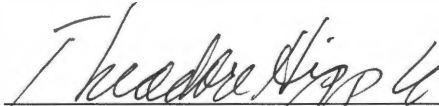


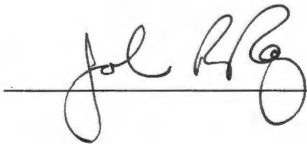
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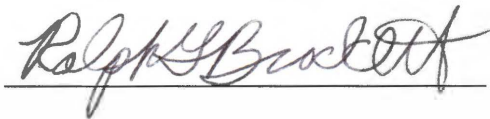
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Belita Diane Raines entitled "Nontraditional Female Students Enrolled in Developmental English Courses at Roane State Community College." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Instructional Technology and Educational Studies.


Theodore Hipple, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and
recommend its acceptance:







Acceptance for the Council:



Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

Thesis
2003b
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NONTRADITIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS
ENROLLED IN DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH
COURSES AT ROANE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Belita Diane Raines
December 2003

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Lem Raines, and my parents, Charlotte and Leo Coates and Eldon and Sandra Deakins, for always believing in me, inspiring me, and encouraging me to reach higher in order to achieve my goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those who helped me in completing Doctor of Education in Instructional Technology and Educational Studies. I thank Dr. Theodore Hipple for his guidance, his many helpful suggestions, and his willingness to serve as the chair of my dissertation committee. I also thank Dr. Ralph Brockett, Dr. Russell French, and Dr. John Ray for all of the assistance they provided to me as members of my dissertation committee.

ABSTRACT

The first purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and needs of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The second purpose of this study was to learn from current students how to help future students overcome the barriers they will face and thus enable them to be more successful in their college coursework.

In order to collect data regarding nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, two different types of data collection were used. First, surveys were administered to the population being studied. Then, in an attempt to gain additional knowledge, one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants who were willing to do so from the population being studied.

The barriers faced by nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College include home responsibilities (including husbands and children), emotional issues, age related problems, other responsibilities, a previous bad experience with school, problems interacting with others, job responsibilities, financial difficulties, transportation problems, institutional barriers, and race.

The strengths possessed by nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College include motivation, personality characteristics, maturity, commitment, interaction with others, work experience, family support, patience, and religion.

Ways Roane State Community College as an institution could help nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses include hiring more qualified personnel, providing assistance with childcare, offering financial help, offering special programs for these students, forming support groups, adopting different teaching methods, offering alternative class schedules, providing transportation, and increasing resources.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

Sarah is the fictional name I will give to the nontraditional female student at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, who, along with her nontraditional female student colleagues, is both the inspiration and a source of information for this dissertation. Now 30, Sarah dropped out of high school when she became pregnant at the age of 17. She married soon thereafter and now has three children, two boys, aged 12 and 10, and an eight-year-old daughter. Joe, her husband, is a full-time factory worker during the day and a part-time janitor at night. Although she has had occasional part-time jobs during extreme financial duress for the family, Sarah has for the most part been a stay at home housewife, taking care of the children, cleaning the house, and running errands. Joe has taken care of the outdoor jobs, such as mowing the grass, cleaning the garage, and washing their almost antique cars. Theirs has been a fairly typical, lower middle class family.

However, things are about to change drastically for Sarah and her family. For the past year and a half, Sarah has been going to a local high school the two nights a week. Joe does not work at his janitorial job and has earned her G.E.D., and she has just made the decision to enroll in a community college in her hometown. Sarah wants to earn an A.A. degree so that she can work as a teacher's aide and provide some needed funding to put in a savings account for the children's college expenses.

Sarah's emotional state about this new venture is mixed. She is excited about going to college and learning new things. However, she is also worried about how she will "fit in" with the college scene. Will she be able to keep up with the younger students who have recently finished high school and still have study habits that she has long since forgotten about? Will these younger students befriend her or ridicule her? Will she be able to write the required papers and pass the tests? Will she have time to attend classes and study to prepare for them? Where is she going to find the money to pay for tuition, books, and parking fees? When she has questions related to the many aspects of school, where will she find the answers?

And her home life, too, has added to her emotional uncertainty. Her children are used to her preparing the meals and serving them on time. They are also used to her taking them places they want to go. Will they be able to accept the fact that she has to study and can no longer do all of the things for them she once did? Will she need childcare? If so, where can she find reliable, affordable, and quality childcare? And how will Joe, her husband, adjust to her going to school? Will he support her efforts to get an education, or will he become jealous and resentful because she has chosen to "better" herself and he is still stuck in the same old rut? Will he help her with doing the housework and meeting the children's needs? Will their marriage suffer as a result of her going to school?

Before even enrolling in the community college, Sarah is experiencing guilt and anxiety about her decision. Will these feelings be magnified once classes start? What I wanted to know was what Sarah and others in her similar situation (women coming to college for the first time at an older age) think about their new lives. What barriers must

they overcome in order to be successful in college? What strengths do they have that will enable them to overcome those barriers? And what can the college they attend do to help them? These are the kinds of questions that caused me to undertake this study.

This chapter is divided into nine parts: Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, Importance of the Study, Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations, Definitions of Terms, and Organization of the Study.

Statement of the Problem

In 1974, Clements wrote:

Older women are enrolling in higher education in ever increasing numbers... but neither research nor personality theory offers the firm basis for academic guidance, personal counseling, classroom instruction, or either encouragement or discouragement of these students from an emotional perspective. (p. 1)

Clements provided the following statistic regarding the increase of enrollment of nontraditional female students in institutions of higher education: "Between the years 1950 and 1966 the proportion of women twenty to thirty-four attending school increased almost fourfold" (p. 2). Clements concluded, "There was much need for discovering more about the personality characteristics of older women students, if counselors, educators, and psychologists were to provide effective help and planning" (p. 8).

In 1976, Berkove reported the following statistic regarding the increasing number of nontraditional female students enrolling in institutions of higher education: "Greater numbers of mature women, particularly housewives and mothers, are returning to school

than ever before... In 1972, the Labor Department reported that 262,000 women aged 35 years and over were enrolled in colleges as undergraduate and graduate students” (p. 5).

During the 1980’s, the enrollment of nontraditional female students in institutions of higher education continued to increase. In 1980, Smallwood provided the following information:

In the past few years, adult women have been seeking a college education in increasingly greater numbers. Espersson (1975) estimated that the number of women over 25 years old who are attending college has increased almost ten-fold in the past twenty years. Recent research indicates that the number of women over the age of 30 who are enrolled in college has doubled in the past decade... Clearly, the trend has been a great increase in the numbers of mature women who are attending college. (p. 65)

Smallwood mentioned “the need for research concerning the specific problems of mature college students” (p. 66) and stated, “Adult women are increasingly enrolling as students on campuses today, so college administrators, counselors, and teachers need to be attuned to their unique problems as students” (p. 72).

Also in 1980, Hunt wrote the following:

Throughout the nation, women have been enrolling in institutions of higher education at an increasing rate. Enrollment data for higher education indicate that females now comprise a majority of undergraduate students. Particularly at community colleges, the increase in the

enrollment of female students in recent years has been so great that the student mix at many institutions has been reversed. (p. 3)

Hunt also stated, “Even more significant, females classified as returning students increased 688 percent between 1972–1978” (p. 6). And at one particular institution, “The proportion of females classified as returning students increased significantly from 48 percent in 1972 to 64 percent in 1978” (p. 11). Hunt concluded, “In order to survive, institutions of higher education will have to be more sensitive to the interests of their clientele, particularly now that women are a definite component of the student population” (p. 22).

In 1987, Jacobi wrote, “Among the major trends in higher education in the United States over the last two decades is the significant increase in the enrollment of adult women in colleges and universities. Today, more adult women are pursuing college degrees than ever before” (p. 4). Jacobi recommended, “Future research should continue to explore the special characteristics, experiences, and needs of re-entry women” (p. 18).

The trend of more nontraditional female students enrolling in institutions of higher learning continued into the 1990’s. In 1990, Chartrand provided this statistic: “A recent College Board survey found that 45 percent of the 6 million students who attend college are over 25 years of age and that the majority (60 percent) of these students are women” (p. 65). Chartrand concluded, “There is a need to better understand the experiences of this rapidly growing student population” (p. 65).

In 1994, the foreword of *Financial Aid for Re-Entry Women Students: A Guide to Financial Resources* included the following statements, “In 1991, 54 percent of all undergraduate college students between the ages of 25 and 34 were women... Despite a

high percentage of dedicated re-entry female students, little information is targeted toward them” (p. 4). And in 1998, Richardson and King wrote, “The majority of adult students in... the United States... are women” (p. 3).

In the state of Tennessee, there are three systems of institutions of higher learning: the University of Tennessee, private (often religiously affiliated) schools, and those governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. One institution in the latter category is Roane State Community College. According to the 2001–2002 Roane State Community College catalog:

Roane State Community College is a comprehensive, public, two-year postsecondary institution and a member of the State University and Community College System governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. Through a firm commitment to affordable access and equal opportunity for all protected groups, Roane State serves the higher education needs of a widely diverse eight-county service area which includes Roane, Anderson, Loudon, Campbell, Scott, Cumberland, Morgan and Fentress counties and expands to include Knox and Blount counties for a delivery of health technologies. With seven staffed locations and a wide range of distance learning offerings, Roane State brings the benefits of higher education within the reach of all who live and work in these different communities.

Roane State awards the associate of arts and associate of science degrees to students who wish to transfer to a four-year college or university. For those students seeking immediate career opportunities,

licensure, or professional skill upgrading, Roane State awards the associate of applied science degree as well as technical and academic certificates of credit. The college offers career programs in business-related fields for the 21st century workplace and has achieved regional and national distinction for the diversity and quality of its programs in the field of health care. To meet the needs of students who must balance multiple career and family priorities with their educational goals, Roane State offers programs in flexible and convenient instructional formats. To facilitate a seamless transition through all stages of the educational process, Roane State is committed to developing and maintaining cooperative partnerships with area K–12 schools as well as four-year institutions.

Roane State is committed to providing all students a challenging and nurturing learning environment which encourages and inspires them to meet the high expectations and standards needed for responsible citizenship and to embrace the concept of learning as a lifelong endeavor. The college is committed to preparing all its students to demonstrate the attainment of critical thinking skills, communication skills, personal and professional goals and values, respect for diverse ideas and cultures, and a sense of the global community.

Roane State serves the workforce development needs of its communities by working in partnership with area businesses and industry to provide customized training, onsite at the workplace, locally at one of

Roane State's centers, or through a variety of distance learning options.

The college also serves as a valuable resource for cultural, aesthetic, and recreational opportunity and enjoyment for its communities.

Just as Roane State values lifelong learning as the key to thriving in a complex and rapidly changing world, so too the college embraces technology as the driver which will power those changes and is committed to integrating the most efficient and effective uses of technology throughout the institution for the enhancement of learning and of service.

(p. 18)

During the Spring 2002 semester, the enrollment for all Roane State Community College campuses included a total headcount of 4,662 with a full time enrollment of 3,202 students. During the Fall 2002 semester, the enrollment for all Roane State Community College students included a total headcount of 5,233 with a full time enrollment of 3,767 students. However, the focus of this study was on those students enrolled at the Oak Ridge (Anderson County) campus because it had the largest student enrollment and the largest number of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses.

Over the past few years, the number of nontraditional female students enrolling in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College has increased dramatically. Unfortunately, the retention rate and the persistence toward graduation of these students are exceedingly low. Both of these issues, the low retention rate of students and the persistence toward graduation, have been identified by high ranking administrative officials as top priority items that need improvement at Roane State

Community College. In order to increase the retention rate and the persistence toward graduation of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College, new strategies must be implemented to address the specific needs of this special population of students.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and needs of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The second purpose of this study was to learn from current students how to help future students overcome the barriers they will face and thus enable them to be more successful in their college coursework.

Research Questions

Three research questions were investigated:

- (1) What barriers do nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College face?
- (2) What strengths do nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College possess that help them to overcome these barriers?
- (3) What can Roane State Community College do as an institution to help alleviate the barriers faced by nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses?

Importance of the Study

This study is important because it will be beneficial to the participants since the students involved in this research will recognize that both their opinions and their success

in college are important to others. The body of knowledge gained from this research study will be beneficial in helping future nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, be more successful in their college coursework through the implementation of new strategies that address the specific needs of this special population of students. If this study or a similar one were replicated at other college campuses, it could provide useful information to administrative officials at those institutions. Furthermore, this research study will contribute to the body of literature on nontraditional female students.

Assumptions

The first assumption in this research study is that the nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, were truthful in their responses to the survey questions and interview questions. Since the students did not sign their names on the surveys and they were thus anonymous, it is likely that the students did indeed provide truthful responses. Since only those students who expressed a willingness to do so were interviewed and since they were not identified by name, once again the probability is high that the students provided honest responses. A second assumption is that the survey and interview questions elicited the information essential to this study. Again, it is highly probable that this was indeed the case.

Limitations

The main limitation to this study is the lack of generalizability. However, as Yin (1989) noted:

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (p. 21)

Therefore, since this was a qualitative case study, the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and needs of this one group of 24 students and not to generalize the findings. If desirable, the same type of research study could be replicated at other campuses of Roane State Community College and at other community colleges to help administrative officials at those college campuses determine methods of assisting their nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses.

Delimitations

The first delimitation to this study was that only nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, were surveyed. The second delimitation of this study was that of the students surveyed, only those who volunteered to do so were interviewed.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, five terms need defining: nontraditional female students, Developmental English courses, ACT, COMPASS, and diagnostic evaluation. Nontraditional female students are female students aged 25 and over who have a gap in time between completing their high school educations and enrolling in college. Developmental English courses are required for students enrolling in a Tennessee Board

of Regents community college if their ACT scores in English are below 19, if they do not perform well on the English part of the COMPASS exam, and if they do not subsequently perform well on the diagnostic evaluation. The ACT is a standardized examination that provides scores that are submitted when a student applies to a college or university. The COMPASS is a placement examination that determines whether students need basic and/or developmental courses before enrolling in college level courses. The diagnostic evaluation is a test administered on the first day of class to determine if students have been placed in the proper (basic, developmental, or college level) courses.

Organization of the Study

All nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters were given surveys to complete. Along with the surveys was an additional sheet of paper for them to sign if they were willing to participate in one-on-one interviews with me. Those students who expressed a willingness to do so were then interviewed by me. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The responses to the surveys and interviews were analyzed using a constant comparative method of data analysis, and the findings from the data analysis were reported. Occurring simultaneously, a review of literature was conducted to ascertain the barriers faced by nontraditional female students, the strengths these students possessed that enabled them to overcome those barriers, and ways for institutions to help nontraditional female students be more successful in their college work. The findings from the review of literature were also reported. Finally, a concluding discussion was written that examined the significance and implications of these findings. Thus, the rest of this study is

organized in the following manner: a chapter containing the review of the literature, a chapter explaining the research design and procedure, a chapter analyzing the data, and a concluding chapter with findings, recommendations, and implications for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter Introduction

The literature review consists of four separate sections, one for each of the three research questions and a summary. Thus, the sections deal with barriers faced by nontraditional female students, strengths possessed by nontraditional female students, how institutions can help nontraditional female students, and a summary.

Barriers

Responsibilities. One huge barrier that nontraditional female students must overcome to be successful in college is family responsibilities (Astin, 1976; Bauer & Mott, 1990; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Berkove, 1976; Chartrand, 1990; Clements, 1974; Dill & Henley, 1998; Hengesbach, 1978; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Jacobi, 1987; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Richter-Antion, 1986; Roach, 1976; Sewell, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Starks, 1987; Suchinsky, 1982; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tice, 1997; Traupmann, 1982; Wallace, 1979; Weidman, 1985; Young, 1973). Astin (1976) stated:

Arranging a schedule to include both academic and household responsibilities is a problem for many women, particularly those with families... Sometimes they feel selfish for neglecting their families or spending money that could have gone toward a family trip or the children's college educations... Some women and their families experience some negative consequences, such as more tensions in the

marital relationship or disapproval by neighbors... All the responses reflect the known barriers to a woman's educational and occupational development: marriage and children. (pp. 57–59)

Referring to nontraditional female students, Bauer and Mott (1990) remarked: These people speak often of the disharmony in their lives stemming from competing commitments to children, spouses, jobs, and self... they struggled with competing demands of home, school, and work... feeling constantly overwhelmed by competing responsibilities to family, school, and work. (pp. 555–556)

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) wrote that family concerns are one “of the biggest considerations that impact on the adult student experience” (p. 1) and also mentioned “the more traditional the roles and responsibilities within the family, the greater the guilt the woman experienced about her student role” (p. 2). Some specific examples included “feelings of responsibility for maintaining their role within the family” (p. 2) and “insufficient support from family for returning to school” (p. 3).

Berkove (1979) noted, “When women attempt to integrate school responsibilities into their existing household routines, tensions are often created as family members find themselves taking second place to term papers and examination deadlines” (p. 451). Berkove also found, “When women return to school, they usually add their new responsibilities as students to their old ones as wives and mothers” (p. 454). In addition, Berkove (1976) mentioned “specific areas to be problematic to some extent (e.g.: time for myself, time for children, taking on too many responsibilities, neglecting housework, integrating my responsibilities as student, wife, and mother)” (p. 3). Berkove asserted,

“The demands of being a student in addition to wife and mother often result in considerable strain on the established family routine and require new adjustments of everyone” (p. 5). Berkove concluded:

Whether it was due to long established habit or ingrained pressure to meet traditional expectations, these women heaped burden upon burden on themselves - perhaps unnecessarily – in an effort to maintain their standing as ‘Super Mom’ and ‘Super Wife’ (and now, ‘Super Student’) even at the expense of their health. (p. 10)

Chartrand (1990) noted that due to “family obligations... nontraditional students often have less time and energy to commit to their student role” (p. 66). Clements (1974) mentioned “tensions of exams causing increased tensions at home” (p. 4) and noted, “Some thirty percent of the women had a value conflict when study activities conflicted with homemaking activities” (p. 4). According to Dill and Henley (1998), “Nontraditional students reported much more responsibility in the home... Nontraditional students would feel stress because of family obligations and financial problems” (pp. 1-2). Dill and Henley also revealed that “the nontraditional students reported a higher impact from... family members recovering from an illness or injury” (p. 4).

In regard to nontraditional female students leaving college, Hensley and Kinser (2001) found, “Others left because of family responsibilities... Several students reported that their significant others and families were strongly opposed to their pursuit of academic goals... Other students described a lack of emotional support as a significant factor” (p. 4). Jacobi (1987) discovered that “commonly encountered barriers include...

conflicts between family and school responsibilities” (p. 4). Jacobi noted, “Re-entry to college may lead to the exacerbation of strains in... marriage, motherhood, or other roles and settings occupied by the re-entry woman” (p. 6). McKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) stated, “The problem of fitting educational goals with the complexity of family obligations requires juggling and balancing skills” (p. 332).

Osgood-Treston (2001) noted, “Both stopouts and dropouts by adult learners occur because of... problems at home” (p. 4) and also revealed that when compared with traditional students, “nontraditional students are more concerned about... responsibilities at home... and tend to... have more family responsibilities” (p. 4). Rawlins (1979) found that one reason nontraditional students waited longer to enroll in college was “responsibilities to family” (p. 140) and that they were concerned about “changes in family life” (p. 140). Richardson and King (1998) asserted, “To be sure, adult students often have domestic... commitments” (p. 3) which lead to “restrictions on their study time” (p. 4).

Richter-Antion (1986) wrote, “Adults generally have more commitments on their time than do younger students. They are usually juggling... family responsibilities as well as academic responsibilities” (p. 60). Roach (1976) remarked that returning to school for some women gives “rise to stress and change in their relationships within their families” (p. 86). Roach also asserted, “Most of them experienced some degree of resistance to their returning to school” (p. 87) and “those persons closest and most important to her became less accepting of her, and they react negatively or withdraw” (p. 87).

In a survey conducted by Sewell (1984), at least one-fourth of the nontraditional students considered “family responsibilities” (p. 311) as a very important barrier to being successful in college. And in a survey Smallwood (1980) found, “The number one issue of concern to the women participants was coordinating studies with ... family responsibilities” (p. 67), and she also discovered that the second most crucial interpersonal issue with these women was “relationships with their spouses and children” (p. 71).

Spratt (1984) defined the typical adult student as one who is “limited in time by external demands of... family” (p. 4), and Stark (1987) mentioned “difficult home situations” (p. 9) as a characteristic of adult learners. Suchinsky (1982) revealed, “The response of her family will tend to be inhibitory, either subtly or covertly” (p. 31), and he also noted, “When other members of the family would like to plan some recreation on a weekend, but the woman has to study or write a paper, difficulties can arise” (p. 31).

Terrell (1990), in regard to nontraditional students, made the following statements:

Their collegiate program must be flexible enough to take a back seat to any pressing family and home situations... They not only have to care for their maturing children but are often the primary care givers for aging parents... Individuals must adjust to... changes in their relationships with spouses, children, and others... Many women have been thrust into increased independence due to separation, divorce, or death of a spouse. They may have difficulty coping with this new independence... A woman may feel that her first priority is her family while denying her own needs. (pp. 242–244)

Similarly, Thon (1984) mentioned “their need to balance their current family... responsibilities” (p. 32). Tice (1997) also noted, “For adults, formal learning is usually added to an already full schedule of... family responsibilities” (p. 19). Likewise, Traupman (1982) mentioned “conflicting demands at home” (p. 5), which can often lead to “depression... due to self-inflicted feelings of guilt and self-reproach from wanting to break from familial responsibilities and pursue a more expanded and self-expressive existence” (p. 11). Wallace (1979) noted, “The decision to attend college can be a crucial one in the life of an adult, and probably means additional sacrifice for the individual when a family is involved” (p. 16). Weidman (1985) stated, “These women must be responsible to... their own children and possibly other relatives in addition to meeting the demands of the postsecondary educational institution they are attending” (p. 10). Young (1973), in discussing nontraditional female students, found, “They had home responsibilities” (p. 40).

To be more specific, the husbands of nontraditional female students often become barriers to their success in college (Astin, 1976; Berkove, 1976; Berkove, 1979; Jacobi, 1987; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Roach, 1976; Starks, 1987; Terrell, 1990). Astin (1976) discovered, “Some spouses thought that the marriage suffered and that there were more tensions in the family as a result of the wife’s new involvement” (p. 59). Berkove (1976) found, “Husbands of ‘drop-outs’ offered significantly less functional support (i.e. help with household chores) than husbands of ‘successful’ students” (p. 4). Berkove (1979) also found, “A husband ... does nothing to help finance his wife’s education or ease her housekeeping and child care responsibilities” (p. 451), and according to a survey she conducted, “The women

indicated that they had adopted new attitudes about women's roles which were not compatible with their husbands'" (p. 453).

Jacobi (1987) stated, "Stress in her [the nontraditional female student] marital relationship may exacerbate stress in school" (p. 6) and also mentioned "demands for adaptation in ... marriage" (p. 7). Through a survey, Jacobi also found, "Re-entry women are more likely to report opposition from significant others regarding their decision to attend college" (pp. 12–14). Kahnweiler and Johnson (1980) noted that a woman returning to school "may create friction in the marriage" (p. 451). Karr-Kidwell (1984) remarked that women returning to school often face "subtle or explicit resentment from husbands" (p. 12). Roach (1976) mentioned "negative reactions from husbands... the resistance of husbands... and the implied risk of deteriorating family relationships" (p. 87) as hurdles nontraditional female students must overcome. Terrell (1990) discovered that a common problem of re-entry women was "believing that no matter how helpful their spouses may be (if they have spouses), they bear much of the burden of keeping the family running smoothly" (p. 244).

In addition to husbands, the children of nontraditional female students can become barriers to their success in college (Bauer & Mott, 1990; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Dill & Henley, 1998; Hengesbach, 1978; Hooper & March, 1980; Jacobi, 1987; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Richter-Antion, 1986; Roach, 1976; Smallwood, 1980; Suchinsky, 1982; Terrell, 1990). Bauer and Mott (1990) found a "frustration with caring for dependent children while supporting themselves financially and attending school" (pp. 556-557). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) noted "feeling guilty about not 'being there' for their children and concerns about quality and expense of

childcare” (p. 2) as issues for nontraditional female students. Dill and Henley (1998), in referring to nontraditional female students, wrote, “The women reported that time and role demands were major strains; women with younger children reported the most strain in their student role” (p. 1) and mentioned “child care” (p. 6) as being a college stressor.

Hengesbach (1978) also referred to “responsibilities for dependents” (p. 6) as an added responsibility that nontraditional female students must handle. Hooper and March (1980) went into detail regarding the problems faced by nontraditional female students with children:

Child care problems are enormous, particularly where there are preschool children... We believe that the intermix of the problem of sole-responsibility for children, together with the need to work and the time requirements of academic institutions, creates the major conflict for the female student single parent...

Women with school-aged children have additional problems because a sick child cannot go to school, because school recesses at 3 o'clock p.m. for children as young as age five, because public schools have teachers' conventions and training days that do not coincide with university holidays, and because there is little or no child care available after school. (pp. 142-144)

Jacobi (1987) noted that “commonly encountered barriers include a lack of child care” (p. 4) and later mentioned “demands for adaptation in motherhood” (p. 7) as problems faced by nontraditional female students.

Karr-Kidwell (1984) mentioned “child care services “ (p. 9) as an added responsibility that nontraditional female students must handle. Osgood-Treston (2001) noted, “Because they are more likely to have dependents... adult learners view college

not as an alternative but as an addition” (p. 2). Richter-Antion (1986) remarked, “When one’s child is sick and must be cared for, studies simply take a back seat for a while” (p. 60). Roach (1976) discovered “regressive behavior on the part of older children along with feelings of competition and resentment” (p. 87) as being hindrances to the success of nontraditional female students. Smallwood (1980) found, “The number one issue of concern to the women participants was coordinating studies with child care” (p. 67) and stated, “Adult women students were more concerned with coordinating child care and with relationships with their children” (p. 72).

Suchinsky (1982) revealed that younger and older children can make it difficult for returning female students to be successful in college. In discussing younger children, Suchinsky remarked, “When a child in the family gets sick and has to remain home from school, great problems can emerge; when the baby sitter can’t ‘sit’ that day, who’s going to take care of the children?” (p. 31). In discussing older children, Suchinsky stated, “If one or more of these children is experiencing his or her own difficulty, either in marriage, school, or other aspects of living, it is not unusual for the student mother to experience a reasonable degree of stress as a result of her concern about her grown children” (p. 36). Terrell (1990) mentioned “feeling guilt over being gone when their children might need them [and] paying a considerable amount of money for day care and worrying about its adequacy” (p. 244) as being common problems applicable to re-entry women.

Along with family responsibilities, another barrier that nontraditional female students must overcome to be successful in college is job responsibilities (Berkove, 1976; Dinmore, 1997; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Jacobi, 1987; Kerka, 1989; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Richter-Antion, 1986; Sewell, 1984;

Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tice, 1997; Young, 1973).

Berkove (1976) noted, “Students were employed part-time or full-time while they were going to school, thus amplifying the problems of stress they were under” (p. 10).

Dinmore (1997) found working adults to be people “with many responsibilities and a shared concern – the necessity to work... puts constraint upon the amount of time available for study” (p. 2). Hensley and Kinser (2001) wrote, “Students often said that multiple jobs and long, inflexible hours at work interfered with going to school” (p. 4).

Referring to nontraditional female students, Jacobi (1987) wrote the following:

Re-entry to college may lead to the exacerbation of strains in work... In addition [to the domains of home, school, and leisure] re-entry students may occupy an employment domain as well... A woman’s job opportunities may preclude opportunities for socializing or participating in co-curricular activities, thereby constraining opportunities to obtain social support in school... Re-entry to college produces a variety of demands within the school domain, as well as demands for adaptation in... work. (pp. 6-7)

Kerka (1989) noted, “Situational factors that affect persistence [toward graduation] include... work problems” (p. 2).

Osgood-Treston (2001) remarked, “Because they are more likely to ... hold outside employment, adult learners view college not as an alternative but as an addition” (p. 2). Rawlins (1979) found adult students were different from their younger colleagues in several ways, one of which was “responsibilities of... work” (p. 140). Richardson and King (1998) discovered, “One problem experienced by many adult women... is balancing the dual commitments to family and career” (p. 2). Likewise, Richter-Antion

(1986) remarked, “Adults generally have more commitments on their time than do younger students. They are usually juggling work... responsibilities as well as academic responsibilities” (p. 60). Sewell (1984), through the use of a survey, noted, “ ‘Wanted to or had to work’ was rated very much responsible for delaying the enrollment of a majority of the matriculated adult students” (p. 311).

Smallwood (1980) found “job responsibilities” (p. 65), especially “coordinating studies with their jobs” (p. 67) and “coordinating job schedules” (p. 69), as a perceived problem of concern among adult women college students. Spratt (1984) noted that nontraditional female students are “limited in time by external demands of job” (p. 4), and Terrell (1990) mentioned “work and civic demands” (p. 245) as being a concern of adult students. Likewise, Thon (1984) wrote of the need for adults “to balance their current... work responsibilities” (p. 32). Tice (1997) also remarked, “For adults, formal learning is usually added to an already full schedule of work... responsibilities” (p. 19). Likewise, Thon (1984) wrote of the need for adults “to balance their current... work responsibilities” (p. 32). Young (1973) discovered, “Even though they had home responsibilities, the great majority of these married women students were in the labor force” (p. 40).

As if family and job responsibilities are not enough, nontraditional female students also have other responsibilities (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Chartrand, 1990; Dill & Henley, 1998; Dinmore, 1997; Hooper & March, 1980; Jacobi, 1987; Kerka, 1989; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Starks, 1987; Weidman, 1985). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) mentioned “multiple non-school related commitments and responsibilities” (p. 1) which led to “minimal free time” (p. 3). In reference to

nontraditional female students, Berkove (1979) wrote, "Time and role demands created especially big problems for them" (p. 455). Chartrand (1990) noted, "Nontraditional students must also deal with the difficulties of being committed to the student role while simultaneously being committed to other important life roles" (p. 65) and found, "Other important roles often supersede student responsibilities and create strain in the student's life" (p. 66).

Dill and Henley (1998) revealed, "Nontraditional students had significantly more time constraints and role conflicts than the traditional students" (p. 2) and mentioned "incompatible demands, tenseness, and unfulfilled personal commitments... the major strains were conflicting time demands" (p. 2). Dill and Henley also stated, "It is possible that other responsibilities interfere with their class attendance" (p. 5) and mentioned "the complexity of balancing school with other obligations for this group" (p. 5). Dill and Henley further noted:

Nontraditional students simply do not have the time to spend with friends and peers because they have other obligations... Since the nontraditional students also reported more responsibilities at home, it is very likely that they were juggling so many roles and responsibilities that there was little time left to devote to an outside social network. (p. 5)

Furthermore, Dill and Henley mentioned "role conflict" (p. 6) as a college stressor for nontraditional female students.

Dinmore (1997) found, "The necessity to work and engage in all the other activities that being an adult entails puts constraint upon the amount of time available for study" (p. 2) and also mentioned the "constraints of time and money that often concern

adult learners” (p. 2). In referring to a typical nontraditional female student, Hooper and March (1980) wrote, “She has numerous outside responsibilities; her time is limited” (p. 142). Jacobi (1987) noted, “Re-entry women experience a variety of environmental or situational ‘barriers’ that increase the difficulty of adjusting to college or lead to a variety of academic, personal, and social problems” (p. 4) such as “a lack of time for schoolwork” (p. 4). Jacobi also stated, “Re-entry to college produces a variety of demands within the school domain, as well as demands for adaptation in... recreation and in the coordination of multiple responsibilities” (p. 7). Furthermore, Jacobi found, “Re-entry women experience more time constraints than traditional women... and will experience more conflicts between school and other life domains (role conflict) than traditional women students” (p. 12).

Kerka (1989) concluded, “As they [nontraditional female students] handle multiple roles and responsibilities, the student role is often secondary” (p. 1). Rawlins (1979) mentioned “the adults’ limited time” (p. 140) and noted they “felt pressured by time” (p. 141). Richardson and King (1998) wrote, “To be sure, adult students often have... other commitments” (p. 3) and found, “One domain in which adult learners are sometimes said to encounter problems is that of time management” (p. 5). Starks (1987) discovered that nontraditional female students “had to juggle many roles as mother, primary wage earner, wife, student, and even caretaker of parents” (p. 10), and Weidman (1985) referred to “the demands faced by students in coping with personal responsibilities... in addition to academic coursework” (p. 13).

Interaction with Others. Perhaps due to their many other responsibilities, interaction with others (or lack of positive interaction with others) is another barrier that

nontraditional female students must overcome in order to be successful in college (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Clements, 1974; Dill & Henley, 1998; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Hooper & March, 1980; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Roach, 1976; Smallwood, 1980; Suchinsky, 1982; Terrell, 1990). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) mentioned “multiple non-school related commitments and responsibilities” (p. 1) which led to “minimal free time” (p. 3). Clements (1974) defined “curtailment of social activity” (p. 4) as an occasional problem for nontraditional female students, and through a survey she conducted found, “The younger group reported more positive attitudes toward others (peers) and parents than did the older group” (p. 21).

Dill and Henley (1998) reported much the same findings as Clements. They discovered “significantly more traditional students than nontraditional students reported going to parties (and doing so more frequently) and belonging to organizations” (p. 4) and concluded the following:

Nontraditional students simply do not have the time to spend with friends and peers because they have other obligations... traditional students reported more vacations, trips, and summer breaks than the nontraditional students did. Since the nontraditional students also reported more responsibilities at home, it is very likely that they were juggling so many roles and responsibilities that there was little time left to devote to an outside social network. (p. 5)

Another reason for nontraditional students to lack positive interaction with others, according to Hensley and Kinser (2001), is, “Several students stated that they ‘felt lost in the crowd’ and ‘overwhelmed’ at previous large universities” (p. 4).

In referring to female single parents (a type of nontraditional female student), Hooper and March (1980) wrote, "First, for a period of time, possibly years, she can expect to have almost no social life. Her isolation from the larger society and from fellow students remains, and the possibility of meeting people with whom she might have a social relationship are limited" (p. 143). Rawlins (1979) discovered, "The over-thirty learners were most concerned about their ages and their abilities to relate to their younger colleagues" (p. 140) and found the following three characteristics common among them: "Were concerned about relating to younger students, perceived differences from the younger students... and sensed isolation" (pp. 141-142). Likewise, Richardson and King (1998) noted, "They express fears about competing and fitting in with 18-22-year-old students" (p. 2).

Roach (1976) revealed, "The reentering woman loses her friend group. Her peers sometimes resent her making it on the outside. She experiences sociological isolation" (p. 87). Roach also provided the following quotation from a typical nontraditional female student: "At first I was frightened, being in class with students the age of my own children. I was sure I was too dumb or they would laugh at me, or worse, they would ignore me like my own kids do" (p. 87). Smallwood (1980) found "interpersonal relationships" (p. 65) to be one of five problems of most concern among adult women college students and offered the following quotation from one of the students: "I was concerned with how I would fit into the college program" (p. 69). Smallwood also discovered "relationships at school with other friends or with their parents" (p. 71) to be interpersonal issues of women students returning to college and mentioned "being treated seriously and equally by other students" (p. 72) as a significant issue for these women.

Furthermore, Suchinsky (1982) stated, “The older student may encounter substantial difficulty in his interaction with the faculty” (p. 32) and may also have trouble interacting with younger school companions due to “feelings of inferiority, particularly when the younger colleague is able to perform more effectively” (p. 32). And Terrell (1990) found “fear that they will feel out of place with younger students” (p. 243) to be a difficulty faced by nontraditional female students.

Financial Difficulties. Another barrier that nontraditional female students must overcome to be successful in college is financial difficulties (Astin, 1976; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Dill & Henley, 1998; Dinmore, 1997; Hengesbach, 1978; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Hooper & March, 1980; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Kerka, 1989; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Pennsylvania Commission for Women, 1994; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Sewell, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Starks, 1987; Terrell, 1990; Weidman, 1985). Astin (1976) noted, “Financial barriers seem to prohibit access to education” (p. 57). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) wrote that financial concerns are one “of the biggest considerations that impact on the adult student experience” (p. 1). Dill and Henley (1998) listed financial problems as one of the “college stressors... many nontraditional students face” (p. 6).

Similarly, Dinmore (1997) wrote of the “constraints of... money that often concern adult learners” (p. 2). Hengesbach (1978) mentioned “lack of adequate financial resources” (p. 6) and stated, “Most females do not have the kind of personal income to support a decision to return to school... Women... have severely limited income as well as fewer financial aid opportunities” (p. 8). Hensley and Kinser (2001) called money “a

major concern for the students” (p. 4). In writing about female student single parents, Hooper and March (1980) made the following statements:

Her financial situation is precarious at the best, and self-maintained... these women cannot get loans because they are considered poor risks; they cannot win scholarships because, no matter what their academic abilities, they cannot find enough time to study. In addition, most of these women are part-time students, which limits their eligibility for loans and scholarships. Jobs are difficult to locate because of the conflict with class hours. (p. 142)

Karr-Kidwell (1984) acknowledged “economic factors” (p. 9) and noted, “Students indicated that they had difficulty in locating information about or attaining financial aid” (p. 10).

Kerka (1989) found, “Situational factors that affect persistence [toward graduation] include... economics” (p. 2). MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) wrote, “The divorced women perceived financial issues as more likely to interfere with their attainment of career goals” (p. 330). Osgood-Treston (2001) mentioned a study that “concluded that both stopouts and dropouts by adult learners occur because of... financial difficulties” (p. 4). The following statements are included in a publication by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women (1994):

Financial aid, in particular, proves a major obstacle to women who would like to attend college. Many women with jobs and families become discouraged by the time consuming paperwork involved in processing financial aid forms. Few women know where to look for loans, grants, and scholarships beyond the traditional routes suggested by many financial aid officers... Unsuitable financial

aid programs may further limit women's choices. Many schools and organizations do not specifically focus on the needs of older students. (p. 4)

Rawlins (1979) found, "There were many reasons for delay in returning: inability to afford tuition and fees" (p. 140) and also noted, "Other concerns of returning adults were... financial problems" (p. 140).

Richardson and King (1998) wrote, "To be sure, adult students often have... financial... commitments" (p. 3). In a survey conducted by Sewell (1984), he found that a "lack of funds" (p. 311) was considered to be a very important barrier by more than one-fourth of the respondents. Smallwood (1980) discovered that "need for financial aid" (p. 65) was one of five problems of most concern for adult women college students. After speaking with personnel employed at a community college, Starks (1987) reported, "Faculty and advisors also indicated that many of them [adult women students] had... financial problems" (p. 9). Terrell (1990) mentioned that "individuals must adjust to... financial changes" (p. 243) and wrote of the necessity of "establishing financial stability" (p. 245). And Weidman (1985) alluded to "the demands faced by independent adult students in coping with... financial contingencies in addition to academic coursework" (p. 13) and further noted, "The importance of providing financial aid should be emphasized. Because of their responsibility for family expenses, it can be a financial hardship for adult students to pursue college-level degrees and certificates" (p. 14).

Transportation Problems. Transportation problems are another difficulty faced by nontraditional female students (Jacobi, 1987; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Kerka, 1989; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Rawlins, 1979). Jacobi (1987) noted, "Wide spatial dispersion of domains that require the student to spend considerable amounts of time commuting is

another potential source of stress” (p. 6). Karr-Kidwell (1984) mentioned “transportation problems” (p. 9) and stated, “Many students indicated that commuting such distances... caused difficulty in scheduling required and elective courses” (p. 9). Kerka (1989) found, “Situational factors that affect persistence [toward graduation] include... logistics” (p. 2). Osgood-Treston (2001) discovered, “Because they are more likely... to live off campus... adult learners view college not as an alternative but as an addition” (p. 2) and cited a study that “concluded that both stopouts and dropouts by adult learners occur because of commuting issues” (p. 4). And Rawlins (1979) listed “impracticality of commuting” (p. 140) as a reason for adult students to delay their return to school.

Age Related Problems. Nontraditional female students must also overcome age related problems in order to be successful in college (Richardson & King, 1998; Suchinsky, 1982; Terrell, 1990). Richardson and King (1998) noted, “Adult students do not have recent experience of formal education; consequently, they may be out of practice in the art of learning... They may also exhibit increased learning difficulties as the consequence of age-related impairment in intellectual abilities” (p. 5). Richardson and King also provided quotations from other sources related to the age related problems nontraditional female students face:

Woodley (1984) proposed that the capacity for learning may have decreased in older students, ‘both in terms of memory and in terms of the mental flexibility required to adapt to new perspectives’ (p. 47). Similarly, Wheeler and Birtle (1993) suggested that adult students might be ‘at a disadvantage compared to younger students with their adaptability, the speed with which they are able to work, and their retentive capacities’ (p. 92). (p. 7)

Richardson and King also discovered, “A decline in cognitive function is often linked with poor physical health or physical disablement... Poor physical health often requires the greater use of medications that may themselves adversely affect intellectual functioning” (p. 8). Finally, Richardson and King found, “The break in their full-time education had also resulted in a decline in their mathematical and scientific skills” (p. 10).

According to Suchinsky (1982), “The older person must confront the phenomenon of aging” (p. 31), and he noted “physical decline, attenuation of mental capacities” (p. 31) as two age related problems. Suchinsky wrote:

The older person may have lost some of his capacity for intuitive grasp of concepts and brilliance of innovation... One of the things that is most pertinent in the education of the older student is the fact that his or her capacity to grasp abstract concepts and to use memory will be somewhat diminished from that seen in the younger age groups. For many, the intrinsic capacities will still be present, but will be slower. (pp. 31–32)

Similarly, Terrell (1990) mentioned “declining physical abilities” (p. 243) and stated, “Individuals must adapt to physical decline” (p. 243).

Being Unprepared for College Work. Several nontraditional female students are simply unprepared for college level work (Clements, 1974; Dinmore, 1997; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Hooper & March, 1980; Jacobi, 1987; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984). Clements (1974) mentioned problems such as “having difficulty in concentrating, reading rapidly, and in taking effective class notes”

(p. 4). Dinmore (1997) noted, “Adult learners may have forgotten many of the skills they acquired in the classrooms of their youth” (p. 1) and wrote:

With increasing passage of time away from the formal learning environment, people lose many valuable skills. Particularly noticeable are declines in quantificational, writing, and critical thinking skills. As adults return to the formal learning environment, many feel vulnerable about perceived and real deficiencies in basic competencies. (p. 10)

In discussing a “perceived lack of academic skills” (p. 4), Hensely and Kinser (2001) wrote the following:

Many students described being told they ‘didn’t have what it takes,’ to be successful college students. One student stated that she had been ‘thinking of herself as a failure’ because of multiple past attempts at enrollment. Students felt they ‘never learned how to study,’ ‘relied too much on friends’ notes’ or ‘never took time to get help outside of class.’ Some students experienced extreme test anxiety, had problems with procrastination, and lacked necessary organizational skills. (p. 4)

In discussing a female student single parent, Hooper and March (1980) stated, “Her study skills are, or she thinks they are, rusty” (p. 142).

Similarly, Jacobi (1987) noted that one barrier encountered by re-entry women was “rusty study skills” (p. 4). Rawlins (1979) mentioned “unreadiness for the pursuit of an educational goal” (p. 140), “study habits” (p. 140), “difficulties arising from the break in formal learning experiences” (p. 140), and “inadequate study skills” (p. 141) as reasons for adult students to postpone a return to school. Richardson and King (1998), in

reference to adult students, wrote, “They question their ability to understand and retain large quantities of information... Adult learners may exhibit fewer skills for coping with an academic environment” (p. 2). Richardson and King also discovered, “Adult students do not have recent experience of formal education; consequently, they may be... lacking in basic study skills” (pp. 4–5). Smallwood (1980) found that one issue of concern for adult women college students was “knowing how to study efficiently” (p. 67) and that “they begin to worry about how to study... and their ability to succeed in college in general” (pp. 69-71). And Spratt (1984) reported, “Self-improvement items of crucial concern to reentry adults included memory, concentration, and oral reporting” (p. 6).

Institutional Barriers. In addition to being unprepared for college work, nontraditional female students must also face institutional barriers as well (Astin, 1976; Clements, 1974; Hooper & March, 1980; Jacobi, 1987; Rawlins, 1979; Terrell, 1990). Astin (1976) noted, “A return to college involves not only classes, but also library work and study, which all require a major time investment” (p. 57). Astin also mentioned “admissions requirements, inflexible programming as to time and place, and restrictions on part-time study” as being obstacles for nontraditional female students. More specifically, Astin wrote the following:

Institutional representatives skeptical of women’s real intentions in returning to school... various obstacles such as refusal to accept transfer credits, physical requirements applied that were meant for teenagers and artificial, arbitrary age limits... the overt discrimination of faculties, deans, and college officials; institutional barriers such as rigid admission requirements; lack of services which would make education compatible with women’s other activities; and assumption

and inhibitions on the part of both men and women which denied the talents of women... residence requirements, the inability to transfer credits, insistence on full-time study, lack of childcare facilities, and inadequate health services...

Women are frequently discriminated against in obtaining fellowships and travel grants and such amenities as married-student housing. (pp. 8-9)

Clements (1974) listed “deficient orientation to college... the ubiquitous scheduling difficulty” as being problems for older women students. In referring to female student single parents, Hooper and March (1980) revealed the following:

She will find that institutional barriers abound, such as offering classes during ‘traditional’ daytime hours only, having a registration process that requires hours in line, requiring her to obtain numerous signatures and to pay tuition fees in full, not providing adequate care facilities for her preschool children, and refusing to give her academic credit for learning that occurred outside the traditional classroom. (p. 142)

Similarly, Jacobi (1987) listed “institutional discrimination” (p. 4) as a commonly encountered barrier for re-entry women and also wrote, “Stress at school for re-entry women may be due... to the temporal conflicts in which scheduled class times interfere or overlap with other responsibilities” (p. 6). Rawlins (1979) found, “Adults felt uncertain and insecure about using services that they perceived as geared to the younger students” (p. 141). And Terrell (1990) mentioned “inexperience with institutional policies and procedures designed for the traditional age student (e.g., college entrance exams, acceptance of prior college credit deadlines, financial aid procedures, and physical education requirements)” (p. 243) as being difficulties for adult women students.

Emotional Problems. Considering all of the abovementioned barriers, it is not at all surprising that nontraditional female students must overcome emotional problems in order to be successful in college (Astin, 1976; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Berkove, 1976; Chartrand, 1990; Clements, 1974; Dill & Henley, 1998; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Kerka, 1989; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Sewell, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Suchinsky, 1982; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984). Astin (1976) wrote quite a bit about the emotional problems of adult women students:

The first problem a woman faces is how to go about returning to school...

Another problem is the lack of confidence which a woman invariably feels after being out of school for some time, particularly if she has been a homemaker in the interim. She is apprehensive about taking notes, remembering material, using the library, and writing papers and exams. Afraid she will not be able to keep up with the 18-to-22 year-olds, she hesitates to enter competitive academic situations...

Guilt is another problem with which these women must cope. Because of an internalized concept of their primary role as wife and mother, they feel guilty about leaving their homes and families to undertake a time-consuming venture so personally fulfilling. Sometimes they feel selfish for neglecting their families or spending money that could have gone toward a family trip or the children's college educations. (pp. 56-57)

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) mentioned "limited social acceptability and support for their student status... perceived lack of credibility when returning to college... fears

of failure and self-doubt” (pp. 2-3) as issues that typical nontraditional female students face. Berkove (1979) found, “The effort required to maintain traditional role responsibilities in addition to handling school pressures resulted in a fair amount of stress and strain for many of the women” (p. 455) and listed “guilt, anger, insecurity, and confusion” (p. 456) as feelings nontraditional female students typically experience. Berkove (1976) also noted, “In the beginning, they were unsure and lacked confidence” (p. 8) and, “With regard to the demands made on their time, they felt frustrated” (p. 9).

Chartrand (1990) reported responses such as “‘fear of being too old’ and ‘low grades in past, not confident of my abilities’” (p. 65) to a survey given to nontraditional students, and she also wrote:

Nontraditional students, particularly female students, are more prone to underestimate their abilities and to lack confidence in their ability to succeed in college. Low self-confidence in academic settings may create psychological distress and place nontraditional students at risk for prematurely dropping out of school. (p. 65)

Clements (1974) noted, “The older women’s attitudes were less positive toward peers, parents, and their own sexual attractiveness” (Abstract) and mentioned “lack of self-confidence” (p. 4) as a problem faced by older women returning to school.

Dill and Henley (1998) found, “Women returning to the university after an absence of at least 2 years (average absence 10 years) had depression symptom scores twice as high as a normative population” (p. 1). Dill and Henley also noted, “They [nontraditional women] reported several disadvantages, such as incompatible demands,

tenseness, and unfulfilled personal commitments... 85% percent felt strained. The major strains were conflicting time demands and anxieties about their academic ability” (p. 2). Dill and Henley discovered, “The nontraditional students reported greater impact from bad classes or teachers than the traditional students did” (p. 4) and found “time and role demands to be sources of anxiety and tension” (p. 5).

Kahnweiler and Johnson (1980) noted that nontraditional female students often have “feelings of isolation and separation” (p. 415). Kerka (1989) mentioned “anxiety about schooling based on prior experience” (p. 3) as being common among nontraditional female students. Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) stated, “Fears and doubts, plus other emotional and behavioral problems, create hardships in adjusting to the new student role” (p. 480). MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) found, “Some have been housewives and have experienced frustration, a lack of self-confidence, and anxiety” (p. 327). Osgood-Treston (2001) quoted a previous study that showed, “Traditional students graduate at a higher rate than nontraditional students, possibly because ‘adult learners tend to be older... and hence have more difficulty achieving emotional attainment’” (p. 4).

Rawlins (1979) mentioned “lack of confidence for doing college work” (p. 140) as a reason for nontraditional students to postpone their return to college. Richardson and King (1998) found adult students “question their ability to understand and retain large quantities of information” (p. 2) and “the resulting lack of self-confidence may undoubtedly generate appreciable levels of anxiety among adult students” (p. 4). Sewell (1984) found “lack of encouragement” to be a barrier that prevented some adults from enrolling in college earlier than they did. Smallwood (1980), in discussing adult women

college students, stated, “They begin to worry about how to study, what courses to take, and their ability to succeed in college in general... The most crucial interpersonal issue was general self-confidence as a woman student returning to college” (pp. 69-71).

Smallwood further noted:

Adult women students most recently enrolled in college were especially concerned about their ability to succeed and their self-confidence as women students returning to college... The older women students worried more about their ability to succeed in college and wanting to pursue a career traditionally open to men. (p. 72)

Spratt (1984) found the typical adult student to be “threatened by the classroom... anxiety-ridden” (p. 4). Spratt elaborated:

There is a gnawing, anxiety producing, and psychologically disturbing feeling when entering a classroom of young adults who look very bright (though perhaps mildly bored), relaxed and “in place,” and extremely clever in their khakis and blue jeans. The youthful environment can be terrifying, and also challenging, to the adult student. (p. 5)

Suchinsky (1982) discovered several emotional problems encountered by nontraditional female students:

Depression, anger, and difficulty in concentration... anxiety about their ability to perform... low self-esteem and her lack of a personal development... these women will think very little of themselves, and episodes of poor academic performance, whatever their origins, will frequently have a substantial negative psychological impact. (pp. 37-40)

Terrell (1990) noted, "Adults in this stage may question their capacity to understand and learn a new body of knowledge" (p. 242). Terrell mentioned "poor self-esteem and low confidence levels" (p. 243) as difficulties faced by women college students. Terrell wrote, "She may feel guilt about attending classes and spending money for tuition and books" (pp. 243-244). Terrell also discovered "low self-concept; threatened by the classroom" (p. 244) as being concerns of adult learners. And Thon (1984) stated, "Frequently, adults return to school with many questions, fears, and anxieties because of the length of their absence from the classroom, their uncertainties about careers, their family and/or work responsibilities, and their immersion into the environment of younger students" (p. 31).

Strengths

Good Health. One strength possessed by nontraditional female students is good health, both mental and physical (Clements, 1974; Dill & Henley, 1998; Jacobi, 1987; Weidman, 1985). Clements (1974) found, when comparing older women students to younger women students, the older women "were more positive toward work and education. On personality measures, the older women were less anxious, depressed and hostile than the younger women" (Abstract). Dill and Henley (1998) noted:

The nontraditional students showed significantly less academic stress, reported greater satisfaction in the school domain, and experienced significantly fewer health problems... nontraditional students reported less test-related anxiety than traditional students did... The nontraditional students experienced significantly more benefits... such as greater self-respect and respect from others, a more diversified life, and less boredom. (p. 2)

Dill and Henley concluded:

Yarbrough and Schaffer's (1990) results – that nontraditional students experienced less school-related stress – were supported. Perhaps success with other roles outside of college increases nontraditional students' overall confidence (Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990), or the finding may be explained with a similar idea of self-complexity based on the number of social and personal roles one has (Linville, 1987). The nontraditional students probably had greater self-complexity with more varied roles than the traditional students and thus experienced less anxiety related to the successful performance of the specific role of student. The nontraditional students may have cushioned themselves from stressful academic events by gaining high self-appraisal in other roles, such as that of a spouse, parent, or employee. (p. 5)

Similarly, Jacobi (1987) found, "The expectation that re-entry women would experience more stress than traditional women was not supported. In fact, re-entry women show significantly less stress in the school domain than do traditional women" (p. 14). And Weidman (1985) noted in a study of retention of nontraditional female students, "Graduates, in contrast to dropouts, were able to cope better with the demands of life outside of the training program because they... were healthier" (p. 13).

Personality Characteristics. Another strength that nontraditional female students possess that enables them to overcome barriers and thus be successful in college is maturity (Bowden & Merritt, 1995; Dinmore, 1997; Jacobi, 1987; Kerka, 1989; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Richter-Antion, 1986; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984;

Suchinsky, 1982; Thon, 1984; Tice, 1997; Tinker, 1965; Traupmann, 1982). Bowden and Merritt (1995) stated, “Along with the age comes experience, most of the students in an adult learning program have a great deal of practical experience” (p. 2). Dinmore (1997) wrote the following in reference to the maturity of adult learners:

They bring to the classroom a wealth of experience that younger learners rarely possess... the adult learner who is able to integrate classroom learning with insights gained from personal experience... capitalizing upon the experiential learning that they bring with them into the classroom... adult learners... can refer to their own experiences... the ability of older learners to make connections more readily between theoretical factors and their applications in daily life... older students are able to learn at a more accelerated pace when their experience and course work are linked. (pp. 1-4)

Dinmore also mentioned, “Adults are quick to extrapolate from their own experience to what they are taught in the classroom” (p. 6).

Jacobi (1987) noted, “Re-entry women relative to traditional women may appraise their coping skills as better able to meet demands for adaptation. Their previous life experiences may lead them to believe that they have the capacity to meet the challenges of re-entry” (p. 16). Kerka (1989) wrote that nontraditional female students often “have greater self-determination and acceptance of responsibility” (p. 1). MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) stated, “Many [re-entry female students] see themselves as being independent, effective, self-confident, and committed to their educational endeavor” (p. 327). Osgood-Treston (2001) mentioned, “Mentality, or how well these adults can play the student role; adaptability, or how well these adults can cope with

additional challenges; and flexibility, or how well these adults are able to see past present obstacles to the future” (p. 5) as being factors in the success of adult learners.

In referring to undergraduates who were over thirty years old, Rawlins (1979) wrote, “They were committed to achieving personal, professional, and career goals” (p. 142). Richardson and King (1998) noted, “Adult students significantly utilized time-management strategies and exhibited learning approaches that were perceived as more desirable than those of young students” (p. 1). They then elaborated, “Adult students... are capable of more effective and elaborative learning than younger students precisely because they are likely to be far more adept at examining and exploiting their prior experience in order to make sense of new information and new situations” (p. 4).

Richardson and King also remarked, “Many adult students have been successfully juggling a variety of domestic and occupational responsibilities for several years” (p. 5).

They found:

The prior life experience of older students promoted a deep approach to studying in higher education... Older people would be more capable of exhibiting the interpretive, contextualized, and relativistic conceptions of learning that other commentators have claimed to constitute genuine intellectual development among university students. (pp. 7-8)

Richardson and King stated, “The extra life experience of adult students could be translated into academic success” (p. 10), and they concluded:

Adult students seem to make more use of time-management strategies than younger students. In fact, adult students generally exhibit approaches to learning that are more desirable than those of younger students in the sense that they are

more compatible with the avowed aims and objectives of institutions of higher learning. (p. 12)

Richter-Antion (1986) noted, "Adult students have more life experience to draw upon and to bring to bear on their studies. This allows the adult student to put things in a different perspective" (p. 60). Smallwood (1980) stated, "Research studies concerning the measurable personality traits of the mature college woman student have described her as both achievement-oriented and self-accepting" (p. 66). Spratt (1984) classified the typical adult student as being "experienced in the skills of living and attuned to economic reality" (p. 4). Suchinsky (1982) wrote, "These [adult] students will frequently show a much more mature perspective on the educational process and the subjects they are studying... They are so enthusiastic and have an understanding of life, its processes, and its vicissitudes that no younger person can possibly have" (p. 41).

Thon (1984) noted, "Adult students are more mature and independent" (p. 28), and, "Many adults come to campus with a wide range and depth of life, work, and leadership experience" (p. 32). Tice (1997) wrote, "Adults bring a level of... maturity to learning transactions often lacking in youthful learners" (p. 19). Tinker (1965) stated, "Many adults have acquired a wealth of experience through their years of living" (p. 301). In addition, Traupmann (1982) found, "The 'mature' woman is a good student" (p. 5).

Perhaps due to their maturity, another strength that nontraditional female students possess that enables them to be successful in college is having a realistic picture of their situation (Starks, 1987). Starks wrote the following:

To cope with this myriad of 'role overloads,' they [adult women students] lowered their expectations for grades in college and set limits on their capabilities. They were thus satisfied with a 'C' or a 'B' in certain classes that they felt would be difficult for them given their academic backgrounds. This attitude also permeated their home life where they learned to ignore a messy house or dirty dishes and spent more time helping the kids with schoolwork, paying attention to the spouse or boyfriend, or doing their own academic work. (p. 10)

Motivation is another strength possessed by nontraditional female students that enables them to be successful in college (Astin, 1976; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Clements, 1974; Dinmore, 1997; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Osgood-Treston, 2001; Richardson & King, 1998; Richter-Antion, 1986; Sewell, 1984; Shields, 1995; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Suchinsky, 1982; Tice, 1997; Traupmann, 1982). Astin (1976), in referring to adult reentry women, wrote, "They are conscious of their reason for learning and understand the benefits of education" (p. 55). Astin discovered:

Women... who have returned to college to update or to develop skills for a second career... Women who need to work come to continuing education programs to gain or to update marketable skills. Some women have jobs but have discovered that without a college degree they have no opportunity for advancement... are now preparing for midlife career changes. (pp. 55-56)

Astin noted:

When asked why they sought continuing education, the women most often mentioned becoming more educated, achieving independence and a sense of

identity, and preparing for a job... Dissatisfaction with their status motivated them to seek further education and training to improve their occupational status... Women in academic programs have a great sense of direction, feel independent, and have mapped out a plan of action. (p. 57)

Astin concluded, "These women are serious, determined, and very frequently pragmatic in their goals... [and] have more self-confidence" (p. 59). According to Benshoff and Lewis (1992), "Adult learners tend to be achievement oriented, highly motivated, and objectively independent" (p. 1), and they also have a "stronger consumer orientation (education as an investment)" (p. 1) and are searching for "self-fulfillment" (p. 2).

Clements (1974) reported:

The continuing education service at the University of Texas at Austin found the returning coed highly motivated and planning to do a good job academically... In addition, the older women expected superior performance of themselves because they felt their maturity made them better able to recognize the importance of a college education. (p. 4)

Clements mentioned several motivational factors as reasons for seeking degrees:

Personal growth and self-improvement, enjoyment of learning, and desire for professional growth... preparation for teaching, financial security, financial assistance for children, advancement in work, enrichment of everyday living, and preparation for employment other than teaching... to fulfill a desire for knowledge... dissatisfaction with club, community and social activities... financial preparation for retirement... lack of interest in jobs that did not require a college education. The women gave as their main reasons for returning to

college personal growth and enjoyment of learning; but professional growth and financial concerns were mentioned too. (pp. 6-7)

Dinmore (1997) noted, “Working adults are motivated, experienced, practical people” (p. 2) and discovered, “For the adult, formal learning may be viewed as the key to a better job, or a better life” (p. 6). Dinmore also found, “For adult learners, however, learning is not usually an externally imposed, secondary role, but one that they freely choose... Employer’s offer of tuition reimbursement for specific degree programs is a powerful incentive” (p. 8). Similarly, Hensley and Kinser (2001) wrote the following regarding adult learners:

Returning to college, they exhibited a sense of purpose... Students desired to return to college as a way to prepare for a better future through career advancement. They felt strongly about finding careers so that they would not be ‘stuck in minimum wage jobs’; ‘I want job security, more freedom, time to have a career, not just a job.’ Students also desired financial security and the ability to earn more money... Of the many participants with dependents, most described their children as being the reason they returned to school. Instead of an obstacle, children became a constant reminder of the need to persist toward their academic goal... Many students wrote about returning to college to serve as role models for their children so they would recognize the value of higher education. (p. 5)

MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) discovered “how committed the women were to their educational pursuits, tolerating the short-run inconveniences for the expectation of future satisfaction to be gained from a career” (p. 332). Osgood-Treston (2001) reported the following:

Donohue and Wong (1997) have examined the correlation between achievement motivation and satisfaction and student attrition and performance. Their findings from a questionnaire administered to 69 traditional students and 57 nontraditional students (adult learners) from the junior and senior classes of a medium-sized university in Southern California reveal that while achievement motivation and satisfaction with college is positively correlated between both groups, there are significantly higher correlations between achievement motivation and satisfaction among nontraditional students. (p. 4)

Richardson and King (1998) discovered, “Adult students were motivated more by intrinsic goals than by vocational ones” (p. 7) and noted “their level of dedication to their education” (p. 8). Richter-Antion (1986) remarked, “Adults usually attend college with a clear purpose in mind. They are in classes because they want to be there. They are committed to being there... The purpose of college attendance is clear and represents a conscious choice on the part of the adult student” (p. 59). Sewall (1984) found the following to be motivational factors of adult undergraduates:

To develop a new career... simply to learn... to have the satisfaction of having a degree... to achieve independence and a sense of identity... career advancement... a personal growth goal... job dissatisfaction, encouragement from family or friends, or the availability of funds... realization that a college degree was necessary to achieve a personal goal... ‘a realization of what I wanted to do in life,’ ‘found a field that interested me,’ ‘made a decision about goals for the future,’ ‘finally decided what I wanted to do,’ and ‘I realized how badly I wanted to experience education.’ (pp. 311-312)

Shields (1995) described “a sense of social competence, pride in behavior, and a sense of self-satisfaction” (p. 8) as being motivational factors for adult returning students. Smallwood (1980) noted, “Two major reasons why adult women have been enrolling in college in increasing numbers are a desire for increased personal fulfillment... and a hope for better career opportunities” (p. 66). Spratt (1984) mentioned adult learners being “driven by high standards” (p. 4) and those who “returned for personal reasons... for additional vocational or professional training, for developing the skills to find a job, to learn more about a particular field of interest, or to develop abilities for critical thinking” (p. 7).

Motivational factors of nontraditional female students mentioned by Suchinsky (1982) included the following: “Using education to prepare to enter a career... They see education as a vehicle for the enhancement of income... Some women enter educational programs later in life in response to an urge toward an expansion of intellectual and social horizons” (p. 30). He also noted that some nontraditional female students use education “as a kind of anchor during a period of severe emotional distress” (p. 35). Tice (1997) discovered, “Adults bring a level of commitment... to learning transactions often lacking in youthful learners” (p. 19). And Traupmann (1982) mentioned “an interest in learning” (p. 5) and noted the nontraditional female student “is usually very motivated to adjust to her environment to fulfill her own needs” (p. 5). Traupmann also stated, “An opportunity to forge a new life, focusing on personal development rather than on family, should produce positive changes for midlife women” (p. 14).

Perhaps due to their motivation, another strength possessed by nontraditional female students that enables them to be successful in college is their willingness to go the

extra mile (Clements, 1974; Dill & Henley, 1998; Starks, 1987; Weidman, 1985).

Clements (1974) discovered, “The older women spent twice as much time studying, studied daily at regular hours, reviewed and outlined materials, began assignments promptly, and wrote multiple drafts of papers” (p. 4). Dill and Henley (1998) wrote the following regarding nontraditional students:

They also gave returning to school after time off, attending classes, and doing homework higher desirability ratings than the traditional students did, a finding that may point to a greater desire to learn or a higher enthusiasm for learning among nontraditional students. If so, this finding may indicate that the years out of school have put a new perspective on the classroom experience... These findings confirm the feelings of satisfaction of nontraditional students in the student role. (p. 5)

Starks (1987), in writing of adult women students, revealed, “They often mentioned utilizing student services such as peer tutoring, career counseling, learning assistance, or study skills courses” (p. 10). And Weidman (1985), in reference to nontraditional students, noted the “willingness of... women to do extra classwork at the training institution” (p. 12).

Being able to establish positive and supportive relationships with mentors and peers is another strength possessed by nontraditional female students that enables them to be successful in college (Astin, 1976; Berkove, 1979; Clements, 1974; Hooper & March, 1980; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Kerka, 1989; Roach, 1976; Starks, 1987; Weidman, 1985). Astin (1976) wrote the following about adult women students:

They viewed their husbands as supportive; they had also had a working mother while growing up... The majority of husbands had positive feelings about their wives' activities. They saw the wife's new role as not only making her a happier, more actualized person, but also as benefiting the whole family intellectually and financially. Husbands believed that as wives increased their earning potential, they would assume part of the financial load. They also reported positive effects on the children, who became more independent and more willing to share household responsibilities. They also became more interested in their school work; mother as a student provided a role model for them... Their children and husbands are generally supportive of their work and educational activities. Practically all the women see their continuing education as being highly beneficial both personally and professionally. (p. 59)

Berkove (1979) found, "Many of the men stayed with the children so that their wives could study or attend classes" (p. 455). Clements (1974) discovered, "Three-fourths of the women were encouraged to go to school by their husbands; two-thirds by their parents, children, and professors; and eighty percent, by their employers" (p. 6). Hooper and March (1980) mentioned "the support of significant others" (p. 144) as a reason for the success of female single parents. According to Kahnweiler and Johnson (1980), "the existence of a mentor relationship" (p. 416) was beneficial to nontraditional female students because "the mentor offered emotional support" (p. 416). Kerka (1989) noted the importance of "social integration (participation in college life)... contact with fellow students, group work, and studying together... close relationships with faculty,

access to counseling, shared values and good relationships with other students” (p. 2) for nontraditional female students.

In addition, Roach (1976) mentioned “acquir[ing] a new friend group” (p. 87) and “form[ing] additional significant relationships with persons who share her new perceptions and attitudes” (p. 89) as being keys to success for nontraditional female students. Starks (1987) noted “more formal and informal contact with faculty, viewing both types of relationships as part of their academic growth” (p. 1) in a study she conducted on adult women students. Starks also revealed, “Institution persisters had positive contact with other students, both young and old. They socialized during lunch hour with students in the cafeteria and they studied together between classes. They enjoyed group work in the classroom and made friends in their classes” (p. 11). And Weidman (1985) remarked that nontraditional students “had more supportive friends and relatives [and] reported fewer problems with their own children” (p. 13).

Institutions

Simplifying Processes. Since the admissions process is probably the first hurdle a nontraditional female student must overcome in college, it is one area that institutions can adjust to help nontraditional female students be more successful in their college careers (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Astin, 1976; Hooper & March, 1980; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Sewell, 1984; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tinker, 1965; Wallace, 1979; Weidman, 1985). One way to accommodate nontraditional female students is through the use of alternative requirements based upon their prior experiences. Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) recommended “appropriate admissions criteria and procedures for adults” (p. 33) and

“provision for degree credits by prior learning (CLEP, military education, etc.) within both ‘regular’ curricula and any special adult programs” (p. 33). They also recommended, “When a university has developed a substantial adult constituency it should modify its mission statement to clearly express a commitment to adults and should have this change fully understood and endorsed by the governing board” (p. 34).

In discussing a specific program for adult women, Astin (1976) wrote, “Admissions procedures and traditional performance criteria have been altered so they are more appropriate for adults” (p. 60). She further stated, “Colleges and universities must adopt a more flexible attitude to accommodate individual differences. They must relax nonessential academic regulations and requirements that do not apply to older women returning to school” (p. 60). Similarly, Hooper and March (1980) mentioned “more flexible admission requirements, including the Credit for Life Experience Program (CLEP)” (p. 144). Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) recommended having “an office for prospective students containing pertinent information related to reentry” (p. 480). After results of a survey had been tabulated, they further noted, “A preference of reentry students was for services that would aid in their assimilation into the university community. The most frequent request was for a designated reentry admissions counselor” (p. 481).

Rawlins (1979) discovered, “Changes in the initial enrollment process for the adult learners could be facilitated by minimizing red tape” (p. 140). She further recommended:

It would be wise to have provisions for waiving prerequisites for specific programs or courses if the adults have experience equivalent to having fulfilled

the same requirements... Testing out of class could be encouraged when the over-thirty learners have had life experiences or gainful employment that has provided the same kind of background as would be expected from a course...

The initial enrollment process should be eased for the returning adults. (p. 142)

Richardson and King (1998) advocated offering “greater opportunity for part-time study outside of normal hours” (p. 2) as a way of altering the requirements of full-time study for adult students. Sewell (1984) recommended “credit for prior learning” (p. 313). In reference to adult learners, Spratt (1984) found, “They want academic credit for their worthy past experience acquired outside the classroom... [otherwise known as a request to] credit out-of-college experiences” (pp. 5-6). Terrell (1990) wrote of the necessity of “credit for prior learning” (p. 245) and of the need to “identify transferable skills” (p. 246). Similarly, Thon (1989) suggested “credit for prior learning and/or work experience” (p. 29), and Tinker (1965) noted, “Many adults have acquired a wealth of experience through their years of living” (p. 301).

Wallace (1979) noted, “Modifications in the rules and regulations established with the typical student in mind should be made giving consideration to the maturity and the developmental stage of the adult” (p. 22). Weidman (1985) wrote, “For institutions, this suggests the desirability of providing sufficient flexibility so that students are not penalized inordinately for occasional personal contingencies that might temporarily prevent them from fulfilling institutional expectations” (p. 13). Weidman also wrote, “What is essential is that admissions requirements reflect *contemporary* assessments of adult students’ academic potentials, not outdated indicators” (p. 14). Weidman concluded, “Allowing some flexibility with respect to institutional demands (including

attendance requirements, deadlines for completion of coursework, and schedules for tuition payment) may certainly be reasonable” (p. 15).

Once nontraditional female students have been admitted to college, the next obstacle they must face is the process of obtaining financial aid. Thus, making the financial aid process easier for nontraditional female students is another way institutions can help them to become more successful in college (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Bowden & Merritt, 1995; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Kerka, 1989; Pennsylvania Commission for Women, 1994; Rawlins, 1979; Richter-Antion, 1986; Sewall, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Terrell, 1990; Tinker, 1965; Wallace, 1979; Weidman, 1985). Benshoff and Lewis (1992) recommended “special assistance with financial aid and housing” (p. 3). Berkove (1979) noted, “The academic institution itself can do a great deal to lessen the burden on these women by providing support in terms of... financial assistance” (p. 456).

Bowden and Merritt (1995) mentioned the need of having extra employees available in the financial aid office:

The financial aid office needs to be prepared for the onslaught of loan applications that will be coming its way. Some programs have up to 50% of their adult learners receiving grants and/or loans... Added financial aid transcripts will be received and requested, support materials such as files, envelopes, and even notepads will be needed... Many adult learners have some sort of corporate reimbursement for their education. Whatever aid they receive from corporations must be accounted for during the financial aid process. (p. 5)

Karr-Kidwell (1984) advocated “personnel in the financial aid office... attending, on a regular basis, several orientation sessions for re-entry students” (p. 9) and sending letters to nontraditional female students “when additional monies such as grant monies are available” (p. 13).

Kerka (1989) argued for “assistance with transportation and child care... creative financial aid that might include flexible payment plans and tuition reimbursement” (pp.

2-3). The Pennsylvania Commission for Women (1994) published a booklet:

Designed to help Pennsylvania’s re-entry female students find the best ways to finance a college education. It presents a ‘To Do’ list with the following steps: (1) prioritize what is wanted or needed from an enhanced educational opportunity; (2) familiarize oneself with different types of federal, state, and local aid sources, including grants, loans, and federal work-study programs; (3) comprehensively research financial aid sources; and (4) campaign to have the institution of higher education accommodate one’s needs. (Abstract)

The booklet mentioned several sources of financial aid, including “Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study... Carl Perkins Loans... Federal Pell Grants... Federal Stafford Loans... Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS)” (pp. 5-6) and explained a little about each of these types of financial aid. The book also contained the following helpful information for re-entry female students:

Community organizations are good sources of financial aid. Ask professional groups, political parties, sororities, churches, employers, civic groups, unions, or women’s organizations if they offer scholarships... Contact the financial aid office of the college(s) of interest and ask for an appointment with one of the

counselors. Also, request any publications the college's office may put out and ask for clarification on anything that confuses you. If you work, check with your personnel or benefits office to see if your employer has a tuition reimbursement policy and if you are eligible. (pp. 6-7)

Rawlins (1979) discovered through a survey administered to over-thirty undergrads that they "desired improvements in services relating to... financial aid" (p. 140). Rawlins noted, "Different criteria for awarding financial aid would benefit adult learners, that is, criteria based on need rather than grades, test scores, or class rank" (p. 142). Richter-Antion (1986) stated, "Special scholarships earmarked for part-time adult students can ease the financial burden on this group of students that is unlikely to qualify for existing federal or state aid" (p. 61). In a survey administered to adult undergraduates, Sewell (1984) found "the... cost of attending a particular institution strongly influenced their decision to enroll" (p. 312) and "job placement services" (p. 313) might be found to be useful. Sewell noted, "Many employers may also provide the additional encouragement (psychological and financial) needed to trigger a return to school" (p. 313).

Smallwood (1980) suggested "the provision of an actual employment office on campus for helping students secure off-campus employment that can be coordinated with class schedules" (p. 72) and noted, "A... challenge to college student personnel professionals will be to meet the financial and personal counseling needs of low income women... Special funding and counseling for women in such transition would be very practical in encouraging adult women enrollment and survival in college" (p. 72).

Terrell (1990) recommended “special institutional financial aid for adult part-time students; include adult students in student worker positions, particularly in recruitment and orientation areas” (p. 245). Tinker (1965) stated:

Through the provision of *scholarship assistance*, more women who need these programs will be able to enroll... With money for babysitters and tuition fees provided for them, it would be possible to continue study without draining the family budget. Scholarship aid for those who have completed only a high school education may encourage these women to go on to college. (p. 284)

Wallace (1979) discovered, “The older adult... would like some help in defraying the cost of an education through financial aid” (p. 20). Wallace asserted:

The offices of financial aid and placement must become aware of the needs of adult students with respect to the financing of a college education... The financial aid office must make efforts to inform adult students on how to obtain financial aid ... ‘in forms suitable for and acceptable to older persons’ (Preston, 1975, p. 15). Grants should not be given to the exclusion of adults. Loan programs could be expanded to provide greater availability for adult students... Adults, particularly the younger adult, should be considered equally in such programs as College Work Study and should be informed about job opportunities in the community. The placement bureau can make a vital contribution in this area. (p. 22)

And Weidman (1985) noted “the importance for institutions of providing financial resources for non-traditional students” (p. 6).

Helping Students Feel Accepted in the College Environment. Once nontraditional female students have been admitted into college and received financial assistance, another way to help them be more successful in their college careers is to make them feel accepted in the college environment. One way to accomplish this is through the use of the media, especially in literature (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Heppner & Olson, 1982; Rawlins, 1979; Sewell, 1984; Thon, 1984). Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) concluded a model institution for adult students would be one where “administrative services such as registration and financial aid and information are made available by phone, mail, etc., and during evenings and weekends, within the context of the appropriate unit, rather than separately” (p. 33).

Heppner and Olson (1982) noted, “Articles from professional journals, as well as popular magazines, can provide valuable normative information for adult clients” (p. 126). Heppner and Olson also stated:

Adult clients must be reached through special public relations efforts (Arbeiter, 1980). City newspapers, ‘shopper’s guide’ paper notices in laundromats, and public service announcements on radio and television have all been important vehicles for advertising the CPPC [Career Planning and Placement Center] adult service. (p. 126)

Rawlins (1979) recommended, “A ‘guide for returnees’ brochure with information about all areas and services of the university could be developed and mailed to the adult learners” (p. 142).

Sewell (1984) noted, “Advertising the availability of programs, class schedules, and other special services could close this information gap and might also stir some

interest among adults who are ‘just thinking’ about getting a college degree... The job or career benefits of obtaining a degree should also be advertised” (p. 313). And Thon (1984) stated:

Provide a printed manual for returning students... It is important for colleges and universities to provide at least one written manual oriented towards adult student interests and needs... A manual for returning adults, whose time is often at a premium and whose questions are many, would inform them where to go most directly for answers and resources. The manual might also include a directory of adult students and should partly or wholly be written by adult students. A periodic newsletter for older students could supplement such an adult student manual. (pp. 31-32)

Another way institutions can help nontraditional female students feel accepted in the college environment and thus help them to be more successful in their college careers is to provide opportunities for interaction with other nontraditional female students (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Bauer & Mott, 1990; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Chartrand, 1990; Heppner & Olson, 1982; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Kerka, 1989; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Roach, 1976; Sewell, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tinker, 1965). Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) mentioned “support services (day-care, peer-counseling, orientation sessions, etc.) for adults” (p. 33). Bauer and Mott (1990) noted the importance of “the guidance of a mature, genuinely caring significant other who may be called *teacher, counselor, or mentor*” (p. 559).

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) stated, “Adult students benefit from opportunities to interact with their peers and need to be actively involved in the educational process through sharing their relevant work and life experiences” (p. 2). Chartrand (1990) noted, “Support groups for nontraditional students can also be used to help foster positive self-perceptions” (p. 72). Heppner and Olson (1982) found, “The appropriateness of using peer counselors with adult clients has been emphasized” (p. 124) and also discovered, “One of the prime resources for adults is a mechanism for connecting them with other adults in their field or desired field” (p. 126). Kahnweiler and Johnson (1980) recommended that “women in various re-entry situations become involved with mentors” (p. 418).

Kerka (1989) noted “the importance of the fit between the person and the environment” (p. 2) and argued for “mentoring by successful adult students; peer support groups... involvement of adult students in program governance... establishment of rituals and symbols that form a sense of shared meaning and connectedness among students, faculty, and staff” (p. 3). Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) found that female reentry students would benefit from “an exclusive lounge area” (p. 481). MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) advocated “support groups for re-entry women” (p. 332) and stated, “Divorced women may need additional support to achieve their goals” (p. 332).

Rawlins (1979) stated, “A fourth priority is the provision of opportunities for adult students to meet with other over-thirty learners” (p. 141) and noted, “the need for an adult identity group: social needs were not met; sharing similar problems and interests

would be helpful; there was no organized means for meeting each other and making friends; there was a sense of not belonging on campus and a feeling of isolation” (p. 141). Richardson and King (1998) remarked, “Identifying and discussing reentry concerns can facilitate the reduction of such fears. Encouraging adult learners to find and to discuss their concerns with other adult learners can reveal the common and situational versus personal nature of many fears” (p. 2).

Roach (1976) asserted campus counselors must help the nontraditional female student “to understand that changes in herself will, predictably, be accompanied by changes in her life style and interpersonal relationships” (p. 89). She advocated “campus activities that integrate the returning woman into the mainstream of campus life” (p. 89) and support groups that offer these women “an opportunity to develop close friendships with peers and to consider together through weekly two-hour meetings, workshops, and special programs many issues of pressing personal concern to them” (p. 89). Sewell (1984) suggested, “Institutions should consider using former graduates and students currently enrolled as peer counselors or promoters of specific programs” (p. 314). Terrell (1990) recommended “opportunities to socialize with research oriented faculty and knowing at least one faculty member personally” (p. 243) for adult students. Terrell also noted the importance of “adult orientation programs that include families and provide an atmosphere where ‘it is safe to ask dumb questions’” (p. 245) and the need to “provide family-oriented activities to include students’ families [and to] provide peer support groups” (p. 245).

Thon (1984) stated, “Involve older students in the provision of student services” (p. 32) and stressed the importance of providing “identifiable peer support for adult

students who are returning to school with many questions, anxieties, time conflicts, and career choices” (p. 32). Thon provided the following suggestions:

Older students can assist as peer advisors and group leaders for orientation programs. If the institution has an advocate or an office for older students, adult students can handle many of the basic information questions of fellow adults.

Older students would also provide valuable assistance to the counseling department by serving as peer counselors and leaders of peer support groups.

Involve the families of adult students in some campus activities... It is important that the family become an active part of the returning member’s campus life in order to increase understanding of and sensitivity to the added pressures upon the family and the returning students and to make the adult student’s transition to college less burdensome... Spouses and children of the adult students should be invited to come and spend time on campus and participate in some orientation activities. Family members should become involved, when appropriate, in counseling services and be encouraged to participate in various social activities throughout the year such as Sunday afternoon intramurals, campus Christmas parties, and family-oriented movies. (pp. 32-33)

Tinker (1965) felt institutions should “provide informal occasions for sharing ideas with others of like concerns” (p. 301) for adult students.

In addition to providing interaction with others, another way institutions can help nontraditional female students feel accepted on campus and thus be more successful in college is through offering programs that are specifically geared toward this special population of students. One such program would be to somehow assist these students in

finding affordable day care for their children while they are in class (Berkove, 1979; Hooper & March, 1980; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; Sewell, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Weidman, 1985). Berkove (1990) stated, "The academic institution itself can do a great deal to lessen the burden on these women by providing support in terms of... inexpensive child care" (p. 456). Hooper and March (1980) suggested "that universities begin to provide day care for the children of its students, and particularly for its students who are single parents" (p. 145).

Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) found, "Externally expressed needs [of nontraditional female students] included child care centers" (p. 480). Sewell (1984) noted, "The adult student may find the following services useful:... day care and evening care" (p. 313). Smallwood (1980) wrote the following:

Is it the college's responsibility to provide adequate child-care facilities?

Although some colleges may dismiss the issue and others may eventually decide it is not within the realm of the college's jurisdiction to provide adequate child care, the reality is that colleges that can provide this service may indeed increase their enrollment of adult women (and men!) students. (p. 72)

Spratt (1984) discovered, "Daycare services will show up as a common criterion for satisfaction with campus life" (p. 4). Terrell (1990) suggested, "Provide day and evening child care with reasonable financial charges on a drop-in or flexible scheduling basis" (p. 245). And Weidman (1985) recommended "providing day care facilities on campus (preferably for both long- and short-term childcare)" (p. 15).

Offering courses dealing with issues of relevance to nontraditional female students is another example of special programs that are geared toward this special

population of students that should help the students to feel more accepted on campus and thus to become successful in their college studies (Astin, 1976; Bowden & Merritt Jr., 1995; Chartrand, 1990; Rawlins, 1979; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Tinker, 1965). Astin (1976) recommended offering “courses of interest to women” (p. 56). Bowden and Merritt Jr. (1995) noted, “Many adult learner programs are developed in such a way that course requirements can be met through textbooks and course materials with very minimal time in a library, for most courses” (p. 4). Chartrand (1990) suggested having “orientation programs and workshops conducted at the beginning of the academic year” (p. 72).

Rawlins (1979) recommended “an effective informational outlet. Which office or person was appropriate to resolve a problem seemed very confusing to the returning adults” (p. 141). Information such as this could be covered in a special orientation class for nontraditional female students. Rawlins noted, “Thus, through information services, questions could be answered, information could be made available to save the adults time and hassles, needed directions could be given, procedures could be explained, and communication about university functions and procedures could be facilitated” (p. 141). Rawlins stated:

Special efforts to help adult students be aware of the traditional counseling services, including personal, academic, and vocational counseling, would be very helpful. The personal concerns of the adults interviewed encompassed needing support, encouragement, and praise for endeavors and accomplishments; assistance with hassles and apprehensions; marriage counseling; someone to listen

to and understand one's situation; and help with adjusting to being with younger students. (p. 141)

Once again, a special orientation session for nontraditional female students could encompass all of these issues. Another topic this orientation class could cover could be "an identifiable place for assistance" (p. 141). Rawlins concluded, "The Extension Division, the Counseling Center, and the Admissions Offices could develop and provide these services jointly: orientation, redevelopment of study skills, and opportunities to meet with other students" (p. 142). All of this could be included in an orientation class for nontraditional female students.

Spratt (1984) found the top ten needs of adult learners to be the following:

1. Developing speaking ability
2. Increasing skills in mathematics
3. Increasing reading speed
4. Improving study skills and habits
5. Learning about job opportunities
6. Learning how to handle pressure
7. Identifying strengths and abilities
8. Learning to take tests better
9. Learning how to make better decisions
10. Learning what jobs are available near home. (pp. 6-7)

All of these topics could be covered in courses designed for nontraditional female students.

Terrell (1990) suggested that colleges “offer courses on child development, childrearing, family dynamics, organizational behavior, leadership, and community power structure” (p. 245) along with “values clarification and leisure planning” (p. 246). Tinker (1965) suggested, “Credit courses given on television could be sponsored jointly by a number of cooperating institutions across the country, each of which would allow full credit for these courses to degree-seeking students” (p. 301). Tinker noted:

Many colleges and universities now have *residential centers which can be used* for short courses, or for summing-up meetings in conjunction with the other courses provided. The advantages of residential education in getting a class together under one roof for a period of a few days or more, where the students can concentrate without outside interference on a particular study, may be very beneficial. Students have a greater opportunity for an exchange of ideas in this setting than the ordinary class situation allows, because of the additional leisure hours available for further discussion and debate. They are relieved of tensions from daily routine and are better able to give their minds completely to the subject under consideration. A camaraderie among the students is more easily developed in such a situation, and the ‘mutual buttressing’ which so many adults need when returning to academic pursuits takes place more readily. (p. 301)

Several other special programs and workshops can be offered to nontraditional female students in order to make them feel more accepted on campus and thus enable them to be successful in their college careers (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Bowden & Merritt Jr., 1995; Chartrand, 1990; Hengesbach, 1978; Hooper, 1979; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979;

MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber & Slaney, 1988; Pennsylvania Commission for Women, 1994; Rawlins, 1979; Richardson & King, 1998; Richter-Antion, 1986; Roach, 1986; Sewall, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tinker, 1965; Wallace, 1979; Weidman, 1985). Benschhoff and Lewis (1992) noted the importance of “the willingness of institutions to modify existing programs and develop new services geared to adult populations” (p. 4). As specific examples, they mentioned “separate registration, advising, and orientation... health services, publications for adults, and qualified staff to work with nontraditional students... social activities appropriate for both older students and their families” (p. 3).

Berkove (1979) stated:

The academic institution itself can do a great deal to lessen the burden on these women by providing support in terms of... individual and group counseling which is sensitive to these women’s particular needs. The institution can also make the return to school easier for women by providing opportunities for including husbands in formal and informal programs such as orientation sessions, special seminars and workshops, or even strictly social get-togethers. (p. 456)

Bowden and Merritt Jr. (1995) discovered, “Some colleges and universities have established departments, schools, and colleges for adult learners. These entities range in administrative support from a basic advising staff to virtual autonomy with advising, records, financial aid, accounting, assessment, marketing, and alumni offices” (p. 3). They further noted, “Any adult program should have a computer lab accessible to the adult learners. Some adult programs have their own lab from which they can set their own nontraditional operating hours” (p. 5).

Chartrand (1990) stated, "Interventions conducted early in the academic career are important for fostering student adjustment... steps taken at the beginning of the academic year can be beneficial for nontraditional students" (p. 72). Hengesbach (1978) mentioned the need for "counseling programs for returning women students that actively involve entire families in the counseling process" (p. 145) that "would involve the women and their families quite early in the student's academic career" (p. 152).

Kahnweiler and Johnson (1980) stated:

A significant number of returning women have concerns over their physical development and appearance. A workshop in weight control could be offered in response to this expressed concern. If divorce-related concerns are identified by returning women, programming might include personal counseling and workshops with themes such as divorce adjustment. (p. 417)

They also remarked, "An accessible and comprehensive women's center could provide a wide variety of counseling and support services to women" (p. 417).

Karr-Kidwell (1984) recommended career advisement and counseling with "an emphasis on career and life planning... vocational development... educational-vocational information workshops, use of cooperative education" (pp. 2-3). She also advocated forming a student organization "that would help re-entry students with their issues and concerns" (p. 5) and offering "diverse programs and/or workshops for re-entry students... on a regular basis" (p. 5) on topics such as "stress management and reduction techniques, assertiveness training... time management" (p. 10). Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) discovered:

The needs of returning students were internally and externally directed. Internally directed needs included counseling --- group and individual; peer and professional; academic, vocational, and personal; and a specifically designated reentry counselor. Also suggested were special orientations, reentry courses, workshops (communication, decision making, academic skill building, and self-development), and socials. (p. 480)

They also noted, "Evening counseling was another counseling service needed" (p. 481). "Peer counselors, a specialized credit course for reentry students, speed reading, paper writing skills" (p. 482) were also mentioned as being desirable.

MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, and Slaney (1988) remarked, "Providing programs and services, such as a locator system to find the adult student during class time, may relieve some of the anxiety of having children of any age and may also provide greater flexibility and peace of mind for re-entry women as they pursue their academic goals" (p. 332). They further noted:

Divorced women may need additional help with financial issues, career decision making, emotional support, and adaptation to children growing older. Married women may need personal counseling for family concerns and career counseling to help them broaden their career choices. Single re-entry women may require counseling for career change issues, emotional support, and financial planning. All women need the support and encouragement of mentors, networks, and role models. (p. 333)

The Pennsylvania Commission for Women (1994) noted, "Larger universities often have associations or leagues that address the issues and needs of re-entry women.

They may provide social activities and meeting space” (p. 7). Rawlins (1979) discovered, “To aid in coping with the anxieties and uncertainties experienced during the first enrollment, these adult learners needed assistance with informational, procedural, and emotional matters” (p. 140). Rawlins stated, “The over-thirty learners said that they could have used more help with enrollment procedures” (p. 140) and elaborated:

Changes in the initial enrollment process for the adult learners could be facilitated by minimizing red tape. Adults desired more assistance than they had received with interpreting curriculum and course changes, evaluating prior academic work, dealing with reentry concerns and obstacles, and planning a program of study. Anxieties and uncertainties could be dealt with through personal counseling. Once admitted and enrolled, the interviewees could see the benefits of orientation before actually being on campus. Orientation sessions would help the adults to feel secure and familiar with the university settings as their college careers were begun. A format that would pull all areas of the university together was viewed as potentially helpful and meaningful. Because these students consulted most with their spouses when considering a return to school, it would be sensible to include the spouses in the orientation. (pp. 140-141)

Richardson and King (1998) noted, “Development and use of time management skills can be a boon to otherwise overextended women. Adult women can benefit from learning decision-making or planning strategies for careers or graduate school” (p. 2).

Richter-Antion (1986) stated:

Recognizing the many commitments on an adult student’s time, institutions have sought to remove as much red tape from administrative procedures as possible.

Phone-in registration and payment of fees by mail or credit card are welcomed by adult students who want to keep to a minimum the number of times they must drive to campus and hunt for a parking space... the student activities office can sponsor Family Day to appeal... to spouses and children of adult students... Workshops on adult development theory can be provided as faculty/staff development. (p. 61)

Roach (1986) suggested helping the nontraditional female student “not only to anticipate and understand the source of developing family tensions but also to learn and to practice more satisfying and effective interpersonal, management, and coping skills” (p. 89). Sewell (1984) noted, “The adult student may find the following services useful: career and educational counseling... personal-family counseling” (p. 313). Sewell elaborated:

In addition to making services available to interested adult students already on campus, the institution should provide prospective students with counseling and other assistance regarding (a) possible career options, (b) degree alternatives, (c) cost and expense information, (d) occupational outlook information, (e) licensing and certification requirements, (f) complete admissions requirements and procedures, and (g) an orientation to the policies of the college or university, particularly any degree requirements that must be met by all students... It may be advantageous for colleges and universities to implement a liaison program with local business and community organizations to develop a strong base of support. Support from these groups can take the form of jointly sponsored courses or

certificate programs, letters of support from company executives, and advertisements in a newsletter or other publication. (p. 313)

Smallwood (1980) wrote of nontraditional female students, “They need help with choosing courses, acquiring basic study skills, and exploring their own academic potential” (p. 71). She noted:

A... problem facing adult women students focuses on academic reentry. A woman (or man) who has been out of college for several years will need special academic counseling and encouragement. Fears about academic potential, the adequacy of study skills, and what courses to take will be important to recognize and deal with. Counselors and services especially designed to meet these academic reentry fears need to be provided to all returning students. (p. 72)

Spratt (1984) mentioned “the need for adequate and convenient parking facilities” (p. 4) and also noted, “The adult who feels threatened by the classroom can be helped by pre-registration orientation sessions that include visits to actual classes, meetings with adult students who have overcome similar fears, and the friendly face of a middle-aged person in the counseling office” (pp. 4-5). Spratt remarked:

Many colleges and universities sponsor career workshops that respond to the questions adults ask about how to achieve their goals. Held in libraries, at shopping centers, on campus, in union halls, at churches and at business and industrial settings, these workshops not only provide needed information to interested adults, but also serve as a message from the college or university to the adult community at large: ‘We are here, and we are interested in your personal development and job advancement.’ (p. 5)

Spratt stated, “Adults want... a network that provides information, support, and answers to important questions” (p. 5), and she discovered, “Students who are twenty-five years of age or older want speedy registration procedures” (p. 6).

Terrell (1990) made the following recommendations:

(a) to develop a strong commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of women students, (b) to provide a supportive campus climate for women, (c) to develop a women’s studies program, (d) to review policies for their effect on women, (e) to develop an institution-wide concern for children and families, (f) to make a commitment to enhancing women’s leadership, and (g) to create a center for the exploration of community and personal relationships. (p. 244)

Terrell also noted the importance of:

Adult orientation programs that include families and provide an atmosphere where ‘it is safe to ask dumb questions’... opportunities to serve in leadership positions and on university or department committees, opportunities to socialize with research oriented faculty... Adult Resource Center that provides a one-stop shopping ‘convenience’ store... provide family-oriented activities to include students’ families, provide peer support groups, counseling programs aimed at values clarification and use of leisure time may be of interest to and benefit many adults, particularly those in the 35-45 age range... develop a relationship with local business and community organizations to provide a supportive network for employed students. (p. 245)

Thon (1984) suggested improvements in career counseling and placement services and in orientation services for older students. In reference to career planning and placement services, Thon remarked:

Because the needs and backgrounds of older students are so varied, counseling services should make available adult needs assessment instruments to assist individual adult students in their career planning. The counseling office should also offer adult development programs not included in the academic curriculum. Programs such as assertiveness, resume writing, life-planning, communication skills, time management, decision making, and midlife developmental stages would all be beneficial to returning adults. Finally, since one of the strongest needs of returning students is to identify and be supported by other returning adults, counseling services should establish peer support groups. (p. 32)

In regard to orientation services, Thon wrote:

Separate orientation programs for younger and older students should be seriously considered because many of the needs of these two groups are different. The use of adults to help plan and run orientation activities is also recommended. Since career counseling is so important to returning students, orientation programs should include opportunities to meet and interact with members of the counseling staff. Some adult development programs would also be welcome additions to orientation programs for adult students. (p. 32)

Tinker (1965) made recommendations in the areas of orientation, counseling, and testing programs for adult students. In reference to orientation programs, she wrote:

Special effort should be made to orient the adult student returning to an academic environment. Such orientation might include introduction to the great minds on campus, the use of libraries, laboratories, art departments, and attendance at extracurricular lecture series, and should also provide informal occasions for sharing ideas with others of like concerns. (p. 301)

In regard to counseling, Tinker noted:

Counseling services are a necessary element in the programs, and those well-trained in guidance and counseling procedures should be available for several purposes. These include sharing information about all the educational possibilities open to a student in her own community; giving the student an opportunity to talk over her problems from time to time, not as therapy but as catharsis suggesting ways of developing good study habits, methods of participation, and listening ability; and lending encouragement when the student feels insecure in returning to the academic world, particularly in the early months of stress. Counselors should be selected for their ability to work with adults. (p. 301)

In addressing testing programs, Tinker suggested, "It is advisable to have testing services available in order to help prospective students determine their academic strengths and weaknesses, their interests, and their potential abilities. Such testing frequently reveals 'hidden assets' which can be utilized in guiding the individual to a better program of study" (p. 301).

Wallace (1979) mentioned the need "for adult counseling services such as administrative advice, course selection, and information about careers" (p. 18). Weidman

(1985) suggested providing “tutoring and supplementary instruction” (p. 7) and remarked on “the importance for institutions of developing remedial programs that are as effective as possible in providing students with the skills necessary for success in the transition to the regular academic program for which they are preparing” (p. 12).

In addition to providing special programs, institutions can also help nontraditional female students by offering alternative scheduling (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Astin, 1976; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Berkove, 1979; Bowden & Merritt Jr., 1995; Hengesbach, 1978; Hooper & March, 1980; Karr-Kidwell, 1984; Kerka, 1989; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; Rawlins, 1979; Richter-Antion, 1986; Sewall, 1984; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon, 1984; Tice, 1997; Wallace, 1979). Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) suggested “academic advising available on weekends and evenings” (p. 33) and “personal counseling, financial advising, career counseling, and other student services available in the evening and responsive to adult problems” (p. 33). They stated, “Courses must be scheduled in times and places, including evenings, weekends, and off-campus locations, where adult students can get to them, and yet where there is no diminution of academic quality or credibility. This process must be made part of the regular class scheduling procedure” (p. 34). They also noted:

The university must recognize that adult students operate in different time-frames from traditional students and, thus, require longer, later operating hours for many university functions. The university must identify offices and functions which adult students need and extend the operating hours of appropriate offices and services. (p. 35)

Astin (1976) advocated offering “courses at times convenient for women” (p. 56).

She also revealed:

Time and place constraints have been greatly reduced by restricting the delivery of courses from, for example, 50 minutes three times a week to a 3-hour sequence once a week, and by using available space in churches and schools to reduce transportation hassles. Admissions procedures and traditional performance criteria have been altered so they are more appropriate for adults. (p. 60)

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) recommended “flexible schedules” (p. 1) that included “more evening and weekend course offerings” (p. 3). Benshoff and Lewis stated:

It is not unusual for administrators committed to nontraditional students to maintain creative operating hours in their departments, schools, or colleges. Advisors often work on a rotating basis. Usually advisors are not faculty members. Office hours range from the more traditional 8 am to 5 pm to the nontraditional 12 pm to 9 pm. Office hours may include working one Saturday a month. These hours are not limited to the advisors. Rotating hours for each office can be established to meet the needs of both administrators and adult learners. The key is to be flexible to meet the demands of the college or university and the adult learners. (pp. 3-4)

They also wrote, “At large colleges and universities bookstores stay open late enough during the week to accommodate the shopping needs of the adult learner. One university located downtown in a large metropolitan city is open on weekends” (p. 4). They advocated having “sufficient library hours that meet the obligations of the nontraditional

programs” (p. 4) and “a computer lab with hours conducive to the educational process of the adult learner” (p. 5).

Berkove (1979) noted, “The academic institution itself can do a great deal to lessen the burden on these women by providing support in terms of flexible scheduling” (p. 456). Bowden and Merritt Jr. (1995) commented on “flexible scheduling” (p. 1) and gave as an example “being able to package the content of what may be considered a normal semester into, in some cases, as little as 20 hours” (p. 2). They noted:

The times they [adult students] are available to attend courses are at night or on weekends. It also means, and more importantly, that the times they can meet with an advisor, register for courses, purchase books and materials, apply for financial aid, and obtain any number of other requirements are late afternoons and early evenings. (p. 3)

Hengesbach (1978) suggested “university office hours after 5 PM... occasional Saturday office hours... Sunday office hours” (pp. 15-16). Hooper and March (1980) recommended “expanding schedules to include late afternoon, evening, and, in some cases, weekend class hours” (p. 144). They wrote, “The expansion of external degree programs such as the University Without Walls is our third suggestion for improving institutional responses to the student who is a single parent” (p. 145) due to “the self-scheduled study inherent in such programs” (p. 145). Karr-Kidwell (1984) proposed offering “courses that could be taken on a Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday schedule, on Saturdays, at off-campus locations, and on alternating weeks/weekend schedules” (p. 11).

Kerka (1989) suggested “independent study, correspondence courses, contract learning” (p. 3) along with “expanded academic day, week, and year (use the noon hour, offer 6-week modules, Sunday classes)” (p. 3) and “expanded locations (classes in shopping malls, courses broadcast to businesses, hospitals, military bases)” (p. 3). Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) mentioned “appropriate scheduling of classes (location and time)” (p. 480) as a method of helping nontraditional female students. Rawlins (1979) wrote the following:

There could be registration during evening hours for the working, over-thirty adults, just as there is for graduate students. Most university services could plan to be open during the noon hour and in the late afternoon at least one day per week to accommodate the working adult students... If the tutorial services were expanded to offer more sessions during the day and the evening, over-thirty adults would have more opportunity to take advantage of these services... One suggestion is to offer more extension and undergraduate courses at night. (p. 142)

Richter-Antion (1986) noted, “Scheduling meetings of campus organizations at a fixed time just prior to evening classes can encourage participation by adult students, helping them to feel a greater identity with the college” (p. 61). Sewell (1984) mentioned “more flexible class schedules and locations” (p. 313) and stated, “Institutions should strive to offer courses during evening hours and on weekends. It seems especially important to make it possible for an adult student to get a degree by taking only evening or weekend courses” (p. 314). Smallwood (1980) recommended “greater flexibility in scheduling campus classes that coordinate with the reality of the working world (i.e., late

afternoon, evening, and Saturday classes, classes that meet once a week, etc.)” (p. 72). Spratt (1984) discovered that adult students “need classes that meet for three hours one evening a week instead of three evenings a week for one hour. They are interested in weekend programs and independent study” (p. 5).

Terrell (1990) recommended “on-line computer or telephone registration; extended office hours in admissions, records, veterans affairs, financial aid, counseling, advising, career planning, health services, and college activities” (p. 245) and noted the need to “maximize alternatives for course offerings, i.e., satellite campus centers and one-week, three-week, five-week, eight-week, and weekend alternative course durations; early classes before 7 am and late evening classes beyond 10 pm” (p. 245). Thon (1984) suggested “extended office hours... evening and weekend classes, off-campus classes” (p. 29). Tice (1997) argued for “promoting the use of technology and arguing against strict residency requirements so that workers can take courses when and where it is convenient (even at home in front of a computer) and earn a college degree” (p. 19). And Wallace (1979) stated, “Departmental clubs, religious organizations, special interest groups, and service organizations should be made more accessible and attractive to adult students” (p. 22).

Hiring of Personnel. Employing personnel who are sensitive to the needs of nontraditional female students is another way institutions can help these students to be more successful in college (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Bowden & Merritt Jr., 1995; Clements, 1974; Heppner & Olson, 1982; Hooper & March, 1980; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979; Rawlins, 1979; Smallwood, 1980; Spratt, 1984; Terrell, 1990; Thon,

1984; Tinker, 1965; Weidman, 1985). Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) made the following recommendations:

Senior policy-making bodies of the university aware of adult students...

University administrative policy and procedures developed and implemented with a full range of students, including adults, in mind... Administrative policy and practice is proactive rather than reactive in its mode of dealing with adult students, their needs, and their problems... The President and his executive staff, especially the chief academic officer, must clearly, frequently, and consistently articulate the university's commitment to adults when dealing with university employees, to include not only the deans but especially the faculty and the administrative staffs of the central administrative units... University long-range planning must consistently address the needs of adults as a major constituency of the university... The President and key members of the governing board must consistently work to develop a personal and institutional philosophy which emphasizes a commitment to serve and educate adults as equal members of the academic community... Student services, from the top-level down, must develop processes and positions having specific responsibility and authority for identifying and meeting the service needs of adults. (pp. 33-35)

Bowden and Merritt Jr. (1995) wrote of the roles advisors and those who work in the records office must play in order to help nontraditional female students. In reference to advisors, they remarked:

Advisors are trained to deal with the complexities of the adult learner's previous college or university credit as well as any number of teaming experiences... A

skilled advisor trained in transfer credit, College Level Examination Program credit, prior learning credit, military and corporate training, and Continuing Education Units can give a better sense of direction to the adult learner. The adult learners are there to complete their degree, not for the college experience. The advisor facilitates this by being more readily available to adult learners and by tracking them through the completion of their program. (p. 4)

In regard to those who work in the records office, they commented:

One university graduates 87% of its adults. This makes for additional work for records offices. It means more transcripts, grade cards, registration forms, diplomas, and everything else associated with the office to process. It also means verifying grades and providing them to corporations that require them in order to reimburse the college, university, or employee. Records offices must not underestimate the amount of time it takes to process information from adult learner programs... The records offices will need additional staff. (p. 5)

Clements (1974) noted, "Aiding or fostering changes in role expectations was an appropriate intervention for colleges and universities to make with both men and women students" (p. 9). Heppner and Olson (1982) wrote the following regarding counselors:

Older peer counselors have been hired to work with evening clients. Evening career planning counselors range in age from 25 to 45. Criteria for employment include a variety of dimensions such as counselor training, professional experience, and, perhaps most importantly, a diversity of life experiences... These counselors bring with them a wealth of information from their past experiences and are a crucial element to the success and credibility of the

program... Adult staff members need to be trained in techniques of career counseling. (p. 124)

They recommended that adult counselors have knowledge of the following:

1. *The process a person goes through in returning to the school.* This process includes both the actual process of re-entry as well as the adjustment problems many adults encounter while making this transition. Counselors are to be knowledgeable about programs that offer credit for life experience and other curricular offerings of interest to older learners...
5. *Community referral sources to other human services agencies* including day care centers, counseling services, rehabilitation centers...
7. *Time and money management.* An ability to help adults make personal plans in these areas is essential.
8. *The issues faced by special groups.* Dual career couples, single parents and pre-retirees have unique planning issues to face...
11. *Counseling adult women.* Included are such areas as identity confusion, fear of failure, fear of success, and the myriad issues related to sex-role socialization.
12. *Major adult development theories.* An ability to recognize stages and crises points and thus to normalize the experience of clients is needed. (p. 125)

They further commented:

Adults... prefer one-to-one counseling rather than self-instruction... The mood and appearance of the center, in general, changes somewhat. The rock background music is turned off and classical music is turned on; counselors

generally are dressed more professionally than the day peer staff who are encouraged to dress like their peers. A receptionist greets people, who may be strangers to the university, when they come in. (p. 125)

Hooper and March (1980) advocated “the provision of special counseling by persons trained to be aware of the special needs of these women and to be informed on the availability of special resources and supportive services in the university and community” (p. 144). Furthermore, they suggested, “Intra-university publicity of the plight of the nontraditional, and particularly the female single parent, student can do much toward making faculty and staff more aware of and more sympathetic toward the problems faced by these students” (p. 145). Lance, Lourie, and Mayo (1979) noted the importance of “a designated reentry admissions counselor” (p. 481).

Rawlins (1979) wrote the following:

Adults desired one over-thirty-year-old counselor or advocate for adult students who was aware of and understood the adults’ special needs, concerns, problems, uniqueness, and situation... The study substantiated the need for specialized training in working with older students. For example, the counselors of adults need to be skilled in the decision-making process to help the over-thirty students in several areas --- adjustment to college life, career decisions, financial problems, and coping with change. Moreover, the adult counselor’s expertise should encompass a knowledge of psychosocial theories and of developmental issues of adulthood; an understanding of the salient issues of adulthood and of the resulting periodic traumatic crises; and skills developed for working with special groups as mid-life males, minority persons, and adult women. (p. 141)

Rawlins suggested:

To increase awareness of the unique needs of the adult students, the Adult and Continuing Education Department and the Extension Division could provide staff development for divisions providing student personnel services, particularly those of admissions, financial aid, the Counseling Center, the Veterans Administration campus office, registration, and advising. It would be beneficial to form a task force to give immediate consideration of these recommendations. This task force might be composed of persons from the Adult and Continuing Education Department, the Extension Division, the Counseling Center, admissions, placement, registration, housing, financial aid, advising, and the Health Center. Coordinated relationships between all offices providing student personnel services would result... Another is to assign adult learners to advisors who have volunteered to work with older students and who have participated in an in-service training program to develop the necessary awareness and expertise for working with the over-thirty undergrads. (p. 142)

Rawlins concluded:

There needs to be more sensitivity to the adult learners among university personnel. It is important for counselors, other student personnel workers, adult educators, and administrators to understand the adults' problems, to assist in interpreting the older students' needs, and to develop means to satisfy these needs --- thereby making the over-thirty undergrads' return to university life more pleasant, rewarding, and less complicated. (p. 142)

Smallwood (1980) noted “the need to inform counselors, administrators, and faculty of the needs and problems of the mature college woman student” (p. 66). Spratt (1984) mentioned “sensitivity and understanding at the reception desk” (p. 4) and “the friendly face of a middle-aged person in the counseling office” (p. 5). She also wrote, “Some institutions make a special effort to recruit persons who have had experience as adult students to work in their adult reentry offices and programs” (p. 5). Terrell (1990) suggested “staff training about the needs and concerns of adult students” (p. 245).

Thon (1984) made the following recommendations:

Increase institutional awareness of the presence and needs of older students... It is important that colleges and universities do whatever they can to gain as much information as possible on their older student population so as to become more anticipatory and proactive in responding to the needs of these students. First of all, a task force or committee should be established with the following objectives: to identify the demographic characteristics, interests, and needs of the institution's older student enrollment; to evaluate how well the institution is responding to these students, and to offer recommendations to various constituencies on how to respond more effectively to adult students. Other methods of heightening institutional awareness of the needs of older students are providing in-service training for faculty, staff, and administration; having each department and office conduct a self-evaluation of their services to adult students; and gathering feedback from older students through surveys, adult representation on institutional committees, and informal conversations with these students. Identify a person and/or office as an advocate for adult students... The importance of a designated

advocate, ombudsman, or office for a new student group... would be extremely valuable in aiding the adult student's return to campus. Serving as the recognizable on-campus contact for older students, a designated advocate could allay some of their anxieties by providing needed information in a clear and consistent manner. This advocate would also assist students in identifying and meeting other adult students and would seek and compile information on the needs of older students to present to and interpret for other campus constituencies... At least one counseling staff member should have direct responsibility for older students. This counselor should have knowledge of and professional training in adult development theories and stages, life-planning processes, and career opportunities for adults, especially women. The adult student counselor could also be instrumental in setting up in-service training programs and could train adult students to serve as peer counselors... The admissions office should enlist adult students to help with the advertising for and recruiting of other adults. Older students can also assist as peer advisors and group leaders for orientation programs. If the institution has an advocate or an office for older students, adult students can handle many of the basic information questions of fellow adults. Older students would also provide valuable assistance by serving as peer counselors and leaders of peer support groups. (pp. 31-33)

Tinker (1965) recommended "the appointment of an advisory board" (p. 284) and stated, "To promote public interest, the advisory board should also include outstanding individuals beyond the immediate academic community who could give additional support and perspective" (p. 301). Regarding counselors, Tinker noted, "Counselors

should be selected for their ability to work with adults” (p. 301). Weidman (1985) mentioned “the hiring of a special counselor at each school to work exclusively with ... [nontraditional] students” (p. 7). He elaborated, “These counselors were available throughout the life of the program to assist... students in overcoming academic and non-academic problems which might interfere with successful school completion” (p. 8). He argued for “special counselors who are available on campus at times and in places that are easily accessible to non-traditional students” (p. 14). Weidman advocated making “certain that financial aid officers are trained to assist in the identification and acquisition of aid that is available through sources outside of the institution” (p. 14) and “providing resources for personal and career counseling” (p. 15).

Finally, hiring faculty who are trained in teaching methods that are conducive to nontraditional female students must not be overlooked as a way of helping this special population of students to be successful in college (Ackell, Epps, Sharp & Sparks, 1982; Bowden & Merritt Jr., 1995; Dinmore, 1997; Richter-Antion, 1986; Roach, 1976; Spratt, 1984; Suchinsky, 1982; Weidman, 1985). Ackell, Epps, Sharp, and Sparks (1982) suggested “fully integrated faculty, i.e., a faculty for whom evening or adult classes are a usual part of the regular teaching load” (p. 33) and “faculty development programs to improve teaching for both adults and younger students” (p. 33).

Bowden and Merritt Jr. (1995) stated, “The adult learner should be given ‘an active role in the learning process... [and] applications in their work or their daily lives’” (p. 1). They also noted, “Along with age comes experience, most of the students in an adult learning program have a great deal of practical experience. It is up to the instructor to draw upon that experience and use it in the classroom” (p. 2). Bowden and Merritt Jr.

revealed, “They [adult students] need to see a concept in action through activities and examples” (p. 2), and they suggested, “Adult learners present a challenge in the classroom; however, this challenge can be easily met by understanding that these students have had career experiences and are embarking on a new experience” (p. 2). Bowden and Merritt Jr. further elaborated:

The instructor must be aware that the students are not young with no real desires but have a definite aim in life. With these goals in mind the instructor must be able to demonstrate how a particular concept or theory applies directly to the goals and aims of the students. One of the best ways an instructor can do this is through real-life experiences. (p. 2)

Bowden and Merritt Jr. concluded:

The four points of age, needs, desires, and goals converge on the following points for instructors: 1) the instructor must not be intimidated by the students, 2) the instructor must be prepared to show how a concept or theory applies to the everyday world, 3) the instructor must be able to demonstrate practical knowledge of the subject he or she is teaching, and 4) the instructor must respect and use the knowledge already gained by his or her adult students. (p. 3)

Dinmore (1997) stated:

Successful teaching of older learners celebrates experiential learning, often acquired in a variety of informational settings, and exploits it through the application of formal, conceptual learning. Interdisciplinary studies (IDS) has proven successful in the pre-adult, conventional classroom. The inherently

integrative nature of IDS makes it eminently suitable for the integrative learning style of returning adult students. (p. 1)

Dinmore noted, “Interdisciplinary studies (IDS) can be invaluable” (p. 2) and elaborated:

Adults need to acquire an education built on a curriculum of interdisciplinary courses and one that focuses on the ability of the student population to synthesize newly-acquired theoretical knowledge with the practical skills they have brought to the classroom. Such a synthesis has a dual outcome of validating students’ experiences and confirming, in the learners’ eyes, the validity of theory because they can reconcile it with their own experience. (p. 2)

Dinmore recommended, “Showing them ways to extrapolate from their experience and to combine their insights with theory derived from disciplinary and interdisciplinary literature validates their experience, and permits them to gain the confidence necessary for the completion of a rigorous, degree completion program” (p. 3). Dinmore stated, “Adult education... is a highly appropriate point of application for experiential learning. The combination of experiential learning and interdisciplinary learning is a powerful tool for adult learners” (p. 3). Dinmore found, “Practitioners in the field of adult education often incorporate integrative methodologies and practices into their teaching practices” (p. 4). Dinmore wrote:

Focus on both the formal and the informal learning environment (e.g. job and family) in adult learners’ formal education may prove valuable... Adults are quick to extrapolate from their own experience to what they are taught in the classroom... In some degree programs for returning adult students such as management and business, or information systems, colleges and universities

employ practitioners as instructors. Adult learners respond well to such instructors. (p. 6)

Dinmore suggested, “A nonauthoritarian atmosphere, parallel to that in matrix organizations, has the advantage not only being similar to the workplace, but also putting the learner back in the driver’s seat” (p. 8). Dinmore remarked, “Since adults frequently learn in informal environments such as the workplace, it makes sense that instructors strive to break down any barriers between themselves and their adult learners” (p. 9). Dinmore recommended, “Since learning theory has demonstrated that adults learn well from their peers, the instructor can assume a role of facilitator of learning. In addition to removing the artificial hierarchial barrier, the adult educator can encourage small group activities to foster learning synergy among students” (p. 9). Dinmore concluded:

Their tendency to integrate experiences makes adults more likely to benefit from interdisciplinary courses, and from the interactive and participatory methodologies that are frequently employed in those classes... An important factor in many adult students’ evaluation of teaching effectiveness is whether their instructor has been able to make connections between course content, the rest of their study program, and their own experience... The role of the instructor becomes that of a facilitator of group and individual learning, and a catalyst for students to integrate their experiential learning with new, theoretical and conceptual learning. (p. 10)

Richter-Antion (1986) stated, “For the adult student, choices are often not possible: when one’s child is sick and must be cared for, studies simply take a backseat for awhile. This calls for understanding on the part of faculty members when dealing

with adult students who request special arrangements for tests or assignments” (p. 60). Richter-Antion recommended, “Faculty who teach courses that are likely to have reasonable numbers of adult students, due to the course topic or the time they are offered, can be given a brief orientation session focusing on the special characteristics and needs of adult students” (p. 62). Roach (1976) wrote that universities need “to respond to them [nontraditional female students] as an identifiable group with unique needs and stresses, as well as abilities and expectations” (p. 87).

Spratt (1984) found, “Adults gave significant ratings to preference for relaxed and informal instructors who provide alternative assignments and pretests, who base final grades on several activities, and who modify course outlines to satisfy student interests” (p. 6). Spratt also discovered:

The instructor got high ratings... because he made clear the basic content of the course; because he said that requirements would be individualized to meet the diverse needs of the students; because he gave the class his office hours, his office telephone number, and his home telephone number; and because he was serious when he said that he was accessible and looked forward to discussing student work. (p. 7)

Suchinsky (1982) mentioned “greater skill on the part of the instructor in making more abstract concepts comprehensible and... greater patience in working with these students” (p. 32) as desirable qualities for an instructor of nontraditional female students. He also noted, “What is needed is an awareness of the differences of these students, their differing capacities and requirements. It may be that the differences in this population will necessitate modifications in some student and personnel policies and approaches if

they are to be assisted” (p. 41). And Weidman (1985) recommended, “On those campuses with increasing numbers of non-traditional students, faculty should be encouraged strongly to orient themselves more fully to the particular problems of these students” (p. 14).

Chapter Summary

Unfortunately, nontraditional female students face many barriers that must be overcome in order to be successful in college. Some of these barriers include responsibilities (family responsibilities, husbands, children, job responsibilities, and other responsibilities), interaction with others (or lack of positive interaction with others), financial difficulties, transportation problems, age related problems, being unprepared for college work, institutional barriers, and emotional problems.

Fortunately, nontraditional female students possess many strengths that enable them to overcome these barriers. Some of these strengths include good health (both mental and physical) and personality characteristics (maturity, having a realistic picture of their situation, motivation, willingness to go the extra mile, and being able to establish positive and supportive relationships with mentors and peers).

Also fortunately, there are several tactics institutions can use to help nontraditional female students be successful in college. Some of these tactics include simplifying processes (simplifying the admissions process and the financial aid process), helping them feel accepted in the college environment (through media, providing opportunities for interaction with other nontraditional female students, offering programs and workshops that are specifically geared toward nontraditional female students, and offering alternative scheduling), and hiring of personnel (employing personnel who are

sensitive to the needs of nontraditional female students and hiring faculty who are trained in teaching methods that are conducive to nontraditional female students).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Chapter Introduction

This chapter consists of eight sections: Type of Design, Role of Researcher, Data Collection Procedures, Sample, Surveys, Interviews, Data Analysis Procedures, and Methods of Verification.

Type of Design

This research was a qualitative case study project in which a specific population of students (nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters) served as the participants in the research study. In order to understand the needs and experiences of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, a qualitative case study was the best design to use because it provided a rich, thick description of this special population of students.

Role of Researcher

I first began working at Roane State Community College in August of 1988 as an adjunct instructor. Since that time, I have been promoted first to a lecturer, then to an instructor, next to an assistant professor of English, and am presently an associate professor of English. I have taught Developmental English every semester since the fall of 1988, and I have also taught Basic English, Developmental Reading, Study Skills, and Composition I (English 1010).

In this research study, I was “the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 20) who administered surveys to and conducted one-on-one interviews with the group being studied. Although I had read literature concerning nontraditional female students, no literature had been read concerning this particular group of nontraditional female students. Therefore, I had very few “preconceived notions” because it was not known until the surveys were administered and the interviews were conducted whether or not nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, shared the same experiences and needs as the nontraditional female students at other schools who were studied during the time period from 1976 to 2002.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to collect data regarding nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the students who qualified for the study were identified through the Student Information System (SIS) at Roane State Community College. First, all Developmental English courses being taught during the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters were accessed through the use of a screen in SIS. Then, class rolls from those courses were accessed from another screen in SIS. Finally, birth dates of the female students enrolled in the Developmental English courses were obtained from another screen in SIS.

Two different types of data collection were used. First, surveys were administered to the population being studied. Then, in an attempt to gain additional knowledge, one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants who were willing to do so from the population being studied.

Sample

All nine nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during the Spring 2002 semester were given surveys to complete. These students were all between the ages of 25 and 54 and were either in their first or second semester of classes at Roane State Community College. Eight out of nine of these surveys were returned for a completion rate of 89 percent. The five students who expressed a willingness to do so were interviewed, and the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

All 21 nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during the Fall 2002 semester were given surveys to complete. These students were all between the ages of 25 and 54 and were either in their first or second semester of classes at Roane State Community College. 16 out of 21 of these surveys were returned for a completion rate of 76 percent. The five students who expressed a willingness to do so were interviewed, and the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

When the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters are combined, all 30 nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English classes at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, were given surveys to complete. These students were all between the ages of 25 and 54 and were either in their first or second semester of classes at Roane State Community College. 24 out of 30 of these surveys were returned for a completion rate of 80 percent. The 10 students who expressed a willingness to do so were interviewed, and the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

Surveys

A survey created by me with open-ended questions (see Appendix A) was administered to all nontraditional female students attending Developmental English courses during the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. This survey enabled me to answer the research questions of the study since it consisted of questions about the barriers faced by the students, the strengths of the students, and how Roane State Community College as an institution could best meet the needs of the students. The surveys were confidential since names were not provided. A form created by me (see Appendix B) that indicated a willingness to participate in a one-on-one interview with me was also distributed to these students along with the survey. Those who were willing to be interviewed returned the forms completed with the requested information (name, address, phone number, etc.). Those who were not willing to be interviewed did not return the form.

Interviews

After the students had signed an informed consent form created by me (see Appendix C), one-on-one interviews (see Appendix D) were conducted with the nontraditional female students who expressed a willingness to participate. Like the surveys, the interviews enabled me to answer the research questions of this study since they consisted of open-ended questions regarding the barriers they faced, the strengths they possessed that enabled them to overcome these barriers, and how Roane State as an institution could help them to overcome these barriers. These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in an effort to gain further insight into the experiences and needs

of these students. Like the surveys, the interviews were confidential since names were not provided.

Data Analysis Procedures

A constant comparative method of data analysis was used in this research project. According to Merriam (1998):

The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated.

(p. 159)

The findings from the surveys and the interviews were examined in this manner. I first coded the responses on the surveys and in the interviews with number 1, 2, or 3, depending on which research question they answered. I then coded the responses with letters according to how they answered the research questions (J = job responsibilities, T = transportation difficulties, F = financial difficulties, etc.). I was then able to tabulate the responses into meaningful categories and thereby “make sense” of the responses.

Methods of Verification

The methods of verification for this research project included trustworthiness, internal validity, reliability, external validity, and ethical practices. According to Merriam (1998), research results “are trustworthy to the extent that there has been some accounting for their validity and reliability” (p. 198). These concepts are addressed in the following three paragraphs in this section.

Internal validity was established through triangulation and member checks.

Merriam (1998) defined triangulation as “using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (p. 204). Triangulation occurred in this study through the constant comparison of the review of the literature, the 24 surveys, and the 10 interviews in the areas of barriers faced by nontraditional female students, the strengths possessed by nontraditional female students that enable them to overcome these barriers, and what institutions can do to help these students to be successful in college. According to Merriam, member checks consist of “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if results are plausible” (p. 204). This process was done with all 10 students who were interviewed.

Merriam (1998) stated that reliability could be achieved if outsiders “concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense --- they are consistent and dependable. The question then is... *whether the results are consistent with the data collected*” (p. 206). In order to ensure that the results of this research study were dependable, three techniques were used: the investigator’s position, triangulation, and an audit trail. In order to establish the investigator’s position, according to Merriam, “The investigator should explore the assumptions and theory behind the study, his or her position vis-à-vis the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected” (pp. 206-207). This research study included all of the above information. As mentioned previously, triangulation occurred through the constant comparison of the review of the literature, the 24 surveys, and the 10 interviews. According to Merriam, an audit trail can be made when the investigator

“describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout this inquiry” (p. 207). Upon written request, this information can be provided for this research study.

Merriam (1998) wrote, “External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 207). Through the use of triangulation between the review of literature and the responses from the surveys and interviews, the findings of this research study were consistent with research done on other nontraditional female students. Furthermore, this study could be replicated at other campuses to provide further proof of external validity.

In order to perform an ethical study, Merriam (1998) mentioned, “the protection of subjects from harm, the right to privacy, the notion of informed consent, and the issue of deception” (p. 213). All of these issues have been addressed and accomplished in this research study. No foreseeable risks to the participants existed, names were not used on surveys or in interviews, the participants signed informed consent forms before participating in interviews, and I was not deceptive in any way to the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter Introduction

In order to make the processes of triangulation and constant comparative analysis easier, the data in this section are organized in the same manner as the review of literature. Therefore, the data analysis is divided into three separate parts: the barriers faced by nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; the strengths these students possess that enable them to be successful in college; and what Roane State Community College can do as an institution to help this special population of students. There is also a summary at the end of this chapter.

Barriers

Home Responsibilities. Seventy-five percent of the survey respondents and 80 percent of the students interviewed mentioned home responsibilities as a barrier to their educations. One survey respondent noted, “trying to keep house along with everything else,” another mentioned, “busy home schedule,” and a third response was, “trying to keep a household going.” Other answers included, “poor parent support,” “family away from me (no support),” and, “responsibilities like helping aging family members.” One survey respondent wrote, “I have a family to worry about now. I have to get everyone up and going in the morning before I do anything.”

Interviewee C stated:

Maybe even cooking supper or laundry... got in the way.

Interviewee D noted:

I've got the demands of... taking care of the house, everything to do with that.

Interviewee H revealed:

Because I've got a family that relies on my income, and... Plus I'm also a mother and a wife, so that's another full-time job. I have to make sure my daughter gets her homework done. I have to cook. I have to make sure the house is clean. My husband helps, but to my daughter it's not the same as having Momma there. There are some things men just can't do.

Interviewee I remarked:

The negative aspect of it is I have children, I've got a husband, I've got a family, and I have to kind of have time for them and then try to make time to study, too. Try to get everything organized and... And the negative about it is when you're married and you have children, it takes away from them.

Of course, home responsibilities include husbands. One survey respondent mentioned, "marriage," in an obvious reference to her relationship with her husband, and another wrote of, "a husband that is used to being waited on and will not cook, only microwave."

Interviewee D stated:

I don't have the support, though, from my husband that I expected or that I had starting off. I don't know why this is--- It could be jealousy, it could be a control thing, it could be just him, even though he wants me to

complete a degree and get a good job, yet at the same time he's not that supportive.

Interviewee I said:

If you have a jealous husband, it's really hard to come to school because it kind of conflicts.

Perhaps even more so than husbands, children are a responsibility that limits the time allotted for studying, preparing for classes, completing assignments, and other school-related activities. Survey respondents noted, "married with two daughters," "I have a seven year old and a nine month old," "I have a child, which is a full-time job in itself," "helping my daughter with her homework," "I wanted to wait until my children got older," "my children," "mother of four small children," "have three teenagers at home," "I have two children," "I have a seven year old that finds it hard to understand that Mommy has to do her homework and cannot play often," "motherhood," "being a mommy of four, time is very limited for studying," "having to miss school when your kids are sick," and, "having to leave in the middle of class because your kid peed on himself."

Interviewee D stated:

Basically my children take up so much of my time... Like taking them to piano practice, taking them to state competitions, taking them here, taking them there, keeping them from being bored on rainy days, just things--- "Mom, Mom"--- they need you. That is a big barrier... I feel like I need to spend more time at the school when I need to be with them and help them to have a really good Spring Break, but then I'm going to have all

this, knowing I need to find time to study, too. So I'm going to have to find a way to keep them busy. Making dental appointments, making things like that, you have to say, "You can only do it on Tuesday or Thursday or really late on one of the afternoons because I go to school on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday." So that has been a challenge too, making sure everything is on certain days that I can do it.

Interviewee A said:

The obstacles that I'm still struggling with and facing is always the childcare issue. I'm worried about the summer. What am I going to do with my kids? It's more internal, "Is my son old enough to stay home now that he's twelve?" He tells me he's too old to go to a camp. My daughter is in daycare. That is an obstacle.

Interviewee B revealed:

I have three kids... I can't study at night. They want my undivided attention when I get home... I wanted to take one class, but I couldn't because it ran over 3:00, and by 3:00 I have to be home. Being able to miss classes here because the kids are sick or there is nowhere for me to take them. When the kids are out of school here in Oak Ridge, this school is not closed. Like our Spring Break was last week, and their Spring Break is this coming week. So I had to find something to do with my kids for all week... And you can tell where my grades have changed. I get really down on myself. You can tell I was helping the kids more than I was helping myself.

Interviewee E remarked:

Would I be able to handle, even though I have a small amount of classes, would I be able to handle that plus raising a baby? I have to get my son to the babysitter and then come to school.

Interviewee I confided:

I have four children and a husband who acts like a child, so I have five kids!

Interviewee J noted:

Well, just finding time to do everything, and my children come first. Schoolwork, you know, requires a lot of studying, so I just have to manage my time really well.

Emotional Issues. Emotional issues were cited as a barrier by 38 percent of the survey respondents and 100 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, “getting free time for yourself so you can stay sane,” “test anxiety,” “not being prepared---in the beginning I did not realize how much homework I would have,” “I have no time for myself,” “I was afraid to come back to school after being out for so many years,” “fear---fear of not doing well,” “fear that you’re looked down upon because you’re older,” “I was very intimidated about coming back to school after being out for so long,” “fear of failing,” “fear of not fitting in with younger kids,” “fear of failing classes,” and, “fear of returning to school after a lot of years.”

Interviewee D revealed:

I was hoping I would place out of it... I was kind of disappointed. Well, it was a little confusing. It was different.

Interviewee E said:

I was a little worried about what the expectations would be in my courses.

Interviewee B stated:

I was upset that I was going to have to take these classes that did not count towards my other, but I knew that my English is bad to begin with, so it wasn't a shock. I didn't have enough confidence.

Interviewee C remarked:

I already felt insecure in my English... I struggle to find time to study, and I guess talking to you today I can tell you I feel more confident than I do now. I've thoroughly enjoyed it, and I'm so glad I'm doing it, but my confidence level has dropped because it has been so much harder than I expected it to be... And a lot of us feel like we certainly weren't prepared to go to college... I know probably so many times, even things that I felt confident in my knowledge, I still didn't feel confident enough to speak up or show that knowledge because I felt like I wouldn't be respected. "You might know a little bit, but you really don't know as much since you didn't go to college" type situation.

Interviewee A mentioned:

I just remember being totally unprepared... I was not prepared at all... So I was totally unprepared, and that threw me off. I was very nervous and everything, and I knew that I did bad. English was always my worse subject, and I knew I did bad... I was nervous the first day just trying... That first day was scary... More than anything it's the emotions. A lot of

emotions like guilt from my children's grades going down from school. I'm not spending as much time with them. Taking time away from the kids and spending on yourself is not something I'm used to and haven't been used to in a long time. That's an obstacle for me because I always put my children first. Now this time I have to say this needs to be first. This is very difficult to do. Very, very difficult for me... an unhappy home life. I always wanted to do the opposite of what my mother did.

Interviewee F revealed:

Maybe a little nervous because I hadn't been in school for thirty years, so... Okay, I was a little nervous. I didn't know what to expect. I was trying to remember where all the rooms were and my classes and the times... I was afraid at first that it was going to be really hectic, and I didn't know what to expect... I was really worried about my English class because it had been thirty years, and I really thought I was going to fail it the first week because I couldn't remember what verbs and all that was.

Interviewee G said:

I was actually pretty nervous about coming back to school because of my age. I know I'm not as old as some of the students that are here, but with me being 26, it has been... like I was really, really nervous. I thought I wouldn't fit in, couldn't make the grade, couldn't get used to doing the work... I felt like I didn't know anything. It was... everything that I had learned in school had just left my mind totally because once I got out of high school, I didn't use any of it. Like I said, I went to dead-end jobs. I

worked at a dry cleaners; I worked in production. You don't use any English skills in that. So it all just left my mind totally... I thought I was going to be in the lowest, lowest. I mean, I thought, "God, they're going to have to teach me how to read all over again?"... The first week that I was here I was so nervous because I just... I thought, "My goodness, what am I getting myself into?"... Because I just didn't know what to expect... I mean, I stay stressed enough right now. I don't need anything else in my life to stress me out even more... When I know I have a big test, I get a little stressed.

Interviewee H stated:

I wanted to make myself as comfortable in that situation as possible, but I was still a nervous wreck, not really knowing what to expect from the other students... Not having been in school so long, it was like a shock to the system.

Interviewee I remarked:

At first I felt really dumb because I knew that was stuff I should've known... I was really overwhelmed, really overwhelmed... it was just really overwhelming.

Interviewee J mentioned:

I was nervous, but just being out of school for so long, my skills weren't that good... Well, I was nervous. I've been nervous through the whole process... I was nervous and my fear of the first day... I think, before I started college, I just had the fear of college, that I wouldn't be able to do

it, that I wasn't smart enough... Since I didn't do so good in high school, I thought I couldn't do that good in college.

Age Related Problems. Age related problems had an impact on the survey respondents (50 percent) and the students interviewed (50 percent). Survey respondents noted, "not being in a learning environment like RSCC in over 20 years, big adjustment, new experience, big age difference with other students," "I have forgot a lot of information: good study skills, basic, developmental," "I require more study time, which results in about three hours of sleep, because it takes more time for information to sink in, and I can only study after 9:00 when the kids are in bed," "being out of school for 20+ years takes time to learn to study again," "At 42 I certainly have less energy than at 22," "not remembering lots of things learned when in school," "having a hard time comprehending things," "took a while for me to comprehend," "trying to get back into a school state of mind," "not knowing how to use the computer," and, "not able to remember good study skills." Survey respondents also wrote, "being an older student," "no energy at times," "It had been 30 years since I was in school," "have forgotten a lot of things over the years," "I'm not as sharp as I used to be," "takes a while sometimes for me to comprehend certain things," "slower about getting things done," "age," and, "forgetting things from high school."

Interviewee D stated:

Not just the English but all of it, especially being out of school for 20 years, really was kind of difficult, especially the math... I was in ninth grade when I took algebra. I don't remember it, and I probably didn't have a very good grade in it then.

Interviewee C said:

I guess it's just a matter of not realizing how hard it would be for me to remember things and to catch on to things... And I've heard a lot of people in general talking about even in their work-studies or with the jobs that they have, as they get older and start going back and getting more education, it's harder to learn things. That is just part of life. And so it has taken me a lot longer to read something and remember it and go on. We've heard that you let your brain get lazy, and I had been in a position in a business that my parents owned where I didn't have to sit down and think about a lot. And so I felt like my brain did get lazy. And now I'm exercising it again, and it's getting real swollen.

Interviewee F remarked:

I'm learning things that I really knew, but it's been a 30 year gap in between there, and I need to be refreshed.

Interviewee I noted:

I felt I could have done better. There were a lot of things I had forgotten.

Interviewee J revealed:

Just being out of school for so long, my skills weren't that good.

Other Responsibilities. Fifty-eight percent of the survey respondents and 60 percent of the students interviewed mentioned other responsibilities as a barrier to their educations. Survey respondents noted, "finding time to study," "It is much harder at an older age because of many more responsibilities," "I don't have enough time," "too many other things to remember (my classes, appointments, kids' classes, babysitter, sporting

events, homework),” “shopping,” “I’m in PTO at school and help with fund raisers and do volunteer work, such as book fairs, copying every Tuesday,” and, “finding time to study and do everything else I’m committed to.” Survey respondents also wrote, “more responsibility,” “outside responsibilities,” “time management,” “I have to put my priorities in order,” “insufficient time on hand (I wish I could make it a 37 hour day),” “time (enough hours in a day),” “no extra time to study,” “not a lot of free time to study,” “juggling work, family, and school,” “finding time to do homework, housework and work all at the same time and still keep my sanity,” “not enough time in the day,” and, “too many other activities that are going on in my life.”

Interviewee D said:

Once you get to college, you have responsibilities. You don’t have people coming after you, so you have to take the initiative to do things.

Interviewee C stated:

Maybe that is with the million other things going on in my mind, like a little girl who is doing homework and everything else.

Interviewee D revealed:

The volunteer work that I do on the side, which I’ve dropped a lot of it considerably.

Interviewee G remarked:

I’ve had to totally rearrange my time as far as, you know, using my time wisely. In eight years that I’ve been out of school, I never had to worry about going home and doing homework or when to do... or when a project was due, you know, this and that. But now I have to sit down and think,

“Well, I have to do this work then, so I can turn it in by a certain day, and I have to do this project, so I can turn it in by a certain day.” And that’s just something that’s been actually hard on me, trying to get used to that.

Interviewee H said:

I have more responsibilities than kids coming straight out of high school.

Interviewee I stated:

More responsibility... a lot more responsibility.

Previous Bad Experience with School. A previous bad experience with school was cited as a barrier to their educations by 4 percent of the survey respondents and 60 percent of the students interviewed. One survey respondent wrote, “I was a slow learner... I was mostly in IEP classes.”

Interviewee C stated:

I did start college the fall after I graduated from high school. I just didn’t stick with it. I was more interested in getting married.

Interviewee E stated:

I would say it (high school) was somewhat of an unsuccessful time because I didn’t really have the motivation to do what I should have done to have better grades.

Interviewee B revealed:

I quit school in tenth grade... because I didn’t think that education counted; it didn’t matter. I could get a job doing whatever I thought I wanted to do. I went and got my GED, went to [name of a community college]. I went there for two years, and that whole time I got zero

credits... I partied too much... When I was going to [name of a community college] back in '88, it was more... I was in with the kids, what I call them now. I was in that little clique, and I didn't do very good in that clique because I partied too much.

Interviewee G remarked:

Well, like in high school, it was all I could do to get by. Because I didn't care if I did the work or not, you know. As long as I made a "D," that's all I cared about. If one of my friends said, "Hey, let's go do something," if I had something to do, I would push it off to the side and I'd go have fun with my friends. And that's been a lot of my problem. Even now, I have trouble with that. Not as bad because I know what needs to be done now, but I used to be... it was just awful... Back then I thought, "I'll do it later. If I can't do it now, it doesn't matter." I remember in some of my algebra classes in high school I thought, "I'm never going to need this when I get out of school, so why bother with it?" And so I didn't. As long as I passed with a "D," that's all that mattered. You know, I barely graduated from high school because of that attitude.

Interviewee I said:

A negative thing is that when I was in high school, I ended up, I got pregnant at 16, so I had to quit school. The counselor that I had encouraged me to quit school, and she kind of put it in terms that... that's the only thing I would be good for, that I needed to quit because I couldn't get an education with a child.

Interviewee J stated:

In high school I was just there for the social aspect. I really didn't make good grades. So that was one thing that was kind of an obstacle for me because since I didn't do so good in high school, I thought I couldn't do that good in college... I just didn't apply myself in high school.

Problems Interacting with Others. Problems interacting with others had an impact on the survey respondents (21 percent) and the students interviewed (60 percent). Survey respondents noted, "have nothing in common," "Most of the students are young with no children," "Their reasons for being here are different from mine," "Levels of motivation and priorities are different," "While in groups to do activities they don't give any feedback or input," "They think because you are older you have all the answers," "They always want you to be the talker of the group," "They always ask to see the homework because they didn't do it," "They see no connection that you must study to get good grades," "They only do enough to pass," "They do not want to study," "They are always complaining that they have too much work and no time for leisure activities," and, "They are always worried about what's going on outside of the classroom instead of inside." Survey respondents also wrote, "not in the partying stage," "I'm not looking for a man," "I'm a loner," "social life," "younger students understanding class better," "Since I am a little older than most of the students, I was worried about not 'fitting in,'" and, "I was worried about not being able to relate to anyone about anything."

Interviewee A stated:

Not that they ever made me feel left out, they always included me. I excluded myself.

Interviewee B said:

I felt lonely because the younger kids have their own little cliques. And then, I just don't communicate with them well. So I was just by myself all the time, which I still am... Not being able to meet people... yeah, because I don't initiate.

Interviewee G remarked:

You know, when I came here, I remember being at the bottom of the stairs and seeing all these people congregated together... just chit-chatting back and forth, back and forth. And I thought, "You know, I wish I was relaxed enough to get with a whole bunch of people,"... but that first week, oh no. All I could do was think about getting to class, and after my class was over, I was back out in the parking lot sitting in my truck by myself.

Interviewee H revealed:

Not really knowing what to expect from the younger students, how they would perceive me, being an older student.

Interviewee I stated:

With me, I've been a housewife. So I've been at home. So I have to get out and start interacting with other people, and that was a biggie.

Interviewee J said:

Well, I didn't... there are a bunch of young kids here, but I just thought I wasn't going to fit in here.

Job Responsibilities. Forty-six percent of the survey respondents and 20 percent of the students interviewed mentioned job responsibilities as a barrier to their educations.

Survey respondents noted, “We own a landscaping business in which I manage the office portion,” and, “I still have to work to provide some income.” Survey respondents also wrote, “busy work schedule,” “work full time,” “work on call every other week,” “work,” “I have a job and have to work,” and, “I have to work 40 hours each week.”

Interviewee C said:

Trying to do a job, those kind of things probably got in the way.

Interviewee H stated:

I have a job 40 hours a week with [name of a hospital]. That’s how I get paid.

Financial Difficulties. Financial difficulties were cited as a barrier by 46 percent of the survey respondents and 20 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, “having the funds to pay for tuition and books,” and, “I had to quit my job.” Survey respondents also wrote, “financial,” “having to pay rent on a house big enough for everyone and car payments, a lot of bills that teenagers don’t have,” “money,” “cost,” “paying bills,” “Being an older single woman I depend totally on financial aid to attend school,” and, “My husband and I both work and make decent money but have a mortgage, truck payment, utilities, daycare... even with a Pell grant covering most of my tuition but none on my books, money is tight!”

Interviewee B said:

Money... and they don’t offer, or I don’t know how to get, more financial aid.

Interviewee F stated:

Without financial aid, I couldn’t go to school.

Interviewee H remarked:

And also another obstacle has been the financial part. My parents would help me all they could, but my mother is still working full time. My father is retired; he's 70. So he's only working part time. So it takes both of their incomes to meet their bills. Plus, my younger brother is still very dependent on them. So I applied for a Pell grant, and I got a partial Pell grant, but my tuition still was right at \$300. My part that I... plus all my books, and the gas money, eating. It's really put a strain on things... I would say most kids... their parents, especially in this day and age, are expected to help with college expenses, and a lot of students still live at home. They don't have that mortgage. They don't have those utility bills, and they're more in a comfort zone financially than I am.

Transportation Problems. Transportation problems had an impact on the survey respondents (four percent) and the students interviewed (10 percent). One survey respondent noted, "getting my classes all at one campus."

Interviewee E said:

I have to get up extra early to be able to get to school because I live further out than I did before... And I have to make sure that I have everything with me because if I don't, I can't really just turn around and go back. I'll miss my first class.

Institutional Barriers. Thirty-three percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed mentioned institutional barriers as a barrier to their educations. Survey respondents wrote, "being a part-time student," "I am not good with

self taught classes,” “Some of my class hours were a little bit too much at first,” “too many papers to write,” “not enough night classes offered,” “tutoring flexibility,” “total time needed to finish,” and, “teacher who doesn’t correct attendance---could interfere with financial aid.”

Interviewee F said:

Maybe the problem about attendance, you know, where the... Like one of my teachers didn’t record that I had been in school and hadn’t missed a day of her class, and it was on there that I hadn’t been in school since September 19... or September 9. And it could’ve messed up my financial aid.

Interviewee G stated:

But I had... there was one teacher in particular that would, just to get his point across, he would holler. I would just jump out of my skin every time he would do that, and I thought, “My goodness, if this is how the whole semester is going to be, I’m not going to make it in this class”... I’ve noticed... I’ve missed quite a few days of school, and trying to get in contact with some of my teachers is near impossible. I have e-mailed and... I’m not one for talking on the phone, so usually I e-mail my teachers, and half the time, and I know they get the e-mail, but half the time they say, “No, I didn’t get it.” Or if I e-mail them and they do get the e-mail, they don’t respond to me. And so that makes it hard on me... And trying to find someone in their office at a particular time is... I know everyone’s busy, but for somebody to say, “I’ll be in my office at this

time,” and they’re not there when you go, I think something needs to be done about that. If one teacher is going to say that they’ll be there, then they should be.

Interviewee H responded:

The negative... it was done on computer, and if you hit the wrong button, you can’t go back. On the first essay, I hit the wrong button, and there were only two essays. If it had been done on a paper form, I believe I could have done a lot better on it... Right. That’s something I had never done. And also, I graduated high school in ’89, and a lot of the stuff was in my mind. I knew how to do it, but it was buried so far back, it was a struggle going through the test. I wonder if they had had a ... even just a booklet of, you know, this is what the test will be like, I could have prepared a little better. But just going in knowing that you’re going to take a test, not having any clue really what will be on it, there is no way to prepare.

Interviewee J revealed:

I did have a problem getting one-on-one attention with the financial or the admissions office, and I just felt like they didn’t give me the time I needed, and I wasn’t 18. I’m 34, and this was a big step for me. I just needed more one-on-one time... And also, if they had like... I know there’s an office in there, but I just spoke to a girl over the counter. You know, when you’re talking about financial aid and you’ve got other

students around you, you can't really talk at ease in front of the other person.

Race. Four percent of the survey respondents mentioned race as a barrier to their educations. One survey respondent wrote, "my background (Hispanic female). I am a minority."

Strengths

Motivation. Motivation was cited as a strength that enabled them to overcome the barriers they have to face in order to be successful in college by 63 percent of the survey respondents and 100 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, "I want a good job," "more money," "desire to finish school," "for me to be an example to my kids," "the support of my spouse," "I have a goal to finish by 2002," "certainly more determined to do my very best," "I know why I am here and what my goals are," "I want to learn," "I want to be educated," "I want to better my life and my kids' lives," "I want to show my kids you need an education," "I want to help other people by working in the medical field," "I want to achieve something for myself," "I know I have to finish school for a better job to take care of my family," "I am interested in learning no matter how long it takes to get the information stored," and, "knowing that education is important if I want to move up the ladder of success." Survey respondents also wrote, "I am a strong and self-motivated person," "motivation," "tired of struggling," "the need to be successful," "determination to succeed," "love for my children to have a better life," "because I want a better paycheck," "my determination," "knowing what I want to do after completing school," "desire to make more money," "the desire to learn," "the need to be independent," and, "a strong desire to get my degree."

Interviewee D said:

To get a better career... A lot of things have changed in 10 years. I came back just to better myself and to get a better education... To make more money, to be able to have a job where I can go to work as opposed to when I was in retail sales management. When you are a manager in a business setting like retail, you have to... If somebody gets sick, you work it. You may get one set salary and work 60 to 80 hours or 48 to 60 hours. I would like a job where it is 40 hours a week, maybe a little bit more but no more than that, and with good benefits and a good retirement plan.

Interviewee E stated:

I want to be able to make money and support my family... Even though I am starting a little bit later than I would like to, I know that I am going to be able to succeed and finish my degree, more than if I had started at an earlier age.

Interviewee B remarked:

To make more money... because I didn't do it when I was younger... am realizing I don't want to be just an LPN... I got on the internet and applied for some scholarships. I applied for the Developmental Study scholarship... I found out on the web that there were some scholarships I could apply for. I went ahead and did my financial aid early, so I'll get a check next year.

Interviewee C revealed:

Mostly so I could earn more income... Experience doesn't pay the bills... So I just felt like I needed an education so that I can increase my income earnings... As a matter of fact, I guess she [her daughter] was also one of the biggest reasons I wanted to go back to school because I saw her eagerness to learn and me not feeling comfortable with even helping her with her homework at times. That was certainly something I needed to do, as well... I'm certainly seeing... even as I get older, and I'm 42, in my 30's I worked for an insurance company, and we were on the telephone selling insurance, and I was one of the highest producers, and everything I did was top notch, but I could never move up because the kids that were younger than me had educations. No matter how much better I was and capable of what I was doing, they were the ones that got the promotions. Again, we go back to that. So just that knowledge certainly makes a big difference... I know I just have a huge desire to know it.

Interviewee A acknowledged:

I think the main reason for me is I always wanted to experience what my other brothers and sisters have experienced because they are always talking about what it was like in college, and they've always went beyond college... I think it was to see if I could do it... I think the thing that just pushed me was being the sole supporter. It's like I know there's no other answer. Being the sole supporter of children, you need an education. So that was the main reason for me... It has a lot to do with your motivation... very motivated. I know what my goals are. My goals are

very flexible. I've given myself six years, but if not... I've given myself six years, but I want to do it in three and a half. Motivation is determination. You have to have that in you... I think the greatest difference is the level of motivation. We know what it is like to work for five dollars an hour trying to support a family... That is another motivation factor. I don't want to depend on any man for anything... I want to learn. It's like, "What am I going to learn today? What different?" Somebody is going to give me a different meaning of how I looked at things before.

Interviewee F said:

After 30 years of working in factories... two years ago my back and knee locked up on me at work, and I had to have surgery. So I can't work in factories anymore, so I need an education, so I can get a different kind of job... I realize that an education is important and that in order to get a good job, you need an education... persistence, motivation.

Interviewee G stated:

I decided that I wanted to make something of my life. I was tired of working dead-end jobs and getting no pay... Well, I know... I'm certain of what I want to do, and a lot of 18-year-olds are saying, "Well, I don't know what I'm going to major in. I haven't decided yet." I know what I want to do, and I know what I need to do to get there. So I think that's a big difference, big, big because younger students are so... they just have no clue really. They haven't been out and lived their life... I've worked

so many jobs that... well, like the last job I had, I worked production, and I stayed down on my back all the time because I was lifting so many things, and I thought, "I can't do this the rest of my life. I've got to make something of myself." So that was another reason I decided to come back to school... Well, anybody at any age I would encourage them to come to school period because without an education, you just don't get anywhere. I mean, like I, myself, had a personal experience that kind of drove me to come back, but other people just need to figure out what they want to do with their life and then try to take a step forward to further that... Don't wait until you're 25 or 26 to decide what you want to do. People don't want to hire older people, especially business executives.

Interviewee H remarked:

Because in the health information field, the field that I work in, we're becoming more automated, and it's going to get to the point where if you don't have a degree of some type, you'll basically be out of a job... I believe, really, it's better because this late in my life, I am more focused on my goals. I've heard several students talk about... "Well, if I don't like this, I can just quit." I can't quit. I have to finish this. I have to finish my school. I have to get that degree. I have to have a good job. I have a daughter who hopefully I will be putting through college in the future, and I want to make sure she doesn't have to go through the hardships that I've had to go through. So I know that I cannot fail this. I cannot back out. I cannot turn away.

Interviewee I revealed:

I've been out of the work field for over 18 years, and I knew that if I was going to try to go back, I had to have a skill in order to get a good paying job.

Interviewee J acknowledged:

At this point in my life, I'm single and I have two kids to take care of, so I needed to further my education to make more money.

Personal Characteristics. Personal characteristics had a positive impact on survey respondents (71 percent) and the students interviewed (70 percent). Survey respondents noted, "the positive attitude to reach my goals," "time management," "I'm organized," "I schedule my time wisely," "I am committed and focused," "I know what's important," "have good organizational skills that help with time management," "Good communications skills allow me the confidence to ask more when I am not certain of something," "I am very ambitious," "organizational skills, being able to do several things at once," "time management: plan when to do certain things, pick kids up from school, study, clean house, grocery shopping, appointments, etc.," and, "being independent and open-minded." Survey respondents also wrote, "I try to stay focused," "I don't listen to pessimistic remarks," "honesty," "punctuality," "will power," "able to survive on little sleep," "outgoing," "learning better time management skills," "stubbornness --- refusal to work anywhere where I have to wear a name tag that says, 'Hi, my name is,'" "good attitude," "more stable," "I am able to adjust well to new environments," "I try to manage my time better now because I have so many things to do," "I am very determined to

succeed,” “will power,” “hard headed,” “determination,” “somewhat of a good memory,” and, “attitude --- I told myself at the beginning, ‘I will make it.’”

Interviewee E said:

It makes you more confident to be able to take the college courses.

Interviewee B stated:

If you had asked me a year ago to write an essay for that developmental essay, why I deserved that, I never would have done that because I don’t do rejection well. So I’ve overcome that.

Interviewee A remarked:

I’m not afraid if I need help. I’m the first one to say I need it. And I think that’s the difference between the older students and... We’re not afraid to ask questions about whether or not we need it.

Interviewee D acknowledged:

I felt very, if anything, for being home as long as I had been, coming back to school made me feel better about myself... I found, and I know night time is the worst time to study, but I have found that after everybody goes to bed between 10:00 and 11:00, that is when I can get the most done or early in the morning when everybody is gone or asleep.

Interviewee C claimed:

I felt like to go forward well in college, after 25 years, I felt like I needed to start back at the basics... There again, I just felt very confident that I needed the fundamentals... Excited, I was very excited. I wasn’t intimidated. I didn’t feel that way.

Interviewee G said:

Well, even when I went to [name of a community college], I did the same thing. I was pretty... I was a "slacker." But now, if my boyfriend says, "Let's go do this or that," I usually just say, "No, I don't want to or I just... I have other things to do"... Well, I've been discouraged several times, just on my part, because like when I miss a day, I may fall behind or something, and with that a lot of people just don't come back to school because they think, "Well, I'm behind. I can't catch up." You can catch up if you really want to, and you shouldn't drop out... Well, this doesn't really have anything to do with school, but I exercise. I go walking with a friend, or I try to go walking with my mother, but she won't. Or I lift weights at home. Just anything to get the... you just feel like you're going to blow up. Well, I lift weights when I feel like that just so I can take that strength out on something... That's with anything; you have to develop stress management, or you'll go crazy, especially here. I know one student I have a class with, I heard him say the other day, "I just don't know how I'm going to deal with all of this. I just can't handle it." And I thought, "It can't be that bad where you can't handle what's going on." I mean, change something else. Make something else easier. In turn, what you're doing now will be easier, if that makes sense... People just don't realize they're wasting time, but they are getting older. If you set your mind to it, you can do it. When I hear people saying they don't think they can do it, I'm like, "You best think again!"

Interviewee H stated:

I started, a couple of months before I started class, kind of adjusting my body to getting up earlier and even staying up later, so I'm functioning on about two hours less sleep at night than what I used to get, but I try to get to work usually around 5:00 or 5:30 a.m... I told my husband up front, "I want to go back to school. It's going to take this many years, approximately this much money. To do it, I need your help, especially with our daughter. If you're not going to help me, tell me now. There's no stopping in the middle. Once I start, that is it." You have to be confident in your goals and in yourself that you can do it. But at the same time you also have to realize that once you start, is there really a way to stop? So before you start the process, make sure that it is definitely what you want to do. And if that's what you want to do, go for it, and don't let anything stand in your way. There are always different jobs, if you have to take a different job. If your boss won't work with you and your schedule, you can find something for just two or three years to get through school. It will be worth it in the long run.

Maturity. Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents and 90 percent of the students interviewed mentioned maturity as a strength that enabled them to overcome the barriers they faced and thus be successful in college. Survey respondents noted, "maturity--- I feel more confident because of personal experiences," "Being a mother you learn how to juggle several things at once," "I've already experienced what they have

not,” “The more information I learn in school, the more I know, making me stronger,” and, “more mature level.”

Interviewee B said:

I have to study harder. I expect more of myself.

Interviewee E stated:

I always like to take things step by step, and I don't like to overwhelm myself, so being able to take it allows me to reiterate all the information that I ... that may have been lost all this time... In actuality, you tend to do better in school, for some reason, as an older student than you do as younger because you have more responsibility and you have less distractions in a way. You don't have other students distracting you because you have your focus and everything. Even though you have your life distractions, you don't have the play and nonchalant distractions you would as a young person.

Interviewee D responded:

This is where I need to be, and I'm really learning a lot from this class... I thought, “You know, if I haven't done an essay, I really don't want to go into Composition I without knowing exactly what I need to do,” and now that the semester is a little more than halfway over, I have learned so much just in punctuation that I had forgotten. And what is a fragment? Subject agreement? I've learned a lot. With commas... I do too many commas. And I capitalize. When I'm writing, I just capitalize whenever I want or whatever I feel, and it is not correct. So that is going to help me when I do

get out of school in the business community because they want great oral and written skills, so this is going to help me a lot... It's positive for me as far as I feel better about myself. I feel I'm more mature. I can do these classes and feel better, and I feel like I'm more settled, that I can pay the attention that these classes need as opposed to right out of high school.

Interviewee A revealed:

I'm glad I'm taking this class. It's helping me out a lot. I still have a lot to learn, but it's good... It's like you know what your limitations are and what your abilities are. I know my weaknesses are in math. I knew my weaknesses, so it didn't upset me. It didn't bother me. It was actually a relief to know I was in these developmental classes because I need it... We know we have to live on our own. We don't have anybody to depend on. We are responsible for people. We have people depending on us. That is the bottom line. We have responsibilities. I'm not saying a lot of these kids don't because they do have kids. They are very young, but they do have children. But they live with their parents, and they always have somebody to fall back on... You look at everything differently than you did in high school. They make me laugh. I can really laugh because those are not my kids. And I don't have to worry about if they are doing good in school. So I can come here and laugh at them, and I don't mean to do that, but you know they have funny stories. They actually give me something in return that I was always afraid to say things about what life was like or what you're going through. I was always afraid, as an adult, to do this.

These kids, I have to say, are not afraid to say what is on their minds, and I give them a lot of credit.

Interviewee C voiced:

Just life experiences, I guess that sounds so vague, but it really is...

Knowing what the real world is like and knowing where you are going to benefit and knowing the confidence that you need or having the education so you will have the confidence... It's interesting, going back to another class that I had, that the people who had the highest grade point average halfway through the semester were all mothers... And you learn. You certainly learn then how to juggle many things, although I said that was an obstacle, and it still is. I still think you learn those things as you become a mother and a wife, and a lot of them are married and have children. You start learning how to do so many other things at the same time and just the importance of it.

Interviewee F said:

It didn't bother me because I wanted developmental classes... to refresh my memory... Yes, I think it's more positive because I realize the benefits of education now.

Interviewee G stated:

I was actually glad that I was in it because in high school I never did well at writing essays or just... I never did well at all writing anything like that, and I was glad that I was placed in the developmental writing... I just thought, "Wait, oh gosh, I'm going to have to write papers." But then

again, I thought, “Well, I’m going to have to anyway, but in Comp I it’s going to be harder, so why not learn how now?”

Interviewee H responded:

I was kind of disappointed in myself that I had not done better, but at the same time knowing that I had been out of school for so long, I knew that I needed a refresher on a lot of the things before I got into a more demanding class. With the first year, taking my developmental courses and prerequisites before I start the [name of a] program next fall, it gave me a chance to do my catch up work this time around and have time to actually do the hard work later on... I believe with age and maturity comes an acceptance and understanding of yourself, what you can expect from yourself, to be more tolerant with yourself, and just accept things, not sit around and whine about something that Mom and Dad can’t change for you. You’ve got to change it yourself.

Interviewee J revealed:

Well, just that it put me in the classes I needed to be in. You know, we found out what I needed to review... I thought that I needed to review before I went on because I would struggle and not make good grades in the higher classes... I wouldn’t have taken it as seriously as I do now. Since there’s been such a gap, I do take it very seriously. I realize that you need a college education today.

Commitment. Commitment was cited as being a strength that helped them to overcome the barriers they faced and thus enabled them to be successful in college by 58

percent of the survey respondents and 60 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, “I have learned to adjust to less sleep knowing my future will be better after I get out of school,” “I can survive on five hours sleep,” “being able to say I will do something and follow through,” “sticking with and working through hard situations that life sometimes throws at you,” “not having to work so that I have the time,” and, “I know what is expected of me, and I have people counting on me to finish.” Survey respondents also wrote, “I look at these barriers as reasons for reaching a goal,” “I am goal oriented and ambitious,” “persistence,” “being prepared for class,” “have made school number one priority,” “I know what needs to be done and when to get it done,” “I have learned not to put things off anymore. I’m not getting any younger,” “desire,” “my decision to return to school,” “the will to become a better and smarter person,” “my own will to succeed (for my children),” “I had to put my priorities in order,” “Once I make a decision, I stick to it,” and, “very serious about an education.”

Interviewee D said:

But then again you do have the barriers that you run up against which are hard, but you just have to be able to manage your time as best as you can.

Interviewee C stated:

I was doing other things, and I have had to stop those other things. I was trying to do too many other things. I had a couple of part-time jobs, and I just realized I couldn’t find any way to do them.

Interviewee F revealed:

I spend most of my time studying and doing my homework... I see a lot of them that don’t turn in their homework on time, they’re not there to

take their tests, they're absent, and I try to make sure all of my homework is turned in on time, be there for tests, and I never miss a day... to attend everyday and turn in all the homework and be there for class and tests, etc... I've worked on quality jobs before, like in quality control. I like for everything to be perfect, so maybe I expect too much of myself, but I push myself because I want everything perfect.

Interviewee G responded:

Well, I think I take it more seriously than a lot of 18 year olds because I know that when I first got out of high school, all I wanted to do was party. I didn't care about school. As a matter of fact, when I first got out of high school, I was registered to go to [name of a university], and I backed out at the last minute just because I wasn't ready, and I knew if I had went, I would've failed anyway... And another thing is I'm usually so tired after doing all my work that I just don't feel like doing anything. So, pretty much, my schoolwork just... it consumes me... Other than my family, schoolwork is my top priority... You can always find out from a classmate or a teacher what you need to do to make up. There's no sense... you pay \$900.00 to come here. What's the point in going half the semester and then quitting? That's just, to me, it's not sensible... Prioritize what needs to be done first, whether it be family, schoolwork, or work. The way I see it is if you're going to school, there's not really a job so important that you should flunk out of school just for that job. That's

the way I see it, but, you know, that's why I'm not working right now because this schoolwork is coming first... So I just don't see the point in getting so bombarded with everything that you just quit. You say, "Well, I can't do it, so I'm just going to quit." There's just no point in that.

Interviewee H acknowledged:

And get some work done before class. That way, I don't have as much to make up on the weekends, which takes time away from my daughter. And just learned to set my priorities... what's most important to me, which is my family. But I also know that as much as my family is important, keeping my job is important to support my family, so school is important. I just have to... what comes first... That morning I got up about three. I finally gave up trying to sleep. I went downstairs, so my husband could get some sleep from where I'd rolled in the bed all night. I decided I might as well go on in to work and get something done. I came to class, got to class, got to the school an hour before my classes started because I wanted to make sure I could find my way around.

Interviewee J said:

With my case, luckily, I don't have to work a whole lot, so that's one advantage. I just manage my time. I know that I have to study, and I stay after school and study. After my kids go to bed, I study. So I just manage my time very well... I just study a lot and apply myself... You just need to really manage your time because it will take studying, a lot of studying.

Interaction with Others. Interaction with others had a positive impact on the survey respondents (29 percent) and the students interviewed (30 percent). Survey respondents noted, “get along well with others, no matter what age, race, religion, etc.,” “not so worried about peer acceptance,” “able to interact with all age groups,” “support of friends,” “I get along with almost anyone,” “more stable in life (social),” and “getting along with different people.”

Interviewee B said:

With the kids and the studying, they know now that this is number one. Schoolwork is my job. Their job is their schoolwork, and they don’t bother me as much. When I’m sitting at the table, they better leave me alone. This is very important to Mommy.

Interviewee C stated:

I did seem to go toward the people that I knew were older and sort of buddied up. However, in one of my classes, I’ve become real good friends with a girl who is very young... I know, just in talking to other students, that’s where I’ve gotten my information.

Interviewee D revealed:

Of course there are several people in my own age group and several people I know even from [name of a town] and even from my church who come here. Sometimes you see someone in the hall, and you are surprised... But I went out on my own and talked to people about what I should do and what I should take and which way I should pursue where I’m going to make the best money, which is the best position for

advancement, and where I'm going to be happiest with the kind of person I am. Totally turning around and going into the medical field, that would be so different for me from what... because I'm a people person. Like medical transcription, I've even considered, but I could not sit at a computer eight hours a day and listen to something and just type. I have to be interactive. That is just the way I am.

Work Experience. Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed mentioned work experience as a strength that enabled them to be successful in college. Survey respondents noted, "After 20 years of being in the workplace I see how important an education is," "work experience," "try to make time away from work," "encouraging coworkers," and, "support from work. My boss is willing to do anything to help me, scheduling, advice, moral support, etc."

Interviewee C said:

I've worked off and on through the years, and I have a lot of experience... I sold insurance... being in the workforce and competing with people... Just being in the workforce, I've seen the difference in an education and not having one.

Interviewee E stated:

I've also had the experience of working between school, and so I've learned a lot more responsibility and have more experience and knowledge. Therefore, I am able to be more successful in college, unlike when I went in college right after high school and was very unsuccessful.

Interviewee H revealed:

My boss is absolutely wonderful. She's the one that really encouraged me to go back right now because we only found out last week that within a year the jobs in our department will be cut by a third. But she started encouraging me before that because she could see it coming, even though she didn't have the facts yet... to go on and get what education I could, so she's been real good to work around my schedule.

Interviewee J remarked:

I think the advantage is that I've been out there in the workforce, and I know what's available to me out there, which isn't a whole lot at this point. My priorities are different. My education is very important now.

Family Support. Family support was cited as a strength that enabled them to be successful in college by 17 percent of the survey respondents and 30 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, "I have good family support," "support of family," "I have a strong support group at home," "family saying they know I can do it," "kids see how important an education is," "make time from home schedule," "have... family help with children," "I am 'settled' in my home life," "have support from family," "encouraging husband," "encouraging children," "encouragement from my children," "support from my husband," "already settled down," "I don't have to take time off to start a family," "great support system," and, "family support. My mother is my rock."

Interviewee C said:

As far as she [her daughter] is concerned, she is probably my biggest help. She is in third grade, and she loves to learn... She is always excited about what I am doing. "I'm doing algebra too, Mom. Are you doing

algebra?”... Anytime that I say I am studying, she never has a problem.

She is real encouraging... I have a very large family who is very helpful.

Interviewee A stated:

But it worked out good because I never realized how much of an influence I am to them [her children], like they are very curious to see what I am doing. They think it's funny that we're doing the same things in school --- verbs and nouns and putting commas... And I get them involved in my work to give me spelling words, even though they can't pronounce them, but I think it's important because I can't pronounce them. But I involve my children very much in my homework because I am involved in their homework. It's a family team. They [her brothers and sisters] are the ones that took care of us. Having their examples and they're good motivation too. My brother comes over and brings me all this English composition stuff to carry around.

Interviewee I revealed:

I think, for me, that's the most important thing, having a support group... I've got family. My parents are supporting me, my husband sometimes, but I've got the support of my kids, and that is really just backing me up. It makes me feel good. When I pass a test and I go home and I'm excited and I tell them, they are excited with me, and it makes me feel like I can do this.

Patience. Having patience had a positive impact on the survey respondents (17 percent) and the students interviewed (10 percent). Survey respondents noted, “knowing

it takes time to learn,” “I pace myself and allow time to rest before next battle,” “realize it takes time to acquire knowledge and skills,” and, “patience.”

Interviewee G said:

And, you know, a lot of... I’m not working right now just for the simple fact that I need more time to sit and study my lessons because I just can’t cram it all in and then expect to pass a test or be ready for something. I have to sit and think about and think about it and think about it.

Religion. Seventeen percent of the survey respondents mentioned religion as a strength that enabled them to overcome the barriers they have to face in order to be successful in college. Survey respondents noted, “my faith in God,” “I depend on me, God, and no one else,” “faith,” and, “my faith in God. When things are getting difficult, He pulls me through.”

Institutions

Hiring Personnel. Hiring more qualified personnel was mentioned as a way that Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college by 38 percent of the survey respondents and 70 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, “computer tutors --- someone who will help me learn to use the computer for school,” “Advisors should contact the students more periodically,” “Make sure the older people know for every hour you have, about two hours study time at home,” “I did not meet anyone in counseling who is even familiar with my situation,” “It would be good if there were more counselors available for helping with any special needs,” “Counselors need to be trained better to answer questions and know what credits will transfer,” “I’ve noticed that a lot of kids talk about their home

lives. Much of it is negative, mainly about substance abuse of some kind. I think they would become more focused if something other than career counseling were available,” and, “tutors available more often, especially for math.” Survey respondents also wrote, “a great advisor,” and, “I think the Financial Aid office needs to have one on one sessions, in a private office, with older students. I had a hard time getting the individual attention and advice that I needed.”

Interviewee D stated:

I just wish that I had known a little more about the ins and outs of financial aid, counseling, and finding an advisor. I just got a letter in the mail, as a matter of fact, who my advisor is, and this is the ninth week of classes.

Interviewee C remarked:

Well, I think it is interesting, we’re more than halfway now, and I just now got a letter in the mail about who my advisor is. So I guess it would have been nice to have that early in the semester, and then maybe talking to her, she would have been able to encourage me or help me talk to other people who have suggestions on ways that could help me. So I’m not saying that it is not there, as far as help, but I haven’t been able to seek out and find the people that could possibly help me find ways to overcome these obstacles... A couple of times when I’ve approached some people, I think the Counseling Center, I don’t know, there weren’t enough people in there to feel like I wasn’t being rushed and moved on to the next person.

Interviewee F said:

And maybe there should be some connection between the school and the students to let them know there's a problem with their attendance. Mine was a mistake, but...

Interviewee G revealed:

A lot of them [college personnel] act like they really do care, but they need to... the communication, the doors need to be open wider.

Interviewee J acknowledged:

Maybe just periodically throughout the semester, have a little one-on-one contact, but mainly what I had a problem with was before. I think that when you're speaking to someone in admissions and you're thinking about going back to college, that is a huge step for someone at my age with children and other responsibilities. I think that would've been the best thing for me. That's the most important aspect, just before you enroll... a periodic one-on-one. You know, how are you doing, are there any problems that I could help you with... When they call and speak to someone in admissions, they need to... if they feel like they're not getting the time they need, call back. You know, I just felt like I was bothering them, and I wouldn't call with all of my questions. But they need to just call. If you have a question, you call. If it's ten times a day, then it's ten times a day.

Childcare. Roane State Community College providing or assisting with childcare would have a positive impact on the survey respondents (46 percent) and the students interviewed (40 percent). Survey respondents noted, "sick bay childcare for students

with kids that are sick or out of school when they're in," "get a deal going with a childcare center to offer special discounts for students that are full-time," "daycare for night classes, especially if single," "daycare providing," and, "child care --- Often my kids are out of school when I am not. Other times my kids are sick and I cannot come to class, so what do I do? I might miss a quiz which I cannot make up. I can find some childcare on some occasions but not always." Survey respondents also wrote, "on site childcare," "have an in-school daycare for mothers with small children," "maybe start a childcare program," "on site daycare," "provide daycare," and, "having a daycare center on campus."

Interviewee E said:

As far as daycare, I know there are a lot of people who have problems with daycare, and if they had gotten together with people who do daycare or a daycare center that would offer students discounts and allow them to be able to bring them whenever their classes start, not early in the morning, and be able to pick them up right after class, that would be awesome for everyone. Even if they are out of school, an after school program that they usually have for older children. If they had that as an area for them to be able to come and bring them, and they can do their studying or whatever. And activities for older children who may not have school that day so that we could actually attend school and not miss our classes.

Interviewee A stated:

Have something, like even as a backup or something, or maybe a company of services that would only be for any type of childcare for students in school... I applied for... something has to be wrong for them to get in the Head Start program. Something really has to be wrong with your child. To me, if something could be done to where maybe Roane State could work at getting some type of childcare, maybe even at a discount. Or maybe some of these young people want to work part-time to keep our kids here.

Interviewee B remarked:

There are a lot of parents who come to school, and they have to figure out, “Well, what am I going to do with my kid? They have off today, and I have to go to school.” I have a great idea. They have that Early Childhood Education program here. They could have, not necessarily a daycare, but they do have to perform a lot of hours, the students in there, a lot of... well, they get paid, so it’s not really volunteer hours. They have to have a lot of hours with the children. And if they had a daycare here, then it would be onsite. They have to have the instructors come in and observe them, and that would be a lot easier here than going elsewhere. And since they have that program, it would be pretty cool if they had the kids to go with it. And I have three of them for them. Just for, not an everyday daycare, but like when school is closed but we’re open, bring your kids in. And still charge, but not an arm and a leg like the other daycares want.

Interviewee D revealed:

Okay, for example, you can't do anything about the kids getting sick and having to take off or anything that is going to happen in life like that, but like with the school schedules, they had a holiday, and we didn't for President's Day, and my Spring Break was last week, and their Spring Break is next week. I'm going to have to come in, do my classes, and as soon as I'm done at 12:25, go home. However, I would rather stay here until 2:00, as long as the computer lab is open, and do as much as I can get done in my flex classes... I don't know if it would be advisable for or even economically possible for Roane State, or even if the children would want to come while their parents are in school, but if they're a certain age, like I have a nine and an eleven year old, they are entertained very easily. You could put them in a computer lab, and they'll have a blast, you know. But, anyway, I think if we could do something for this age group, especially for single moms or moms that are married and have to have something to do. All of my family is in [name of a state], and my mother-in-law just can't do everything, and I don't want to ask her. Maybe if there was some way the college could work out, for example President's Day, when they didn't have to go to school and we did. If they could have been here doing something while I was in school, then I could have taken them to a movie in Oak Ridge right afterwards and not had to go home and do something. If there was some way we could do something, if it was economically feasible for the campus to do that... If there are people

here that are going into education with children, wouldn't that be good if they had a program where they were doing things with these children on those certain times? Yeah, if they could do something with the people who are going into the education program, maybe they could set it up, not like a daycare but children who are of school age. Maybe that would help them and us, also. And it wouldn't be an economic problem for the campus. It would help everybody.

Financial Assistance. Forty-two percent of the survey respondents and 30 percent of the students interviewed mentioned financial help as a way that Roane State Community College as an institution could enable them to be more successful in college. Survey respondents noted, "RSCC should have a small loan for students without so much red tape," "offer RSCC students discount tickets for community activities," "I am single, and there are so many aids available to assist single mothers. I wish Roane State would have more information regarding this," "information about scholarships," "maybe have a list of grants offered to older students," and, "longer grants for slow students who may take a longer time to learn algebra and anatomy." Survey respondents also wrote, "make school book cheaper," "school jobs," "cost of books lowered," "offer installments for cost of classes," and, "cheaper school books."

Interviewee C said:

Certainly, anywhere you are in life, finances is a burden. So I understand that there are a lot more things out there, and I think that is something that Roane State could certainly have done to help me in that area... I don't think it would be something that Roane State would have a hard time

finding if they just had the staff to research it out so that they know things are available because it is very time consuming. As much as I need it, getting out there and finding the time to go sit down and talk to someone and fill out papers and things like that, it is so overwhelming to me. So that could be something that Roane State could offer.

Interviewee A stated:

I still keep going to [name of a person] in financial aid. You're always going to need help with how to figure out those forms... Or at least a funding for just the students in school because even getting funding for that is difficult. I applied and got turned down because you make just enough but not enough... Do something because I know that sometimes you have to work within the schools if you get some type of grant, depending on what type of grant you get. Do something like that because that would really, really help out tremendously.

Special Programs. Providing special programs was mentioned as a way Roane State Community College as an institution could help them to be more successful in college by 38 percent of the survey respondents and 80 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, “have an orientation just for older students,” “have marriage counseling classes,” “have a class on parenting and time management, how these would go together,” “have more extracurricular activities,” “more certificate programs,” “learning and practicing better time management in school,” “caters to adult students,” “maybe have a special orientation for older students,” “help me prepare for the

future,” “help me be prepared for the work place,” “help me learn to write correctly,” and, “offer tutors at more flexible hours.”

Interviewee E said:

If they had an introductory for older students, too, then you would be able to meet some of the people that you might actually have class with, and then you could be more comfortable when you come the first day.

Interviewee C stated:

I guess it would be real interesting to see different areas that maybe people would even give you advice on how to do things. I don't know that there is any.

Interviewee D revealed:

If I'd known I was going to come back to school full-time and I had my Pell grant, I would have been more ready. So some of it is my fault, but some of it... I think Roane State could have done a little bit more to prepare.

Interviewee A proposed:

I wish you would have more of an open house to have tours, to be able to come in there with people. Right now the orientation you have is about registration and that kind of stuff. I would have felt more comfortable knowing what even the classrooms would look like, knowing in advance where the things were, things like that. I would have felt more comfortable knowing other things besides how to sign up. That, to me,

you're never going to figure out... You're always going to need help with scheduling classes. I just felt getting to know the school better in general.

Interviewee B remarked:

More of a big orientation... meeting your classmates... That way, you could know your study groups and start forming those, but I just don't take initiative on meeting people, I guess. And maybe if that was more of the introduction part... then it would be a lot easier to approach somebody and say, "Hi"... More orientation. When you do the first orientation, more information on different scholarships, not just for sports, which we don't do, but different orientation things about the financial aid... And then, when I had orientation, I didn't meet anybody who was in that room with me, except [name of a person], who is a counselor, and [name of a person], who is a counselor. And it would have been nice to have known some of the other names that I see around campus, just to say, "Hi, how have you been doing?"

Interviewee H acknowledged:

Especially for students coming in that have no idea what college is going to be like. I know we had an orientation, but three of my four classes are here in Oak Ridge. My orientation was done at the Knox County campus because it's closer to where I work, and so I had no idea where to find my classes. That's why I came in an hour early, to try to orient myself. Maybe have a... I'll say an open house, but invite all of their students to come... the ones that will be students to come in ahead of time, walk

through the campus, maybe have somebody available, like an ambassador type, to do a little tour of the campus to show you where everything is, show you how lunches will be, where you can get something to eat, what's close, and why they don't have an ATM machine.

Interviewee I stated:

Well, I think another thing that maybe they could do... it's just really small, but on the first day you feel lost. You don't know where... we have the little maps, but maybe we could, prior to coming to school, somebody could give us a tour. That would be great because we would know where the... we wouldn't feel lost and disoriented. That would be excellent.

Interviewee J remarked:

Maybe just what I said, before I started just would be one-on-one time, but maybe during the first week, in the middle, maybe someone could've called and said, "How are things going?" or just kind of encourage me a little bit.

Support Groups. Roane State Community College helping with the formation of support groups would have a positive impact on the survey respondents (21 percent) and the students interviewed (30 percent). Survey respondents noted, "offer some sort of support group for older students," "form study groups for older students --- we study different," "try to put more of the same age groups together in a single class," "support groups available for older students, married students, or single students," and, "people who I can talk to if I feel overwhelmed."

Interviewee B said:

Maybe some study groups that they can form, like, “Psychology is going to be this day in the library.”

Interviewee C stated:

Maybe if you had more of a support system in place for people that were struggling or people that were older or nontraditional, then maybe that would be something that would come up during this, and you wouldn't have to take the time to seek things out... You know, I guess coming in at this age group, there probably wouldn't be anything wrong with meeting people. That's probably... everybody has such little time, but if you were able to meet up with some people that you knew were in your age group that you might be able to even buddy up with. Everybody needs a pal, whether you're 18 or 50. You want to feel like you fit in somewhere.

Interviewee I remarked:

They could've put a group of women in my age bracket together, maybe let us meet for the first time. That would've made the experience a lot better for me... Prior. I think they should've had them prior. They could've just sent out flyers to us, and the ones that wanted to participate could've. Get us all together, let us meet each other, you know, ones that are in the same situation that I'm in. That would've made it a lot easier, you know. I wouldn't have been all alone... right, a support group.

Teaching Methods. Thirty-eight percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed mentioned adopting different teaching methods as a way Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in

college. Survey respondents noted, “slower algebra classes for slower learners,” “People who want to learn are scared because they’re slow, and some classes are not slow enough,” “offer Learning Strategies to everyone who has been out of school five years or more,” “offer a lot of encouragement to older students --- it would be so easy to quit because of taking care of family, jobs, and so forth,” “try to get more of the students’ input,” and, “having some type of class where it focuses on what it is to compromise.” Survey respondents also wrote, “Teachers are willing to work one-on-one if I am having problems,” “The staff is very caring. The students are not treated as just a number,” “teachers be a little more caring and show some support,” “good teachers,” “need more understanding instructors, especially because I’ve been out of the school environment for almost 20 years,” “Something should be done to make sure attendance is taken correctly,” “not counting points off work turned in late because of uncontrollable circumstances,” and, “being more understanding of absences that are excused by doctor, lawyers, dentists, DHS, and WIC appointments.”

Interviewee D said:

I would have definitely found out a little bit more about some of the flex computer classes because they have been the hardest thing for me. It’s like, “Here’s the book; there’s the lab. Do it on your own.” I do like the classes better where you have an instructor, even if they are just there where you can ask questions.

Interviewee A stated:

Not putting us on the spot. That is one thing that I hated. On the very first day you always had to get up and introduce yourself, like in high school.

That made me feel very uncomfortable, especially when I'm around all these younger kids, and stuff like that. It just made me feel... but he didn't do it to me personally. He did it to everybody. All the teachers did put us on the spot. That was very uncomfortable to do in the first week of school... Not putting us on the spot would be the best thing to do. Maybe not go into the work right away, give us a couple of days because we need to get accustomed to being back in school. I'm not one of these young people that was out of school last summer. That is one thing; you rush right into it. They give you... you need your book... they did give you a day, I'm sorry, to make sure you had your book. But then you rushed right into it, and what I find is you read it. Even now in some of my classes, I read things, and I don't understand it, and we do it after the fact. Maybe touch up on subjects before. Say, "This is what this is going to be about," instead of assigning things... I think just give examples first. All the teachers give a syllabus, "This is what is going to be outlined." See, in other words, what I'm trying to say is that it is very intimidating for somebody to right away give out this syllabus. You are sitting there, and you're reading this, and my first thought was, "Oh my God." I felt overwhelmed. So maybe don't give things out right away on the first day.

Interviewee H revealed:

The four instructors I have this semester have been open about what they expect and what's expected of me and what I can expect from them. Which, in high school, it was... I was used to the... they were the little

gods that sat up front, and it was their world, and you had to fit in. After about the first or second week, I really settled in... I believe the four instructors I've had this semester did a wonderful job with explaining everything in explicit detail, sometimes almost hand feeding it to the students, but, not being in school so long, that made me feel more at ease... the over explanation of things.

Interviewee I remarked:

All of the instructors I had made me feel welcome, made me feel that they were open. Any question wasn't stupid. Like they understood that I was coming back to school after a long time and that I would be asking questions. So that made me feel more confident.

Alternative Schedules. Offering alternative class schedules was mentioned as a way Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college by 42 percent of the survey respondents and 10 percent of the students interviewed. Survey respondents noted, "library open later and earlier like 6:00a.m.- till ? for studying," "more classes on the Internet so I can take care of my family and study at home," and, "more and extended lab times with instructors for computer flex classes." Survey respondents also wrote, "offer extra help with classes on evenings and weekends," "offer fitness class hours more flexible," "increase testing center hours," "offer more classes for summer semester to finish quicker," "more online classes," "have flexible hours for classes," "perhaps place adults that are more advanced into separate classes than someone right out of high school," "more days and hours to use

testing center,” “more classes on video or web,” “more Saturday classes,” and, “more online/video courses.”

Interviewee D said:

For example, I’m going to use your class as an example, Developmental Writing. If I say, “Mrs. Raines, my child can only get a dentist appointment,” and you have to schedule those a couple of months in advance, “They called with a cancellation, but it’s at 12:00, and I need to be in school. Is there any way I can take one of your classes... is there room for me to sit in on another day or earlier that day?” A little bit of flexibility in sitting in your same class but in a different one, just that time that I need to make a change.

Transportation. Roane State Community College providing transportation would have a positive impact on the survey respondents (four percent). One survey respondent wrote, “offer transportation to students who experience car trouble.”

Resources. Four percent of the students surveyed and 10 percent of the students interviewed mentioned increasing resources as a way that Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college. One survey respondent wrote, “increase resources for research papers on each campus.”

Interviewee H said:

I wonder if they had had a... even just a booklet of, you know, this is what the test is going to be like, I could have prepared a little better. But just going in knowing that you’re going to take a test, not having any clue really what will be on it, there is no way to prepare.

Chapter Summary

Seventy-five percent of the survey respondents and 80 percent of the students interviewed mentioned home responsibilities (including husbands and children) as a barrier to their educations. Emotional issues were mentioned as a barrier to their educations by 38 percent of the survey respondents and 100 percent of the students interviewed. Age related problems had a negative impact on the survey respondents (50 percent) and the students interviewed (50 percent). Fifty-eight percent of the survey respondents and 60 percent of the students interviewed mentioned other responsibilities as a barrier to their educations. A previous bad experience with school was mentioned as a barrier to their educations by four percent of the survey respondents and 60 percent of the students interviewed. Problems interacting with others had a negative impact on the survey respondents (21 percent) and the students interviewed (60 percent). Forty-six percent of the survey respondents and 20 percent of the students interviewed mentioned job responsibilities as a barrier to their educations. Financial difficulties were mentioned as a barrier to their educations by 46 percent of the survey respondents and 20 percent of the students interviewed. Transportation problems had a negative impact on the survey respondents (four percent) and the students interviewed (10 percent). Thirty-three percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed mentioned institutional barriers as a barrier to their educations. Race was cited as a barrier to their educations by four percent of the survey respondents.

Thus, the most significant barriers were home responsibilities (including husbands and children), emotional issues, age related problems, other responsibilities, a previous bad experience with school, and problems interacting with others. The somewhat

significant barriers were job responsibilities, financial difficulties, and institutional barriers. The least significant barriers were transportation problems and race.

Motivation had a positive impact on the survey respondents (63 percent) and the students interviewed (100 percent). Seventy-one percent of the survey respondents and 70 percent of the students interviewed mentioned personal characteristics as a strength that enabled them to overcome the barriers they face in order to be successful in college. Maturity was cited as a strength that enabled them to overcome the barriers they faced and thus be successful in college by 21 percent of the survey respondents and 90 percent of the students interviewed. Commitment had a positive impact on the survey respondents (58 percent) and the students interviewed (60 percent). Twenty-nine percent of the survey respondents and 30 percent of the students interviewed mentioned interaction with others as a strength that enabled them to be successful in college. Work experience was cited as a strength that enabled them to be successful in college by 21 percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed. Family support had a positive impact on the survey respondents (17 percent) and the students interviewed (30 percent). Seventeen percent of the survey respondents and 10 percent of the students interviewed mentioned patience as a strength that enables them to be successful in college. Religion was cited as a strength that enabled them to be successful in college by 17 percent of the survey respondents.

Thus, the most significant strengths were motivation, personal characteristics, maturity, and commitment. The somewhat significant strengths were interaction with others, work experience, and family support. The least significant strengths were patience and religion.

Roane State Community College hiring more qualified personnel would have a positive impact on both the survey respondents (38 percent) and the students interviewed (70 percent). Forty-six percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed mentioned providing assistance with childcare as a way Roane State as an institution could enable them to be more successful in college. Financial help was cited as a way that Roane State as an institution could enable them to be more successful in college by 42 percent of the survey respondents and 30 percent of the students interviewed. Offering special programs for nontraditional female students would have a positive impact on both the survey respondents (38 percent) and the students interviewed (80 percent). Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents and 30 percent of the students interviewed mentioned support groups as a way Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college. Adopting different teaching methods was cited as a way Roane State as an institution could help them be more successful in college by 38 percent of the survey respondents and 40 percent of the students interviewed. Offering alternative class schedules would have a positive impact on both the survey respondents (42 percent) and the students interviewed (10 percent). Four percent of the students surveyed mentioned providing transportation as a way that Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college. Increasing resources was cited as a way that Roane State Community College as an institution could help them be more successful in college by four percent of the students surveyed and 10 percent of the students interviewed.

Thus, the most significant ways Roane State Community College as an institution could help nontraditional female students were hiring more qualified personnel and

offering special programs. The somewhat significant ways Roane State as an institution could help these students were providing assistance with childcare, offering financial help, creating support groups, adopting different teaching methods, and offering alternative class schedules. The least significant ways Roane State as an institution could help these students were providing transportation and increasing resources.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Chapter Introduction

This chapter is organized into three separate sections: conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further research.

Conclusions

From the review of the literature, the authors who wrote of home responsibilities being a barrier included Astin, Bauer and Mott, Benshoff and Lewis, Berkove, Chartrand, Clements, Dill and Henley, Hengesbach, Hensley and Kinser, Jacobi, Kahnweiler and Johnson, Karr-Kidwell, Osgood-Treston, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Richter-Antion, Roach, Sewell, Smallwood, Spratt, Starks, Suchinsky, Terrell, Thon, Tice, Traupmann, Wallace, Weidman, and Young. The authors who wrote of emotional issues as being barriers included Astin, Benshoff and Lewis, Berkove, Chartrand, Clements, Dill and Henley, Kahnweiler and Johnson, Kerka, Osgood-Treston, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Sewell, Smallwood, Spratt, Suchinsky, Terrell, and Thon.

Age related problems were mentioned by Richardson and King, Suchinsky, and Terrell. Other responsibilities were noted as a barrier to nontraditional female students by Benshoff and Lewis, Berkove, Chartrand, Dill and Henley, Dinmore, Hooper and March, Jacobi, Kerka, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Starks, and Weidmann. Being unprepared for college level work due to a previous bad experience with school was revealed as a barrier by Clements, Dinmore, Hensley and Kinser, Hooper and March,

Jacobi, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Smallwood, and Spratt. Authors who mentioned problems interacting with others as barriers for nontraditional female students included Benshoff and Lewis, Clements, Dill and Henley, Hensley and Kinser, Hooper and March, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Roach, Smallwood, Suchinsky, and Terrell.

Job responsibilities were cited as a barrier to nontraditional female students by Berkove, Dinmore, Hensley and Kinser, Jacobi, Kerka, Osgood-Treston, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Richter-Antion, Sewell, Smallwood, Spratt, Terrell, Thon, Tice, and Young. The authors who noted that financial difficulties were barriers included Astin, Benshoff and Lewis, Dill and Henley, Dinmore, Hengesbach, Hensley and Kinser, Hooper and March, Karr-Kidwell, Kerka, Osgood-Treston, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Sewell, Smallwood, Starks, Terrell, and Weidman. Those mentioning transportation problems included Jacobi, Karr-Kidwell, Kerka, Osgood-Treston, and Rawlins. Astin, Clements, Hooper, and March, Jacobi, Rawlins, and Terrell all cited institutional barriers faced by nontraditional female students.

Therefore, in regard to barriers, consistency was found among the review of the literature, the surveys administered, and the interviews conducted in the following areas: home responsibilities (including husbands and children), emotional issues, age related problems, other responsibilities, lack of preparation for college work due to previous bad experiences with school, problems interacting with others, job responsibilities, financial difficulties, transportation problems, and institutional barriers.

From the review of the literature, the authors who mentioned motivation as being a strength of nontraditional female students included Astin, Benshoff and Lewis, Clements, Dinmore, Hensley and Kinser, Osgood-Treston, Richardson and King, Richter-

Antion, Sewell, Shields, Smallwood, Spratt, Suchinsky, Tice, and Traupmann. Those who cited maturity as a strength included Bowden and Merritt, Dinmore, Jacobi, Kerka, Osgood-Treston, Rawlins, Richardson and King, Richter-Antion, Smallwood, Spratt, Suchinsky, Thon, Tice, Tinker, and Traupmann. Clements, Dill and Henley, Starks, and Weidman all noted the importance of commitment to the success of nontraditional female students. Positive interaction with others was revealed as a strength of successful nontraditional female students by Astin, Berkove, Clements, Hooper and March, Kahnweiler and Johnson, Kerka, Roach, Starks, and Weidman.

Therefore, in regard to strengths, similar findings occurred among the review of the literature, the surveys administered, and the interviews conducted in the following areas: motivation, maturity, commitment, and interaction with others. Also, consistencies were found among the surveys administered and the interviews conducted in the following areas: personality characteristics, commitment, work experience, family support, and patience.

From the review of the literature, the authors who mentioned institutions hiring personnel who are sensitive to the needs of nontraditional female students included Bowden and Merritt Jr., Clements, Heppner and Olsen, Hooper and March, Rawlins, Smallwood, Spratt, Terrell, Thon, Tinker, and Weidman. Those who wrote of instituting some type of childcare program included Berkove, Hooper and March, Sewell, Smallwood, Spratt, Terrell, and Weidman. Astin, Bowden and Merritt Jr., Chartrand, Rawlins, Spratt, Terrell, and Tinker all noted the importance of special programs that are geared toward this special population of students. Authors who suggested offering financial aid assistance included Benshoff and Lewis, Berkove, Bowden and Merritt,

Karr-Kidwell, Kerka, Rawlins, Richter-Antion, Sewell, Smallwood, Terrell, Tinker, Wallace, and Weidman.

Hiring faculty who are trained in teaching methods that are conducive to nontraditional female students was mentioned by Bowden and Merritt, Dinmore, Richter-Antion, Roach, Spratt, Suchinsky, and Weidman. Those who wrote of offering alternative scheduling included Astin, Benshoff and Lewis, Berkove, Bowden and Merritt Jr., Hengesbach, Hooper and March, Karr-Kidwell, Kerka, Rawlins, Richter-Antion, Sewell, Smallwood, Spratt, Terrell, Thon, Tice, and Wallace.

Therefore, in regard to how institutions can help nontraditional female students, consistent findings occurred among the review of the literature, the surveys administered, and the interviews conducted in the following areas: employing personnel who are sensitive to the needs of nontraditional female students, instituting some type of childcare program, offering programs and workshops that are specifically geared toward this special population of students, providing financial aid assistance, hiring faculty who are trained in teaching methods conducive to nontraditional female students, and offering alternative scheduling.

Recommendations

Nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, are likely to have problems with home responsibilities (including husbands and children), emotional issues, age related weaknesses, other responsibilities, previous bad experiences with school, interaction with others, job responsibilities, financial difficulties, transportation difficulties, institutional barriers, and possibly racial issues. Some of the ways these

students do help themselves overcome these barriers include being highly motivated, possessing certain personality characteristics, being mature, having a high level of commitment to school, establishing positive interaction with others, employing skills learned through work experience, soliciting family support, learning patience, and using their religious convictions as a source of strength.

There are several things Roane State Community College is already doing to ease the burden on nontraditional female students, but there are several more things the institution could do to help these students be more successful in college. Early in the semester or even before the semester begins, these students could be counseled regarding the difficulties they are likely to face and told the characteristics that other nontraditional students possess that have enabled them to become successful in their college studies.

In order to help these students cope with their home responsibilities, Roane State Community College could offer an orientation session that included spouses and children. During this session, the families could be told how things at home are likely to change and what they could do to help ease the transition these women will soon be going through. The husbands and the children could be told ways they could help the female adjust to her new role as a college student. Furthermore, it would be wonderful if Roane State Community College could find some way to help these women obtain quality and affordable childcare for their children. A childcare center onsite would be fantastic. Perhaps Roane State Community College could offer such a facility as part of its teaching/training program for prospective teachers and aides in early childhood and elementary education. However, if this turned out to be impossible due to financial feasibility and lack of space, perhaps some sort of reduced payment plan for students at a

childcare facility close to the campus could be offered. Of course, these students would need to be given a pamphlet or brochure of some type advertising these services so that they would be aware of them.

In order to help the nontraditional female students overcome their emotional problems, Roane State Community College could provide counseling services to this special population of students. The counseling sessions could be one-on-one or in a group setting with other nontraditional female students or both. Once again, these students would need to be given a pamphlet or brochure of some kind advertising these services so that they would be aware of them.

To help the nontraditional female students overcome their problems with age related weaknesses, Roane State Community College could provide these students with literature that explains the natural aging process and what to expect from it. This would let these students know that there are valid reasons that they cannot comprehend certain concepts as quickly as they once did and that other people of comparable age are in the same boat, thereby reducing the feeling of low self-esteem due to the fact that they feel like something is wrong with them personally.

In order to help nontraditional female students deal with all of the other responsibilities they face in addition to schoolwork, Roane State Community College needs to let these students know before they register for classes that they will probably need to study two hours outside of class for every class hour they take. This could be accomplished through a one-on-one advising session, through a group advising session with other nontraditional female students, or through a pamphlet or booklet given to these students.

To help nontraditional female students cope with and overcome previous bad experiences with school, Roane State Community College could provide counseling to these students to help them realize that they are now mature individuals capable of handling difficulties better than they were at a younger age. This could be done through either one-on-one counseling or group counseling with other nontraditional female students.

Roane State Community College could encourage nontraditional female students to interact with others in several ways. Before classes even started, Roane State could offer an orientation session solely for nontraditional female students. This would provide the students the opportunity to meet other people of their age group and to open the lines of communication with them. They would most likely meet at least one other nontraditional female student who would be in the same classes as them, and they could exchange names and phone numbers so they would not feel so alienated. Once classes began, Roane State Community College could offer a support group for the nontraditional female students. This group could meet once a week to discuss problems they were having and how to solve those problems. In order to reduce the stigma of needing to be in a support group, perhaps the group could actually turn into a school club with a name other than support group. Once again, a pamphlet or booklet would need to be given to these students to make them aware of these special services for them.

Roane State Community College already offers several alternative class offerings and schedules in order to help nontraditional female students handle their job responsibilities along with their schoolwork. For example, at the Oak Ridge campus, a program called Weekend College exists, and through this program classes are offered on

Friday nights, Saturdays, and Sundays. There are also courses offered at night, and several courses are now available through the Regents Online Degree Program (RODP). In addition to taking courses online through the RODP, several other courses are also offered online. Another option for students is to enroll in video courses, where they can do most of the work at home by playing tapes on a videocassette recorder. However, in order to register for these courses, the students must first be aware that they exist. So perhaps a pamphlet or booklet could be given to these students to let them know about all of the alternative course offerings.

In order to help nontraditional female students with the financial difficulties they often face, Roane State Community College needs to do a better job of informing these students about all of the different kinds of financial aid that exist. This could be done through a one-on-one session with a person in the Financial Aid office or someone in the Financial Aid office leading a group session of nontraditional female students. The word about financial aid could also be spread by giving the students a pamphlet or booklet that listed different types of financial aid available.

Roane State Community College already does several things to help students with transportation problems. Roane State has campuses in seven different counties, and some classes are offered interactively so that students do not have to travel to a faraway campus. In this instance, a student can sit in an interactive classroom at one campus and watch the class being taught on a different campus. The students at the different campuses can all speak into microphones and be heard by all the other students and the instructor if they have questions or comments to make. Also, as previously noted, video

courses are offered for several different classes. Once again, the nontraditional female students need to be given a pamphlet or booklet that makes them aware of these options.

To help nontraditional female students overcome institutional barriers, Roane State Community College needs to train its administrators, faculty members, and staff members about the specific problems these students often face and how to help these students overcome these problems. This could be accomplished through mandatory training sessions during the in-service activities before the classes start each semester. Roane State Community College could thus make sure that the college personnel were sensitive to the needs of this special population of students.

Roane State Community College has a Multicultural Day every year in the effort to promote at least tolerance of and hopefully acceptance of different nationalities. Perhaps a committee or club could be formed that dealt with racial issues on a more frequent basis. The committee or club would need to be comprised of students, staff, and faculty members.

Implications for Further Research

With the numbers of nontraditional female college students continuing to rise dramatically, a significant amount of further research is needed in the area of nontraditional female college students. Research studies similar to this one could be conducted at Roane State Community College campuses other than the Oak Ridge campus. Also, nontraditional female students in general, rather than the specific group of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses, could be studied at all campuses of Roane State Community College. Actually, research could be conducted by studying nontraditional female students enrolled in other schools, both two-

year (community colleges and technical schools) and four-year institutions, governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. Four-year institutions in the state of Tennessee not governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents (the University of Tennessee, Vanderbilt, and Carson Newman, just to name a few) could conduct similar research studies on the nontraditional female students enrolled in classes on their campuses. Of course, nontraditional female students enrolled in colleges throughout the United States could also be the focus of research studies.

Furthermore, research could be conducted just on the barriers that must be overcome by nontraditional female students or, even more specifically, on just one of the barriers faced by nontraditional female students. Similarly, research could be done regarding the strengths nontraditional female students have that enable them to overcome these barriers or, even more specifically, regarding just one of the strengths. For example, religion was not discovered through the review of the literature, but it did occur as a response in this study. Is religion really a strength of nontraditional female students? Can one's faith in God truly enable one to be more successful in college? Likewise, research could be conducted just on the tactics institutions could use to help nontraditional female students or, even more specifically, just on one tactic

Along with nontraditional female students, studies should be conducted regarding the needs and experiences of nontraditional male college students. For example, do they have the same barriers and strengths to overcome those barriers as their female counterparts? And what can institutions do in order to help nontraditional male students be more successful in their college studies? Will the same strategies that help

nontraditional female college students also help nontraditional male college students, or do different tactics need to be employed?

In addition to the aforementioned questions, several other questions need to be addressed through research concerning the plight of nontraditional female (and male) students. How have the many technological advances that have taken place over the past few years impacted nontraditional female college students? In what ways have these technological advances been negative liabilities or positive impacts for nontraditional female college students? If the technological advances have negatively impacted the nontraditional female college students, what could be done to turn technology into a tool to help, rather than hinder, these students? And even if the technological advances have positively impacted nontraditional female college students, are there other ways that technology can better help these students?

Along with technological issues, personnel issues relating to nontraditional female college students need to be researched. How can the administrative staff (presidents, vice presidents, deans, etc.) at the institutions enable nontraditional female students to be more successful in college? How can the teaching staff (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, adjunct faculty, etc.) at the institutions aid in the success of nontraditional female students enrolled in their courses? And finally, how can other personnel (guidance counselors, admissions clerks, financial aid officers, librarians, secretaries, etc.) make the college experience a smoother process for nontraditional female students?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
STUDENT SURVEY

1. Which of the following age groups describes you?

_____ A. 25-34

_____ B. 35-44

_____ C. 45-54

2. List at least 5 barriers to your success as a nontraditional female student.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

3. List at least 5 strengths that you possess that enable you to overcome the barriers
you face.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

4. List at least 5 things that Roane State Community College could do to help you overcome the barriers you face.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

APPENDIX B

If you would be willing to be interviewed in a one-on-one situation with me, please fill in the information below. Your name will not be used in the interview or in any part of the interview that I include in my study.

Name:

Street Address:

City, State, and Zip Code:

Telephone Number:

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

NONTRADITIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH COURSES AT ROANE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Nontraditional female students of three different age groups (25-34, 35-44, and 45-54) enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research study is to understand the experiences and needs of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. In order to do so, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. What barriers do nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College face?
2. What strengths do nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College possess that help them to overcome these barriers?
3. What can Roane State Community College do as an institution to help alleviate the barriers faced by nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses?

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

In order to conduct this research study, nontraditional (those 25 years of age or older who have a gap in time between completing high school and beginning college coursework) female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College will be asked to complete a survey relative to their experiences as nontraditional students. Then, a select few who express a willingness to do so will participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher in order to obtain more in-depth responses to questions regarding the experiences they face as nontraditional students. The results of the surveys will be tabulated and analyzed, and the interviews will be transcribed (the process of creating a typed version of the interview questions and responses) in an effort to provide thick, rich descriptions of the experiences and needs of nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College. The one-on-one interviews will last approximately one hour and will be tape recorded so that they can be transcribed.

Participant's initials _____

RISKS

No foreseeable risks exist for any of the nontraditional female students who will be participating in this research study. However, there is a very small possibility that recollecting unpleasant past experiences could be somewhat emotionally disturbing for the participants. If this does occur, the student(s) will be referred to one of the school counselors who can help the student(s) resolve the issue.

BENEFITS

This research study will be beneficial to the participants because it will uncover ways to help nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College be more successful in their college coursework. The students involved in the research study will recognize that their opinions are important and that understanding their experiences can be valuable to others. The body of knowledge gained from this research study will be beneficial in helping future nontraditional female students enrolled in Developmental English courses at Roane State Community College be more successful in their college coursework.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the research records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study. Those participants who complete surveys will not reveal their names on the surveys, and transcriptions will be labeled "Interview #1" and "Respondent #1" and so on rather than providing names.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the research study or the procedures or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher:

Diane Raines
Associate Professor of English
Roane State Community College
701 Briarcliff Avenue
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
865-481-2000, ext. 2241

Participant's Initials _____

You may also contact the person the researcher is working under the guidance of:

Dr. Ted Hipple

Professor of Instructional Technology and Educational Studies

The University of Tennessee

A522 Claxton Addition

Knoxville, TN 37996-3400

865-974-7930

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at the University of Tennessee at 865-974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this research study is voluntary; you may decline to participate. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed according to your instructions.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

STUDENT INTERVIEW

Background Information

Which one of the following age groups describes you?

- A. 25-34
- B. 35-44
- C. 45-54

Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to further your education at this time in your life?
2. In as much detail as possible, describe the experience of taking the English part of the COMPASS exam.
3. How did you feel when you found out you would be placed in a Developmental English class? Why?
4. In as much detail as possible, describe the first week of classes at Roane State Community College.
5. How did you feel during your first week of classes at Roane State Community College?
6. What do you think would be the ideal situation during the first week of classes?
7. What obstacles have you had to overcome in order to be successful in your schoolwork?
8. What character traits do you possess that might have led to these obstacles?
9. What are some of your past experiences that might have contributed to these obstacles?
10. What have you personally done to help yourself overcome these obstacles?
11. What character traits do you possess that might have enabled you to overcome these obstacles?
12. What are some of your past experiences that might have enabled you to overcome these obstacles?

13. What do you think Roane State Community College as an institution could do to help you overcome these obstacles?
14. How is returning to school as an adult different from what you expected?
15. Is there anything you want to tell me that I have neglected to ask you about?

VITA

Belita Diane Deakins Raines was born in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on May 30, 1963. Her parents are Eldon Deakins and Charlotte Coates. In 1965, the family moved to Florence, South Carolina, and remained there for eight years. Diane has resided in Knoxville, Tennessee, since 1973 and married Lemuel Raines on May 17, 2000.

Diane graduated from Farragut High School in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1981. In 1985, she graduated from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with a Bachelor of Science degree in English Education. She received a Master of Arts degree in English in 1995 from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education degree in Instructional Technology and Educational Studies with a concentration in Curriculum at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Diane taught eleventh grade English at Sweetwater High School in the Monroe County School System during the 1985-1986 school year. She taught ninth grade English at Fulton High School and tenth and eleventh grade English at Halls High School in the Knox County School System during the 1987-1988 school year. In 1988, Diane began teaching English at Roane State Community College in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where she is presently an associate professor of English.