefit of adult education on professional growth and development. The interviewees believed that at minimum, having a high school diploma or GED would make life easier for them as they search for employment. One interviewee said a high school diploma or GED could prevent him from doing hard manual labor and give him the opportunity to access better jobs.

Why I am doing it? So I can better myself and I don't have to kill myself with my hands and my back and I can get the education that I have always needed. So I can be able to be a better person not just for myself, but for my family, the community and to be able to be a successful individual. George

I would rather go back to school so I could get a better job than at Burger King. Well I like learning and it is to get further in life. So I can get my diploma and get most jobs because most of the jobs require you to have our [sic] diploma. Lala

I have six kids that look up to me, so I have to. You know, set a good example for them. And, um, I want a good job to be able to support them. Jada

Because I need to have a school diploma. For my life, job, school period. Kiki

‘Cause education is what, um, helps you to succeed in life and um, job aspects and everything. Education is the key to everything. George

I am going to leave with a high school diploma and hot have to worry about hunting for a job that doesn’t require one. I am running into the same problem now. I can’t support myself fully on my photography. Um, cause, it is just not the way it is anymore. Ben
Justin relocated from Trinidad and Tobago to Tampa. He did not complete high school in his home country and had a hard time getting a job after coming to the United States of America. It was important for him to find work and support himself financially.

Because, um, when I moved up here and try to look for jobs, all the jobs wanted a high school diploma or to have GED. So, that is all the well-paying jobs. The motivation is to, one, is financial help support because, I kind of feel it is my responsibility to now instead of depending on my parents to continue sending money for me and. Also, I want to get experience on the outside. Justin

Three years after leaving high school, Jeff realized it was necessary for him to go back to school to become employable.

When I actually realized where I was, like three years later, 19 years old and notice like all my friends are getting jobs, some had actually graduated, some of them haven’t. And I realized I wanted to be in a situation where I had a job and was going to school and had a future I could actually look forward to. So, it kind of crushed me a little and like, I need to go do this. It’s more a sense of accomplishment to give me that drive I need to pursue what I want to do. Jeff

To succeed in life. John

The interviewees had experienced some form of rejection in their employment pursuits because they did not have the minimum requirement of a high school diploma or GED for most entry-level jobs. Their inability to find good jobs was the main motivator, or the wake-up call, behind them entering the GED program. All eight interviewees were optimistic about the prospect of acquiring a job of their choosing once they have received their high school diploma or GED. All eight interviewees were preparing to sit the GED test.
Summary

Three hundred and sixty-five adult learners without a high school diploma or GED completed the AACES survey. Fifteen surveys were discarded as they had missing information and some participants did not meet the age requirement of 18 years and older. The participants were more open to completing the surveys once I told them their responses are anonymous. I did not request or collect personal identification from the respondents to the surveys and IRB waived the informed consent for survey respondents. However, the eight participants interviewed signed IRB approved consent forms and they received a copy of the signed form. The adult learners interviewed had been out of school from between 2 to 15 years. The eight interviewees received $10 gift cards for their time. More than 60% of the adult learners registered for Spring 2016 at both institutions completed the surveys. Class attendance is not mandatory and, therefore, it was not easy to determine which day would yield the highest participation rate for taking the surveys.

I collected all completed surveys once the participants had finished taking the surveys, except for two centers where the administrators asked me to leave the surveys and pick them up within three to seven days. The administrators had the adult learners complete the surveys during instruction breaks or before instruction started. I told the administrators the surveys should be completed individually. The administrators returned the surveys to me in sealed envelopes. The eight interviewees volunteered to participate in the
face-to-face interviews. They seemed enthused to talk about their adult
learning experience. Two of the eight interviewees seemed disengaged and
somewhat frustrated with school. Wikelund et al. (1992) posited adult learners
“tend to perceive and experience the adult programs accordingly—as
extensions or continuations of the schools programs in which they have
previously experienced failure, loss of self-esteem, and lack of responsiveness to
their personal needs and goals” (pp. 4-5). John and Kiki seemed disinterested
during the interviews. John was nonchalant, but pleasant. I told John he could
stop if he so desired, but he simply smiled and said he wanted to continue. Kiki
wanted to talk and she spoke freely about her experience and beliefs. She was
interested in the interview but she seemed frustrated with school or the
education system.

To begin the data analysis, I scrutinized and sorted the quantitative data
for analysis, after which, I spent over 700 hours transcribing and checking the
data collected from the interviews. The results of the data analysis revealed
attitudes toward adult education were not very favorable among adult learners
without a high school diploma or GED. However, participants were happy for
the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma or GED, which would help them
to be successful in the job market.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED. The parts of this chapter include the summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
2. What are the differences in attitudes toward adult education among the subgroups (age, gender, and race/ethnicity) of adult learners without a high school diploma or GED who responded to the AACES?
3. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED participate in adult education?
4. In what ways do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the importance of their participation in adult education?
5. How do selected adult learners without a high school diploma or GED perceive the value of adult education to their professional development?
Summary

Although there had been numerous research studies conducted on attitudes toward adult education, little research had examined attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Researchers in prior studies had not targeted adults without a high school diploma or GED. In this study, I explored attitudes toward adult education among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED toward adult education.

In this study, I employed a mixed methods research design for the purpose of data analysis. I collected quantitative data using the Adults’ Attitudes Toward Adult Education (AACES) instrument (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1990), after which I interviewed eight individuals who volunteered for the study. I used a 13-question interview protocol, which I developed for this study. I got approval from Hillsborough County Public School (HCPS) district and Hillsborough Community College (HCC) Operation College to survey and interview participants for the study. After I received the approvals from the two participating institutions, I contacted the administrators of the adult learning centers via email and telephone. Administrators provided me dates and times to visit the centers based on class schedules and student availability. Two administrators elected to distribute the surveys over a one-week period to capture most of their student body. The administrators returned the surveys to me in sealed envelopes. The 350 participants surveyed in the study were adult
learners without a high school diploma or GED from HCPS Adult Learning Centers and HCC GED Program. After, I completed the data collection for the qualitative data; I solicited volunteers to participate in the face-to-face interviews. Seven interviewees initially signed up to participate in the interviews but, on the last night of data collection, one person expressed an interest to participate in the interviews, which brought the total number of interviewees to eight.

Conclusions

Below, I discuss the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study.

According to Darkenwald and Hayes (1986), favorable attitude scores are considered to be 85 points and above out of a possible score of 110 points. The results of this study indicate low favorability toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED with only one participant achieving favorable attitudes based prior studies. The average attitude score of those sampled in this study was very low when compared to prior studies conducted by Darkenwald and Hayes (1986, 1990). The participants interviewed, however, believed participation in adult education was important for professional growth and development and self-actualization.

Attitudes toward adult education increased with age. Older adults had a more favorable attitude toward adult education when compared to younger adults. On average, adults 39 years and older scored higher on the AACES than all the other age groups. Additionally, older adults interviewed expressed
greater enthusiasm for the opportunity to have a second change at earning a high school diploma or GED. Almost all of the interviewees indicated a strong desire in obtaining their high school credentials.

Female and male participants’ responses reflected similar views on attitudes toward adult education. Results from prior studies (Darkenwald & Hayes, 1986, 1990) revealed significant differences in attitudes between males and females, with females exhibiting higher favorability toward adult education than males.

Most of the male interviewees indicated they were not embarrassed about earning a high school diploma or GED as an adult, but instead they were grateful and believed they made the best decision for their future. Female interviewees spoke about becoming more confident in their ability to succeed as adult learners.

In regards to race/ethnicity, overall scores on attitudes toward adult education were similar. The interviewees shared similar sentiments—they were hopeful about the prospect of obtaining a high school diploma or GED. In addition, all of the participants interviewed agreed that obtaining a high school diploma or GED might give them a better chance to access good jobs.

One consistent theme that emerged from the interviews with the participants was that adults without a high school diploma or GED valued the adult learning environment. The interviewees repeatedly spoke about the level of support and respect they received from their adult educators/teachers,
which also led the interviewees to being more confident as learners. Most of the interviewees did not believe they had that level of support in previous schooling, which was a key contributor to them dropping out of the K-12 system.

While scores generally were low, younger adults, without a high school diploma or GED, regardless of gender and race/ethnicity, scored lower than older adults did on the AACES. The interviewees were motivated to get their high school diploma or GED as they suggested participation in the program would give them an opportunity to find meaningful employment.

Long-term goals and plans for future participation in adult education were not evident among the interviewees. Again, the driving force behind the interviewees’ participation in adult education was to put themselves in a position to access better job opportunities. Generally, the interviewees did not show much enthusiasm for participation in adult education beyond the GED program, as their immediate focus was to complete the GED program. However, based on the findings, the interviewees showed an understanding and awareness of the connection between adult education and professional growth and development.

The interviewees included in this research fit in the category of goal-oriented learners as theorized by Houle (1961). Houle (1961) posited, some adult learners are simply goal-oriented learners and, therefore, their participation in adult education is to achieve a set of goals whether personal or professional. The goal-oriented individuals, Houle (1961) suggest are individuals who
participate in episodes, as the need arises. Unlike the learner-oriented learner, their participation is not steady or continuous. In addition, goal-oriented learners do not confine their learning to any one institution or provider as their objective to accomplish their learning goal. One of the interviewees took courses simultaneously in two separate programs. Overall, the interviewees participated in adult education with a central goal in mind: to obtain post-secondary credential, which they believed would help them secure good jobs.

Based on the results from this research, the qualitative data provided some explanation and support for the low favorability revealed in the quantitative data. While the interviewees thought participation was important for career development, generally, they did not express an enthusiasm for participation in adult education. Further, the interviewees did not indicate any immediate plans for future participation in adult education. Hence, lack of interest in future participation might explain the low favorability scores seen in the quantitative data.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study might contribute to the existing body of literature on participation in adult education. Increased participation in adult education rests heavily on removing barriers, especially dispositional barriers such as unfavorable attitudes toward adult education and lack of trust in one’s ability to succeed educationally (Bariso, 2008).
Adult educators/teachers. Participants were motivated to complete their GED, and therefore, educators and teachers may need to use the opportunity to counsel learners on career development beyond GED program as the learners were concerned about getting good jobs. Adult learners come to the learning environment motivated to learn (Knowles, 1980). It is apparent that career advancement is important to adults without a high school diploma or GED; therefore, educators may want to counsel them on the connection between continued participation in adult education and professional development. Mezirow (1997) and Freire (1993) suggested adult learners transform and self-actualize as they learn more about themselves and their world.

Additionally, adult learners will persist in learning activities if they have the respect and support of their teachers/instructors. Adult learners want to participate in a learning environment where there is mutual respect. Therefore, adult learners desire a learning environment where there is support and respect, and a place where they can learn information that will be beneficial to their everyday responsibilities, especially in their jobs. Thus, adult learners are more confident and they would value their learning experience more, if they learn in a non-threatening environment.

K-12 education system. Based on information gathered from the interviewees, the K-12 system may need to re-examine the approach taken to teacher/student interaction. Results from this study suggested that K-12 students
also value the support and respect of their teachers. This might be valuable to student persistence in K-12 and by extension, decrease students’ chances of dropping out of school. K-12 administrators could offer professional development programs geared toward enhancing teacher/student relationship, beyond the regular training geared toward classroom management.

Whereas the results of this study may be valuable to the K-12 school system, other educational institutions (non-profit and private organizations) providing services to K-12 students could also benefit from these findings as well. A student/teacher interaction nurtured in an environment where there is support and respect could prove beneficial to student success.

**Adult education providers.** The results of this study revealed most of the participants had little or no immediate plans to continue their participation in adult education beyond the GED program. It might prove beneficial for GED and adult basic education providers to develop and introduce adult learners to post-secondary courses, which would expose them to traditional education, and participation beyond the GED program. According to Tough (1971) and Knowles (1980), when adults engaged in learning relevant to their everyday lives, they are driven to participate in learning activities. Therefore, if adult learners without a GED are given the opportunity to experience post-secondary courses and they are successful, it might inspire them to continue their
education. Boeren (2011) explains, “it is generally accepted that a positive attitude towards a behavior results in intentions and actual behavior” (p. 377).

Policymakers. The results of this research, and similar studies might assist policymakers to develop programs that combine job-training programs with GED classes for high school dropouts. With such a program, GED providers might experience an increase in the number of individuals signing-up for the program. Based on the results, interviewees reported they were not aware of GED programs. In addition, it might be necessary for policymakers to put systems in place to track high school dropouts and keep them abreast of programs that might beneficial to them. Adults want to be able to provide for themselves and their families. And so, if adult learners feel secure and comfortable in providing for their basic needs, then they might be encouraged to participation in further education (Maslow, 1970).

Recommendation for Further Research:

Based on the findings of this study, there are several recommendations for future research in this area.

1. Future research might explore the attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED for the entire state of Florida. Data for the state of Florida would provide researchers with attitude scores for adult learners similar to those in this study.
2. Further, researchers could conduct a comparison by county for the state of Florida to ascertain similarities and differences among adult learners without a high school diploma or GED.

3. This study only focused on one county in Florida, future research could extend the study to all 50 states in the USA and gather data on how GED programs are managed across the country.

4. In this study, I employed a mixed methods research design to get a deeper understanding of attitudes toward adult education among the selected participants; future research might conduct in-depth case studies to obtain a broader understanding of what influences participants' attitudes.

5. Researchers might replicate this study with a larger sample of adults over the age of 35 years. This study failed to capture an equal number of participants for the different age groups, and therefore, the age groups were unbalanced. With an equal number of participants in each age group, researchers might be able to assess differences in attitude scores.

6. This study only included adult learners in a GED or high school credit programs; future study may include other adult learners participating in adult basic education (ABE), English as Second Language (ESL), and other literacy programs.
7. In the future, researchers might conduct studies to include GED instructors and administrators to see if they could shed any light on adult learners' general attitudes toward adult education and their learning needs.

8. Participants credited adult education instructors for their persistence in the GED program; future research could examine the relationship between teacher support and program completion.

9. Future research may assess attitudes toward adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED who are not currently enrolled in formal adult education programs.

10. This study did not examine the correlation between attitudes toward adult education and participation in adult education among adults without a high school diploma or GED. Future studies may measure the relationship between participation in adult education and scores on the AACES.

11. Future research might extend the qualitative research to interview participants after completing the survey instrument and change the AACES questions into open-ended questions to get a better understanding of their attitudes and beliefs toward adult education.

12. In this study, I did not ask participants if they planned to attend college, future study could consider collecting data on future plans for college.

13. Researchers might collect information on participants' perception of the GED program.
14. In this study, I did not examine the relationship between participation in adult and personal growth and development; future studies might examine that relationship.

15. The mean scores of adults’ attitudes toward adult education in prior studies were much higher than the scores achieved by the participants in this research, a difference of almost 20 points. Therefore, I recommend researchers conduct additional research to determine if the lower scores in this study are typical of adults with less than a high school diploma or GED, since it is possible that the lower mean is more indicative of their actual scores as opposed to the considerably higher than those observed in earlier research studies.
References


http://www.npr.org/2013/10/30/241910094/adding-up-the-cost-of-low-literacy-among-adults


Appendices
Appendix A: Survey Instrument – AACES


Please answer the following five questions about yourself. Your answers are completely confidential and your name is not required.

1. What is your sex?  Female  Male
2. What is your age?  Years
3. Do you have a high school diploma or GED?  Yes  No
4. Please circle the number below that indicates the last year of schooling you completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 11 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What is your approximate total family income (Circle one)?
   1. Less than $25,000
   2. $25,000 to $39,000
   3. $40,000 to $54,000
   4. $55,000 to $69,000
   5. $70,000 or more

6. Would you describe yourself as (Circle one):
   1. Asian-American
   2. Black/African American
   3. Caucasian (White)
   4. Hispanic
   5. Native American
   6. Other _______________

This questionnaire is part of a study intended to identify adults’ opinions concerning Adult Education. The term “adult education” includes literacy classes, life classes, workshops, seminars, discussion groups, conferences, training programs, credit and non-credit classes, and any other organized learning activity for adults who have completed or dropped out of formal schooling.

Would you please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire? Your cooperation is most important to the success of the study. Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence. Do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

Please read the following list of statements. Each represents an opinion about Adult Education. There is no right or wrong opinions. For each item, circle the response that best describe your feeling about the statement.
### SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult education helps people make better use of their lives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful people do not need adult education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy participating in educational activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for adults is less important than education for children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education is mostly for people with little else to do</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for education continues through one’s lifetime</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find learning activities stimulating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in adult education is a good use of leisure time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike studying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going back to school as an adult is embarrassing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More people should be encouraged to participate in adult education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing my education would make me feel better about myself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education would not be of any benefit to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education is not necessary for most adults</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am fed up with teachers and classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in a classroom makes me feels uncomfortable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy educational activities that allow me to learn with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money spend on adult education for employees is money well spent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me, adult education is less important than my leisure activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education is an important way to help people cope with changes in their lives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best way for adults to learn is to attend adult programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn everything I need to know on my own without participating in adult education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Interview questions for face-to-face interview

Interview Protocols

(A) Questions to understand participants’ attitudes and participation in adult education. Explain some of the high and low points of your educational experiences (what childhood and adult memories stand out)

1. At what age did you stop attending school and why? (Was it your decision to leave school; what was the problem)
2. How did you feel when you were in regular school? (e.g. happy, mad, sad, alone, anxious, etc.)
3. What do you thing would have made school participation better for you? (Would more support from teachers, parents, family, etc make your experience better?)
4. What informal learning and education activities did you participate in last year and why? (Was it for your job, specific reason, or out of curiosity?)
5. How did you feel about learning new information? (Did you find it useful, were you happy to learn about it/then, did you want to search some more?)
6. What you do think would make these experiences better for you? (Did you need help, did you understand the information presented, etc.)
7. What formal learning and educational activities did you participate in the last year (such as adult basic education classes, life skills classes, job training, etc.) and why?
8. How did you feel as you participated in these activities? (Did you find them useful, was it too much information, was the teacher helpful to your learning, etc.)
9. What do you think would make these formal experiences better for you? (Family support, teacher’s support, job, etc.)

(B) Questions assessing participants’ beliefs and value of adult and formal education. Now we are still talking about what adult education means to you and the value adult education in your life. The participant is now expected to explain what value he/she places on adult education. Also, how important (benefits) is adult education to his/her life.

Some adults believe that adult education may not contribute to the success of their life. So explain:

1. Why are you participating in adult education classes? (Is it for personal benefit, you like learning, job, to get ahead in life, etc.)
2. What ideas and beliefs do you want to share with me about adult education? (What does it mean to you and do you think it is important?)
3. What are your beliefs about adult education helping you to get ahead in life? (Do you think it is important for you to succeed in your job or everyday life?)

4. What would you tell others about your experiences and the importance of adult education classes? (Were your experiences good or bad? Is adult education important?)

(C) Participants are given an opportunity to explain or clarify information presented in the interview. Also, the participant can add anything he/she thinks is important but was not asked by the interviewer.
Appendix C: HCPS approval to participate in the study

Andrea R. Bennett
5125 Palm Springs Blvd., #13-201
Tampa, FL 33647

Dear Mrs. Bennett:

The Hillsborough County Public School district has agreed to participate in your research proposal, Attitudes Toward Adult Education Among Adults Without a High School Diploma or GED. A copy of this letter MUST be available to all participants at Bowers/Whitley Adult, Chamberlain Adult, Gary Adult, and Plant City Adult to assure them your research has been approved by the district. Your approval number is RR1516-33. You must refer to this number in all correspondence. Approval is given for your research under the following conditions:

1) Participation by Bowers/Whitley Adult, Chamberlain Adult, Gary Adult, and Plant City Adult is to be on a voluntary basis. That is, participation is NOT MANDATORY and you must advise ALL PARTICIPANTS that they are not obligated to participate in your study.

2) If the principal agrees the school will participate, it is up to you to find out what rules the school has for allowing people on campus and you must abide by the school’s check-in policy. You will NOT BE ALLOWED on any school campus without first following the school’s rules for entering campus grounds.

3) You must request approval from this department before other schools are added to your sample.

4) Adult permission must be obtained for all students involved in your research. You must have this adult consent before you begin your collection of data.

5) Confidentiality must be assured for all. That is, ALL DATA MUST BE AGGREGATED SUCH THAT THE PARTICIPANTS CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED. Participants include the district, principals, administrators, teachers, support personnel, students and parents.

6) Any student educational data MUST be DESTROYED when the project has been completed.

7) Research approval does not constitute the use of the district’s equipment, software, email, or district mail service. In addition, requests that result in extra work by the district such as data analysis, programming or assisting with electronic surveys, may have a cost borne by the researcher.
October 22, 2015
Page 2

8) This approval will expire on 2/1/2016. You will have to contact us at that time if you feel your research approval should be extended.

9) A copy of your research findings must be sent to us for our files and must be submitted to this department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVE VOLUNTEER FORMS/FINGERPRINTING:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your proposal indicates that you will come into contact with students but your contact will be supervised. Because of the Jessica Lunsford Act and Privacy Acts, you must complete the enclosed SERVE VOLUNTEER FORM and present it AND this letter to the principal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good luck with your endeavor. If you have any questions, please advise.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Theodore Dwyer
Manager of Evaluation
Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation

TD/mt

cc: Dr. Catherine Batsche, Director, Tampa Bay Educational Partnership
Harold Keller, Ph.D., University of South Florida
Sheila Washington, Administrator, Bowers/Whitley Adult
Marcia Monk, Administrator, Chamberlin Adult
Edward Cristiano, Administrator, Gary Adult
Valarie Henry, Administrator, Plant City Adult
Andrea R. Bennett
5125 Palm Springs Blvd., #13-201
Tampa, FL 33647

Dear Mrs. Bennett:

Your request to extend your research project, Attitudes Toward Adult Education Among Adults Without a High School Diploma or GED (RR1516-33), and to add Brandon Adult, Jefferson Adult, Lennard Adult, and Leto Adult Schools, has been approved. This approval will expire on 6/30/2016.

Remember, all conditions of our original letter dated 10/22/2015 still apply including:
1) Participation by the schools is to be on a voluntary basis. That is, participation is NOT MANDATORY and you must advise ALL PARTICIPANTS that they are not obligated to participate in your study.
2) If the principal agrees the school will participate, it is up to you to find out what rules the school has for allowing people on campus and you must abide by the school’s check-in policy. You will NOT BE ALLOWED on any school campus without first following the school’s rules for entering campus grounds.

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Theodore Dwyer
Manager of Evaluation
Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation

TD/rmt

cc: Sheila Washington, Administrator, Bowers/Whitley Adult
Susan Balke, Administrator, Brandon Adult
Marcia Monk, Administrator, Chamberlin Adult
Edward Cristiano, Administrator, Gary Adult
Pam Elies, Administrator, Jefferson Adult
Sandra Tune, Administrator, Lennard Adult
Dr. Olaniyi Popoola, Administrator, Leto Adult
Valerie Henry, Administrator, Plant City Adult
Harold Keller, Ph.D., Director, Tampa Bay Educational Partnership

Appendix C Cont’d
Appendix D: Approval to use the instrument

Information

Elisabeth Gee <email>  
To: Andrea Bennett <email>

Hi Andrea - Thanks for your kind words. I no longer have a copy of the AACE scale but you are welcome to recreate it and use it. I believe that the article has a complete list of the items included on the scale. That research was quite a few years ago but I am glad you still find it useful.

Best wishes,

Betty

---

On Apr 13, 2015, at 7:49 PM, Andrea Bennett <email> wrote:

Dr. Gee:

Thank you for taking the time to respond. I would like to commend you on your remarkable work and accomplishments in the field of literacy and adult education.

I am in the dissertation phase of my program at USEF. I would like to measure attitudes toward continuing education (AACE) for my research. I would like to use the AACE scale developed in 1986 by yourself and Gordon Darkenwald. Would it be possible to provide me with a copy of the scale? Also, would you be willing to grant me access to the scale for my research after my proposal is approved?

I would appreciate any assistance from you for this study. I look forward to hearing from you. Again, Dr. Gee, I appreciate your time and effort.

Regards:

Andrea R Bennett
Appendix D Cont’d

Inbox (11)
- Starred
- Important
- Sent Mail
- Drafts (1)
- Comm/Quals/Diss
- Focus Group
- Follow up
- Group: Asst
- Health Ins
- JOBS
- Misc
- Notes
- Personal-Family (29)
- Phd Docs (46)
- Priority
- Professors
- Stats I
- Work Files (!)
- More

Andrea Bennett
Dr. Gee: How are you doing? I am Andrea R Bennett, a PhD student at Universi...

Andrea Bennett <
to Elisabeth
Good Morning Dr. Gee:
How are you doing today?
I am following up with our earlier discussions about the AACES instrument. Thanks!
I was asked by my graduate school to seek your permission to copy the instrument.
Thanks again Dr. Gee.
Happy Holidays!!

Elisabeth Gee
to me.
Yes, you have my permission to copy the instrument. If you need anything else, just let me know.
Happy Holidays to you too!

Betty

Click here to Reply or Forward

Using 0.96 GB
Manage
About the Author

Andrea Rose Bennett is a native of St. Mary, Jamaica. She migrated to the USA in 2001 to further her education. Andrea earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Adult Education from the Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, and Higher Education at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. Andrea’s interest in Adult Education and Learning began after serving as a youth leader at a non-profit organization almost 20 years ago. Over the years, she has provided guidance to adults in career and educational development. Her research interests include educational research, mentoring, professional development, participation in adult education, and organizational learning.