

DISSERTATION

MEANINGS STUDENTS ATTRIBUTE TO THEIR EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE SHORT-TERM TRAINING PROGRAMS

Submitted by

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School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

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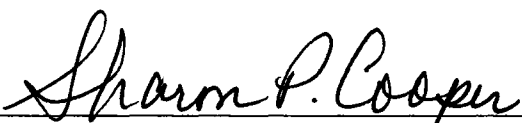
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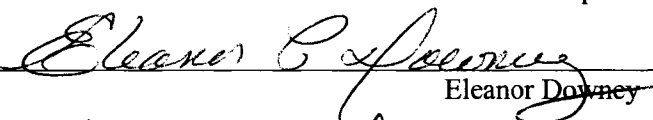
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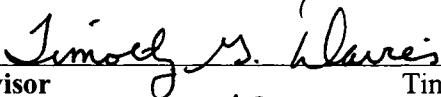
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Meanings Students Attribute to Their Community College Short-Term Training Program Experience

This Basic Interpretive Qualitative research study examined the experiences of fourteen participants who successfully completed a short-term training program at a community college. The students participated in a combination approach of job search assistance and education short-term training program after the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) OF 1996. The study researched how the short-term training program affected the students' lives while in the program and differences made in their lives after program completion. Open-ended interviews allow the reader to witness how these participants interpreted their experiences, constructed their worlds, and attributed meanings to their experiences. A maximum range of diversity included Hispanics, Anglos, a European immigrant, single mothers, and separated, divorced, married, and widowed participants. Ages ranged from 20 to 60 years of age.

Three themes emerged from the data results: *Fear*, *Support*, and *Maturation*. The overriding theme was fear. Fears were brought from the past, experienced during the program, and projected in the future. The support theme was also an important factor. Participants received support from various individual "village" members that included family, workforce center staff, college faculty and staff, and friends. This support contributed to the maturation theme reflected in the differences the short-term training program made in the students' lives during and after program completion. Most participants agreed the short-term training program did make a difference in their lives.

Many stated successful program completion contributed to a higher degree of self confidence and toward successful achievement of additional education and career goals.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my husband Patrick Daggett Hull, our children Philip Michael Hull and Jennifer Ann (Hull) Hillmann, our late daughter Rebecca Hull, and my late parents Herman August Dill and Hilda Mary (Bach) Dill. Each of you in your own unique way contributed to this success. Thank you!

I love you

Dorothy Elaine (Dill) Hull, Ph.D.

October 19, 2006

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Without participants willing to be interviewed, there would be no qualitative research. The former short-term training students who consented to be interviewed are the ones who made this work possible. For their courage, time, and effort in sharing their stories, I am very grateful.

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In addition, my extended family, relatives, friends, staff, co-workers, professors, and fellow cohort members continually gave me encouragement, inspiration, and support. You each helped me on this journey in your own distinctive way.

Thank you, all.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The joy and pride on the faces of the graduates attending the short-term training certificate ceremony were a sharp contrast to the anxiety, fear, and anticipation noted on orientation day fifty days earlier. The fifty-day journey was filled with experiences that affected the participants and their families. Objectives of the short-term training program were for the graduates to gain employment, continue with an internship, or add to the academic foundation they had just completed. For those students who have gained the knowledge content and the confidence that training instills, the program experiences may provide the opportunity to begin breaking the cycle of unemployment many graduates have experienced. The graduates participating under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program realized they have a limited time to receive benefits before they are expected to be at least partly self-supporting. I have been involved for over ten years with short-term training programs that have elicited the observations mentioned above. I understand those responses and what they feel like. Being a first generation college graduate, I have empathy for the barriers students face to successfully complete education or training programs that can make a difference in their lives.

Training opportunities have not always been available. Early in the 1900s adults and children in need generally continued to live and remain in the economic situation into which they were born (GAO, 1999). Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was created by the Social Security Act of 1935 to provide cash assistance to families with needy children who had been deprived support of a parent--at that time, mostly children

living with widowed mothers. The AFDC program initially was not designed to promote employment because mothers were generally not expected to work outside the home (GAO, 1999).

Successive programs in the 1960s through the 1990s continued to provide cash assistance, education, training, and job search assistance to welfare recipients (GAO, 1999). Over time, however, the public came to believe that most welfare families should work to become at least partly self-supporting. “The welfare burden kindled strong middle-class resentment against the poor, which overtook the compassion that had predominated during the 1960s” (Morris & McGann, 2004, p. 264). “The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 has ushered in a new era of welfare reform” (Imel, 2000, p. 1). Its passage ended welfare’s status as an entitlement program (Bombach, 2001).

The community colleges’ role in welfare-related education and training also changed with the passage of PRWORA (Peterson, 2002). PRWORA’s work-first approach reduced community colleges’ welfare populations (Szelenyi, 2001). The work-first concept emanated with this particular act. Community college general practitioners realized that the work-first philosophy meant participants had to enter the work force sooner. Some participants may come from an eighth grade education, or less than a high school diploma, to receive less than a year of college level training before entering the job market. Most short-term training programs are between four and fifteen weeks in length. This short-term work-first approach usually puts participants out in the work force eligible for minimum wage jobs rather than family wage jobs. Community college practitioners also realized the push was not to get participants off welfare with education

and training; it was to get them off welfare by going to work (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997). After the passage of PROWA, community colleges worked with social service agencies to get programs approved and became primary providers of training services. The students who experienced this short-term training program at Pleasant View Community College (PVCC-a pseudo name) were referred to PVCC by the local workforce center because the program was on the approved program list. While community colleges have a role in both educational and training programs, a distinction has emerged between the two.

Educational programs are offered at public and private institutions of higher education. Job training programs can be offered in a variety of educational institutions, unions, and proprietary schools. Job training programs are usually independent of the better-developed system of education (Grubb, 1996a). Job training programs are usually shorter (four to fifteen weeks) than certificate programs (six months to one year) or the associate degree programs (two years). The job training program programs are open only to those who are eligible: typically, high school dropouts, long-term unemployed, displaced workers, and welfare recipients (Grubb, 1996a). These short-term training programs, with an emphasis on employment and the development of entry level employment skills, have increasingly become the common method of providing instruction for welfare recipients at community colleges (Szelenyi, 2001; Brock, Matus-Grossmann, & Hamilton, 2001; Hull, 2003). Various approaches used by community colleges to provide short-term training include the rapid employment approach which is quick exposure to and entry into the labor force; the education-based approach which provides time for skill building thereby providing greater opportunities to obtain a family

wage job; and the combined approach which emphasizes education, training, and job search assistance. By participating in both job training and education, community colleges have the potential to move individuals from short-term job training into the education system (Grubb, 1996a).

The alternate system offered by Grubb (1996b) suggests a progression or “ladder” of increasing sophistication and skill. Through this study, Grubb found there were a variety of ineffective job training programs, despite thirty years of experimentation. Various approaches at many different types of educational institutions, unions, and proprietary schools offer short-term training programs. He went on to state that with the “ladder” system, existing job training efforts would then be linked to the educational system instead of the large variety of ineffective approaches experienced during the past thirty years. Currently, very few community colleges are able to follow their short-term training program students through their systems. Budget driven or state mandated criteria are tracked (low acculplacer test scores, low grade point averages, blocks to financial aid), but following short-term job-training students to nurture them as they go through the system is seldom done. By interviewing students to learn about their short-term training program experiences, an understanding of those experiences could strengthen community colleges efforts to increase completion rates.

An understanding of the issues and pressures faced by participants of short-term training programs could contribute toward the steps of permanent participant economic self-sufficiency (Peterson, 2002). A discussion with short-term training program participants could enable community colleges to become more aware of the students’

experiences and could maximize community colleges' commitment to furthering educational opportunities for the disadvantaged (Szelenyi, 2001).

States and community colleges have developed a number of initiatives in response to PRWORA. Research, however, on short-term welfare-to-work programs developed under the PRWORA is limited (Imel, 2000). Due to the relative novelty of these programs and practices, institutions and states will benefit from research specifically related to students' views and experiences related to the limitations placed on education and training under the legislation. Furthermore, an examination of how particular students experience a program can make all community colleges, including those not currently involved in providing education for the welfare student and displaced worker populations, more aware of the ways and methods that maximize community colleges' long-standing commitment to furthering educational opportunities for the disadvantaged (Szelenyi, 2001). Over the years, states' short-term training programs have emphasized different goals and philosophies for moving individuals into work and have provided different types of services to program participants to help them reach those goals (Szelenyi, 2001; GAO, 1999). More needs to be known about the current environment created by the enactment of welfare reform in 1996 (GAO, 1999). One way to determine what that environment is like for students is to find out how they experienced it and what challenges they faced.

Purpose

Using the Basic Interpretive Qualitative Research approach (Merriam, 2002), I interviewed students who completed a short-term training program successfully to better

understand their experiences while they were in the program and their experiences after they completed the short-term program at a community college.

Research Questions

The main question being researched was: How did the students experience their short-term training program?

The two sub research questions were:

1. How did the short-term training program affect the students' lives while they were in the program?
2. How did the short-term training program make a difference in the students' lives after they completed the program?

Significance

Better understanding how students experience a short-term training program could make all community colleges, including those not currently involved in providing education for the welfare student populations, more aware of the ways and methods that affect the students' lives while in the program. These students' experiences could provide information on how to maximize community colleges' long-standing commitment to furthering educational opportunities for the disadvantaged (Szelenyi, 2001). The educational and training programs offered have changed over the past decade. Previous programs beginning in the 1960s allowed students more time for completion. The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) ushered in a new era with a focus on a work-first approach (Peterson, 2002). Work-first programs emphasized quick exposure to and entry

into the labor force. This limited the amount of time participants had to complete their programs (GAO, 1999).

Community colleges' short-term training programs are engaged in a variety of efforts to assist recipients to move off welfare and into economic self-sufficiency. These efforts include providing General Equivalent Degree (GED) instruction if needed, job readiness training, academic training, case management, job counseling, and job placement. The ultimate purpose of these efforts is to remove obstacles that may preclude a participant's involvement in training, education, and employment (Higgins, 2001). One way to find out what the obstacles are that prohibit people from persisting to completion is to interview students and learn about their experiences.

Successful efforts take into account unique barriers recipients often face—barriers that can prevent success at both work and school. An understanding of the issues and affect these programs have on students' lives could contribute to the development of programs that facilitate not only job attainment but also job retention and educational advancement. All are important steps toward the ultimate goal of permanent economic self-sufficiency (Peterson, 2002).

Researcher's Perspective

I have been associated with short-term training programs for over ten years. I have witnessed the change from longer periods of time being provided for participants to complete their training or pursue educational degrees to squeezing more curriculum content into shorter and shorter training programs. The emphasis on short-term training programs increases the number of hours required for the participant to attend on a weekly basis. This affects participants and their ability to successfully complete programs as

they juggle part-time jobs, childcare schedules, and transportation issues. The history of the community college's long-standing commitment to partnerships with local workforce centers is to provide educational and training opportunities for those who are disadvantaged.

I come from a very hard working, economically disadvantaged, bilingual background. My grandparents were German immigrants in the mid 1800's who homesteaded in the Midwest and became United States citizens. My father came from a family of nine and my mother from a family of ten. My nineteen aunts and uncles provided me with numerous, numerous cousins. From that large family background, my sister and I, and a very few cousins, were the first to attend high school. I was the first from that generation of my family to attend college. I understand the barriers students face to successfully complete educational programs and the difference training and education can make in a person's life.

Upon completion of my bachelor's degree, my professional history with short-term training programs began when I was hired as an instructor for a short-term training program. It moved on when I became a coordinator for short-term training programs and continued as I supervised programs as manager of the department. As a director of a training institute, I wanted to research the experiences of students in a short-term training program. Throughout this history, I have witnessed many participants' journeys from orientation filled with feelings of anxiety, fear, and anticipation, to the celebration of certificate ceremonies, demonstrating feelings of confidence, pride, and happiness. I saw the need to research short-term training programs from the perspective of the student and

the meaning the participant(s) attributed to their experience by giving them a voice through my research.

Their voices may prove or disprove my assumptions about the meaning they give to the experiences of their short-term program while they were in the program and after they completed it. In my perspective, I have a bias participants encounter many program completion barriers as childcare, transportation, and low academic skill levels. An additional bias is the program has a positive affect on most of the participants and made a difference in their lives. Their voices, however, may disprove that bias by informing me their experience in the program did not affect their life while in the program and had no impact on their life after completion. The interviews will enlighten me as to how they did experience their short-term training program.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, the public's level of compassion for the disadvantaged has changed. Early programs that provided education, training, and job search assistance were reduced with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. Expectations now were for those on welfare or who were unemployed to become at least partly self-supporting. PRWORA also altered the role community colleges had in welfare-related and short-term training programs. The work-first short-term training approach had begun.

Chapter two covers the historical perspectives of society's outlook of welfare families in the Pre-PRWORA and PRWORA area. PRWORA also significantly altered the community college role in welfare-related education and short-term training (Peterson, 2002). PRWORA includes Rapid Employment, Education Based, and a Combination method in the three types of Welfare-to-Work approaches to short-term training. Vertical articulation and ladders of opportunities provide the potential to move individuals from short-term job training programs into the educational system. Community Colleges are often the major providers for short-term training. This research project seeks to understand how graduates of a community college short-term training program perceive their lives have been affected by the program.

Historical Perspectives

Prior to 1935, children of poverty received little governmental assistance to help alleviate conditions under which they lived. Those in need generally continued to live

and remain in the economic situation into which they were born. The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 was heralded as an end to welfare as it had been known. The role of community colleges in welfare-related education and training also changed with the focus of the work-first approach of the passage of PRWORA.

Pre-PRWORA

The Social Security Act of 1935 originally created Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). AFDC was to provide cash assistance to needy families with children who had been deprived one of their parents. The program was not designed to promote employment because generally mothers were not expected to work outside the home (GAO, 1999).

During the past several decades, however, the public has come to believe that most welfare families should work to become at least partly self-supporting. Many efforts to provide education, training, and job search assistance to help welfare recipients prepare for and find jobs can be traced back to the 1960s. At that time, Congress mandated every state operate a Work Incentive (WIN) program to encourage AFDC recipients to become self-sufficient (GAO, 1999).

Job training programs then began to develop. The first programs were through Manpower Development and Training Act (Manpower) in the 1960s and then continued under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) during the 1970s. During the 1980s the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) added to the number of job training programs as well. The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program of the Family Support Act of 1988 provided support for job training specifically

for welfare recipients (Grubb, 1996a). Institutions in the United States, since the 1960s, that educate and train people for employment have grown in number and complexity. Vocational education, increasingly, takes place in postsecondary institutions, including community colleges, technical institutions, and area vocational schools (Grubb, 1996a). Grubb goes on to state that the different set of job-related preparation programs developed since the early 1960s are often constructed apart from the regular schooling system.

A GAO report on JOBS in 1999 found almost half the states reported a shift from an emphasis on immediate job placement to an emphasis on long-term education or training. Several years after the JOBS implementation, a review by GAO indicated the JOBS programs nationwide showed only approximately 11% of welfare recipients were actually involved in JOBS activities each month. “In addition, AFDC caseloads rose to their highest level ever, peaking at 5 million families in 1994” (GAO, 1999, p. 5). These findings influenced future legislation regarding welfare reform. Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter recommended major welfare reforms as skepticism about welfare programs increased. Fundamental reform was not adopted until President Clinton’s first term in office in 1996 (Rodgers, 2000).

PRWORA

PRWORA significantly changed the nation’s cash assistance program for needy families with children (GAO, 1999). “The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 ushered in a new era of welfare reform” (Imel, 2000, p. 1). Its passage was heralded as an end to welfare as it was known and ended welfare’s status as an entitlement program (Bombach, 2001).

The passage of PRWORA resulted in the most innovative period in American's welfare history. State responsiveness varied a great deal with different approaches tested in counties of the same state (Rodgers, 2000). Title I of the law replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cash assistance program with fixed block grants to states. These grants were to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and end a family's entitlement to assistance. To encourage and facilitate this innovation and address continuing concerns among policymakers about growing welfare dependence, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWOPA) of 1996, commonly referred to as welfare reform legislation, overhauled the nation's welfare system. The AFDC program was abolished, and the TANF block grants were established. The TANF program goals were to end welfare dependence by promoting work over welfare and self-reliance over dependency (GAO, 1999).

The failed history of welfare reform had prompted President Clinton to propose something radical. He wanted able-bodied people to work for their benefits, cutting them off of welfare after two years if they refused (Gibbs, 1995). President Clinton vetoed the first two versions of the PRWORA bill, but signed the reform plan in 1996. It provided funds to reduce out-of-wedlock births, required both parents to accept responsibility to support their children, and provided states with funds to improve the quality of childcare. Under the reform plan of PRWORA, families would be limited to a lifetime limit of five years of cash assistance. PRWORA was designed to reduce future generations of welfare poor (Rodgers, 2000).

According to Peterson (2002), the ultimate goal of permanent employment is, therefore, economic self-sufficiency. The focus of PRWORA is to move able-bodied

poor into the job market (Rodgers, 2000). Grubb, Badway, Bell, & Castellano (1999) indicate obstacles to education and training presented by PRWORA have received considerable criticism. Employment obstacles welfare recipients frequently experience are lack of transportation, lack of social networks, low educational attainment, racial discrimination, health problems, parenting demands, lack of experience, and unavailability of affordable childcare with low basic skills representing the most important impediment to employment (Szelenyi, 2001). In addition, Szelenyi also asserts the existing four- to twelve-week training programs, with their limited time frame, do not meet the needs of a student population characterized by low academic skill levels. Recipients also fear time limits on program completion and may follow caseworkers' advice to leave school and start work.

PRWORA and the Community College

PRWORA's focus on a work-first approach significantly altered the community college role in welfare-related education and training (Peterson, 2002). Their first consideration was to coordinate with local welfare agencies and be aware of policies concerning education, training, and work activities (Brock et al. 2001).

Imel (2000) noted two issues related to welfare-to-work are legislation and policy. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) created by PRWORA established greater work requirements and placed a 5-year lifetime limit on receiving aid. The term "personal responsibility" implied poverty and joblessness resulted from the failure to act on opportunities. The second issue is education's role in the work-first environment was de-emphasized.

The focus shifted from job preparation through education to providing training concurrent with jobs. Analysts contended that PRWORA's work-first approach played an important role in reducing community colleges' welfare populations (Szelenyi, 2001). "Bruce Harris, Chair of the Association for Community College Trustees, says welfare reform has become one of the greatest concerns of community colleges presidents in every state because the colleges are seen as primary providers of such services" (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997, p. 31). In the past, community colleges could assume most welfare recipients were unemployed. Now, PRWORA's work requirements adopted by many states, find many recipients working at least part-time (Brock et al., 2001).

Forty-four percent of courses taken by community college welfare-to-work participants were noncredit. According to Kennedy-Manzo (1997) working with local social services agencies, colleges try to get as many programs as possible onto approved lists. They squeeze programs into shorter time periods to allow students to meet time restrictions. Higgins (2001) states studies indicate welfare recipients achieve financial independence by earning a college degree. The passage of welfare legislation (PRWORA) in 1996, however, only allows short-term training that leads directly to employment, not a college degree, to count as allowable work activities.

Welfare-to-Work Approaches

A distinction has emerged between education and job training. Job training programs are generally much shorter than educational programs and open only to those who are eligible. Job training programs concentrate on individuals who would typically not find their way into community colleges or other educational institutions. These programs are most common among high school dropouts, long-term unemployed,

dislocated workers, and welfare recipients. Relatively few individuals with post-secondary education have been in public job training (Grubb, 1996a). By participating in both job training and education, community colleges have the potential to move individuals from short-term job training into the educational system. Grubb offers a system vision arranged in a progression or “ladder” of increasing sophistication and skill in which existing job training efforts would be linked to the educational system. Two-year colleges could be the crucial linchpins between the two. They would be responsible for connecting the current job training system with the educational system.

Between 1935 and 2005, states’ welfare-to-work short-term training programs have emphasized different goals and philosophies for moving individuals into work and have provided different types of services and activities to program participants to help them reach those goals. The various approaches included Rapid Employment, Education-Based, and Combination Approach programs. Rapid Employment programs have traditionally concentrated on a job search. Education-Based development programs offered basic education to welfare recipients. A Combined approach included both job search assistance and some education and training. The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) was directed by Congress to review research on the various welfare-to-work approaches effectiveness. Findings were examined on the effectiveness of a rapid employment approach, an education-based approach, and a combination of these two approaches in improving employment related outcomes for welfare recipients (GAO, 1999; Szelenyi, 2001).

Rapid Employment Approach

Rapid employment programs emphasized quick exposure to and entry into the labor force. This goal reflected the belief that participants can best acquire employment-related skills when they are working, regardless of the job. These programs' service strategies tend to rely heavily on job search activities but can make use of education and training to some extent. The 1996 welfare reform law emphasizes the importance of moving welfare recipients into employment. It did, however, give states greater flexibility to tailor their programs to meet their own goals and needs (GAO, 1999). The decisions made in exercising their options created a varied and complex matrix (Rodgers, 2000).

The welfare reform legislation, approved by Congress in 1996, set strict limits on eligibility for public funds. As of 2006, able-bodied recipients have a sixty-month lifetime limit on receiving benefits. They must find work or enroll in programs that prepare them for employment within a year. The emphasis is not to get off welfare with education and training; it is to get off welfare by going to work (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997). "The belief behind a labor force attachment model is that it is the act of working that is instructive. Education is something that a recipient can always pursue later, on their own time" (Bombach, 2001. p. 74).

Several TANF program goals are specified in the law. These goals included ending welfare dependence of the Family Support Act of 1988, eliminating the WIN program and creating the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program (GAO, 1999). PRWORA's work-first focus has led most community colleges to adopt short-term training programs emphasizing rapid employment. These short-term training

programs, with heightened focus on employment, have increasingly become the common programmatic approach for community college welfare recipients (Szelenyi, 2001). Even though studies have established these work-first focused programs to speed up welfare recipient's entry into the labor market, they usually do not lead to jobs that are long lasting or well paying (Brock, et al. 2001).

Workforce or short-term job training is a continuation of the education that each worker received while in elementary and secondary school. This training is, however, more industry and task specific (Stocker, Sagan, & Payne, 1997). A distinction has emerged between education and job training. Short-term job training is more task specific for industry, generally much shorter than educational programs, and often is open only to those who are eligible; for example, welfare recipients and displaced workers.

Grubb (1996a) indicated a vision of vertical integration is more appropriate than the current system. Needs in the existing program structure do not support efforts to attain stable employment. On the whole, job-training programs have been quite ineffective despite thirty years of experimentation with new approaches. Some individuals claim that locating job-training programs in community colleges gives individuals easier access to the colleges' educational programs. It is pointed out, however, that some job training programs are not currently structured to lead to subsequent training and educational opportunities.

Education Based Approach

Some job training programs have the goal of skill building. This focus is often called an education-based approach. This approach usually involved a greater initial investment in participants' educational and occupational skills. After this investment,

when the students enter the labor market, it was easier for them to obtain a job with higher pay, health benefits, and advancement opportunities (GAO, 1999).

Higgins (2001) indicated that because many jobs require college training, Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, who have access to job training through postsecondary education, have a higher chance of achieving financial independence. According to Seguino and Butler (1998) a 1997 survey of 569 Aid to Family with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients in Maine found those who attended college experienced higher employment rates and earnings than those without college.

A nine-year follow-up study was conducted of 158 women who received public assistance when they enrolled in New York colleges in 1980 and who then received either a two-year or four-year degree. Eighty-eight percent of the women left welfare after graduation, eighty-nine percent had been employed since graduation, and almost half of the respondents were earning more than \$20,000 per year at the time of the study in 1980, according to (Gittell, Schehl, & Facri, 1990).

Deborah L. Floyd is president of Prestonburg Community College located in the heart of Kentucky's Appalachian region. She indicated that literacy and technical programs and those that lead to various certificates and degrees give many who are on public assistance the extra assistance they need to become self-supporting. She goes on to state that educating for high-skilled, high-wage jobs is the way to keep people off welfare and help them have a more productive life (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997). It is evident, to compete in today's employment market, individuals benefit greatly from college training (Higgins, 2001).

Job training programs offer a great variety of services. These may include classroom instruction, vocational skill training, on-the-job training, job search assistance, and placement efforts. Some of the most effective job training programs seem to be successful because they provide a variety of services and help individuals in several distinct ways. Services may include counseling, tutoring, child care services, remedial education, and minority student services (Grubb, 1996a, 1996b).

Some job training programs contract with community colleges to provide short-term job training. Administrators claim this aspect of job training programs is one of the benefits that trainees receive. Participants can then easily enroll in regular community college programs. The encouragement to return is often stressed. The atmosphere of a community college campus may encourage participants to envision themselves as part of an educational environment. The El Paso Community College (Texas) welfare-to-work program requires participants to obtain college Identification Cards (I.D.) cards and attend sessions where they fill out financial aid forms and applications for admission. These actions can help program participants define themselves as college students, not welfare clients (Bombach, 2001).

Participants of another short-term training program receive a campus tour; complete admission forms, and receive a college identification card (I.D.) on program orientation day. It is stressed as program participants, they are college students. Participants have verbalized their pleasure of having a college I.D. to share with family and friends. They view themselves as college students enrolled in a college program, not a welfare recipient. This new self-concept is a transition for many of the participants and may be a contributing factor to successful completion of the program (Hull, 2003).

Remarkably, there are few cases of outright duplication of job training programs. They vary in their services at the local level where there is substantial coordination. JTPA and welfare-to-work programs subcontract with community colleges to provide customized training. In some cases, a local community college may provide virtually all education and job training services. Coordination is common between community colleges and workforce centers (Grubb, 1996a).

Despite job training program deficiencies, it is important not to overstate the value of sub-baccalaureate credentials since the economic returns vary from field to field and depend critically on placement in related occupations. The preponderance of evidence indicates that completion of programs, not simply random course work, does enhance earnings. Most job training programs do increase employment and earnings, thereby reducing the amount of welfare benefits individuals receive. The benefits of job training, therefore, usually exceed the costs, so they are “worth doing” in this sense. However, he feels benefits may be too small to change the lives of individuals who have enrolled in them (Grubb, 1996a). Higgins (2001), however, concludes once welfare recipients earn a college degree and have job training, they can earn sufficiently higher wages to make many of them financially independent and no longer in need of public assistance.

The challenge for community colleges is to structure their welfare-to-work programs in a way that will allow a former welfare recipient to return and gain further credentials in the future. Through the establishment of fully articulated welfare-to-work programs, credits can then be used toward the completion of an associate’s degree at community colleges (Peterson, 2002). Some community college programs have

established funds to encourage welfare-to-work graduates to return to school. These funds may be replenished through private fund raising and used throughout the program year (Pagenette & Kozeli, 2001). Currently, two-year colleges provide virtually the only links between the two systems of education and vocational or job training. Two-year colleges are the crucial linchpins between the two systems. Community colleges often provide vocational training for the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) welfare clients and remediation to these individuals as well as their own students. By participating in both job training and education, community colleges have the potential to move individuals from short-term job training systems into the educational system (Grubb, 1996b).

Combination Approaches

Research on the effectiveness of different welfare-to-work approaches suggests that programs with a combined approach of job search assistance and education and training tend to be more effective. Research conducted over a five-year period indicates a combined approach is more successful than either approach alone in increasing employment and earnings while reducing welfare payments (GAO, 1999).

Daytona Beach Community College, Florida, (DBCC) welfare programs combined vocational training, adult basic education, and work experience into ten- to sixteen-week offerings. Fields ranged from nursing to modern office technology. Corning Community College, New York, (CCC) has a Learn to Earn Program that offered a combination of workforce development activities emphasizing skill acquisition of a variety of skills sought by employers (Szelenyi, 2001). The short-term training focuses on the development of entry-level employment skills. A short-term training

program at PVCC, offered in partnership with the local workforce center, also known as the local One-Stop, recognizes the three approaches to welfare-to-work programs and incorporates the combined approach of job search assistance and education (Hull, 2003).

Combination approach programs provide individualized attention to welfare recipients, concentrate on employment, involve relationships with local employers, and expect high commitment to program participation from welfare recipients. While attaining employment remains the main focus of these initiatives, basic education and skill development also receive considerable attention. Research tends to indicate the most successful program is the combination approach. They include mixed strategies of employment and skill building services. Rather than seeing employment building skills as competing goals, the research suggests that policy makers should use a wide variety of employment, training, and other services available in support of a clear employment goal and allow local flexibility in deciding which services are most appropriate for which people (Szelenyi, 2001).

Grubb's Vertical Integration and Ladders of Opportunities would include occupational and academic skills training becoming increasingly sophisticated as one moves from initial, shorter programs of the current job training system to longer and more complex associate degree programs. Necessary support services should also provide competencies and information of increasing levels of sophistication for students as they move up the Ladders of Opportunity (Grubb, 1996a).

Vertical Articulation and Ladders of Opportunities

Americans are great system builders (Grubb, 1996a). The process of system building in education reflects a smooth progression from kindergarten, through a

sequence of grades, each with a prerequisite for the next, and on to higher education. Creating vertical ladders at the post-secondary level would require the kinds of articulation mechanisms that now exist between some community colleges and four-year colleges. By participating in both job training and education, community colleges have the potential to move individuals from the short-term job training system into the educational system. It is unclear how often this happens. When community colleges administer job-training programs, they often establish courses that are independent of the regular education programs.

Over the past three decades, American community colleges have been major providers of high-quality work-force training (Quinley, 1996). Few institutions keep records about the movement of individuals from welfare-to-work programs into and through certificate and/or associate degree programs (Grubb, 1996a). As long as there has been welfare, there have been efforts at reform, but none as dramatic as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) (Brock et al., 2002)

A ladder of job related training programs began in the 1960's with the Manpower Development and Training Act (Manpower) consolidated into the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in the 1970s, reformed into the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) during the 1980s, and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program of the Family Support Act of 1988 all supporting job training for welfare recipients (Grubb, 1996a). PRWORA replaced the nation's primary cash assistance program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (Brock et al., 2002).

According to the General Accounting Office, the accumulation of programs at the federal level has generated 163 distinct programs to support education and job training, spending approximately \$20.4 billion. This progression of job training programs also included the expansion of a new institution, the community college itself.

Currently, two-year colleges provide virtually the only link between vocational training for JTPA and welfare clients and the remediation needed for these students and the college students. The development of a single system that would reintegrate education and job training in a carefully developed progression of programs would end the fragmentation characteristic of the history of job training programs and thereby develop programs more effective than those that now exist. The vision includes occupational academic skills training becoming increasingly sophisticated as one moves from initial, shorter programs of the current job training system to the longer and more complex associate degree programs. Necessary support services should also provide competencies and information of increasing levels of sophistication (Grubb, 1996a).

Grubb (1996a) stated that a vertical system would require five distinct changes in state policy:

1. Designate a state agency or council to oversee the vertical system(s) development.
2. Designate a local or regional council to oversee the vertical system(s) development at the local level.
3. Create incentives for vertical coordination and disincentives for programs to maintain their independence.
4. Establish information systems.
5. Abolish programs that are inconsistent with the central vision and create institutions necessary for the vertical system(s) (p. 132).

A vision of vertical integration is more appropriate than the current system, both to the existing structure of programs and to the needs of many individuals in their efforts to make their way into stable employment.

Current Job Training Program Deficiencies

Grubb (1996a) indicated job-training programs have been quite ineffective despite thirty years of experimentation with new approaches. As a second-chance route into the sub-baccalaureate labor market, the job training “system” is inadequate. He goes on to state that the entire system of work-related education and job training--a system he feels is often fragmented and chaotic--has become increasingly complex and variegated. The efficiency and analysis of programs are worth doing only if their benefits outweigh their costs. Programs can be effective but inefficient; they can also be efficient but ineffective in increasing the well being of recipients if the benefits to taxpayers outweigh the losses to recipients (Grubb, 1996b).

The creation of job training programs has led to special difficulties. Job training seems to overlap with existing community college programs. The proliferation of job training programs itself has created confusion about what services are available. This results in a crazy quilt of competing and overlapping policies and programs (Grubb, 1996a). Two seemingly conflicting goals face colleges designing welfare-to-work programs: help welfare recipients move into employment quickly and help welfare recipients find and retain good jobs (Brock, et al., 2002).

New vocationalism for postsecondary education must consider an increasingly diverse student population. At the two-year college level, the academic disciplines are relatively weak and unfocused, partly because of the increasing role of vocational

education. The past decade of Grubb's work on academic and vocational education integration defines the debate of future vocational education in the United States (Bragg, 1997). The emerging system of job training is really a nonsystematic of disparate programs and is independent of the better-developed system of education according to Grubb (1996a).

Short-term job training programs are also offered in a bewildering variety of education institutions, unions, and proprietary schools in addition to community colleges. This variety makes it difficult to determine how services are organized and provided. There seem to be very few mechanisms for following individuals through the system, helping them make transitions among programs, providing assistance if they falter, or giving them information about the alternatives available (Grubb, 1996a).

The job training programs seem to concentrate on individuals who would typically not find their way into community colleges or other educational institutions. Job training programs are most common among high school dropouts. Relatively few individuals with postsecondary education are in public job training programs. Most job training programs increase employment and earnings and reduce the amount of welfare benefits individuals receive (Grubb, 1996a).

Therefore, the benefits of job training usually exceed the costs, so they are "worth doing" in this sense. Benefits may be present for two or three years then begin to decline in year four. Five years after enrollment there is typically no difference between those who enrolled in job training and those who have not. The benefits are too small to change the lives of individuals who are enrolled in them (Grubb, 1996a). Recent findings, however, from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS) found

welfare members not participating in welfare-to-work programs succeeded in getting off welfare, but program group members mandated to participate in programs moved off welfare sooner (Brock, 2002).

In the world of job training programs, the worst-off participants suffer from multiple barriers to being employed--a lack of not only basic academic capacities and job-specific skills but also personal attributes necessary for sustained employment. These barriers can be extremely varied, and the conventional offerings of education and job training, classroom instruction, work-based learning, job search assistance, and help with job placement do not overcome them. The realization of these multiple barriers has resulted in some job training programs providing support services in addition to education and training (Grubb, 1996b).

Grubb (1996b) went on to state the weak effects of job training programs is that the very idea of providing “second-chance” programs may be flawed. “First-chance” programs virtually guarantee a place for everyone (in open-access community colleges, if not in four-year colleges). Individuals who fail to use the educational system are those with serious intellectual, personal, and motivational barriers to employment. No “second-chance” system of reasonable cost could possibly help them enter stable employment. However, the abandonment of “second-chance” opportunities in job training programs in adult education and community colleges is a distinctly un-American idea.

Job Training Program Benefits

As mentioned previously, abandoning “second-chance” opportunities in job training does not fit the American idea of opportunities for all. The establishment of job

training programs manifests one of the most generous of American impulses: to provide economic opportunities for as many people as possible. The ambitions of job training programs are not that different from the ambitions of occupational education: to move individuals from chronic unemployment, welfare, or wages too low to permit escape from poverty, into jobs that are stable, well paid, and have some future prospects (Grubb, 1996a). Advocates of the need to build effective school-to-work transitions systems, know without such a system, the “forgotten half” do not have much of a chance (Tucker, 1995).

Compared to other institutions, community colleges offer several advantages for welfare-to-work programs. They serve a wide range of students, offer a wide menu of credit and noncredit courses, help participants acquire marketable credentials, and have relationships with local employers. These features help TANF recipients move toward reduced welfare dependence and increase their employment opportunities. (Brock et al., 2002).

Alternative Vision System

In contrast to the existing system of job training programs, Grubb (1996b) offers a vision of an alternative system arrayed in a progression or “ladder” of increasing sophistication and skill. Existing job training efforts would then be linked to the educational system.

Currently, an important distinction has emerged between education and job training. Grubb (1996b) indicated the seven differences between education and job training are as follows:

1. Job-training programs are generally much shorter than educational programs. Many job training programs involve from ten to fifteen weeks of part-day attendance with the number of contact hours as low as forty. Educational programs are generally longer.
2. Educational programs are generally open to all members of the population. In contrast, job-training programs are open only to those who are eligible. Long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, or welfare recipients are examples of eligible participants.
3. Most educational programs take place in educational institutions. Job training services are offered in a bewildering variety of educational institutions, community-based organizations, firms, unions, and proprietary schools.
4. Services in educational programs are relatively standard. Job training programs, however, also offer on-the-job training.
5. Goals of educational programs are typically quite broad, encompassing political, moral, and intellectual purposes, but job-training programs focus exclusively on preparing individuals to become employed.
6. Job training has generally been a federal initiative wholly funded by the federal government, though locally administered. Most education, by contrast, is a state and local responsibility.
7. Job training programs differ from educational programs in that they constitute a separate system, a “second-chance” system in some ways

parallel to, but disconnected from, the “first-chance” educational system.

The development of a single system that would reintegrate education and job training in a carefully developed progression of programs ending the fragmentation characteristics and developing programs more effective than those that now exist is Grubb’s vision. A vision of vertical integration is more appropriate than the current system, both to the existing structure of programs and to the needs of many individuals in their efforts to make their way into stable employment (Grubb, 1996a). Grubb offers this vision of an alternative system arrayed in a progression or “ladder” of increasing sophistication and skill in which existing job training efforts would be linked to the educational system.

An uneasy relationship continues to exist between academic and vocational education. Fundamental changes are needed in vocational education. Closer connections are needed to academic education. College prep will not change. The acknowledgment of replacing the college bound track for certain students or parents is difficult. Persuading academicians is not difficult; finding the way to implement the practice is the real challenge (Bragg, 1997).

Gregson (1997), however, found Grubb’s neglect of the role of education through occupations in social reconstruction problematic. Education should develop informed, socially aware, democratically sensitive citizens. He argues there is not one best vision of education through occupations.

Two-year colleges would be the crucial linchpins between the two systems. They would be responsible for connecting the current job training system with the educational

system. Grubb's vision is articulated in federal legislation, in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. There are three forms of integration of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act: (a) academic and vocational education, (b) secondary and postsecondary programs, and (c) school-based and work-based learning (Grubb, 1996a).

Grubb (1996a) went on to state that the most important aspect of articulating a vertical system is to make sure it provides a constant vision of how to reform existing programs. From a larger perspective of social policy, a more effective approach might be to reduce poverty, reduce general and racial discrimination in employment, and prevent the social pathologies that afflict low-income communities. From the vantage point of education and training programs, without the power or resources to make these fundamental changes, providing support services is the best that can be done.

Integration of Academic and Vocational Education

Bragg (1997) indicated for the past decade Grubb's work on the integration of academic and vocational education has defined the debate surrounding the future of vocational education in the United States. Grubb has disclosed the uneasy relationships that continue to exist between academic and vocational education. He also believes fundamental changes are needed in vocational education. A closer connection to academic education needs to be built. College prep won't change. Acknowledge the difficulty in replacing the college bound tract for certain students and certain parents. He goes on to state that the balance of power is held by academic education, and uneasy relationships will continue to exist between academic and vocational education. These conditions call for a compromise.

To address these relationships, Phelps (1997) suggested a substantial change in the professional lives of teachers is needed. The majority of teachers have very limited or no workplace experience outside of education. He suggested teachers engage in work-based professional development or have all pre-service teachers have work experience outside of education. Bragg (1997) indicated persuading the academician's education through occupations is the right thing to do is not too difficult. Many teachers hold such beliefs. Finding ways, however, to practice it is the real challenge. Phelps (1997) indicated the problem of implementing any educational reform is deeply rooted in the general public's search for simple, painless magic-bullet solutions to complex problems.

Education through occupations would involve the integration of theory and practice where students reflect and act through having a sense of power and politics. To accomplish this, occupational preparation needs to move from more general to more specific. The continuum of tracking needs to be avoided. An emphasis on project-based instruction is needed. Students need a progression of work experiences from part-time to full-time employment. Careers, not just jobs, need to be emphasized. Expose students to vocational education and have teachers work together across disciplines to fill the gaps between vocational and liberal arts education (Bragg, 1997).

Community College as Major Providers for Training

With increased international competition, industry has looked to community colleges to develop programs to increase the skill level of the workforce. Community colleges are in the most practical position to be providers of workforce development training (Stocker et al., 1997). To help community colleges improve services, the National Workforce Training Study sought the perspectives of the recipients and the

providers of training. The study found community colleges were responding to the needs of businesses and other organizations for workforce training and retraining (Quinley, 1996).

Over the past decade, community colleges have emerged as a major provider of the workforce training necessary in strengthening the competitiveness of our nation's business and industry to succeed and survive in a global economy (Stocker, et al., 1997). To be a competitive workforce in a global economy, we cannot leave people behind. Community colleges are the only real edge many people have. For hundreds of thousands of the nation's poor adults, community colleges have long delivered their best chance for gaining sufficient education and training to land a job that could break their dependence on welfare (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997).

Community College Mission and Commitment

The community college mission is to provide a prebaccalaureate, technical, or general nondegree educational opportunity for individuals within the geographical region of the college it serves. This mission also includes economic development and industrial training along with the traditional academic programs.

A smart educational system requires a community college that is flexible. Job training programs are essential. As the economy changes, the slowest part of change is the work force. Our workers need the skills necessary to move on with their lives. Interesting innovations are One-Stop centers that the community college system is plugged into. A One-Stop is a place where a person can find what's available. The One-Stop allows people to find not only what may be available but also to be able to judge demand for jobs themselves (Bush, 2003).

Community colleges have long been involved in providing education and training to welfare recipients, a student population with a number of academic and personal barriers that impede educational success. Welfare reform has had a variety of impacts on the enrollment of welfare recipients nationwide and on services aimed at these students. Historically, community colleges have been heavily involved in job training and have been expected to be the primary providers of JTPA training. Over the past three decades, American community colleges' continuing education divisions have been major providers of high-quality workforce training. This high-quality workforce training is provided to businesses and nonprofit organizations operating in the United States. Industry is turning to community colleges and technical vocational schools as its door to higher education to supply the basic skill training and other industry-related skill training (Burger, 1984; Quinley, 1996; Stocker et al., 1997; Szelenyi, 2001).

Community college welfare-to-work programs today, however, face two often-conflicting goals. One goal is to help welfare recipients quickly obtain employment, and the other goal is to help welfare recipients obtain the education necessary to gain the types of employment opportunities that lead to permanent economic self-sufficiency (Peterson, 2002). Community colleges welfare-to-work programs are engaged in a variety of efforts to assist welfare recipients to move off welfare and into economic self-sufficiency. There is a willingness on the part of a variety of agencies to cooperate with community colleges for the benefit of their clients. Agencies and community colleges pull out all the stops to come up with viable solutions for workforce development training programs (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997).

Successful efforts take into account the unique barriers welfare recipients face. The significant barrier issues that confront welfare-to-work programs include few skills, little work experience, poor soft skills, limited education, low-level basic skills, no support systems, motivation, and attitude issues (Ream, Wagner, & Knorr, 2001). Grubb and McDonnel (as cited in Grubb, 1996b) indicate two-year colleges provide virtually the only links between the two systems of government and education. Community colleges often provide vocational training for JTPA and welfare clients. They also provide remediation to these individuals as well as providing these same services for their own community college students. In some areas, the community college is the administrator of JTPA programs. In a few communities it is almost the sole provider of all vocational education, job training, and remediation, thereby coordinating the job training and education system de facto.

According to Burger (1984) it is not the educational services offered by community colleges that make them important in economic development. Their importance is in their aggressiveness, responsiveness, and flexibility in using those educational services that make them valuable in meeting the needs of business and industry. First and foremost is the commitment at the state level from the governor, the legislature, and the community college board. The ability to be effective at the local level, however, ultimately requires commitment from within the colleges themselves. This support needs to include the president, the board, and the professionalism of the business center/economic development staff.

The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 significantly altered the role of community colleges in welfare-

related education and training (Peterson, 2002). Regardless of the details, the new rules could force many community college students to drop out of school. Others who wish to pursue more education may be discouraged for fear the time restrictions will prevent them from completing the programs. The new law gives states flexibility to design their own welfare programs. Some states encourage job training and education programs to allow participants to meet work requirements by a variety of means. Other states are far less favorable toward students (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997).

The state of Colorado supports the work-first philosophy. However, some Colorado counties are diligent in providing opportunities for TANF recipients to pursue higher education and job training (Higgins, 2001). There is a short-term training program offered that provides an intensive program that combines technical, core employment, resume, interview, and life skills into useful career options. The collaborative effort of the community college and the local workforce center (One-Stop) helps bridge the gap that separates people who need jobs and businesses that need skilled workers (Hull, 2003).

A program combining work and education in Maryland relies on an individualized approach to education under welfare reform. Corning Community College in the state of New York features a Learn to Earn Program that offers a combination of workforce development activities emphasizing the acquisition of a variety of skills sought by employers. Community colleges play a crucial role in the Oregon welfare-to-work process. There is a strong emphasis on employment, with the colleges offering short-term training programs, averaging six or eight week sessions. In Wyoming, the state's community colleges and four-year university are involved in educational activities

supported by state funds. With the aim of facilitating the completion of educational programs by welfare recipients, the program requires students on welfare who are pursuing education to attend college full time (Szelenyi, 2001). Wisconsin's plan moved recipients into a job ladder, while simultaneously receiving education and training (Rodgers, 2000). Community colleges in many states have long delivered the best chance for thousands of the nation's poor adults to gain sufficient education and training to land a job that could break their dependence on welfare (Kennedy-Manzo, 1997).

Barriers to Success

Fundamentally, there are significant barrier issues to providing welfare-to-work programs. Welfare recipients often have few skills, little work experience, poor soft skills, limited education, low-level basic skills, little or no support systems, lack of motivation, and often have attitude issues. They are typically stuck in a welfare culture. An important milestone is not just getting a job but keeping it. Retention is the benchmark. If a welfare-to-work program is not retaining participants in work, then it is probably not effective (Ream et al., 2001). These barriers can prevent success at both work and school. An understanding of the issues and pressures faced by welfare recipients will contribute to the development of welfare-to-work programs that facilitate not only job attainment but also job retention and educational advancement.

Obstacles to employment welfare recipients most frequently experience are lack of transportation, lack of social networks, low educational attainment, racial discrimination, health problems for themselves or their children, demands of parenting young children, lack of work experience, and the unavailability of affordable childcare.

Childcare and transportation appear to be two major obstacles that hamper regular attendance at work and school (Szelenyi, 2001; Peterson, 2001).

Although it is discouraging, it is not surprising to find low basic academic skills represent the most important impediment to finding and maintaining employment by a welfare recipient. On average, welfare recipients performed at lower levels than unskilled laborers and assemblers (Szelenyi, 2001; Grubb, 1996a). Recipients often have backgrounds beset with crises. Juggling work schedules, school class schedules, and family responsibilities are all barriers to completing certificate programs. PRWORA's work requirements pressure many to work at least a part-time job while also participating in welfare-to-work educational programs. Further disruptions to their lives can quickly cause them to abandon their plans for education and employment (Brock, et al., 2001).

Recipients may encounter new challenges they are ill equipped to face while on the job. Many of the general barriers to success that welfare recipients face during the educational programs persist into the workplace. These issues can be overcome and prevented through proper pre-employment training and resources that aid welfare-to-work graduates during employment (Peterson, 2002). The barriers mentioned previously that some individuals face have been recognized, and some training programs have provided support services in addition to education and training (Grubb, 1996a).

Corporate partners of the Moraine Park Technical College in Wisconsin identified several key barrier definitions. They found there was an obvious difference between job readiness and work readiness. These differences needed to be addressed. Employers indicated job readiness without work readiness was a sure guarantee for job failure for both employer and employee. Work readiness indicates an individual is prepared for the

general working world--in other words, having the required soft skills. (Nitschke, 2001). To aid in job retention, some welfare-to-work programs have chosen to place a major emphasis on teaching acceptable and expected workplace behavior skills that participants may not need to obtain a job but will need to maintain employment. An important milestone is not just getting a job but keeping it. Retention is the benchmark (Ream et al., 2001).

Strategies for Success

Community colleges welfare-to-work programs are engaged in a variety of efforts to assist welfare recipients to move off welfare and into economic self-sufficiency. Successful efforts take into account the unique barriers recipients face that prevent successes in both work and school (Peterson, 2002). Barriers and obstacles to employment welfare recipients most frequently experience are a lack of transportation, lack of social networks, low educational attainment, racial discrimination, health problems for themselves or their children, demands of parenting young children, lack of work experience, and the unavailability of affordable childcare (Szelenyi, 2001).

Employers have indicated a lack of essential workplace skills is often a guarantee for employee failure (Szelenyi, 2001). To aid in job retention, some welfare-to-work programs have chosen to place a major emphasis on teaching acceptable and expected workplace behaviors. These are workplace behavior skills that participants may not need to obtain a job but will need to maintain employment (Ream, et al., 2001).

There are many recommendations for effective welfare-to-work programs. Grubb et al., (1999) provided five distinct percepts of effective welfare-to-work programs: (a) It is important to understand the labor market; (b) education, occupations skills, and work-

based learning should be offered in combination; (c) programs should offer support services; (d) post-employment education should be offered; (e) gather and collect information on outcomes. Szelenyi (2001) indicated the use of these outcomes may be used to inform and improve future practices.

Programs that focus on the development of workplace skills such as communication, interpersonal behavior, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities can greatly aid job retention efforts (Peterson, 2002). Community colleges that collaborate with the Department of Human Services (DHS) may often work to discern potential conflicts and overcome barriers to successful program completion (Peterson, 2002). Additional program recommendations include extending educational opportunities to postsecondary institutions and allowing college and work-study programs to satisfy the work requirement. Further suggestions include establishing a mentor program, increasing contracts, continuing to subsidize provisions, and providing post-employment support programs (Higgins, 2001).

The collaboration of community colleges and the DHS mentioned earlier is demonstrated by the following example provided by Higgins (2001). The Adams County Department of Social Services (ACDSS) in Colorado contracts with the Community College of Aurora (CCA) to provide job readiness, academic training, and case management for TANF recipients. ACDSS has one of the most innovative TANF plans in the metro Denver area. The object is to remove all possible obstacles that may preclude a participant's involvement in training, education, and employment. ACDSS provides a seven-week Essential Skills Certificate Workplace Certificate Program, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. General Equivalent Degree (GED) instruction

is provided for those who do not have their GED. When participants have earned their GED, they are then matriculated into a seven-week work job readiness track. The work job readiness track includes keyboarding, Windows, Word and Excel, customer service, problem solving, listening, and decision-making. Participation in job preparation and job search workshops is also available to students in the program. As an extension of the program, students may complete an internship at a company for two and one-half weeks and earn two credits. Upon graduation, students work with an employment counselor until they secure permanent employment. When TANF recipients secure full-time employment and no longer receive cash assistance, they are eligible for financial aid.

For over a decade, the Community College of Aurora (CCA) in Colorado has helped change the lives of welfare recipients and single parents through its Center for Workplace Development (CWD). The program has helped the community grow stronger, producing competent individuals who are reentering the workplace. In review, this program provides college credit job training, case management, job counseling, and job placement. The program works with local One-Stop agencies, social services, nonprofit organizations, and business and industry companies for job placement. (Higgins, 2001, p. 69).

A short-term training program offered at PVCC is a collaborative effort of the community college and the local workforce center (One-Stop). The curriculum is provided on a progressive incremental basis with the introduction to basic business computer applications. The purpose of the short-term training program is to combine technical, core employment, resume, interview, and life skills into useful career options (Hull, 2003).

Strategies for success by community colleges for recipients include overcoming program completion barriers and providing current workplace skills training.

Collaborating with the DHS, establishing articulated welfare-to-work programs whereby

credits can be used towards completion of associate's degrees, establishing scholarship awards, addressing unique barriers, and researching students' experiences and outcomes are also additional needed strategies.

Due to the relative novelty of these programs and practices, institutions and states will benefit from research in areas such as students' views and experiences and economical, occupational, and educational outcomes related to the limitations placed on education and training under the legislations.

A thorough examination of exemplary programs could enable all community colleges, including those not currently involved in providing education for the welfare student populations, more aware of the ways and methods that maximize community colleges' long standing commitment to furthering educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. (Szelenyi, 2001, p. 102)

An understanding of the issues and pressures faced by welfare recipients will contribute to the development of welfare-to-work programs that facilitate not only job attainment but also job retention and educational advancement. All of these areas are important steps toward the ultimate goal of permanent economic self-sufficiency (Peterson, 2002).

Conclusion

The United States has addressed the problem of poverty and welfare through a variety of social programs beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the present time. Society's outlook of the programs has changed from willingly providing cash assistance to needy families to expecting welfare families to become at least partly self-supporting. PRWORA changed the nation's cash assistance program from an entitlement program to ending welfare, as we know it. Recipients of PRWORA now have a limited time frame of welfare provisions and are expected to become self-sufficient after a limited training time. The distinction of education and training is apparent in the job

training programs. Job training programs are usually much shorter than education programs and are generally open only to individuals who typically would not attend community colleges or other educational institutions. The three principles of Rapid Employment, Education Based, and Combination approaches are currently used to provide the short-term training programs at educational institutions.

A research of the literature indicates the United States currently has a wide array of short-term training programs offered at a variety of educational institutions. Grubb (1996b) indicates that the current job training “system” is inadequate. He advocates a single system to integrate education and job training in a progression of programs developed to be more effective than those that currently exist.

Due to the current system of numerous short-term training programs, Szelenyi (2001) stated that an examination of programs would provide community colleges with information to maximize their long-time commitment to furthering educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Peterson (2002) stated that to provide steps to reach the ultimate goal of permanent economic self-sufficiency, an understanding of the issues and pressures faced by recipients of short-term training could facilitate job attainment, retention, and educational advancement.

The research of this project seeks to understand the meanings graduates of a community college short-term training program attribute to their experiences held at PVCC. How did the short-term training program affect their lives? What issues and pressures did the short-term training graduates face during their program? What difference, if any, has the short-term training program made in the lives of the participants? The attempt to interpret the findings of the participants of this training

program will provide the researcher and other community colleges with short-term training programs information to further future educational opportunities for the disadvantaged (Szelenyi, 2001).

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Basic Interpretive Qualitative inquiry was the research design for this study. The profile and selection process of the participants are discussed. Data collection methods ensuring confidentiality included interviews and field notes are explained. The description of the open, axial, and selective coding procedures used for data analysis was described in the identification of recurring patterns or themes (Merriam, 2002). Strategies to check trustworthiness include the field journal of notes, description of the findings, self-reflection of the researcher, independent transcription of the interview tapes by a professional transcriber, an invitation extended to the participants to contact the researcher with additional comments or questions, and a peer review conducted throughout the process of data collection and data analysis by having a fellow researcher review my research.

. The main question being researched is: How did the students experience their short-term training program?

The two sub research questions are:

1. How did the short-term training program affect the students' lives while they were in the program?
2. How did the short-term training program make a difference in the students' lives after they completed the program?

Research Design and Rationale

According to Merriam (2002), Basic Interpretative Qualitative inquiry informs interpretive qualitative research. In conducting a Basic Interpretative Qualitative study, I sought to discover and understand how students experience their short-term training program. Basic Interpretative Qualitative design provides data on how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2002). This Basic Interpretative Qualitative study examined stories people told in the interviews. It gave me the opportunity to analyze the interviews, interpret how people interpreted their experiences, how they constructed their worlds, and understand the meaning people attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is for me to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences first while in the short-term program and up to several years after the program was completed.

Site

Credit headcount enrollment at Pleasant View Community College (PVCC- a pseudonym) is 4,750 with 2,100 full-time students and 2,650 students attending part-time. An additional 3,000 students (duplicated headcount) register for non-credit, customized, or short-term training each year at Pleasant View Community College. PVCC is part of a multi-campus system with total credit headcount enrollment for all campuses exceeding 15,000. The campus has an articulation agreement for its general education core with a nearby university. As a comprehensive campus, more than 25% of the credits taken are in career/technical areas. As described in several of their promotional pieces specific programs are offered in Nursing, Veterinary Technology,

Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources. PVCC offers secondary programs for over 450 students from three public school districts, nursing clinical at local hospital and medical centers, and astronomy classes at a local Observatory. The area where PVCC is located is a prime target for industry expansion and relocation. Over half (51%) of the community's adults (25 years and older) have at least a bachelor's degree with 9% of the population lacking a high school diploma. Recent layoffs, in the region this particular institution serves, are a public concern. Career and technical programs at PVCC offer a wide spectrum of training and retraining opportunities. PVCC provides many skilled workers to the area's workforce and maintains partnerships with the major area employers. Partnerships include customized associated degree programs for the employees of a local brewing company, customized training for manufacturing firms that account for 15% of the local jobs, and short-term training programs for participants referred by the local workforce center.

The perception that program graduates identify their lives have been affected by a short-term training program at PVCC, was researched for this dissertation. The short term program is a collaborative effort between PVCC and the local workforce center. The program's purpose is to combine computer basic skills instruction, core employment information, resume writing, mock interview trials, and life skills seminars into useful career options. The curriculum of basic skills is provided on an incremental basis to introductory business computer applications.

The short-term training program students participated in is a combined approach focusing on development of entry-level employment skills through job search assistance, education, and training. The fifty-day program began by providing the participants with

one week of college preparatory seminars held at the local workforce center. The program continued with an orientation held at PVCC that included state-required Accuplacer assessment testing for math and English, completion of admission forms, completion of requirements for an I.D. card, and a tour of the campus. Seven hours per day of classroom computer instruction were held on the PVCC campus four days a week (Monday through Thursday). Seven hours of life skill seminars were held every Friday at the local workforce center. The short-term training program at PVCC was eight weeks in length, preceded by an introductory week of college preparatory seminars and a concluding week of mock interviews, job search, and resume information seminars at the local workforce center. The successful graduates participated in a certificate ceremony at PVCC at the conclusion of the program.

Participants

Participants interviewed were former short-term training students who successfully completed the program. They were 100% female and ranged from 20 to 60 years of age. Many participants were welfare Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients with the remainder consisting of participants referred from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program and displaced workers laid off from area jobs.

Participant selection was on a first-come basis from a list of short-term training program graduates provided by PVCC. The graduates were contacted beginning with the most recent semester's graduates. The student lists were identified by term. The initial terms were Spring 05, Fall 04, Spring 04, Fall 03, Spring 03, and Fall 02. I began with the Spring 05, Fall 04, Spring 04, and Fall 03 Semesters. I prepared a letter that went to each of these graduates. The letter included three ways of contacting me if the graduates

were interested in participating in the dissertation research. Successful program graduates could return a postcard in a self-addressed stamped envelope, call me at the phone numbers listed and leave a message with their contact information on my work phone or cell phone, or contact me by e-mail. In addition to the letter sent to request the participation of the program graduates, I also attempted to contact the successful program completers with a follow-up call at their listed phone number or e-mail a week after the letters were mailed. This additional attempt at contact, requesting their voluntary participation, was done to confirm they had received the letter and increase chances of participation. After contact was established, and voluntary participation confirmed, I scheduled an interview at a time and place of their convenience. I did not receive sufficient responses from graduates of these four semesters within two weeks. I, therefore, proceeded to contact graduates of Spring 03 and Fall 02 and prior semesters by letter and phone. I continued until a sufficient number of maximum variations of students had been contacted to interview and volunteered to participate. At the conclusion of each interview, the additional method of “snowballing” was included to seek additional successful program completers to interview. Incorporating all these methods of contact resulted in interviews being conducted with 14 students over a period of ten months, and saturation was achieved.

Data Collection

The data was collected from two sources: face-to-face, open-ended audio taped interviews and my field notes. Interviews were conducted at a time and place of the participant’s convenience. A PVCC conference room, classroom, or convenient site was arranged for interviews. Eleven interviews were conducted in a PVCC conference room

or classroom. Two interviews were conducted at a restaurant, and one interview was held in a study room at a library in a nearby town. The interviews lasted no more than sixty minutes. Before each interview, the informed consent process and purpose of the study was explained. Particular attention was made to each section of the consent form, and the assurance of confidentiality from the researcher was given. Questions were answered before asking the participants to sign the consent form. Participants received a copy of the form and the researcher retained the original. All participants were given the opportunity to terminate the interview at any time. At the conclusion of the interview the participant could select a small gift of appreciation from a basket of individually wrapped packets of tea, candy, or candles. The participants were invited to contact the researcher if they had additional questions or comments after the interview was concluded. The researcher's contact information was provided to each participant.

Throughout the interviewing process, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences in a short-term training program and what meaning they attributed to those experiences. The participants were encouraged to mentally transport themselves back to the setting of the training program. They were encouraged to discuss patterns that led up to the program experience, the experiences that affected them during the training and what, if any, difference the short-term training program made in their lives after the conclusion of the program. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was thanked for their participation, provided with a small thank you gift, and contact information was exchanged.

The main research question lead to some of the following interview questions as their stories unfolded.

- 1) How did you hear about the program?
- 2) Why did you select the short-term training program?
- 3) Tell me about your experiences going through the program.
- 4) What was it like for you?

Field notes were recorded of my observations and thoughts prior to each interview and immediately following each interview to chronicle my own thinking, feelings, experiences, and perceptions throughout the research process. The field notes were kept throughout the research study. To monitor the protocol required, I maintained the signed consent forms, research records of the field journal, and interview tapes during the research study. My advisor will maintain the study data and consent documents after completion of the research for the required amount of time stated by the Human Research Committee (HRC).

Data Analysis

In qualitative analysis several simultaneous activities required my attention. These activities included: Acquire a sense of the whole; complete triangulation through more than one source of data; read through all the field notes and transcriptions several times; reflect; complete a contact summary of the field notes; determine major open codes, axial codes (clusters), and selective codes (themes) of the interview transcriptions to establish an audit trail; conduct peer reviews; and provide rich, thick descriptions so the reader can determine to what extent their situation matched the research context.

My data analysis began by analyzing my field notes written before and after each interview. I would bracket triggers of biases, assumptions, and values that emerged in my field notes. Upon completion of an interview, I reflected on the main concepts of

questions that arose during the interview in my field notes. After reflection, a contact summary of a single sheet was completed of the field notes for each interview contact.

Analyzing the interviews followed the field note analysis. I analyzed the first interview. I read it three or four times. After reading the interview several times, I started a line-by-line data unit analysis looking for the identification of a possible open code for each line. As each line was read, I would determine what the line was about and determine a code for it. As the sentences were analyzed, similar codes emerged from different sentences with some codes applying to sentences both earlier and later in the interview. The findings or codes were a mix of recurring patterns supported by the data from which they were derived.

After all the lines had been read and coded, I reviewed all the codes and grouped them around similarities of content area. As similarities emerged from the open codes, a cluster of similar open codes embraced those codes and were designated as an axial code (cluster). Groups of clusters resulted in numerous axial codes. As the axial codes were reviewed, three selective codes (themes) emerged. If sub themes emerged, they also were identified. As the selective codes (themes), axial codes (clusters), and open codes were identified, an audit trail was established so the data would be able to be tracked back to the original transcript of the interview.

As the open codes, axial codes (clusters), and selective codes (themes) emerged, they formed the basis for the emerging story to be told. I began with one interview to conclude its underlying meaning by the process of coding. When the first interview had been coded, I completed the coding task for several interviews. This constant comparative analysis was an interactive process because I constantly compared the codes

as I assembled the data. After all the interviews had been coded, I alphabetized the codes, assembled the data, and performed a preliminary analysis (Creswell, 1994). The preliminary analysis was prepared for peer review/examination and final analysis.

Trustworthiness

The term trustworthiness is a term used to describe the strength of qualitative research. It is used to suggest the accuracy of the findings from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, and the readers (Creswell, 2003). Creswell went on to state the use of strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Trustworthiness was achieved through the following methods: In addition to the field journal notes, an independent transcription of the interview tapes was performed by a professional transcriber, and an audit trail of coding the raw data was established through open, axial, and selective codes. Rich, thick descriptions were used to convey the findings. A self-reflection of the bias the researcher brought to the study was reviewed (bracketing). Participants were invited to contact the researcher with additional comments or questions after the interview was completed. A peer review was conducted throughout the process of data collection, data analysis, and establishment of trustworthiness by having a fellow researcher review my research.

I have a prolonged interest in short-term training programs spanning over a decade. The coordination and management of this research topic will lend to the conveyance of detail about the site, the participants of the study, and the contextualization of the research material.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Site/Program Description

This short-term training program is a collaborative effort between Pleasant View Community College (PVCC) and the sponsorship of the local workforce center. The program has been offered at PVCC for over eight years. Originally, the program was offered as a non-credit certificate program. Participants did not register for credit and received a certificate, not grades on a transcript, upon successful completion of the program.

The program is reviewed every semester. A debriefing meeting is held after the certificate ceremony for representatives of the workforce center, the director, and instructors at PVCC. This group continually strives to update and improve the program every semester. New technology, scheduling adjustments, and instructor evaluations are reviewed. Changes are implemented to help reduce obstacles to successful program completion. A recent change was the addition of a daily one hour study hall in addition to the classes Monday through Thursday. This study hall provided the participant the opportunity to work on and complete assignments everyday. Program instructors served as study hall monitors and were available for questions participants may have as they worked on their homework.

Over two years ago, the program was approved to be offered for credit. Participants were now given the opportunity to register for credit or non-credit in the computer basic skills classes that make up the program. Participants had the opportunity

to register for the classes of their choice in the program to be taken for credit. The remainder of classes in the program could be taken for non-credit. This option provided the participants the opportunity to register for as many as nine credits, as few as one credit, or to take a portion or all the classes as non-credit. All successful program completers received a certificate of participation at the certificate ceremony at the conclusion of the program. Participants who registered for credit also received a transcript reflecting the grades and grade point average earned that semester in the program.

These options provided participants the opportunity to either earn college credits as a base to begin their academic career, improve a previous grade point average at PVCC, or gain experience and self-confidence by successfully completing the program as a non-credit option. Any option chosen provided the participants entry level job skills to help be competitive in the job market. Program completers have earned a short-term training program certificate that is recognized in the Pleasant View business community. Participants moving to other areas have the classes successfully completed listed on the back of the certificate for potential employer review. This information provides the program completer and potential employer a basis to discuss skills the participant has acquired. Participants who took the program for credit have the additional documentation of a transcript to include with their portfolio. The program completers seeking entry level employment now have the added advantage of recent documented skill acquisition to compete for jobs against the general public.

Participant Profile

Fourteen graduates of a short-term training program were interviewed for this research study. Participants were between 20 and 60 years of age. Participant selection was on a first-come basis from a list of short-term training program graduates provided by Pleasant View Community College (PVCC). Inquiry letters were mailed to one hundred and thirty-five short-term training program graduates. To ensure the best possible chance of contacting the participants, one week after each set of semester's letters were mailed follow-up phone calls were also made to that particular group of graduates. Phone calls were made in addition to the letters mailed to try and contact as many participants as possible. Twenty-two phones had been disconnected and twenty nine letters were returned because participants had moved without a forwarding address. Some phones did not have voicemail. Messages were left on phones with voicemail, often with few responses. Of the attempts made to contact the one hundred and thirty-five short-term training program graduates, twenty participants were successfully contacted and responded. When interviews were scheduled, six participants did not show at the scheduled interview time, and fourteen participants did meet with the researcher to be interviewed.

The short-term training program graduates were contacted beginning with the most recent semester's graduates moving backwards in time. The more recent graduates and those who had remained in the local area were the easiest to locate and contact. Those who had graduated in the past and moved were the most difficult to reach.

Fourteen participants were interviewed. Five participants were single mothers, five participants were divorced, one participant was separated, two participants were

married, and one participant was a widow. All the participants, except one, had children. Seven participants were minorities (Hispanic) six were Anglo, and one was a legal immigrant from Europe. All participants were female. The participants selected pseudonyms for the interview and their respective school is not identified in order to protect their identity. Interviews were held in various locations. Eleven were held in various conference rooms or classrooms on the campus, two were held at local fast food restaurants, and one was held at a library in a nearby town.

Susan

Susan graduated from the short-term training program in the past year. She is a single mother of three children in her twenties. Her stated goals are to pursue a career in the medical field as either an emergency medical technical (EMT) or a licensed practical nurse (LPN). Susan had a previous discouraging part-time job cleaning homes to be ready for resale prior to entering the short-term training program. She found the work depressing and unfulfilling.

Susan contacted the workforce center and registered for the short-term training program and successfully completed the program. Prior to the short-term training program she had attempted college, had been placed on academic probation, and had dropped out of school. Her academic probation was lifted due to the grade point average she was able to maintain in the short-term training program. She has chosen to delay pursuing either an EMT or LPN until her children are all in school.

Maria

Maria graduated from her short-term training program over two years ago. She is a single mother of three in her thirties and was expecting her fourth child at the time of

the interview. Her previous high school experience was many years ago. She expressed a former intimidation of college campuses. Maria experienced a resurgence of confidence and interest in education as she completed the short-term training program. Upon successful completion of the short-term training program, she applied for financial aid and took twelve credits the semester following the short-term training program. She shared that she qualified for scholarships and grants. Maria indicated she didn't know these types of assistance existed before she began the program.

Maria is currently registered for an additional twelve credits and has explored several career possibilities. Maria plans to continue her studies and graduate with an Associate in General Studies Degree in the next year or two.

Miranda

Miranda graduated from her short-term training program over three years ago. She is in her forties and a divorced mother of two children. She shared her triumph in overcoming her fear of driving so she could get to class from a neighboring town. She just started driving recently and hadn't driven in the state where she lived previously for eleven years. Miranda stated she had worked a variety of jobs and shifts in the past including the graveyard shift and some shifts with less than attractive job duties to do what she had to do to support herself and her children. She was very anxious to start the program but was concerned about her age and being able to complete the requirements for the short-term training program. Miranda indicated she felt like a "sponge" soaking up all the knowledge the short-term training program had to offer.

Upon successful completion of the program, Miranda entered transitional employment sponsored by the workforce center. The agency where she completed her

transitional employment extended her time period from six months to one year. An opening has occurred at that agency and Miranda has applied for the position. She is waiting to hear if she will be hired as a permanent employee. Miranda indicated she continues to invest in training for herself. She is currently taking Spanish classes and plans to register for additional Excel and Power Point courses in the future.

Autumn

Autumn graduated from her short-term training program over a year ago. She is in her thirties and a single mother of four children. She was pregnant with her fourth child when she participated in the short-term training program. Autumn shared her excitement at being a regular college student on a college campus.

She originally heard about the short-term training program when she attended training for a medical assistance certificate in a nearby city. Autumn's children lived with her parents in a nearby town while she completed the medical assistance certificate. She indicated it was a real sacrifice leaving her children behind while she went through training. In addition to the medical assistance certificate, Autumn felt she also needed computer skills, so her previous employment coach had her contact the local workforce center when she moved to Pleasant View. She investigated the possibility of registering for this short-term training program. She was accepted and successfully completed the program.

Autumn is currently planning to complete an internship as a support lab tech at a local hospital. She will begin her internship as soon as her young baby is a little older.

Jennifer

Jennifer graduated from her short-term training program six years ago. She is in her forties and a divorced mother of two. Jennifer went through the program and felt it empowered her as she came through a divorce after sixteen years of marriage. Her original goal was to complete the short-term training program, then find clerical work while she completed a nursing degree.

Jennifer felt she was on a time constraint going through her divorce and needed to get her education done in a timely fashion. When Jennifer was registered for the short-term training program, she also took classes at another college and successfully completed 21 credits that semester. She indicated the successful completion of the program spurred her on to complete her associate's degree and later her bachelor's degree. She changed majors when she was not accepted in a nursing program and completed her bachelor's degree in another field.

Jennifer is currently a full-time permanent employee at a community college. She is investigating the possibility of applying to graduate school and completing her master's degree.

Susie

Susie graduated from her short-term training program over seven years ago. She is in her sixties and was married at the time of the program. She is currently on her own. Susie shared her view that more programs needed to be tailored to students over the age of 50. She indicated it was difficult to relate to the other students in the program. She did, however, successfully complete the program and an internship at a local health care facility. Approximately two years after completion of the program, she found

employment and has remained at that job since that time. Susie stated she thoroughly enjoys her job, feels she has become quite good at it, and doesn't plan to take additional training or classes.

Shelly

Shelly graduated from her short-term training program over five years ago. She is in her forties, married, and the mother of two children. She shared her husband is disabled. She stated she needed to find employment to help with the family finances. She was a high school drop out, hadn't worked in many years, and had health problems at the time of the program.

Shelly shared how scared she was when she started the short-term training program. She remembered she could only type 3 or 4 words a minute at the start of the short-term training program and now types 45 words a minute. She successfully completed the short-term training program and her General Equivalent Diploma (GED) at the same time. Her health problems were resolved through surgery after completion of the program. She then applied for and was hired as a full time secretary at a local government agency. She worked at the agency for over two years and has fond memories of her employment there. Shelly quit that job and returned to college full-time intending to complete her associate's degree. Finances forced her back into the workplace. She is currently employed at a local business discount center, has recently received a promotion to supervisor, and continues to work toward her associate's degree on a part-time basis.

Diane

Diane graduated from her short-term training program five years ago. She is in her thirties and a divorced mother of two children. She left an abusive domestic situation

and registered for the short-term training program through the local workforce center and project self-sufficiency. She stated her previous high school experience was negative and was apprehensive about participating in the short-term training program. Diane stated she wanted to complete the short-term training program as a way to open doors to her future and participate in something positive in her life.

Diane was the first member of her family to attend higher education. Although her family was not supportive of her academic efforts, Diane indicated completing the short-term training program was her first stepping stone to self sufficiency. After successfully completing the program, she worked full-time for a health association organization. She later returned to school completing her associate's and bachelor's degree. She chose to attend a private college because of their accelerated programs. Diane stated this choice resulted in a large educational loan debt she is currently repaying.

Diane worked for other agencies after her employment at the health association organization. She has chosen to return to the health association position she held prior to completion of her college degrees. She indicated it was less stressful and the work hours enabled her to attend classes at night. Diane is currently considering pursuing her master's degree at another private institution. Her family is not supportive of her plans citing lack of positive monetary results from having earned her bachelor's.

Amy

Amy graduated from her short-term training program over three years ago. She is in her sixties, married, and the mother of one biological child and three step-children. She shared her husband is retired. Her work experience included several years at a

nearby university, performing specialized computer work on a project, before moving out of state. Her skill barriers were the reverse of many participants in the program. When she worked at the university she was trained on a specific cutting edge computer project. The state where she moved was not as advanced with their computer projects, and she was unable to find computer work comparable to her previous skills.

Amy indicated it was difficult for her to find a job at her new location. She felt her age may have been a discriminating factor but difficult to prove. Being unable to find comparable work to her previous job, she went to work in another area and accepted employment at a print shop. Amy and her husband later moved back to Pleasant View, and she again found it difficult to find employment because her computer skills although specialized, were now dated, and she felt her age was again a job barrier factor. Her workforce career coach offered her the opportunity to participate in the short-term training program to upgrade her computer skills.

Amy indicated she was older than the majority of the students, and although she brought life skills to the class, it was frustrating for her to take the class with participants much younger and seemingly unaware of basic employment concepts. Amy completed the program and successfully graduated. After graduation she secured two temporary jobs lasting approximately six weeks each. Although she felt empowered by working again and having some disposable income, she was discouraged when she was told she worked too slow and was penalized by the employer. When the two temporary jobs concluded, she laid out of the workforce for a time.

Recently, however, Amy noticed a new print shop being built in her area. She contacted the Human Resources office of the company and has been hired to do project work for them.

Grace

Grace graduated from her short-term training program over two years ago. She is in her fifties, a divorced mother of four children, and a European immigrant who became a United States citizen two years ago. She came to the United States over twenty years ago settling into the ethnic community of her former homeland in a large city on the eastern coast. She moved to Pleasant View, left an abusive domestic situation, and divorced her husband five years ago. When she moved to Pleasant View, it was her first experience in living in an entirely English speaking community without benefit of the ethnic community with which she was familiar. She expressed her fear of venturing out into the community, did not want to mingle with the local ethnic community due to the abuse situation, and remained apartment bound for many months. She eventually became more social, began to inquire about services, and was soon directed to the local workforce center by friends and neighbors.

Grace stressed how supportive her career coach, also an immigrant, was in guiding her toward the short-term training program. Her greatest fear was the English language barrier and her ability to function, complete the assignments, and successfully complete the program.

With the support of her children, career coach, classmates, faculty, friends, and neighbors she successfully completed the program and graduated. Grace stated she wanted to participate in this research study to give her personal testimony to the phrase

“Land of Opportunity” the United States has provided to her. She stated she has received so much, and she wants to give back. She has continued her studies taking additional English as a Second Language classes, GED classes, and plans to begin studies toward her associate’s degree fall or spring semester. Grace shared her wisdom that numbers remain the same regardless of the language you speak. She discovered the math skills she had in high school in her former homeland were still excellent, and she plans to major in accounting.

Marie

Marie graduated from her short-term training program in the past year. She is in her twenties and a single mother of two children. Marie originally heard about the program a few years ago. At that time she had completed a massage therapy training program and her career coach would not approve an additional training program for her. After two years, Marie had a different career coach, and she approved Marie’s registration in the computer technology short term training program. Marie shared it was difficult to keep the schedule of getting her own two children plus a niece ready for school or day care and be able to get to school on time herself.

Marie shared her frustration with the fast pace of the program. It was difficult for her to keep up with the assignments. She stated if the program hadn’t had the study hour included, she probably would not have been able to complete the program. The last two weeks were the most difficult for her. One of her children had concerns at school and the instructor of one of her computer classes had a death in his family. She felt her focus and the focus of the instructor were diminished during that time. She almost quit but stated her fellow students encouraged her to stay and complete the program. She did

successfully complete. Marie, like Maria, was not familiar with financial aid opportunities until she was in the short-term training program. She was pleased to find out about work-study opportunities for students if they are registered for at least six credits. Her current interest is culinary arts and plans to register for classes in that area fall semester. She has received her financial aid forms, plans to meet with an Advisor, and would like to enroll for classes for the fall semester. Currently, she is investigating the possibility of completing an internship. If an internship is not available, she will continue to seek employment until fall semester begins.

Hanna

Hanna graduated from her short-term training program in the past year and a-half. She is in her thirties and a divorced mother of one child. She heard about the program from her career coach at the workforce development center. Hanna lived in a neighboring town and because she does not drive, was unable to attend the first week of preparation classes held at the workforce center prior to the program. When orientation and classes began at the college, she was able to arrange transportation in a carpool and also used public transportation to and from the campus. Hanna felt frustrated and overwhelmed at orientation and the first couple weeks of the program because she didn't have the benefit of the preparation classes the workforce center usually provided. Hanna had no knowledge of computer usage, and she almost quit at the beginning of the program. With the support of her daughter, career coach, and PVCC staff she remained in the program and successfully completed. Hanna shared the best part of the program was in her words "I did not quit."

Hanna is currently taking additional classes at the adult learning center and will participate in an internship as soon as it is arranged. She has expressed an interest in taking additional classes at the college and requested materials in her area of interest be mailed to her.

Judy

Judy graduated from her short-term training program in the past year and a half. She is in her twenties and the single mother of one child. Judy felt she had been a very good student in the classes she took in high school. She realized, however, how difficult it was to be in a short-term training intensive program. Attending classes all day on a daily basis, completing her assignments, and working towards a good grade point average affected her personal life with her child. She felt she would have gotten straight A's if she hadn't had to take so many sick days with her child. She realized attending college full-time while raising a child affected her ability to maintain the grade average she preferred. She felt this realization was a life lesson in reality.

Judy knows she wants to attain employment in Nonprofit Youth Services. She isn't certain how to reach that goal. She has experience in this field, but has found most positions now require a bachelor's or master's degree. Judy indicated she was impatient to accomplish her goals. She discussed the possibility of attending college on a part-time basis to allow sufficient time with her child. She wasn't certain she wanted to take a longer time to complete her degree. Currently, Judy is uncertain about continuing with college courses. She isn't certain she has the confidence to move forward at this time. Judy did indicate she loved being a student, loved school and learning, but felt before she began a two or four year degree, she wanted to in her words "be ready to tackle it."

Judy was open to meeting with an Advisor to discuss her objectives and possible schedule to find a way to accomplish her goals. She is currently working with her career coach in searching for an internship, looking for part-time employment, and spending the summer figuring out what her plans will be.

Jan

Jan graduated from her short-term training program in the past year and a-half. She is in her thirties, a widow, and the mother of two children. Jan indicated she had always liked school until she was in junior high school. During junior high, her family moved to another state and she had to repeat a grade. She became very discouraged and eventually dropped out of high school. She completed her Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) prior to the birth of her first child. She expressed her concern that a GED might contain a stigma for an employer instead of having a high school diploma.

Jan shared it was very scary going back to school after such a long time. It had been over eighteen years since she had attended high school. She felt all the instructors were very supportive except for one who seemed to talk down to the students. Jan successfully completed the short-term program and earned a 4.0 grade average. She felt very good about this accomplishment. Jan has currently applied for a one year transitional position with a local government agency. She would like to find permanent employment with a county or city agency after her transitional position is complete. She realized many job postings require Word, Excel, and Access proficiency. Jan plans to continue her education and take more classes in Excel and Access to enhance her employability. Jan uses the local library and workforce center as a resource on a regular basis while she continues her job search.

Certainly the meanings of the experiences the participants shared are reflective of their lives and what led to their program experience and the experiences that affected them during the training. The differences the short-term training program made in their lives after the conclusion of the program vary depending on the length of time since graduation, self-motivation, and circumstances in their lives.

Core Themes

The design of this study is Basic Interpretive Qualitative Research. The purpose of this research project was to better understand the meanings graduates of a community college short-term program attributed to their experiences before, during, and after their short-term training program experience. Interviews were conducted, coded, and field notes were collected for fourteen participants. Three themes emerged as the inductive analysis was performed on the data. The themes in order of presentation are: *I Had to Overcome My Fear*, *It Took the Support of an Entire “Village” for Me to Succeed*, and *The Program Helped Me to Grow, Develop, and Mature*. Each theme is introduced, supported with the voices of the participants, and analyzed for the reader.

I Had to Overcome My Fear

One core theme expressed by all participants was fear. It revealed itself in many different ways and voices in both their academic and personal lives.

Past fears. There was a fear of time that had passed. For some participants the fear of time was the amount of time since they were in school and how they would do academically. Academic fear stemmed from school experiences the participants had in the past and especially the amount of time that had elapsed since their last academic experience. For others the fear of time was in terms of years that had passed since they

had been in the workforce. Workforce fear was a result of outdated skills and the retraining required to become competitive in the current workforce.

At first it was like being back in school all day long which was completely different for me. I hadn't done this in almost ten years. It was tiring, having to get up to get the kids ready and maintaining other things at home. (Susan)

I think most of us hadn't been in school for a long time. The last time I went to school was when I graduated from high school in the 1980s. . . I took typing 20 years ago. (Maria)

The workforce was trying to retrain me because I hadn't worked in eight years. (Shelly)

These three participants realized the amount of time that had elapsed since their last academic or work experience had occurred. Susan felt it took her back to high school memories of being in class all day, but now in addition to attending classes she also had to shoulder the family responsibilities of her young children. She shared how tiring it was to get herself ready, the children ready, and maintain household tasks as well. She shared her fear of not ever having done all these activities at the same time and Susan feared she might not be able to handle attending classes, make passing grades, and take care of her family. Her fear was that perhaps she was taking on too much at once as she began her program studies. Maria realized most of the participants in her classes hadn't been in school for a long time. She knew it certainly had been a long time for her and expressed her fear of being a school graduate in the 1980s and not having had a typing class in over twenty years. Maria felt it would take courage to overcome her fear of not having attended classes in many years. Maria felt so much had changed since she was in school. She wondered if she would be able to adjust to the school environment again after all these years. Would the students welcome her and would she be able to polish the skills she had learned so long ago? Maria's fear of returning to classes after such a long

absence was expressed in her simple statement of not having had a typing class in over twenty years. She wondered if her typing skills were still there and how long it would take for her to again become proficient to type her work assignments when required. In reality her stated fear about her typing skills was simply a metaphor for all the fears centered on returning to school. Shelly expressed her fear of being out of the workforce for over eight years. She knew she needed retraining and was working with the workforce center to receive it. Shelly realized her previous work experience as a nurse's aide hadn't prepared her for the current computer skill level required by employers. She felt inadequate because she hadn't been in the work world for many years and realized she needed retraining. She was fearful that she would not be able to perform at the skill level needed to step back into the workforce after such a lengthy absence. Shelly expressed her fear of entering into a different place in the workforce than she had experienced in the past. When these women felt inadequate to the tasks at hand, they experienced the fear that they would not be successful.

Past academic failures also affected the participants' fear level. Maria, Shelly, Diane, and Jan stated their uncertainty about their experiences in previous academic attempts in school.

All my life I've had real school issues like when I was going to school.
(Maria)

I didn't have algebra at all when I was in school, so it's really hard to understand how you put those numbers together. (Shelly)

I was never a really good school student so I was also a little apprehensive . . .in high school I barely made C's and barely scraped by. (Diane)

My family moved to another state when I was in junior high. . .I had to repeat a grade and got discouraged in high school so I dropped out. (Jan)

Maria, Shelly, Diane, and Jan recalled their negative past school experiences and expressed their concerns based on those memories. Maria admitted she had real school issues while she attended high school. She wondered if she would be able to relate to the instructors and the other students this time around. She was concerned and fearful that the issues she experienced before would rise up again and prevent her from being successful in this short-term training program. Shelly shared she hadn't had any algebra in high school and was still having trouble understanding formulas and how to place the numbers together. Math phobia was a common occurrence for these women who all had a weak background in algebra or geometry. Trying to make sense of seemingly incomprehensible formulas caused Shelly to fear the formula portions of the Excel program course. Her profile shared the fact she had dropped out of high school and was working on her GED at the same time she was registered for this short-term training program. Taking on the double load of earning her GED and completing the short-term training program caused Shelly to fear she might not be able to successfully accomplish so much in such a short period of time. Diane indicated she had not been a good student in high school. In fact, she stated she was apprehensive because she barely made C's and had barely scraped by. It is difficult for participants to envision success in a short-term training program when their past school experiences have been negative. Diane's fear of not making good grades in the program was affected by her past experience of barely making C's. She was concerned she might not be able to make A's and B's in the short-term training program and wondered what it would take for her to accomplish that level of academic success. Jan shared her family had moved to another state when she was in ninth grade. She didn't want to live there and rebelled. She failed some of the courses in

junior high and she had to repeat the ninth grade. Halfway through the ninth grade she became very discouraged and dropped out of high school. Later she did go back and earned her GED. Jan shared she hadn't stepped inside a classroom in over fifteen years. She was concerned whether she would be able to do the classes and wondered about her grades. These fears were very real to Jan at the beginning of the program. Later, in the theme regarding maturity, Jan's growth was discussed regarding her grade results. She earned a 4.0 grade average in the short term training program and felt very good about that accomplishment after overcoming her fear.

The fear the participants experienced was real to them. It was real because if they hadn't done well in school before, they might not do well in school this time. This concerned them because at the young age of sixteen, seventeen, or even eighteen most of these participants didn't really understand that if they didn't earn passing grades in school, their future lives would be impacted negatively. Now they realized, if they didn't earn acceptable grades and graduate from this short-term training program, they might not be employable.

It made me realize an education does count, you know if you don't know what you are doing, you are not going to get hired anywhere. . .so it helps job wise and money wise (Shelly).

If they couldn't secure employment, they might lose their chance of being economically self sufficient. For many, it was kind of their last chance. As Shelly stated, if they weren't able to complete the program successfully, they would probably continue to exist at the economic level they were currently experiencing with little opportunity to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Many of the women have experienced and now know what failure in school means. This caused a real fear for them.

The stakes are higher this time than they were when they were last in school. For some it may be their last chance to recover socially and financially for themselves and their families. From my conversations with these women, they expressed the fear of their lives continuing at the poverty level they were currently experiencing. To climb above that poverty level existence, they knew successfully completing a training program would assist their climb up the economic ladder

I was really discouraged . . .I needed a job pretty desperately. . .if I couldn't find one. . .decided I'm just going to quit looking and we would make it on our money somehow (Amy).

It was hectic. . .I would go home from school, pick up the kids, dinner, baths, bed, and then I would work part-time cleaning houses after the kids were in bed. . . I was paying my bills but it was just that I wondered if it would lead into something (Susan).

We needed more money. . .it just wasn't enough (Shelly).

They realized if they were unable to complete a successful training program sponsored by the workforce center, their ability to complete one on their own without the financial assistance and professional support from the workforce center and the community college staff was probably remote. The stakes were high and they realized it. Amy shared her budget was severely curtailed without the benefit of employment. She feared her age would prevent her from finding even part-time permanent employment. Amy shared how earning even a few extra dollars helped their family budget. Without her additional salary she and her retired husband were forced to count in her words "every penny." For Susan, not successfully completing the short term training program, may have meant having to continue cleaning houses in isolation, loneliness, and the depression she experienced doing that type of job. She had experienced that fate and didn't relish having to continue earning her living that way. Shelly realized she needed to receive training

and complete her GED in addition to facing personal health issues. Facing these tasks at the same time raised the fear level she experienced. She realized to be able to support her family, which included her disabled husband, required she upgrade her skills. Shelly faced the basic level fears of having shelter, enough food, and clothing. She wondered if she could actually do it all. The more I talked to Shelly, the more I heard the additional concerns behind the phrase complete the course work. The reality of all these tasks affected Shelly's fear level.

In addition to past negative high school experiences, two participants shared they had not done well at their first attempt at college. Susan's previous college attempt had resulted in her being placed on academic probation. Maria indicated she had tried college for less than a semester, dropped out, and decided college wasn't for her.

I had dropped out before and was on academic probation. My previous college experience was intimidating. I didn't want to get bad grades again. . . getting the best grades possible was very important. (Susan)

I graduated from school in the 1980s . . . I then went to college for less than a semester and decided college isn't for me. . so that was the last of it.
(Maria)

Being placed on academic probation in the past made Susan fearful about attempting classes for credit again. She shared her concerns of not wanting to get bad grades because they would not weigh favorably on the lifting of her academic probation. Earning the best grades possible was very important to Susan and added to her fear factor. Maria's fear factor derived from her one attempt at college many years ago after graduating from high school. It didn't work for her that time, and she apparently had felt that was the end of any possible college career for her. She was concerned this time might not be different. Could she really be successful at this attempt after having failed before? She was afraid

her past experiences would affect her own expectations of her future successes or failures.

Present fears. Fear manifested itself in self-doubt as it affected participants in both their academic and personal lives. Participants discussed their fear and self-doubt regarding their experiences on college campuses. Maria and Grace shared their fears they had experienced when they made college visits.

I always feel really intimidated at big colleges. When I visit a university, I don't know where to park. I get this overwhelming feeling of being surrounded by thousands of strangers. It just seems so fast and impossible. I used to think about it and then think, Oh, I just can't handle it, and I would be intimidated. (Maria)

I was very scared. I was very scared. I looked around me and thought I was probably the only one from a different country. (Grace)

Maria's self doubt began when she first hit the college campus. She saw the college campus that she went to as intimidating because she felt she was surrounded by literally "thousands of strangers." She felt overwhelmed by the size and busyness of the campus and its students. The students all seemed to know where they were going and what they were doing and she felt that she didn't. She feared embarrassing herself by appearing uninformed and making mistakes that would draw attention to her. Even driving on to the campus parking lot was frightening. She had a hard time knowing where to park and even when she found a parking spot was fearful that she had parked incorrectly and would be reprimanded. She wondered whether she could make the transition to college. In fact, she referred to it as "impossible" and she "just couldn't handle it." When Grace visited the college campus she was extremely frightened. She looked at the students around her and felt like she was the only person on campus from a different country. A first time visit to a college campus can be an intimidating experience for students from

the United States. Visiting a college campus by herself, having a language barrier, and being unfamiliar with the services available was a very frightening experience for Grace.

After participants overcame their fear of arriving and actually being on campus, several expressed their fear about handling the coursework and the new skills they would have to master.

Oh my gosh, can I do the work properly? In my day it was the adding machine and typewriter. Now it is word processing and formulas in spreadsheets. Excel spreadsheets still boggle my mind. (Jennifer)

I was scared to death (Shelly)

I hope I know how to handle the homework. . .I'm a single mom. . .how much work will I have to take home? In school before you didn't have children. . .I mean it is a whole different world. Typical students don't have family worries; they only have themselves to think of. (Judy)

As I began I watched people and felt everybody knew more than me. . .everybody could type more than me. . .it was hard because I would try to type faster. . .before I had always looked at the keyboard. (Marie)

Fear of the unknown and being unsure as to whether they would be able to master new skills was expressed by several participants. There were so many new experiences and tasks they would have to learn, cope with, and master. Jennifer wondered if she would be able to do the assignments properly. She remembered using adding machines and typewriters in her earlier academic attempts. Now the new technology included word processing and formulas in Excel. Even after successfully completing this short term training program, an associate's degree, and a bachelor's degree she indicated computerized spreadsheets still boggle her mind. As mentioned previously, Shelly was facing the fact of supporting her family and disabled husband without a school diploma, without having been in the workplace for over eight years, and now found out that she was having health issues herself. Shelly wondered if she would be able to successfully

complete the course work in addition to the challenges she faced. Fear of successfully completing the coursework is true, but one has to ask if she was mentioning these academic concerns to simply provide a ready made excuse in case she wasn't successful. In the end it was a moot point because she was successful and she did graduate. At the beginning of the program, however, the fear was real and she summed up her feelings well by simply stating she was just "scared to death." Judy was worried about handling all the homework and the amount she would have to take home with her. When she was in high school she didn't have family worries. Judy is now a single mom with family responsibilities and she was afraid of this whole new world she was entering. Marie's fear of attaining new skills was reflected in her stated concerns of her typing ability. As she began the classes she was comparing herself to others as they typed. She shared it was difficult for her to continue perfecting her skills when she felt her skills were below the level of others in the class.

Although many participants expressed concerns regarding their academic fears, one expressed her specific fear about interactions with instructors and the program director. The realization that all instructors, including the one male instructor, and the director were very approachable came as a welcome relief. Miranda shared her initial thoughts about her hesitancy.

At first I thought our male instructor would be unapproachable, but found even he was approachable . . .you all looked so professional and I knew what you were doing is really important and everything. I was humbled by how humble you all were. (Miranda)

Miranda's fear of not being able to talk to the instructors proved unfounded but that did not make the fear any less real at the time. Perhaps she'd had previous academic experiences of being ignored or marginalized when she asked questions, and she was

afraid the program instructors would also be unapproachable. This short-term training program is set up on a cohort basis with the participants going through the program as a group. The participants have the same instructors throughout the program for different subjects. This provides the instructors and participants the opportunity to interact with one another on a more consistent basis and provide the participants the opportunity to feel comfortable in approaching the instructors.

All participants, except one, expressed an appreciation for the cohort concept and seemed to enjoy the support participants in the cohort gave each other. Miranda, however, felt participants in the cohort were a threat to her success by the personal problems they brought to the program. She shared her fear of being dragged back down if she became too close to the difficult lives of the other students.

I tried to be a part of the team but I didn't want them to drag me down. I had to separate myself from them. I put up a shield against others problems. I didn't want to go back down once I had the spirit (Miranda).

Miranda's self doubt surfaced as she described her fears of being dragged down by the problems other participants brought to class. Her insecurity resulted in her need to isolate herself by putting up a shield to the personal problems of others. Apparently Miranda had also experienced feeling down and at the bottom of her life. As she stated, she didn't want to go back down to the place where they were prior to the program. She felt she had gotten the spirit and wanted to remain above the place she and the other participants had experienced before. She felt she had to remain independent from the group to achieve her goal and graduate. She expressed a genuine fear of not being able to remain positive if she associated with the personal problems other students brought with them each day to class. She felt it was simply too much for her to handle.

Future fears. Although most of the participants expressed their desire to achieve additional goals after leaving the program, some demonstrated stagnation or leveling off or perhaps even fear of future success. Susan seemed to put up barriers against striving toward her goals.

At this point I'm kind of steering clear of going back to school. I don't want to further my education now because it would take away from my children. I'm not going back to school until all of my children are in school all day long. (Susan)

This fear of future success can be exhibited by resting on one's laurels. If a participant achieves success at a certain level (graduating from the program) and doesn't attempt further training or schooling, the possibility of future failure or additional expectations is eliminated. Susan expressed her reluctance of furthering her education by indicating she was steering clear of school until her children are all in school. She had successfully completed the program, raised her grade point average to have her academic probation lifted, and didn't want to risk another failure.

I've thought about going back to a community college. . I just don't think I'm really ready for that yet especially without the kind of support group that I had going though this one (Susan).

Susan expressed her fear of trying again and failing. She realized how important having a support group was to her success. In her previous attempt at college she didn't have a support group and had met with failure. This time she'd had a successful experience in the short term training program, raised her grade point average, had her academic probation lifted, and was enjoying the feeling of success. She seemed to want to keep it that way for awhile and used the socially acceptable reason of concern for her children to justify her decision.

Susie seemed satisfied to stay at the skill level of her program completion. During the interview process she stated her emphatic decision not to take additional training.

No, I didn't take any additional education after the program. When I went to work, I stayed at the same job for over 7 years. (Susie)

Susie is the exception to most of the women regarding continual self or economic improvement. Many of the participants shared goals of continuing their education or seeking employment that would make use of their skills. Their words stated indirectly they wanted to continue an upward climb on the economic ladder. Susie, however, accepted a job, remained there, and has not sought further training or classes since graduating from the program. Perhaps the fear of the unknown keeps her content where she is currently working. Perhaps the drive to continually strive upward economically or professionally has been satisfied due to her age or the stage of life she is currently experiencing. When participants are in their 20s, 30s, 40s and even 50s they may feel the need to try and improve their current economic or professional situation. Susie, however, feels she has found her niche, stated she is good at what she does, and has no aspirations to further her education, training, or job advancements.

The academic fears stated were very straight forward and explicit but many women expressed personal fears. Their personal self doubt was expressed in a variety of ways. Jennifer mentioned how difficult it was to return to school after being divorced and an "at home mom" for many years. Miranda had to overcome her fear of driving after an absence from the road of eleven years and being a relatively inexperienced driver.

I had been a "stay at home mom" for 16 years. I'm in a more introverted nature to begin with and so getting out there was frightening. Socializing and communicating wasn't on my top list of things to do. (Jennifer)

I had to drive from another town. I would have never thought about driving back and forth because I had just started driving in the last five years . . .so you know it was really scary. I didn't drive in the previous state when I lived there for eleven years. (Miranda)

Leaving the familiarity of being “in the home” insulated Jennifer and Miranda from the outside world of school or work. As necessity required their emergence from this previous comfort zone, they experienced self doubt in circumstances that frightened them. Jennifer shared she had been married and a “stay at home” mom for over 16 years. She felt she was introverted and having to communicate with new people was difficult for her. Walking out that front door and having to compete with total strangers as the life she'd known came to an end, and a new life began, was a frightening experience.

Miranda hadn't driven in the state she lived in before moving to a neighboring town of the Pleasant View Community College campus. She recently had begun driving and had restricted herself to traveling in the one town she lived. She felt a fear of being lost or disoriented if she ventured too far from the neighborhood in which she was familiar. In fact she stated she never even had thought about driving to another town for school because it was scary.

Personal fears also extended to employment. Susan, Miranda, and Hanna shared their experiences about the jobs they had performed prior to registering for the program. Susan's prior employment cleaning houses proved to be a turning point for her as she sought other opportunities at the workforce center. Miranda shared she had to take employment with night hours and unpleasant job duties to sustain herself and her children even though it wasn't what she preferred. Hanna was concerned about her lack of continuous employment and the length of time since her last permanent employment.

I was working cleaning houses for resale. I would be in this house with the four walls and absolutely nothing. It was depressing. It was a part-time thing, but it wasn't rewarding because I'm a people person. (Susan)

During a time when jobs were hard to come by. . .I had focused on the town I lived in. . .I did get a job at a retail store but it was a strain to have to work the graveyard shift. . .I didn't want to work nights; I'm a single mom. . .but I mopped floors and cleaned toilets . . .I kept doing what I had to do. (Miranda)

I've only had two jobs at the most. . .I didn't stay in those jobs for more than a year at a time. . .something always came up and I had to quit. . .I haven't had a real job since the late 90's. (Hanna)

Susan's fear of being trapped in a job that was depressing revealed itself in her thoughts regarding the job she had been performing. She shared she was a people person and being stuck in a house cleaning it for resale by herself gave her a feeling of depression.

She endured the isolation of having only the four walls and in her words "absolutely nothing positive" from that experience. She seemed to hit bottom emotionally and contacted the workforce center to inquire about different types of jobs and training.

Miranda originally limited herself to the small geographic area of the town she was living in for employment. She resorted to working a night job even though the graveyard shift was a strain for her and her children. The duties of mopping floors and cleaning toilets that job entailed demonstrated the determination she had to, as in her words, "do what I had to do." Her fear of having to continue this type of work propelled her to not only drive out of her neighborhood but to a neighboring town to attend classes and receive training. Hanna realized her employment record was limited. Her previous experience in the work world consisted of only two jobs. Conflicts always seemed to arise when she was employed and she would have to quit. Hanna feared her meager employment record would affect her in a negative way as she began the short term training program. Having

a scant employment record as she looked for a job after completing the short term training program certificate still caused Hanna a great deal of fear.

Fears of a personal nature also included the participant's financial status. Lower socioeconomic circumstances were experienced by many participants. Their financial situation hardships were expressed by Autumn, Susan, and Shelly.

I was living on my own. It was hard because I was on my own, my baby's father was not with me and I didn't have child support. (Autumn)

While I was in school, I wasn't working as much so I was more strapped financially. (Susan)

I was getting financial aid but it wasn't enough. My husband was disabled so I needed to get a job. I was scared to death. There was a lot of pressure, we needed more money. (Shelly)

Autumn is raising her children on her own without her children's father or child support. Being a single parent without the financial or emotion support of the children's father is hard for her. Susan wasn't able to work the hours she had previously worked when she attended the short-term training program. Cutting back on her work hours to be able to attend classes caused a financial hardship for her. Susan felt it is fearful when a person has to make decisions on what budget items need to be cut to be able to exist while remaining in school. Shelly stated she did receive financial aid but indicated how scared she was because it wasn't enough for her and her family. Because her husband was disabled, she felt the responsibility and pressure of finding a job because the family was depending on her for more money. As Shelly mentioned there was a lot of pressure exerted on her and she was scared to death because she realized they desperately needed more money.

I Had to Overcome My Fear Summary

The fears participants shared are often rooted in reality. That's why they are fears. The participants had experienced many different types of situations in the past that affected their expectations in the future. The amount of time passed was a fear factor for many of the participants. They realized a great deal of time had passed since their last experience in school or the work force. In many cases it had been years since they had stepped into a classroom. Some of the women dreaded the adjustment to the school or work environment. Past academic experiences and instructor interactions in high school or college had been negative for many of the participants. They wondered if they would be able to earn higher grades in the short term training program than they had in their previous academic attempts. They questioned if they would be able to relate to the instructors and receive the help they would need to complete their homework assignments. Many of the women were unsure of themselves and feared competing for employment after being out of work for so many years.

For some of the participants, this short term training program was a last chance opportunity. When they were in their teens, they didn't realize how academic failure in high school or early college attempts would affect their lives. They now had experienced what academic failure meant and realized the stakes were high. They needed to successfully complete the short term training program to enhance their chances of employability and improve the economic status for their families.

Fear of the unknown and learning new skills affected many of the participants. Many of the women were not computer literate and had a steep learning curve to acquire the latest computer workforce skills. Self doubt ranged from rusty typing skills to

upgrading social and communication skills. Fear of success also affected some of the participants. Completing the program was a plateau for some as they selected to remain at their current level of training.

Overcoming their many different types of fears was achieved through their own inner strength and the support of many people in their lives. The nurturing and respect they received from “the village” of supporters contributed to their successful completion of the short term training program.

It Took the Support of an Entire “Village” for Me to Succeed

Another core theme that emerged was the support and nurturing participants received from their respective “village.” It is difficult to designate one support area as more important than another because the type of support required or received depended on the individual participant and her life’s circumstances. Family, the workforce center staff, the college faculty and staff, and friends all provided support to the participants as they journeyed through the program.

Autumn, Shelly, Jennifer, Grace, and Judy shared how important their children were in supporting their efforts to complete the program successfully.

You can do it when you have a support group. . .even my children. . they pushed me to do it . . .to try. (Grace)

My daughter would help. . .she would look at my homework and see what I was doing. . .I’d show her what I was doing and let her see if she could also do it. (Hanna)

My daughter was very proud of me. . .she definitely knew how I worked for this. . .she tried to definitely be as supportive as she could. (Judy)

Autumn and Shelly shared how they and their children worked on family projects and homework assignments together while going through the short term training program.

Grace included her children in her definition of a support group. Hanna shared how she and her daughter supported one another by helping each other with their respective homework. Judy's daughter recognized the difference in their home life when Judy had homework and was more tired. Her daughter was in the first grade and didn't have the amount of homework her mother did. She would become frustrated when Judy wasn't as available to her as she had been in the past. Her daughter really did try to understand after Judy explained the benefits of the short term training program and was supportive as a young child of elementary age can be.

The following examples of the participant's children witnessing the importance of "Mom" doing homework right along side them demonstrated the value and support she placed on their education and the children's support of her education

We did stuff together as a family. . .there was no secret to coping. . .we went through it as a family. We would all sit around the table and do our homework. (Autumn)

To be able to do homework with my kids . . .that was number one with me. Sometimes my kids would show me how to do my homework. . .especially on the computer. (Shelly)

My friends helped me get a tutor. When I got an A on my homework, I showed it to my children. . .they said. . .Mommy, it's can't be true. . .and I said yes it is, yes it is (Grace).

Setting an example for their children was very important to many of the participants.

Their actions demonstrated the value they placed on returning to school to upgrade their skills. Autumn indicated she and her children worked on homework together as they sat around the kitchen table. This role modeling of working on homework assignments impressed her children. They, in turn, would also work on their homework in the family

setting at their kitchen table. As she stated, there really wasn't any secret to coping during the program because she and her children went through it together as a family. Shelly emphasized her top priority was being able to do homework with her children. She shared it was a simple event, but she had not been able to participate in that activity previously. She hadn't gone very far in school before and now being able to work along side her children as they completed homework assignments made her feel, in her words, "more like a normal person." At times her children would even help her with her homework, especially the computer assignments. This exchange of knowledge, help, and support proved a welcome occurrence for her. Grace demonstrated her progress to her children through the grades she was able to earn with the assistance of a tutor. This demonstration of earning high grades provided her with confidence to continue the program. It also provided her children with a wonderful example of accepting support from them and a tutor to attain the goals she was seeking.

The women also stated how good it felt to have their children attend the certificate ceremony at the completion of the program. As with many of the women, Jennifer's children came to the Program's Certificate Ceremony. Having her children there to witness and validate her accomplishment was in her words "awesome." She was proud to be a part of the certificate ceremony and it was important to her to have her children there and demonstrate what she had been able to accomplish.

My children came to the Certificate Ceremony. . .it felt like "look at what I can do" (Jennifer)

My kids were just shocked. . .they were happy and my oldest child said "Mommy, I am proud of you. . .you can do it (Grace)

My daughter and my neighbor came to the certificate ceremony. . .my daughter was proud of me (Hanna).

As mentioned above, Jennifer felt very good about being able to demonstrate what she had been able to accomplish. She wanted her children to be aware of the all that she had been able to do. Grace shared her children were happy and even shocked to find out all that she had achieved. Her oldest child was able to verbalize the pride the children had in her accomplishment. Hanna's daughter and neighbor also came to the certificate ceremony. Hanna stated her daughter expressed her pride in her mother. For many of the women, having their children take the time to come and sit in the audience while they walked across the stage to receive their certificates demonstrated the family's pride and support for these women. The children applauded and took pictures providing wonderful memories for each of them.

Several participants discussed the support they received from their parents or relatives. Susan, Maria, Miranda, and Autumn, shared how their mothers or parents assisted them as they went through the program.

I would work late at my job into the night. . .after the kids were in bed my mom lives next door, and she would come and watch the kids. (Susan)

I and the children had been living with my parents, and we lived close to the campus. Fortunately for me the program was pretty easy because my parents are just wonderful, peaceful people. (Maria)

My backup was my mother. She is sickly, however, and couldn't take care of the children when they got strep. (Miranda)

I sacrificed for nine months when my children stayed with my parents in a nearby town. I went to a medical assistance certificate training program in a nearby city while they stayed with their grandparents. (Autumn)

Having the back-up and support of parents nearby proved very helpful for many participants. Susan's mother lived next door. When Susan went to work to clean houses after the children were in bed, her mother came over and watched her children until

Susan returned later in the night. Marie and her children were living with her parents during the time she was in the program. She expressed how fortunate for her that her parents were such wonderful, peaceful people. The harmonious climate in their home made it easier for her to concentrate on her studies. The calm environment they provided made it less stressful for Marie so she could complete the program. She expressed how difficult it would have been if she had been with her children's father and living in a turmoil situation. She realized some of the other participants had domestic issues while they were in the program and felt lucky she had an alternative. Miranda's mother was also her backup for babysitting. She did indicate, however, that her mother's health wasn't strong. She wasn't able to watch the children when they came down with the contagious disease of strep while Miranda was in the program. She expressed her concern of missing classes during that time but was grateful her mother was available the remainder of the time. Many of the students wrestled with child care issues when their children were ill. If relatives were unavailable to care for the children when child care facilities would not admit them, they missed class and had the added stress of making up assignments to stay current in the program. Instructors provide syllabus and assignment schedules at the beginning of the program to assist in the possible event of unavoidable absences. In addition, many of the women would contact instructors or PVCC staff to request homework to work on when they had to miss class due to the illness of their children. Prior to the short-term training program at Pleasant View Community College, (PVCC), Autumn's children had stayed with her parents in a town approximately 75 miles away from the city where she attended a medical assistance certificate training program. She stated the nine months she had to be separated from them while she

attended the medical assistance certificate training program was a real sacrifice. Upon successful completion of the medical assistance certificate program, Autumn moved back to Pleasant View, located close to her parent's hometown, and was accepted into the computer short-term training program to round out her employment skills. While in the short term training program at PVCC, she was again able to rely on her parents. Because they lived close by, they were able to help with babysitting when required.

Miranda and Hanna received support from their extended families. Miranda indicated her brother had bought her a computer after she was laid off from work prior to the program. She then registered and was accepted into the short-term training program. The computer gift was a great help with her homework while she was in the program.

I had lost my job and the workforce center career coach told me about this program. I was interested because my brother had gotten me a computer and I was interested in learning more about computers. (Miranda)

The realization Miranda would require enhanced computer skills to improve her employability, after being laid off from her previous job, motivated her brother to provide her with a computer. Miranda's interest was piqued through the gift of the computer and pursued training in that area. Hanna is a single mother who doesn't drive. She relied on a neighbor and cousin for after school child care because she often had to take the bus to and from the short-term training program. Her home arrival bus schedule time would sometimes be later than her daughter's school bus schedule. If her daughter arrived home first, Hanna had back-up child care with relatives and neighbors.

If my daughter would get home from school before me. . .my neighbor would watch her or a cousin that lives nearby would watch her until I got home on the bus (Hanna)

Having extended family members or neighbors provide support in the form of the gift of a computer or child care support helped Miranda and Hanna as they progressed through the program.

Other members of “the village” who lent support and nurturing to the participants were the local workforce center staff. Many women exclaimed how the workforce center and its career coaches provided the support and information they needed to not give up, keep going, and look at their long term goals.

My career coach mentioned this short-term training program was available and it just seemed amazing at the time. . .she is a very insightful person.. . .She encouraged us to not give up, to keep going, and look for our long term goals. . . she helped us look at our strengths and weaknesses. (Maria)

My career coach from the workforce center is just great. . .because she is an immigrant also. . .she knows it is not easy. . .the language is a huge barrier (Grace).

The workforce center support staff provided the participants support, and it was apparent from their interviews that they were very appreciative of that support. Maria’s experience with her career coach was a very positive one. She related how the coach’s insightfulness prompted her to continue striving and looking at her long term goals. Grace shared how empathic her career coach was to her immigrant status situation. Her career coach’s support and understanding, regarding the language barrier, encouraged Grace to continue with the program and successfully complete. Miranda also shared how her career coach was an inspiration to the participants. Her career coach drew the hard line of “getting their ducks in a row” and keeping their priorities straight.

My career coach was an inspiration . . .she helped us get our ducks in a row and said “get our priorities straight.” (Miranda)

Miranda's coach was able to be supportive to the participants while at the same time setting firm guidelines. This coach was the workforce center employee that met with all the participants on a weekly basis. Life skills classes were offered each Friday at the workforce center by this career coach. She instructed them in the realistic expectations required to be successful. Excuses were not accepted; rather solutions to barriers of success were explored. She would remind the participants to have back up plans for child care, transportation, and schedule personal appointments outside of class time. Only extreme emergencies as the hospitalization of themselves or their child, court dates, or a death in the family were accepted as a reason to miss class.

As mentioned above, classes were provided to the participants on Fridays by the workforce center. These sessions supported the short term curriculum efforts the participants experienced during classes Monday through Thursday. Friday classes at the workforce center included interviews to polish their interviewing skills and time management classes to help maintain their daily schedule

The workforce center had interviews for us. . .they set us up with people from Human Resource Departments of different companies. . .video taped us and we had to pretend it was a real interview. . .it was nerve racking. . .it gave us practice. . . it helped me. . .It got me a job offer at the local Health Clinic.
(Autumn)

The workforce center had classes where you would learn how to time your day out. . .time management classes. . .I went through a lot of that because they were trying to retrain me because I hadn't worked in over eight years (Shelly)

Autumn indicated the practice interviews she participated in at the workforce center led to her securing a job at a local health clinic. Human Resource representatives from different companies, including a local health clinic, came to the workforce center to conduct mock interviews in person. The interviews were videotaped giving the

participants the opportunity to practice dressing for an interview and viewing themselves as they participated in a real interview. Autumn received a job offer by the local Health Clinic after participating in her mock interviews. The time management skills Shelly received helped her to become more employable after being out of the work force for over eight years. She stated these classes helped her to time her day. She hadn't had experience with those skills prior to participating in the short term training program and felt they were beneficial to her.

Susan stated how much easier it was for her to participate in the program by working through the workforce center.

I found out about the training program through the career coach at the workforce center. . .working through the workforce center helped. (Susan)

Having the workforce center as a support while the participants went through the program and sought to improve their employment skills made it less complicated than trying to navigate through all the tasks on their own.

The support participants received from family and the workforce center continued as they entered the short term training program and began to feel the faculty and staff support at Pleasant View Community College (PVCC). Participants shared their feelings regarding their experiences with the faculty and staff at the college. Some of those experiences were expected and others were unexpected.

I learned about the financial aid through the educational opportunities center. I went and sat down, they signed me up, and I became a student the very next semester. . .it was something I never knew about. . .I had no idea. . .they definitely opened the door for me to continue on and go to school. (Maria)

Maria had not been exposed to financial aid opportunities in the past. As she stated, she had no idea they existed. During the program she learned about financial aid

opportunities at the college through the educational opportunities center at the workforce center. After this exposure to financial aid opportunities and upon completion of the program, she sat down, signed up immediately, and started classes as a college student the next semester.

Maria, Autumn, and Jan shared their positive feelings about their instructors. The participants seemed to compare their experiences in the program with past academic experiences.

Most of the teachers were fantastic. . .they were just right there with us. . .the teachers kind of knew the kind of people we were, what we've been through, and are able to relate more on that level. (Maria)

The teachers were great. . .the computer lab teachers were really helpful. . .the program teachers would actually go through it step by step. . .most of my previous teachers I've had didn't do that. (Autumn)

There was a chapter in Excel I was having a lot of problems with. . .I tried everything and just couldn't grasp it. . .I went to the teacher and asked if there was a different way he could explain it to me. We sat down and he showed me a lot of different ways. . .and I finally got it. . .he did an awesome job because a lot of my previous teachers wouldn't have done that. (Jan)

These women felt the instructors made extra efforts to explain the curriculum to them step by step. Autumn stated previous instructors hadn't done that for her. Maria felt the instructors knew the types of environments, life style, and academic challenges the participants had experienced in the past. She stated they seemed to relate with the students on their level. Jan had problems in Excel. She had tried a variety of ways to get the concept and wasn't having success. She approached the instructor and with his help went through many different approaches to explain the material. With the instructor's assistance, she finally was able to grasp the concept. Jan apparently hadn't had this type of instructor support in the past. She was very pleased this instructor took the time and

efforts to make certain she understood the concept. This type of support provided the participants the opportunity to understand and complete their assignments leading to the successful completion of the program.

Other experiences the participants had were unexpected shows of support. Diane, Miranda, and Grace shared some examples that made an impression on them.

The instructors wanted you to be successful . . . one time I had day care issues. . .the teacher's retired husband came and watched my baby by pushing him around in a stroller on campus that day so I could go to class. (Diane)

I saw the director uptown and was amazed she recognized me (Diane)

The director wasn't what I thought she would be. . .looked like a business woman but when she started talking to us. . .wow, she's had experiences like us. (Miranda)

The country of America has given me a purpose. . .it doesn't matter what was before. . .I want to try. I want to send a message to every person who reads this. . .if somebody tries to push you down. . .don't look to death. . .look to yourself and listen to people who encourage you and follow them. (Grace)

The instructor who went out of her way to enlist her retired husband to actually come to the campus one day and push Diane's baby around in the stroller while she attended class certainly had an impact on her. This unexpected extra effort on the part of that instructor and her husband didn't go unnoticed and was still remembered today. Miranda and Diane seemed amazed the director of the program had experienced some of the same life issues they had. When the director shared some of her past academic and life experiences with the participants, they realized other people with similar backgrounds had overcome barriers and succeeded. It seemed to give them hope and determination. Diane was surprised she was recognized when she met the director uptown. Realizing she was a person to the director, not just another nameless face, she expressed her sincere pleasure over the incident. Grace, a legal immigrant, left a domestic abuse situation, divorced her

husband, and moved to Pleasant View on her own with her children. Her experience was overwhelming for her. She expressed her appreciation and amazement of the opportunities she received in the United States to improve her status and that of her children. Her situation was desperate but she overcame her fear with inner strength and the support and encouragement of those around her. These unexpected personal interactions and demonstrations of support outside the classroom seemed to have a positive impact on the participants.

As mentioned before, the short-term training program is set up on a cohort basis with the participants going through the program as a group. This arrangement provided the instructors and participants the opportunity to interact on a regular basis throughout the program. The cohort concept also provided the opportunity for participants to support and encourage one another throughout the program. The majority of the participants appreciated their fellow students.

Maria realized the class pulled together as a group. She mentioned the effect the weekly meetings the career coach facilitated had on the participants as they pulled together and supported each other. Jennifer felt all the students in the class supported each other even though they all came from diverse backgrounds.

We continued to meet at the workforce center once a week. . .the class really pulled together as a group. . .the workforce center staff kept our focus and allowed us to express ourselves and that was inspiring. (Maria)

All the women in the class were supportive . . . we all had different backgrounds and ages . . . I rode with another student and we did our homework together. (Jennifer)

The ability the coach gave the participants to express themselves, perhaps the very first time some one listened to them seriously, inspired the group, according to Marie.

Jennifer felt all the women in her class were supportive even though they varied in age and background. She met and rode with another student, and even stated they did their homework together. Having someone offer Jennifer a ride to class built support for both the students. This support led to working on homework together and being there for each other as they successfully worked toward completing the program.

Having a support system was expressed as the difference in feeling accepted and making it through the program versus feeling isolated and perhaps dropping out.

The cohort was a great support system. . .when I was in school previously I had no support. . .I told them (cohort members) if it wasn't for you, I don't know if I would still be here (Susan)

The cohort would sit and eat lunch and work on assignments together. We worked together and that was good. (Susie)

Susan expressed the difference she experienced between having the cohort as a support system while in the program and her previous experience in school. When she was in school before, she stated she didn't have any support. She even verbalized her feelings that without the cohort she didn't even know if she still would have been there. Going through the program as a group apparently contributed to Susan's ability to successfully complete the program. Susie seemed to appreciate the fact the cohort would meet and eat their lunch together. This gave them the opportunity to work on assignments and she felt that was good for her.

The program gave some of the participants the opportunity to make and keep new friends. The friendships made were strong and remained part of their lives for years after the program.

I made a lot of friends in the program. We did lots of things together . . . I still keep in contact with some of the friends I made in class. (Shelly)

I still keep in touch with fellow students from the program . . . one of them now works at a local discount store. (Diane)

Shelly seemed to really enjoy the students she met in the program. The cohort provided her the opportunity to make a lot of new friends. Her profile indicates it has been over five years since she graduated from the program, but she stated she still keeps in contact with the friends she made in class. This cohort support provided Shelly the ability to benefit from the joys of friendship as she juggled the many responsibilities she carried while successfully completing the program. The friendships she made during the program have endured through the years since her graduation. Diane mentioned that same fact. She indicated she stills keeps in touch with fellow students with whom she went through the program. The cohort concept provided the participants the ability to give and receive support. This ability seems to have contributed to their successful completion of the program.

Support was also received from outside the family, the workforce center, the program cohort, and the faculty and staff of PVCC. Friends made inside and outside the program were a support and contributing success factor for the participants. Susan, Autumn, Jennifer, and Grace mentioned ways friends inside and outside the cohort were of help and support to them while they were in the program.

Friends were really a relief for me. They were a relief from the stress and pressures and helped me through a lot of the assignments. My friends were afraid they would be a distraction but really they were more of a relief. . .I met a friend that had experience as a college student whereas I was inexperienced. . .my friend helped me through English, which was hard for me, and the Workplace communications class. (Susan)

I had a friend who was in the class. . .she was also pregnant and we supported each other. (Autumn)

I had a friend who helped me. She babysat for me while I was in class for another evening class (Jennifer)

I stayed with some American friends and after about ten months I started to find out about people, services, and this short-term training program. . .it was great.
(Grace)

Recognizing the fact that friends were a welcome relief from the pressures and stress Susan was experiencing during the program, enabled her to accept this means of support and gave her a distraction from the daily program pressures. She recognized the value her friend was in being a prior college student. This helped her since she was inexperienced as a student. This friendship, outside the cohort, enabled her to take advantage of her friend's academic experience with assignments in classes that were difficult for her. Autumn was pregnant at the time she took the program. She met another program participant who was also pregnant and stated they supported each other throughout the entire program. Sharing program challenges in addition to pregnancy challenges, while being a full-time student, certainly contributed to the support Autumn experienced from a fellow student. Jennifer also was fortunate to have a friend outside the cohort and college who supported her by babysitting while she took additional evening classes. Jennifer shared she completed 21 credits the semester she took the program by attending another college simultaneously. The support that friend provided enabled her to not only successfully complete the short term training program, but a full load of classes at another institution of higher education. Grace depended on the support she received from friends as she began her journey out of the domestic abuse situation and had the courage to venture out of her apartment. Through these friends she found out about services and programs available to her and her children. The encouragement and support of these friends literally made a huge life change difference for Grace.

It Took the Support of an Entire "Village" for Me to Succeed Summary

The participants received assistance from a wide range of people. It was truly the result of an entire village encouraging, nurturing, and supporting these women that enabled them to successfully complete their goal of completing the short term training program. Many participants mentioned how important the support of their children was to their emotional well being and successful completion. Being a role model for their children provided them the opportunity to not only receive but give support back to their children and share in the pride they all had for each other.

Parents, especially mothers, were the rock solid reinforcement for many of the participants. Whether providing a calm environment to complete homework or supplying much needed child care, their mothers and parents were there for these women and it made an extraordinary difference. Extended family also provided backing for some of the women. The gift of a computer by a brother or a cousin volunteering to watch their children if they got home on the school bus prior to their mother's arrival provided that extra level of support that helped contribute to their success.

Other "village" members who lent support were staff members of the local workforce center. Realistic expectations, mock interviews, time management skills, and life skills classes were provided by the workforce staff. The women appreciated the inspiration and guidance their workforce career coaches shared with them before, during, and after the program.

The backing continued as the participants became familiar with the college campus and the PVCC staff. Expected and unexpected examples of support were shared in the participant's interviews. Stories of instructors going out of their way to provide

extra help, being surprised they (participants) were recognized in public places by the staff, and amazement at the financial opportunities available to them were regularly shared by these women. Many times the participants stated they had no previous knowledge of financial opportunities prior to being registered in the short term program. Becoming knowledgeable about the culture and opportunities available in higher education was a great benefit for these women.

The cohort of students in the program provided a support system for many of the participants. One participant stated without the support of the cohort she didn't feel she would have been able to continue and complete the program. Friends inside and outside the cohort provided much needed support for many of the women to meet each day, get through it successfully, and continue on until completion.

These various means of assistance that came from many different members of "the village" provided the support each participant needed, in their own way, to grow, develop, and mature as they successfully completed the short term training program.

The Program Helped Me Grow, Develop, and Mature

The third core theme that emerged from the interviews was the participants' growth, development, and maturation. As the women developed, they experienced successive changes from a less to a more highly organized state. Their gradual growth or advancement is demonstrated in the series of progressive changes they experienced in their lives. Their maturation is demonstrated by the choices they made. It is also evident in the deliberateness and due care they gave to their decisions prior to their actions.

Some participants expressed knowledge of the areas of growth they had achieved and others seemed unaware of the strides they had made. As the women spoke of their

fears earlier in this chapter, the maturation that occurred is evident to me and I hope to you, the reader.

Taking steps one at a time is demonstrated by Miranda learning to drive around the block, around the town she lived in, and out onto the highway and finally to another town for training.

Before I would have never thought about driving back and forth . . .you know Pleasant View that's clear across to another town. . .and it's all of what, 5 miles?
(Miranda)

Her self amusement at the realization Pleasant View was only about five miles away, but initially seemed a lengthy distance, shows some of the maturity Miranda experienced and demonstrated.

Similar to the fabled mythical bird, Phoenix, consumed by fire but arose from its own ashes, Jennifer began her own resurrection to renew herself.

It took me awhile to have the courage to go on . . . I'm a more introverted nature. . . I look back and think how on earth did I do it? It was all the little experiences, the program, the classes elsewhere, the internship that spurred me on. . .to an associate's degree and then a bachelor's degree. (Jennifer)

Jennifer emerged from her long term marriage and secluded lifestyle represented by the ashes of the Phoenix mentioned earlier as a "stay at home mom," She registered for the program, completed credits at another college simultaneously, finished an internship, earned her associate's degree and her bachelor's degree all the while being a self-confessed introvert. Beginning at the basic level of completing a short-term training program and continuing her upward climb of the educational ladder by recognizing each rung attained as another victory propelled her to emerge with a bachelor's degree. In my opinion, her process to this gain this level of completeness demonstrates the level of maturity she possesses.

The realization participants required additional job skills, to make a change in their lives by furthering their career opportunities, was expressed by several of the students. Acting on this realization rather than merely thinking about going back to school, or passively accepting their current status, signifies maturation. It took maturity and courage for these women to confront the unknown of a college campus and overcome their fears to seek out educational opportunities. Successfully completing the short term program provided opportunities to improve their current situations.

The women came to the program from a variety of backgrounds. They stated their reasons for registering for the program. The reasons stated reflect different stages of maturity. Ranging from the honesty of one participant stating she didn't know what she wanted to do to another participant stating she had heard about the program in another city, took the initiative to seek it out, requested a referral by her previous career coach, and being accepted into the program reflect a wide range of maturity levels.

The following participants realized their current job skills weren't sufficient to lift them from the economic situation they were currently experiencing. Many mentioned the need for acquiring additional employment skills to assist in securing better employment.

Susan was honest when she stated she was very uncertain about her goals. She didn't attempt to fool either herself or the researcher. She just knew she had a general field of interest she wanted to pursue. She stated her interest was something in the medical field.

I wasn't for sure what I wanted to do. I just knew it was something in the medical field. I didn't know if I wanted to be an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). . .I just didn't know.
(Susan)

Being open to different opportunities in a field of interest demonstrate Susan's basic beginning level of maturity.

Miranda didn't want to work nights but ended up having to accept the graveyard shift. It was all she could find at the time

My main interest was to get skills. . I didn't want to work nights. . but I worked graveyard. My main goal was to work days so I could be home with my kids at night. (Miranda)

Miranda shared her main interest in registering for the program was to get additional employment skills. She stated improved job skills would increase her chance of finding acceptable work during the daytime hours. She did not want to have to continue working the graveyard shift. Miranda realized she needed to take the initiative to improve her situation by registering for the program even if it meant driving to another town.

Miranda's actions demonstrate her maturity level. She recognized additional employment opportunities with more suitable hours would be open to her if she widened her job search area and was willing to seek training for those employment opportunities. Acting on these realizations indicates the increasing levels of maturity Miranda demonstrated.

Autumn had been attending a medical assistance certificate program in a nearby city and had heard about the program. She was interested in computers because, as she mentioned, she didn't know much about computers. She stated the program was fast and she realized she needed additional computer skills to get a good job. She requested assistance from her former workforce development career coach in a nearby city to be considered for the short term training program offered in Pleasant View. She was accepted and registered for the program at Pleasant View Community College (PVCC).

I had heard about the program when I lived in a nearby city while I was working on my medical assistant program. . .the program interested me because I didn't know much about computers. . .the program was fast and I needed skills to get a good job. . .I asked my coach about it and she looked into it for me. (Autumn)

Autumn's mature thinking recognized computer skills, in addition to her medical assistance skills, would increase her chances to secure a better job. Her inquires and follow-up assisted her in attaining the additional training she sought.

Jennifer had been married for sixteen years. She had given some thought to attending school earlier in her life, but only as a future idea, after her children were grown. When her marriage ended she seriously began to consider attending school in the present, not the future tense. She planned to rely on her excellent typing skills to seek office work while attending school

I had been married for 16 years. . .I had entertained thoughts about school. . .but only much later when the children were grown. My first goal was to work in an office. . .I could shine at typing. (Jennifer)

Her ability to set a plan in motion during her time of domestic upheaval demonstrates her mature thinking. Often when a person is in a less than stable situation the temptation is to hunker down and survive, not reach outward and seek opportunities. She followed her plan and successfully completed the short-term training program, an associate's degree, and a bachelor's degree.

Diane stated the reason she took the program was to get her foot in the door and have it open "doors of opportunity" for her.

The reason I took the program was to get a foot in the door. . .thought the program would open lots of doors. (Diane).

Diane stated the program would assist her in making contacts, meeting people who could help her, and as she stated, "open doors for her". Being able to recognize the program

would provide her successive changes from her less than perfect situation to a more stable one demonstrated her mature thinking.

As participants shared their program experiences, additional levels of development seemed to emerge. Susan realized her need for a release from the grind of her daily schedule. Working less resulted in being financially strapped and affected her attitude on life. By attending school Susan experienced the outlet she needed to escape the depressing situation of her previous isolated employment cleaning homes for resale even though it meant a reduced paycheck

I had to keep things going for home maintenance . . . had to get everything done. . . wasn't working as much as I was before so I was more financially strapped. . . had to be on a grind staying on top of everything . . . but school was an outlet from regular life. (Susan)

Responsibilities piled up for Susan. She realized she had to maintain things at home, get everything done as she described it "be on a grind", all the while being affected financially due to reduced work hours. Attending the program made her appreciate school as outlet from her regular life.

Maria blossomed with her realization she could actually do the school work. Maria just gushed as she described how her program experience affected her outlook and attitude. She describes it as amazing and told of the enjoyment she felt being in the program. Her joy in the discovery of learning was evident as she described her experiences in the program. She may not have been aware of her development, but it was certainly apparent to the researcher by the attitude she demonstrated.

Oh it was amazing. It opened the door for me to come back to school. I enjoyed it so much. (Maria)

Maria's road to maturity is discovered as she experienced the gradual growth and advancement through a series of progressive changes as she was able to do the assignments and complete the program. Immediately after completing the program, she registered for credit classes, and continues work toward her associate's degree.

Miranda's maturity was reflected in her commitment to "doing what had to be done" to successfully complete the program. Miranda seemed to exude a dogged effort approach to as she said "do what I had to do". She stated she buried her emotions and decided not to sabotage herself with personal problems. Miranda demonstrated the ability to put aside personal problems that might detract from her ability to be successful. That demonstrated maturity. This approach worked for her because she successfully completed the program

I kept doing what I had to do . . . handle things without emotions . . . don't sabotage yourself with personal problems. Just do it. (Miranda)

Miranda's profile shares her triumphs in overcoming the personal barriers she faced. By committing herself to complete the tasks necessary, she did not allow personal situations and problems to impair her growth. She was able to succeed in completing the program despite the hurdles before her.

Autumn experienced the excitement, by her definition, "of being a regular college student". The development of her mind in realizing she was a college student even though she didn't fit her earlier stereotype image was a sign of her gradual development process.

It felt good . . . was excited I felt like a regular college student. I liked being an actual college student . . . will come back in the Fall semester and start working on an Associates Degree. (Autumn)

Autumn's mental image of a regular student apparently did not include herself in the past. She stated her newly declared "college student self-image" excited her. She enjoyed the status of being a regular college student. Upon completion of the program and new employment opportunity at the health clinic, she stated she plans to return to school and begin working on an associate's degree in the near future.

Jennifer's demonstration of maturity was her "self pep talks" to complete the required assignments so she could get through the program, and indirectly the divorce's ramifications. Jennifer seemed to have a running "self pep talk" dialogue. She would tell herself you can get through this, it's going to be o.k., and things are only temporary. Jennifer stated she would remind herself to put her energy into school. It is interesting these phrases could not only be applied to getting through school assignments and the short term training program, but could also be applied toward the barriers she was dealing with regarding her divorce. She didn't directly mention they applied to either her school or personal areas of her life. She just seemed unaware of that duplicity.

I told myself you can get through this . . . it's going to be O.K . . . things are temporary. . . assignments are not forever or daunting. Put your energy into school. (Jennifer)

Jennifer recognized her energy could not be wasted on self-pity. She determined she would be able to succeed by concentrating on the task at hand and put the program and ramifications of the divorce in perspective.

Shelly's expressed confidence that she had the drive to complete the program reflected her mature attitude. Shelly's self-realization "she had the drive" to complete the tasks she was inundated with, contributed to her growth and maturation. Her list included

securing a job, being in school to complete the short term training program and her GED simultaneously, and caring for her home responsibilities.

I had to get a job on top of school . . . had to take care of home and school too. I completed my GED and completed the program at the same time . . . I have the drive (Shelly).

Shelly stated it plainly, “she had the drive”. When times are tough, the tough get going. Her judgment of drawing from her inner strength and drive demonstrates her maturity.

Diane’s profile reflects her demonstrated maturity of gathering the courage needed to take care of herself and baby when she left her abusive marriage. She performed the responsibilities necessary for her baby while successfully completing the program.

I was a single mom, so I was very excited about actually doing something positive . . . but I would get home at 6:00, feed, bathe, and get the baby to bed. . then I had homework. . .I had to get up at 6:00 the next morning and do it again. (Diane)

Diane left a domestic abuse situation and was excited to be participating in something positive. She was, however, responsible for her young baby and kept on schedule caring for her child and completing her responsibilities in the program at the same time.

The areas of growth the participants experienced while in the program are revealed in the self expressions participants stated regarding the program and their future goals. Some women shared examples of their hard-earned self confidence and short-term future goals.

I feel more comfortable in interview situations now. . .found interviews are an ongoing learning experience. . .the process keeps going so that is great. I have more self esteem. (Susan)

I am set up for at least the next two semesters. I have grants and stuff like that. (Maria)

Everyday I gain more confidence. I am somebody because I work. I want to stay up and climb . . . for myself and to better my family and myself.
(Miranda)

Susan shared her self esteem had elevated and she is more comfortable in interview situations. Maria went from having no knowledge or information about the existence of financial aid to contacting the educational opportunity center. She secured grants and loans for her to take classes for the next two semesters. Miranda expressed a familiar theme of identifying our self worth with the employment we perform. She realized once she began her climb it would provide for the betterment of not only herself, but her family as well.

Growth and maturation are also exemplified as some participants shared their successes and goals for the future and beyond.

I now know what I need in the professional business world. . .composing letters and memos and using the Thesaurus and dictionary. If something doesn't sound right. . .I will go and ask and get feedback from someone else. I am going back through my textbooks reviewing. . .and researching at the library and on the computer. . .my future goal is to get a job with the county or city. (Jan)

Showed me I could get out there and work and be successful . . . decided on a degree vs. occupational. The program spurred me to go for an associate's degree. . . and a bachelor's degree. . .I did it and graduated. . . .I am considering graduate school. (Jennifer)

After the program I went on and got an associate's degree, then transferred and received my Bachelors . . . and am planning on a Masters. My goal is to be a forensic scientist or crime scene specialist. (Diane)

Jan's maturity is reflected in her recognition the short term training program wasn't a conclusion of her education but rather a beginning to continue increasing her skills. Her growth has motivated her to perform self research and review to hone her skills for possible future employment. Jennifer and Diane flourished, grew, and matured during and after the completion of the program. The confidence they gained enabled them to

pursue and complete their associate's and bachelor's degrees. They both have expressed their interest in applying for graduate school and working towards a Master's degree.

The Program Helped Me to Grow, Develop, and Mature Summary

The third theme of growth, development, and maturation is revealed in unique examples for the various participants. The growth demonstrated ranged from gradual and basic to advanced and deliberate. Some participants seemed keenly aware of the strides they had made while others seemed completely unconscious of the progress they had made.

Building on one step at a time was reflected in the interviews of some of the participants. Learning to drive and then driving in an ever increasing wider circle to obtain training showed the growth of one of the participants. Another participant reminded me of the fabled mythical bird, Phoenix, who arose from its own ashes after being consumed by fire, to completely renew itself. This participant came out of her sheltered, secluded lifestyle of sixteen years of marriage that was prompted by a divorce. She progressed ever upward through the academic world to emerge with a bachelor's degree, permanent full-time employment, and the goal to enter graduate school.

The acknowledgement of additional job skills enhancing their career opportunities was recognized by many of the women. This growth helped them face the fact their current job skills weren't sufficient to lift them from the economic quagmire they were currently experiencing. They acted on that recognition, registered and successfully completed the short term training program. For one woman the act of simply not quitting was a large growth factor for her.

Reasons for registering for the program were similar yet uniquely different. The growth was demonstrated by the various reasons expressed. One participant was completely uncertain about her goals. Another specifically sought out the program as the remaining piece in her employment skills puzzle that would make her more employable. One participant realized the program would give her the added leverage to “get her foot in the door.” Another recognized her need to escape the depressing grind of her life and registered so she could find a different type of employment.

The development of some participants was expressed as they shared their elation in discovering the joys of learning. They found it amazing they were able to earn good grades and actually enjoy school.

The maturation revealed by several of the participants was reflected in their newly declared self-image and esteem. Whether this was achieved through gradual development or “self pep talks” the end result was the same. They felt better about themselves and realized they could successfully complete the program if they continued to strive toward the goal day by day.

Hard-earned self confidence was dramatically demonstrated by one participant who courageously left an abusive marriage with her children, initially unable to speak English, become a U.S. citizen, successfully completed the short term training program, and continues to strive toward her goal of an associate’s degree.

The pride I feel for these participants is difficult to express in mere words. I am humbled by the barriers they overcame to achieve the level of success they have made. They deserve recognition and it is with pleasure I have shared their voices with you, the reader.

Research Questions

The data that emerged from this research study resulted in three core themes that go across all the participants and how they experienced the short term training program. I next will review how these three themes of Fear, Support, and Maturation responded to the Research Questions.

The main research question being addressed is: How did the students experience their short-term training program? The two sub research questions are:

1. How did the short-term training program affect the students' lives while they were in the program?
2. How did the short-term training program make a difference in the students' lives after they completed the program?

How the participants experienced the program and how it affected their lives were revealed in the fear and support theme experiences they shared with me and which I developed earlier. Their conversations regarding fear and support included circumstances they had experienced in the past and brought with them to the program. In addition, the participants shared their current fears and those they felt they would face in the future. The second sub research question regarding the difference the program made in their lives and their maturity and future goals will be addressed later in this section.

Fear. As I reviewed the data the overriding experience that affected the participants' lives was overcoming their fear factor. The participants discussed the theme of fear with a capital F. The participants revealed fears they experienced in the past, fears they were experiencing in the present, and the fears they anticipated facing in the future. Upon review, having the largest theme related to fear made sense. At this time in their

lives, in the short term training program, a large portion of the participant's lives was viewed through the lens of fears brought from the past, being experienced in the present, and projected in the future.

Past Fears. The lack of social and communication skills or domestic violence was a fear several participants brought from the past. Some had experienced an isolated life style prior to the program.

Jennifer indicated during her sixteen years of marriage she was unable to pursue educational or employment goals for herself. She had thoughts of educational aspirations but buried those ambitions while she was married and her children were young. Diane received no family support for her educational dreams as she left a domestic violence situation and sought educational opportunities. Her family felt the cost of education did not provide sufficient monetary reward to warrant pursuing a degree. Miranda had remained isolated because she did not drive a car. She had been limited in her ability to seek employment or educational opportunities outside a very small geographic circle. When Jennifer's, Miranda's, and Diane's marriages ended, they emerged to compete in the work world and educational culture unfamiliar to them. Their self confidence was extremely low.

Past fears also included academic failure. Many hadn't done well academically in high school or their earlier college attempts. Shelly shared she was scared to death. She had not passed math in high school, found algebra very difficult to understand, and had not graduated from high school. Many participants shared their memories of subjects that had been difficult to master, discussed instructors who weren't helpful, and wondered if this experience would be different.

Susan brought the fear of academic probation to the short term training program. She realized earning excellent grades in the short term training program was paramount to affecting a change in her life. Being able to register for a short-term training program provided Susan the chance to earn higher grades and improve her grade point average at PVCC. If her grade point average at the end of the program was high enough, her academic probation would be lifted. If her academic probation was lifted, she would be able to continue taking classes at the community college. The opportunity to continue registering for classes offered Susan the chance to improve her prospects of earning a degree and, therefore, improve her employment opportunities. All these possibilities for Susan to improve her life rested on her making higher grades in the short term training program than she had done in the past. This pressure caused her a great deal of fear.

Although not all participants were on academic probation, in moving from the past to the present most realized how unsatisfactory grades could now affect their lives. In their teenage years, earning unsatisfactory grades hadn't really affected their economic status. They still had a home to live in and food to eat provided by their parents. Now they knew how difficult it was to obtain employment without adequate education or employment skills. They now shouldered family responsibilities in addition to completing school assignments. They realized they needed job skill training to increase new job seeking opportunities.

Shelly felt the weight of supporting her disabled husband and her children. In the past, she realized she hadn't developed the skills necessary to secure a job.

My husband was disabled . . . I needed skills, I needed my GED. . . I needed a job (Shelly).

Shelly realized because she had dropped out of high school and had not earned a GED, her chances of finding a job were slim and this frightened her. Despite her fears, she faced these realities, however, and registered for the short term training program and a GED program simultaneously.

The fear of time passed was expressed by numerous participants. It had been many years since they had been in school. They knew their skills were “rusty,” many had a huge learning curve in computer literacy, and their previous academic attempts hadn’t been successful. In addition, the fear of age differences between the participants was expressed by Susie. She and other mature students wondered if they could perform at the same academic level as those who were younger. In addition to the fears from the past, the participants realized they faced additional fears in the present time as they began the program.

Present Fears. Participants’ present fears included a variety of areas. How to handle language barriers, facing the world on their own as they raised their children, child care issues, financial woes, current low-wage employment, transportation barriers, and time restrictions were subjects discussed.

The participants experienced the program through real, visceral, or imaged feelings of fear. Self doubt surfaced. Participants compared themselves to others and thought they found their own skills lacking. Some fears were based on reality; others were imagined. Grace felt she was the only student from another country experiencing a large language barrier.

I don’t speak English. . .I don’t understand nothing. . .I was looking around me and I was thinking I was probably the only one from a different country (Grace)

Overcoming the language barrier was one of Grace's biggest fears. She told me when she saw the size of the Microsoft Word textbook written in English, she almost quit the program. Gaining fluency in English was a challenge Grace mastered. Her background of speaking three different European languages proved to be helpful in mastering English.

Autumn indicated it was very difficult doing all the activities on her own. Her children and baby's father wasn't with her, and she received no child support. She had to depend on her parents to provide child care when she had attended her previous short term training program in a neighboring city. She continued to rely on her parents, in a nearby town, for child care for her current short term training program located at PVCC. She indicated these factors made it extra hard for her.

Scarce financial resources added to the fear factor for many participants. The women shared their experiences of lack of funds, no child support, needing work to support their families, and having to accept less than desirable types of employment merely to exist. The women who had no employment or worked at low-wage unappealing jobs feared if they weren't successful in the program, they would be doomed to remain at this economic level.

Miranda indicated there were few jobs for someone without skills, and it was a strain having to accept a graveyard shift job that included mopping floors and cleaning toilets. She feared she would have to stay in jobs she hated merely to continue to subsist. Lack of money or the fear of continuing at the same economic level they currently were experiencing definitely affected the students' lives while they were in the program. This was a last chance opportunity for many and they realized it.

Self doubt during the program extended to matters of transportation many of us take for granted. Transportation was a fear issue for several participants. Being unable to drive or having limited driving skills added to their current fears. They wondered if they would be able to get to class on a daily basis and, therefore, successfully complete the program. Hanna lived in a neighboring town and shared she would often ask for rides. If she couldn't catch a ride, she would have to take the bus. She found the bus schedule often changed, and she would get to the bus station at the wrong time and that caused her anger and frustration. Hanna avoided taking the bus whenever possible. She often found, however, she had no other choice and if she wanted to get to class she would have to ride the bus to get to the campus.

Another current fear was the realization of how much time all their personal and school responsibilities would require.

It was rough on my life; I'm not going to lie about that, it was definitely hard. . . I really need to be sure I can do that. . . I saw how it affected my life and how much schoolwork affected my life and vice-versa (Judy).

Participants shared the fear of numerous, simultaneous responsibilities instilled the thought they may have taken on more than they could handle.

Many participants, in their own way, experienced the gut-wrenching feeling every reader has probably experienced at one time in their lives. The fear that can keep you from acting on issues that relate to your circumstance. The fear that takes every ounce of courage you have to leave the security of your vehicle, walk across a new campus, and enter an unfamiliar room for an orientation to a program that may be your last chance at improving your current economic situation. One former participant shared it took over thirty minutes for her to gather the courage to leave her car and walk onto the campus in

search of the building where the short-term training program orientation was being held. The fact she remembered her feelings of fear so vividly, long after successfully completing the program, demonstrates the power fear had on her life at the time. Fears faced and conquered from the past and experienced in the present, however, helped provide the fortitude needed for the participants to face their fears of the future.

Future Fears. In addition to dealing with the past and current fears, many participants shared their concerns regarding events they would face in the future. Future fears, shared with me during the interviews, included self doubt regarding job searches, fear of failure, fear of success, and how all these factors would affect their lives and their children's lives.

Hanna realized she has had only two jobs, and they were short in duration. She feared her lack of experience would affect her ability to secure a job at the completion of the short-term training program.

Fear of failure in the future manifested itself through avoidance revealed by some of the participants. Some women delayed making decisions regarding their future goals and plans. Susan was delaying her reentry into college because she feared she would be unsuccessful without the support of her fellow cohort students. Susie accepted the level of experience she had attained in the training program and stayed in the same job she had secured seven years ago and indicated she was not seeking additional training or job opportunities.

Each participant had different life events that were their BIG individual fears. Some women expressed one fear, and others discussed multiple fears. They overcame their fears with the support of various "village" members and came to class on a regular

basis. The fears they brought with them or were experiencing currently walked in the classroom door with them. Their fears stayed until they overcame them with self determination, inner strength, and the support of the members from their respective “village.”

Support. Many people provided support to the participants as they faced their various fears and overcame them. The support received from their individual “village” members enabled them to add to their own inner strength and overcome their fears. Questions regarding the strength of spirituality as it affected their inner strength during their program experiences were not included in the Research Questions. Grace Cloud, however, addressed the spirituality aspect in her life, and the strength it provided her. She deliberately chose the name Grace Cloud because she indicated this name represented the blessings she had received from God in the past few years and her thankfulness for them. The support the participants experienced, and the affect it had on their lives as they overcame their fears, is evident in their shared experiences. Whether the fears were real or imagined they were faced and overcome on a daily basis with the support of many people, their own inner strength, and, in the case of Grace, her spiritual strength.

Many different sources of support enabled the participants to overcome their fears on a day to day basis. Immediate family was a rock solid support for many of the women. Their mothers, parents, or relatives were there for them as they juggled transportation, child care issues, family demands, part-time jobs, and homework. Many hours were often spent aligning schedules and responsibilities with the support of relatives prior to arriving for class.

Their children provided emotional support as the women completed homework assignments and gained in self confidence in their skills. Grace felt the need to share her completed coursework with someone, especially her children. She derived great satisfaction in sharing her accomplishments with them. The thrill participants experienced when their children recognized their achievements in daily work assignments or at the conclusion of the program at the certificate ceremony were expressed by many women.

Several participants experienced past and current preconceived fears regarding cohort members. These fears often proved unfounded as they grew to know each other and had positive interactions with fellow cohort members. Having the support of fellow students was extremely helpful for many of the participants. The women indicated the cohort grew, bonded, and friendships were established. Providing support for each other proved to be one of the factors contributing to their success. They studied together, gave each other rides, encouraged each other to continue, and became inspired as they began to communicate and keep their priorities straight. Many of the friendships established in the program still remain active today. Shelly and Diane indicated they still keep in touch with friends made in the program many years ago.

The preconceived fear regarding the instructors was also expressed by several of the participants. This fear turned into unexpected support from the instructors and came as a pleasant surprise to many of the students. Positive feelings about the instructors were expressed by many of the participants. They compared previous academic experiences that lacked in personal interactions. They indicated the program instructors were willing to re-explain many concepts, meet with them on a personal basis, and

provide a step by step approach that enabled the students to understand the curriculum and grasp the concepts. Experiencing this type of academic support, for the first time, helped build their self-confidence and contributed to their successful completion of the program.

The workforce center's career coaches and weekly life skills classes proved to be a valuable support for the participants. The students expressed their gratitude for the inspiration they received from the workforce center staff. Maria indicated her coach was an extremely insightful person. She also commended the coach who organized and inspired the participants through all the different aspects of the program. They were able to express their thoughts, goals, and dreams. This helped them overcome their fears and gave them the required support they needed to grow and develop.

Friendships established inside and outside the cohort were mentioned by many of the participants. They were able to share similar circumstances, overcome barriers, finding relief from the stress of the fears they carried with them, and recognized friendships gave them a distraction and much needed support. The variety of "village" members were all part of the support experiences that affected the participants while they were in the program. With this support, the participants experienced the process of overcoming their fears as they grew, developed, and matured.

Growth, Development, and Maturity. The second sub research question dealt with whether the short-term training program made a difference in the participant's lives after they completed the program. The differences the short term program made in many lives is revealed in a variety of ways expressed through the growth, development, and maturity of various participants. The maturity gained affected not only their current life,

but their future as well. Learning to drive, completing a degree, securing permanent employment, leaving a domestic abuse situation, earning good grades, and the joy of learning and completing goals were some of the differences the participants expressed. These differences were recognized by the women as they reflected on their participation in the program.

Miranda overcame the fear of driving and gained the ability to extend her horizons. She found she was able to explore the world beyond the one small town she lived in.

Jennifer shared how each small step; beginning with the successful completion of the short-term training program enabled her to continue her climb up the educational ladder. She kept moving forward and was able to emerge with a bachelor's degree and a full-time permanent position at a college.

The short term training program provided Diane the ability to participate in something positive, network, and leave an abusive domestic situation behind.

I was the first of my family to go back to college so there was pressure. . .they were very negative. . .I had been in the Shelter (domestic abuse). . .I was excited to actually be doing something positive (Diane)

The difference this first step made in her life is evident as she built on the successful completion of the short term program, completed her associates and bachelors degrees and is currently applying for graduate school to complete her master's degree.

Other differences demonstrated in participant's lives may not have been as dramatic as the academic achievements listed above, but just as important. Jan shared how she overcame her previous unsatisfactory academic record to emerge with a 4.0 at the conclusion of the program. She stated this accomplishment gave her the self

confidence to seek a quality internship in her field of interest of city or county government.

The joy of learning and astonishment at their own blossoming was expressed by several women. Maria expressed her amazement there were caring involved people in the short term training program. She was really surprised she found learning to be so much fun. She had no idea she would enjoy it so much. She indicated she just loved the program and realized all she had to do was just attend and do the assignments. She was pleased to learn she could handle it. The joy she felt in discovering she had the ability to complete the work and be successful was evident in her responses.

Hanna vocalized the sheer self satisfaction of just not quitting. She was very pleased that she had made it. She indicated she earned the certificate and that was what counted. She didn't get frustrated and just quit. She stuck it through and made it. Hanna expressed her pleasure in finishing the program and hoped to start working soon. She indicated that would make her year. She dealt with her fears, continued each day, and successfully completed the program. Hanna expressed her delight in that accomplishment. It was a new concept for her to just not give up and quit.

The difference in being able to re-establish themselves was mentioned by several of the participants. They overcame barriers that included domestic violence, language barriers, introverted personalities, and self imposed or spouse imposed isolation to emerge with hard-earned confidence and goals for the future.

It was great. . .when I look back I think how on earth did I do it? All the little experiences, the program classes as well as classes elsewhere kind of spurred me on to say you can do it. . .you can get through it (Jennifer)

Growth, development, and maturity of the participants are recognized by the researcher and hopefully, the reader. The stories of the participants demonstrated their inner strength and the recognition that the program wasn't an ending but rather a beginning. They shared their goals to continue striving to improve their employment skills, enhance their career opportunities, and improve the quality of their life and the lives of their children.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of students who have successfully completed a short-term training program at a community college. The main research question addressed was: How did the students experience their short-term training program. The two sub-research questions were:

1. How did the short-term training program affect the students' lives while they were in the program?
2. How did the short-term training program make a difference in the students' lives after they completed the program?

The design of the study was the Basic Interpretive Qualitative Research approach using open-ended interviewing to collect the data. Interviewing the students helped me to better understand their experiences while they were in the program and any differences made in their lives after they completed the short-term training program.

Fourteen women participated in the interviews. Five participants were single mothers, five participants were divorced, one participant was separated, two participants were married, and one participant was a widow. They represented a wide range of diversity and backgrounds. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 60 years of age. Seven participants were minorities (Hispanic), six were Anglo, and one was a legal immigrant from Europe.

This chapter contains three parts. Part one discusses the study's results relative to the current literature. Part two presents personal experience discussions and result factors that surfaced and were questioned. Part three offers recommendations for future study.

Results and Literature Discussion

Three core themes emerged from this research study: *Fear*, *Support*, and *Maturation*. The fear and support themes affected participants' lives as they experienced their short-term training program. The maturity theme was reflected in differences of the participant's lives shared during and after they completed their short term training program.

The overriding theme the participants experienced was *Fear*. They brought their fears with them from the past; they identified fears they experienced during the program; and they discussed fears they felt they would face in the future.

Obstacles and barriers stated in the literature by Szelenyi (2001) and Peterson (2001) were mentioned by these participants. The two major obstacles Szelenyi (2001) and Peterson (2001) identified that hampered regular attendance were childcare and transportation. Several participants shared their frustrations concerning transportation and childcare. Miranda was an extreme example of having a transportation problem. She was afraid to drive. She overcame those fears in order to be able to attend class. Hanna had to depend on public transportation and take the bus to class. Transportation, however, wasn't the only obstacle the participants faced.

The second major obstacle was childcare. Autumn was a good example of that because she indicated she probably wouldn't have been able to continue in the program if her parents had not been available to baby-sit for her children. Learning how to drive again, finding transportation to the campus, or finding childcare were barriers that contributed to the fears the participants experienced.

Grubb (1996a) stated job training programs are most common among high school dropouts, long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, and welfare recipients. Profiles of the participants fit these categories. Many participants stated their fear of returning to school after a lengthy absence. Shelly and Jan were high school dropouts, Amy was a dislocated worker, and Hanna was unemployed and had a weak work history.

Grubb (1996a) went on to state job training programs concentrate on individuals who would typically not find their way into community colleges or other educational institutions. Although the participants fit the age of the non-traditional student, they often do not have the self-motivation to attend a community college on their own. These participants faced barriers or experienced crises and benefited from the structure of a program set up by the workforce center and the community college. The profiles of Diane, Jennifer, Grace, and Jan reinforce Grubb's statement. Diane fled a domestic abuse situation and explored training possibilities through Project Self-Sufficiency and the local workforce center. Jennifer, a self-proclaimed introvert, emerged from sixteen years of marriage to enter training after her divorce. Grace also left a domestic abuse marriage and reclusive lifestyle after her divorce to enter training and learn English. Jan was a high school drop-out, widowed, and the mother of two children. These participants do not fit the typical student profile of the traditional aged 18 to 24 year old student or the self-motivated profile of non-traditional aged college students. Job training programs concentrate on individuals who typically would not find their way to the community college. They are registered by the workforce center, received their training, and then move on. They not only don't fit the traditional student profile, they also do not fit the non-traditional student profile as well.

Grubb (1996a) indicated the benefits of job training were present for two or three years and then began to decline. The participants come for job training, are in the program for a few months, and then go back to the world of work. The skills attained will start to be obsolete after several years. Brock, Matus-Gross, & Hamilton (2002), however, found welfare members participating in training programs moved off welfare sooner than members who did not participate in a training program. My research found that some participants reached a plateau after successfully completing the short term training program. This plateau is presented under the core theme of fear of the future. Two participants chose not to further their education or professional opportunities. One stated they were waiting until children were older to continue college; another stated they still were satisfied performing the same job they acquired after program graduation many years ago. As a researcher I feel this is a question that needs further research on a broader level to see if this level of plateau is unique to short term training participants or if it might be something that is beyond the participants. Is the plateau Grubb refers to unique to short term training program completers or does it happen to Associate, Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. degree recipients also?

The opposite example of the short term training plateau are the experiences of forward moving participants. Grubb (1996a) stated by participating in both job training and education, community colleges have the potential to move individuals from short-term job training into the post-secondary educational system. This research confirmed Grubb's findings. Several participants successfully completed the short term training program and moved into college degree programs and successfully completed Associate's and Bachelor's degrees. I earlier reported on Maria, Jennifer, Shelly, Diane,

and Grace sharing their successful journeys beyond the short term training program and the degrees they earned or were in the process of earning.

Some of my results differed from what was reported previously in the literature. One such difference related to the PRWORA bill signed by President Clinton in 1996. One provision of the PRWORA bill required both parents to accept responsibility to support their children. Although required by law, the reality is most of these participants had no support from the males who were the fathers of their children. Autumn stated how difficult it was for her to care for her children and attend training without child support. Diane escaped a domestic violence situation. Thus, she cared for her baby and attended training without partner support to remain physically safe. Several other participants had experienced divorces or were single mothers. They attended training without support of the men previously in their lives. This lack of support raised their fear level as they participated in the short term training program.

Additional literature research revealed there has been a recent tightening of the interruption of the rules regarding PRWORA. Ashburn (2006) stated that new federal welfare regulations announced by the Bush administration in June 2006 limit activities, like postsecondary education, to count as the work requirement. The rules, drafted in response to deficit-reduction legislation passed in February 2006, represent the most sweeping changes in the welfare program since 1996. Up to a year of vocational training at a college still counts toward the work requirements. Baccalaureate and advanced-degree programs, however, cannot count as work requirements. The new tightened regulations, according to Ashburn, could push more welfare recipients out of college. States, which have only until October 2006 to comply with the new rule interpretations,

are not certain how they will deal with the new regulations. Thousands of welfare recipients who attend college are in limbo as the academic year begins. This undoubtedly will contribute to the fear factor of these current potential short term training participants.

The second core theme, support, was also an important area experienced by the program participants. This theme illustrated the needed support required by the participants as they faced their various fears and overcame them to successfully complete the program. Grubb (1996a, 1996b) indicates job training programs offer a great variety of services. Maria, Grace, and Miranda stated the support services they received from the work force center and the PVCC staff contributed to their success. It was less complicated going through an organized program than navigating through one by themselves. Support services included weekly life skill classes, mock interviews, time management assistance, transportation passes, and childcare.

Bombach (2001) stated that assisting participants in completing admission forms and obtaining college Identification Cards (I.D.cards) helped participants define themselves as college students, not welfare clients. The value of this support service was shared by Autumn as she shared her excitement in viewing herself as a regular college student.

The necessary support services provide competencies and information of increasing levels of sophistication for students as they move up the ladders of opportunity (Grubb, 1996a). Jennifer and Diane certainly demonstrated this upward climb as they completed their training program, associate's, and bachelor's degrees.

While participants valued the support services the significance of support received from family and friends was also an important aspect of the support theme. This support

was not mentioned as prominently in the literature. The participants received support from various individual “village” members. This support enabled them to add to their inner strength and successfully complete the program. “Village” members providing support included relatives, cohort members, friends, and workforce and college staff.

An omission noted in the ranks of the “village” members was the absence of supportive men in the lives of the participants. The reformed bill of the PRWORA bill signed by President Clinton in 1996 required both parents to accept responsibility to support their children (Rodgers, 2000). In reality, many participants did not receive support from the fathers of their children. Only two participants were married. One of the married participants, however, was supporting her disabled husband. The remainders of the participants were divorced, single, or widowed and many did not receive child support.

The maturation theme was reflected in the difference the short-term training program made in the students’ lives during and after they completed the program. The variety of development, growth, and maturity examples of the various participants were revealed in the interviews.

The maturity gained affected not only their current lives, but that of their children and future. The self-recognized or unrecognized growth discussed in the interviews was quite varied. Miranda and Jennifer recognized the growth they had experienced in the program. Miranda indicated she felt like a “sponge” soaking up all the program knowledge. Jennifer spoke of her amazement at looking back over her completion of the program and earned degree and wondered how she had done it. Maria, however, seemed

unaware of the tremendous strides she had made. She simply expressed her delight in the discovery of the joy of learning.

Individual maturation participant experiences included overcoming restrictive driving skills, spouse or self-imposed isolation, unsatisfactory academic records, domestic abuse situations, language barriers, and economic hardships. Struggling to overcome their fears with the support of their “village” members resulted in growth, development, and maturation on a day by day basis. Sharing plans for future career and educational goals for self enrichment and for their children demonstrated how far many of the participants had come since the beginning of the program.

Higgins (2001) stated studies indicate welfare recipients achieve financial independence by earning a college degree. Diane and Jennifer demonstrated evidence of this fact. They completed their short term training program, associate’s and bachelor’s degrees, and are permanently employed. Shelly and Susie demonstrated the value of their short term training program by also being permanently employed. Susie is content to remain in the position she has held for several years. Shelly recently received a promotion to supervisor at her place of employment.

Statements shared by the participants that differed from some of the literature review were the benefits the individuals indicated the short term training program made in their lives. Grubb (1996a) feels benefits may be too small to change the lives of the individuals enrolled in the program. Most participants stated a variety of differences they felt the program had contributed to their lives. Miranda overcame limited driving skills to attend class. Jennifer, Diane, Susie, and Shelly hold permanent employment which they did not have prior to the program. Grace and Diane left domestic abuse situations

and gained the self confidence necessary to successfully complete the training program. Susan and Jan dramatically improved their grades. Susan had been on academic probation. She earned a high enough grade point average in the program to be removed from academic probation. Jan had been a high school drop out with failing grades. She registered for the program and earned a 4.0 grade point average. Maria discovered the joy of learning. Participants valued the benefits and demonstrated the maturity they had attained.

The responsibilities the participants assumed to successfully complete the short term training program reflect their contribution to PRWORA's requirement to support their children. The participants achieved this requirement despite the fact males in many of their lives were not a part of their "village" of support.

Results and Personal Experiences Discussion

I continued to review the data, and I questioned various factors that surfaced. The first factor that arose was why these particular participants were successful in this short term training program when they had experienced academic failures in the past. They had expressed their fears based on high school and earlier college attempts that had resulted in bad grades, dropping out of school, being placed on academic probation, or feeling marginalized. What was the motivation factor that prompted them to successfully complete this time? Was it one particular factor or a combination of factors? Was this their "second chance," "last chance," or their "best chance" to succeed?

I have been involved with short-term training programs for over a decade. Initially, I was idealistic and thought every participant could be successful if "the village" just provided the opportunity. Surely every person could be academically successfully if

they only had the chance to try. Wisdom gained over the years, however, has made me realize not each participant is ready at that particular time in her life to take advantage of opportunities. For some the time is now, for some it may be later, and for some, although numerous opportunities are provided, the time is never. These intentionally missed opportunities may contribute to the middle-class resentment against the poor, which has overtaken previous compassion demonstrated in the 1960s (Morris & McGann, 2004).

The second factor that surfaced was the absence of an important segment of the “village” in providing participant support. As mentioned earlier, relatives, cohort members, workforce staff, PVCC staff, and friends provided the much needed support for the participants to successfully complete the short-term training program. The glaring “village” member omissions, in regard to support for most of the participants, were the lack of supportive men in their lives. Many participants lacked the other half of couple ship. Where was the honor and responsibility of the males in providing support to the mother of their children and, in turn, their sons and daughters? This glaring absence of supportive men in the lives of most of these participants was quite evident. Several women mentioned how hard it was for them to handle their lives, children, job skill training, and responsibilities alone. What affect does this missing “village” factor have, not only on these women and children, but on our society at large? This is a question with which I still wrestle.

The third factor I questioned was why six participants of the twenty who responded to the request for an interview did not show up for their scheduled interview time. These six had either taken the initiative to contact me or answered my call to request their participation. Interview times were scheduled at the convenience of each

participant. The interview time arrived, however, and these six did not appear. Follow-up calls were not returned. This factor was all the more puzzling because several of the students were leaders of their individual cohorts. Did these program completers feel they hadn't achieved the financial level of success they had hoped for? Were they unable to maintain a positive identity? Were they experiencing an additional crisis? Was an interview just too threatening at this time in their lives? Single parents commonly experience difficulties with role identity. A positive role identity is often hampered by their inability to support their families financially (Kerka, 1988). The participant's role identity may have affected their decision not to appear for an interview.

The fourth factor I discovered was that there were a number of participants who expressed uncertainty and unfamiliarity with financial aid opportunities. This information was provided to the participants at the orientation and when advisors and program coordinators presented material in their classes. Most participants, however, apparently gathered just enough information on a daily basis for their current situation. They were too overwhelmed to absorb information to be used after completion of the program. This information may be better received if presented at the end of the program when the participants are more ready to receive it and are in the "glow" of success. Many of the participants, apparently, were too overwhelmed for the financial aid information to be applied to their personal use when presented earlier in the program. In addition, the self confidence earned by many wasn't established until later in the program as they neared successful completion. Confidence in oneself contributes to seeking additional opportunities. Many may have felt more confident to seek opportunities to further their education or careers after successfully completing the program.

The discovery that many participants failed to grasp the financial aid opportunities available to them was startling. This factor needs reinforcement later in the programs that are offered in the future. Participants apparently gathered only the information needed for their present situation. They may have been too overwhelmed with balancing family, school, and often work to concentrate on future goals. They were dealing with fear factors and needed to get through that day. Perhaps they weren't able to think far enough ahead to plan for future educational or career choices earlier in the program. They may have thought they might never complete the program or get to the point where they could plan for future academic opportunities. They, therefore, did not connect the financial aid information opportunities to their personal lives and circumstances.

The atmosphere of a community college can encourage participants to later envision themselves as part of an educational environment. Program participants can then define themselves as college students, not welfare clients (Bombach, 2001). Instructors, program coordinators, and guest speakers can repeatedly inform program participants that the credits they receive in the short term training program can be applied toward educational degrees or certificate programs (Pagenette & Kozell, 2001). With repeated financial aid information reinforced by instructors and program coordinators throughout the program, and a review at the conclusion of the program, more participants may be ready to apply the financial aid information to their individual lives and future. Participants may not have felt the financial aid information would apply to them because originally they didn't intend to take additional college classes. It is important for the reader to remember most of the participants had earlier negative school experiences and

their immediate goal was to secure training and find better employment. Initially, many participants were not concentrating on pursuing a degree or taking additional coursework. They, therefore, did not retain the financial aid information as relevant to their lives.

I relate with the participants and the experiences they shared in their interviews. I come from a hard-working, economically disadvantaged, bilingual background. My grandparents were German immigrants in the mid 1800's who homesteaded in the Midwest and became United States citizens. The family survived the Great Depression, the "Dust Bowl", had a tremendous work ethic, and great spiritual faith. They did not, however, generally support higher education. My father completed eighth grade and both my parents attended an Ethnic School during their elementary school years. I am a first generation scholar and remember my fear when I began my college education. I've "walked the walk" these participants experienced. I know first hand how important support from spouse, children, siblings, extended family, advisors, mentors, instructors, fellow cohort members, staff, fellow co-workers, and friends are to awakening the desire to attend college and successfully achieve your educational goals.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study has explained how participants experienced their short-term training program. It also revealed how participant's lives were affected while in the program and what difference the program may have made in their lives after the program. The target population was limited to successful short-term training participant completers at one community college.

My recommendations are based on the study I have done, what I found that surprised me, what I would do to make the program stronger, and the new rules drafted in

2006. This set of recommendations is for researchers coming behind me to explore additional experiences of participants of short-term training programs.

First, a study of participants who did not successfully complete a short-term training program could be researched. A study of the experiences of participants who dropped out of short-term training programs would provide additional insight into the experiences of short-term training program participants.

Second, a longitudinal study of the fourteen successful program completers in this study could be researched. Subsequent interviews could be conducted on an annual basis for five years after the date of program completion. Grubb (1996a) has stated benefits often plateau several years after job training. Looking at the fourteen participants, there was an unevenness of how they succeeded after the program. Some participants continued in an upward academic or career climb while others went into a holding position. If the participants were interviewed on an annual basis for five years, researchers would know if this group fit Grubb's prediction that short term training program benefits plateau after several years.

Third, a cultural study could be researched on the effect the successful completion of a short-term training program may have on the children of the women in this study. Are the children of these women participants influenced to pursue their own educational opportunities by completing high school and going on to college? Were the children influenced by their mother's successful program completion?

Fourth, particular significance is paid to the fourteen participants who overcame past academic failure to successfully complete this program. What made this experience

different? Why were they successful in this program when they had experienced past academic failure?

The fourteen participants interviewed experienced their short-term training after the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 ending welfare's status as an entitlement program. The welfare law signed by President Bill Clinton in August, 1996, was supposed to "end to welfare as we know it." To a degree it did: the number of people receiving a welfare check has dropped by more than half nationwide the past ten years. Yet moving people off welfare is not the same as moving them out of poverty (Biewen, 2006).

New regulations drafted in response to deficit-reduction legislation passed in February 2006 under President George W. Bush represent the most sweeping changes in the welfare program since the 1996 reforms designed to reduce states' welfare rolls. The proposed welfare rules the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued in July 2006 explicitly state baccalaureate and advanced-degree programs cannot count as work requirements. The new rules narrow the definition of "vocational" training that is applied only to programs leading directly into a prescribed career. The intent, the rules say, is to reduce the overly broad number of educational activities that states have counted as work in the past. The regulations now require states to move many more people from welfare to work, and at the same time limit the activities, like postsecondary education, that have counted as work in the past (Ashburn, 2006).

The distinction between education and job training as stated by Grubb (1996a) is clear as the new rules now apply only to a program that leads directly into a job training program for a prescribed career. The new regulations may work against past successes of

participants who have earned a higher wage after earning a degree than those participants who have left welfare without a degree (Ashburn, 2006).

These recommendations may constitute a research project of short-term training program participants for this researcher or another researcher in the future. The recent tightening of the interpretation of the rules of the welfare programs emphasizes the shift from training and educational programs to providing job readiness training for disadvantaged adult populations. Community colleges continue to be an important regional labor force trainer of the unemployed for entry level jobs and a stepping stone to academic and career advancement (Melendes, Falcon, & Bivens, 2003). Future studies of short-term training participants may provide additional information of the experiences that participants have while in and after completion of a short-term training program.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACDSS – Adams County Department of Social Services

AFDC – Aid for Families with Dependent Children

CCA – Community College of Aurora

CWD – Center for Workplace Development

DBCC – Daytona Beach Community College

DHS – Department of Human Services

Education-Based Approach – Job training programs with the goal of skill building

GAO – General Accounting Office

GED – General Equivalent Degree

Job Training – Programs generally much shorter than education programs and open

Only to those who are eligible.

JOBS – Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

JTPA – Job Training Partnership Act

Ladders of Opportunities – Occupational and academic skills training becoming
increasingly sophisticated

Mixed Strategy – A combination of Rapid Employment and Education-Based

Approaches to improve employment related outcomes.

One-Stop – A place where a person can find employment and services that are available
in their local area

PRWORA – Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

Rapid Employment Approach – Programs with the goal of rapid employment to
emphasize quick exposure to and entry into the labor force.

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Vertical Articulation – Moving from initial, shorter training programs to longer and more complex associate degree programs

Welfare-to-Work – Efforts to provide education, training, and job search assistance to help welfare recipients prepare for and find jobs

WIN – Work Incentive Program

Work-First - Quick exposure to and entry into the labor force

Workforce Training – A continuation of the education each worker received in elementary and secondary school

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Introduction
- Assurance of confidentiality
- Demographics: Name
 Location
 Date of Short-term training program
- Interview Questions:
- Main Research Question: How did the students experience their short-term training program?
- Sub Research Question: How did the short-term training program affect the students' lives while they were in the program?
- Sub Research Question: Did the short-term training program make a difference in the students' lives after they completed the program?
- Interview Questions:
- Tell me about your experience in the short-term training program
- Sub Questions: (to be asked if they don't come out in response to the Main Question)
- How did you hear about the program?
- Why did you select the short-term training program?
- Tell me about your experiences going through the program.
- What was it like for you?
- How did the short-term training program affect your life while you were a participant?
- What pressures and issues did you face during the short-term training program?
- How did you cope?

- How did the short-term training program make a difference in your life?
- What were the results of your short-term training program?
- What employment have you found?
- What educational training opportunities are you seeking?

APPENDIX C: FIELD NOTES

FIELD NOTES

Participant _____ Location _____

Observer _____ Event _____

Date & Time _____ Things being observed _____

Overview of the event:

Detailed observations:

Interpretations:

Observer's feelings: