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ADULT WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTIONS OF SELF-DIRECTION IN LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sally Slater Blowers
August 1996

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the three people in my life who, through God's grace, have loved me unconditionally

To my mother
Lucille Whiteman Slater

with profound gratefulness for the faithfulness that has marked your life

and

To the memory of my father
Charles Franklin Slater
1906-1968

whose humbleness and generosity of spirit touched everyone he knew

and

To my beloved husband
Malcolm Eugene Blowers

whose sacrificial love is beyond measure

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Every doctoral student who succeeds does so with the support of a very special group of friends -- other doctoral students who share the journey. At the beginning, Dr. Sherman Wilson, Dr. Eddie Richardson and Dr. Roger Hill shared an office, good humor and much of themselves. In the middle, Dr. Susan Wilson and Dr. Jill White provided a very special kind of encouragement when I most needed it. At the end, when it was looking most doubtful, the members of the dissertation support group, led by Dr. Victor Barr and Dr. Suzanne Newbold stepped in to rescue a floundering and discouraged ABD. Thank you Victor and Suzanne for reaching out and thank you Donna, Gail, Doris, Trish, Marcia, Tina, Mike, Rosa, Theresa, and Beverly. You understood in a way no one else possibly could and you always had the right advice.

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In the last analysis, I acknowledge my total dependence on the One who began a good work in me and will complete it. This journey has been under His direction from its inception.

ABSTRACT

This study explores adult learners' meaning schemes and related actions as they engage in self-direction in learning in the college classroom. A qualitative design and a theoretical viewpoint grounded in constructivism and Philip Candy's (1991) analysis of self-direction structure the investigation. The perspectives presented by nine women who are part-time undergraduate students at a southeastern community college or public university are used in this study. The methodology involves a re-analysis of audiotaped and transcribed semi-structured interviews originally created during a study funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994).

A model of self-direction in classroom learning is developed from the findings. This model has three phases: becoming involved, managing, and evaluating. The model indicates that adult classroom learners possess the skills and actions commonly associated with self-directed learning. These students' abilities to express self-direction is dominated, however, by the socially constructed beliefs about the roles of teachers and learners and the actions expected for classroom learning. Within this study, participants could not articulate new ways of organizing classrooms or alternate behaviors for teachers and learners that went beyond the traditional roles and behaviors. In addition, they believed that their learning peers had little influence on their learning.

Within this study, self-directing classroom learners primarily strive to construct subject-matter knowledge that allows them to achieve high grades because they have numerous academically-anchored goals. They view teachers as important contributors to the creation of academic subject-matter knowledge and as the primary directors of its evaluation. Adult classroom learners may also construct unique subject-matter knowledge to meet personal goals and purposes. Teachers have no role in defining the goals of unique subject-matter knowledge, nor do they direct its construction or participate in its evaluation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"We must first understand how the learning proceeds in its natural form. Only then will we be ready to fit our help into that natural process without disrupting it" (Tough, 1978, p. 289).

Self-directed learning, a pervasive concept in the field of adult education, has been widely embraced by adult educators in many spheres of practice and cited as the hallmark of adult learning (Knowles, 1975; Brookfield, 1986). The essential element of self-directed learning is the learner's voluntary choice to assume the primary responsibility for directing and evaluating his or her own learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Caffarella, 1993; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

Historical definitions of self-direction assumed that learning involved comprehending an objective body of information. An important feature of many past definitions was the learner's social isolation while learning this objective information (Little, 1979; Penland, 1981). Socially isolated learners were ipso facto self-directed. Researchers assumed self-direction was absent in classroom learning since learners in this setting were thought to be dependent upon a teacher's leadership, instruction, and knowledge. Researchers viewed teachers as those who had mastered objective knowledge they could impart to the learner.

Recently, however, new views of self-direction have begun to emerge (Candy, 1991). Emerging views consider knowledge the creative product of an individual's cognitive

interpretations and his or her actions rather than the appropriation of objective ideas and information. Thus knowledge is tentative rather than fixed. Furthermore, learner and environment are interdependent and the social context is central to acts of learning. Learning means that learners create concepts that allow them to interpret their world and act in purposeful ways. Learners then link concepts in complex meaning schemes which represent their individual knowledge. This perspective suggests that self-direction is *inherent in all learning situations* including the classroom.

Researchers' past definitions and views of self-direction have focused attention on instructional aspects of the classroom (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Conti; 1985, Cross, 1981). Few studies have examined self-direction in the classroom from the learners' perspective or considered features of classroom learning that are important according to emerging views of self-direction. Emerging views suggest that researchers should investigate self-directed learning in relation to the process of knowledge creation and learners' concomitant meaning schemes.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the meaning schema and related actions adults use as they engage in self-directed classroom learning. Specifically, the meaning schema of adult women undergraduates in public universities and community college classrooms are examined.

Conceptual Framework

This study is informed by a constructivist paradigm and by emerging views of self-direction. The following discussion will presentthe basic tenets of constructivism and examine

emerging views of self-direction according to the major ideas common to those who refer to themselves as constructivists.

The belief that human beings create their own knowledge and that learning is socially situated is common among those subscribing to a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism assumes that human beings want to make sense of the world they live in and the social reality they experience. In fact, the critical characteristic of human beings is their continuous attempt to make sense of the constant stream of perceptions that make up everyday life and to build coherent pictures of reality that allow them to deal with the present and the future (Kelly, 1955). According to constructivism, it is only possible for a person to *know* what (s)he has invented or created (Resnick, 1987; von Glasersfeld, 1989). Knowledge creation is a universal process that operates both consciously and unconsciously in formal and informal settings (Resnick, 1987). Men and women continually engage in the construction and reconstruction of their experiential worlds. "The experiential world in which human knowers find themselves living is *constructed* because it is the result of the cognitive agents' own distinguishing and relating . . ." (von Glasersfeld, 1989, p. 12).

The constructivist view of learners presents a picture of someone who is capable of perceiving an infinite variety of "sensory elements," and "distinctions" (von Glasersfeld, 1989). Sensory elements are perceived through a learner's biological systems and are both tangible (derived from the physical world) and social (derived from human interactions). Distinctions are the result of learners' cognitive processes (von Glasersfeld, 1989). Learners organize the perceived sensory elements and distinctions in individualistic ways and interpret them in order to create new knowledge or modify their existing knowledge.

When individuals perceive and organize their experiential world, the knowledge they create is in the form of concepts (constructs) and conceptual networks (meaning schemes)(Candy, 1991; Kelly, 1955; von Glasersfeld, 1989). Concepts are less complex than meaning schemes which are sets of interrelated concepts. As long as constructs allow a learner to explain his/her world and to act in ways which accomplish his/her purposes, they will remain intact. When a person is unable to assign usual meaning or cannot determine how to act, (s)he may modify constructs or meaning schemes or create new ones. Persons may also choose to ignore perceptual input.

Constructs may be more or less likely to change according to the perceptual input a learner encounters. Persons may create some meaning schemes that they maintain despite the availability of new perceptual data and their innate ability to create new knowledge. Other constructs may be less fixed and more open to new perceptions. "Open" constructs are likely to have blurred distinctions, to be more oriented to the present time, and to prove less viable in guiding future behavior (Sigel, 1978).

In addition, useful constructs may still contain errors. The perceptual material available for building constructs may not be the material needed to create a fully functioning construct (Resnick, 1987). Constructs that incorporate errors may lead to partial understanding or misunderstanding of the related phenomena (Isaacson, 1989).

On the basis of their created constructs, learners act in intentional ways to achieve their goals and purposes (Candy, 1991; Kelly, 1955; Sigel, 1978, von Glasersfeld, 1989). The response of others allows individuals to create accurate and useful constructs as they test what they know in mental action or observable behavior. Learning in the constructivist sense is

socially situated not only because it occurs in the presence of others, but because the perceptual input others provide is critical to the constructive process.

Socially situated learners are involved not only in constructing their own unique knowledge, but also in constructing collectively shared concepts and meaning schemes. It is possible for humans to construct shared meanings because they use common processes of thinking and ways of reasoning (Resnick, 1987; Sigel, 1978). Collectively held constructs provide the purposeful human actor with explicit and implicit guidelines for action and a basis for interpreting and judging others' actions.

Physical objects and phenomena readily provoke learners' creation of collective constructs with many common features. However, mental phenomena are unique to each person's cognitive structure and more difficult to "share." They are not created from "common" perceptual input in the way objects and social interactions may be, but depend on standard human reasoning processes.

The development of a common language (discourse) with taken-as-shared meanings is vital for learners' development of collectively shared constructs. Common discourse becomes the means for negotiating common understanding and creating collective constructs. Common discourse is also a means by which an individual is able to receive meaningful feedback when testing his or her individual, idiosyncratic knowledge in mental or observable action (Candy, 1991; Cobb, Yackel, & Wood, 1992; Sigel, 1978; von Glasersfeld, 1984).

Within constructivism, learning is seen as the "self-regulated transformation of old knowledge to new knowledge" (Harris & Pressley, 1991, p. 393), because the learner determines which perceptual data to pay attention to and assigns it meaning. Depending on the outcome of

the interpretation, the learner decides whether to construct new concepts, modify existing ones, or ignore the input. The learner elects when and where to test his or her knowledge through mental or physical action or some combination of the two. The learner evaluates the usefulness of knowledge according to its ability to direct action and according to the degree to which his or her purposes were achieved.

Learning is also contextual and situational. In the past, learners have created knowledge in order to respond in specific social situations and contexts. For example, children create knowledge of how to act in classrooms and what learning means in response to their early schooling experiences. In the course of daily living learners encounter environmental cues that indicate particular contexts. They are then able to draw on meaning schemes which in the past have guided them in these same contexts. However, within a given context at any particular time there are certain actors being guided by their individual meaning schemes. New situation-specific perceptual input is being generated and may produce new knowledge depending on the self-regulated learner's decisions. Any given learning situation is an example of a unique learner-situation interaction and must be judged on that basis. Teachers cannot assume that learners' behavior in one learning situation will be the same in subsequent situations.

Within a constructivist paradigm, self-directed classroom learning involves specific perceptual data -- the subject matter. Classroom learners expect at the outset to construct at least some new subject matter concepts or to modify existing concepts. On the basis of extensive prior constructs and meaning schemes related to classroom contexts, classroom learners have certain expectations of themselves and of teachers. Constructivism suggests that learners' own purposes will be the paramount criteria for evaluating their knowledge. Finally, the quality of the

subject-matter constructs the learner creates will be influenced by their interactions with his or her teacher and with his or her fellow learners, especially through the common discourse created in the classroom.

In summary, constructivism provides a view of learners as inherently self-directed in the creation of their own knowledge. Knowledge is not fixed, objective, and separate from the knower, but subjective, shifting and created to achieve specific purposes and goals. Knowledge creation is a socially-situated process that is context-specific. Constructivism assumes that "both parties to the instructional transaction *have a perspective that guides their response to the situation* [italics added]" (Candy, 1991, p. 241). The basis for learners' responses is their own idiosyncratic set of meaning schemes for learning in classroom situations as well as the collectively developed meaning schemes being created in the classroom. Teachers' responses will also be influenced by the subject matter-knowledge they have constructed and by their meaning schemes for teaching in classroom situations.

Candy (1991) is an advocate of the emerging views of self-direction and of constructivism. He indicates that the interdependence of learner and environment in self-directed classroom learning occurs in terms of learner factors and environmental factors. Learner factors include autonomy and self-management. Autonomy is a personal attribute involving freedom of choice and action; self-management entails the willingness and capacity of the learner to conduct his or her own education. According to Candy, the most significant environmental factor in classroom self-directed learning is the instructional process and the extent to which the learner controls that process. Candy refers to this environmental factor as learner-control and defines it as a unified set of actions which express self-direction in the classroom (p. 23).

Candy indicates that the key determinant in self-direction in the classroom is the "learner's subjective understandings and feelings of potency, not the . . . teacher-centered aspects of the situation" (1991, p. 211). The learner's personal sense of autonomy is central to self-directed learning. Personal autonomy is linked to a learner's beliefs about his or her ability to control his or her life and may be expressed in the intellectual, moral, and emotional realms of the learner's life. Candy says that the meaning schemes associated with personal autonomy are broad and complex. He says that a learner with personal autonomy has the ability to conceive of goals and plans; exercise freedom of choice; use the capacity for rational reflection; use will power to follow through on his or her plans; exercise self-restraint and self-discipline; and view oneself as autonomous. Furthermore, autonomy is situation-dependent "determined partly by the situation and partly by the individual's understanding of the situation" (Candy, 1991, p. 125). The adult engaged in self-directed classroom learning may possess numerous meaning schemes relevant to personal autonomy. Some of these schemes might include visions of the possible future, one's beliefs about good manners and ways to treat others in social situations, past successes in self-control, and beliefs about the value of relationships and the value of independence.

Self-management is the other factor Candy identifies as specific to the learner. Self-management in classroom learning requires that learners be willing and able to undertake and direct their own education. Like personal autonomy (the first learner factor), self-management is a personal characteristic or attribute of the learner. Meaning schemes important to self-management might include learners' concepts of themselves as able students and their ideas about how to study and master the subject matter.

Additional learner meaning schemes potentially relevant in self-directed classroom learning might include concepts related to learning in general and to learning in the classroom in particular. Beliefs about self-as-learner, ideas about trying new things, and approaches to learning that have proven successful in the past would be likely to influence a learner's self-direction in classroom learning. Perceptions about appropriate classroom responsibilities for teachers and learners would be likely to influence learners' actions and behaviors.

According to Candy (1991), there are specific actions associated with learning in the classroom include deciding on the content, determining the scope and depth of its coverage, selecting the learning strategies to be employed, regulating the length of time spent on certain concepts, and selecting and evaluating the outcomes of learning efforts. When learners control some or all of these decisions and actions, the degree of the learners' self-direction in the classroom increases. These actions are firmly linked with instructional processes rather than with learning processes. Furthermore, learner-control is situation specific and highly variable because different mixes of instructional responsibility are possible between learners and teachers in different classrooms. Learner-control is a continuum varying according to situational factors such as the nature of the subject matter or the depth and extent of learners' prior subject-matter knowledge.

If learners are inherently self-directed in creating their own subject-matter knowledge and have a predisposition for autonomy (Candy, 1991), then what constitutes self-direction in the classroom requires a new set of assumptions and a new construction for self-direction. Constructivism emphasizes the learner's creation of knowledge. Learning in the constructivist sense is a qualitative shift in the learner's constructs and meaning schemes. This understanding

of learning means that the learner's perspective is as important as the teacher's. Understanding the learner's meaning schemes and his or her cognition becomes a central focus rather than seeking to understand what effective instruction involves. The quality and nature of the learner's existing knowledge must be discerned because, according to constructivism, it is the basis for the learner's current efforts. Finally, the learner's views of the current learning situation must be uncovered in order to understand self-direction in the classroom. The learner's interpretation of the current classroom learning situation is context-specific and influences the degree of self-direction and autonomy that is possible in that situation (Candy, 1991).

A constructivist perspective suggests that instructional acts will be evaluated by learners for their ability to provide high quality perceptual input. Rather than responding to a teacher's direction as though it were an inflexible procedure, learners will be actively engaged in making sense of the subject matter and in constructing their own understanding of it using the perceptual data they select during the instructional process.

Within the constructivist paradigm the issue in classroom self-direction is not other-direction versus self-direction. It is not who is doing the acting (learner or teacher). It is not finding the most efficient way of transferring the teacher's conceptions to the learner. It is not judging learning according to others' intentions and purposes. Rather, self-direction is a function of the interaction among the learners' perceptions of autonomy; their meaning schemes related to themselves as learners; the repertoire of learning skills they have constructed as learners; and their interpretation of particular learning situations. Self-direction in classroom learning is expressed through a unified set of actions designed to promote the learner's construction of subject-matter knowledge.

The dimensions of autonomy that are particularly relevant to a learner's knowledge construction within a classroom context are intellectual autonomy and emotional autonomy. Intellectual autonomy is linked to domain-specific knowledge and the learner's ability to judge the subject-matter perceptual input in terms of its accuracy and significance within the discipline. Emotional autonomy is linked to the learner's sense of potency as a person. The relevant meaning schemes which relate to intellectual and emotional autonomy will be used to guide learners' interactions with the teacher and with fellow learners.

Learners' sense of themselves as learners is linked to their conceptions of learning, their perception of the learning task, and their existing abilities and skills for participating in the learning process (self-management). The skills and abilities that have been successful in guiding their actions in the past are those which they are likely to continue to be use. Learners' skills and abilities are utilized in order to allow them to achieve their goals and purposes. The significant meaning schemes related to self-management are those the learner has constructed in the past to help him or her master subject matter.

In addition, learners' interpretations of particular classroom situations will be based on their existing meaning schemes for similar situations that they have constructed in the past. The influential meaning schemes will be those which learners draw upon to interpret the current learning environment.

Learner-control is linked specifically to instructional acts related to classroom learning. Meaning schemes related to instruction in classroom learning situations are bounded by powerful collective meaning schemes about the implicit and explicit responsibilities of teacher and learners. However, constructivism suggests that learner-control is not a matter of whether

teachers or students make instructional decisions. Instead, it suggests that the act is important for its contribution to the inherently self-directed learner's need for perceptual input. Self-directed classroom learners will actively participate in knowledge construction through public, teacher-initiated instruction and through private, learner-initiated instruction.

The constructivist framework which has been selected to guide this investigation imply several assumptions that may be made about the participants in this study. It may be assumed that the undergraduates participating in this study are inherently self-directed in interpreting and in constructing their knowledge, and that they are participants in creating the classroom reality. Constructivist tenets suggest that because learners possess a wealth of existing meaning schemes relative to learning and the classroom context that their existing meaning schemes will influence their actions in the classroom. It is also assumed that these meaning schemes are based on intricate social roles involving implicit and explicit rules (Candy, 1991, p. 256). Furthermore, each participant's sense of potency in the classroom and her purposes will influence her self-direction. This study focuses on the socially-situated, self-directed learner in the classroom and assumes that learner-teacher interactions, learner-learner interactions, and learner-subject matter interactions are particularly important.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing research in an area that has received limited attention in the self-directed learning research and literature. It is one of the first to examine learners' perceptions of self-direction in the classroom and will add to the theoretical development and understanding of self-direction in classroom learning situations. It will also

add to the limited body of research which has sought the adult learner's point of view of classroom self-direction, a perspective that has been largely overlooked in the past.

This study will build upon the perspective of Candy, Resnick, and others who view learning and self-direction within a constructivist paradigm. Their view of self-direction has implications for further theory development and conceptualization of self-direction within formal classroom settings. This study will provide empirical evidence of the expression of naturally occurring self-direction in a particular learning context.

Because there is increasing evidence that women and men have had different experiences as learners in the higher education classroom (Desjardins, 1989; Heilbrun, 1990; Sadker & Sadker, 1990; Tisdell, 1993), there is the possibility that there may be differing gender-related perceptions of self-direction in the classroom. There is also evidence that there are gender-related tendencies to approach knowledge and learning in different ways (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Therefore this investigation is limited to females and their collegiate classroom experiences and the meaning schemes they use to understand self-direction in the higher education learning context.

This research will also provide alternative ways of thinking about the classroom learning transaction for practitioners. It will suggest shifting from an emphasis on teachers' interpretation of subject matter to a focus on the learner and the learner's meaning schemes. Such a shift has important implications for the ways adult education practitioners based in classrooms understand their roles and their actions.

Chapter Summary

Within constructivism, learning is "an attempt to impose meaning and significance on events and ideas" (Candy, 1991, p. 251). Such a perspective recognizes great individual variability in the ways in which individuals go about learning and calls for an understanding of the learners' interpretations of learning events and settings. It assumes adult learners function in the classroom on the basis of coherent belief systems about learning and the context in which it occurs. And it places "particular weight" on learners' views of learning situations (Candy, 1991, p. 260). Thus, discovering adults' beliefs and the meanings they assign to the various aspects of learning in the classroom is an important step in understanding self-direction in the higher education context. This study contributes to understanding self-direction by revealing the meaning schemes of one group of adult learners (undergraduate women). It further contributes to the theoretical development of self-direction because it is one of the first studies to apply constructivist tenets to self-direction and thus it will provide a new interpretation of what it means to be self-directed in classrooms. The goal, expressed in Allen Tough's words, is to understand how adult self-direction in classroom learning "naturally proceeds" in order to productively support this learning process (Tough, 1978, p. 289).

CHAPTER 2

RELEVANT LITERATURE

This study focuses on adult undergraduate women in college classrooms and seeks to discover the nature of learners' self-direction in this context. It takes a constructivist view of learners and learning, assuming that the study participants are inherently self-directed in their learning efforts and that learning involves constructing knowledge. The constructivist view of learning assumes that knowledge is composed of sets of organized perceptual data called concepts and that related concepts are grouped together to form meaning schemes. A learner's knowledge is seen as his or her accumulated store of concepts and meaning schemes. Learners then use their knowledge to interpret (construe) classroom perceptions by comparing and contrasting present perceptual data to their existing knowledge. On the basis of their interpretations of classroom perceptions, classroom learners act according to their meaning schemes to achieve their purposes. Adult learners who have had extensive experience in classrooms in the past are particularly likely to have constructed numerous meaning schemes that guide their interpretations of what it means to be a teacher and learner in the classroom and how one goes about constructing subject-matter knowledge. Thus, the perceptual elements most likely to influence self-direction in the classroom include interactions between learner and teacher, between learner and subject matter and between learner and fellow student.

The majority of past research on adult self-direction in the higher education classroom has been based on two major assumptions. First, self-direction has been

assumed to be a personal attribute and learners have been assumed to possess varying degrees of it. Second, researchers have assumed that learners could not be self-directed in classrooms unless teachers gave them responsibility for directing various aspects of instruction. Thus, past research has viewed self-direction in fundamentally different ways than the way it is seen in this study. Because of these assumptions, past research has focused on identifying adult undergraduates' characteristics and differentiating them from traditional young adult students (Kasworm, 1990a; Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller & Tabor, 1993), and has examined the use of various learner-centered instructional methods, such as learning contracts (Caffarella, 1983). There has also been an attempt to identify differences in learning outcomes between adult students experiencing learner-centered instruction and adults experiencing teacher-directed instruction (Long & Redding, 1991). Past research of the latter type presumed that self-directed learners would more readily learn because they would be choosing their own content and pursuing their own interests instead of the teacher's.

Few researchers have sought to understand the nature of classroom self-direction as a naturally occurring process and to understand adult undergraduate learning with the exception of Kasworm (1988, 1991, 1992). Neither has adult collegians' naturally occurring self-directed classroom learning actions been examined. Almost no studies have examined women's experiences as self-directed undergraduates.

Because the existing literature is so limited, this chapter describes relevant studies in detail. Although most of these studies were not originally framed from a constructivist perspective, each study included in this literature review was analyzed for constructivist

elements. Since all of the studies reported participants' own views of the classroom, it was possible to examine their responses according to constructivist tenets. In order to provide an alternative view of self-direction in the classroom, it was important to apply the current study's theoretical framework in this manner.

Kasworm Studies

Introduction

Since the mid 1980s, Kasworm has been engaged in a significant self-directed learning research program and was among the first to suggest the interactive and interdependent nature of self-directed learning in contrast to its autonomous and isolated elements (Kasworm 1983a, 1983b). She has studied self-directed graduate students and undergraduates in a variety of higher education institutions (Kasworm, 1988, 1991, 1992) using qualitative case study and qualitative interview methods. Her initial work (1988, 1991) indicated that the higher education setting and classroom were not antithetical to self-directed learning as some theorists had suggested. Rather, the adult college students in Kasworm's (1988) initial study used the form, structure and resources of a college course to meet personal needs, goals and desires, chose when and where to be involved, and determined the degree and depth of their own learning. She also found preliminary evidence that self-directed learning was not dependent on an extra-institutional context despite the fact that this context had been assumed to be the key element in defining self-directed learning. On the basis of her research, Kasworm suggested that self-directed

learning had been too narrowly conceptualized -- that learner authority over learning processes is not the only way to define self-directed learning. Her findings indicated that learner's free choices, learning processes and actions, and mental and emotional states were viable and important elements in a definition of self-directed learning.

Subsequent studies have led have Kasworm to conceptualize self-directed learning as a life-span concept that is "developmental, dynamic and learner-controlled" (1992, p. 223). She retained the notion of "learning episode" that had been historically associated with self-directed learning and suggested the concept of "master planner" to describe the role of the self-directed adult learner engaged in learning projects within the higher education context. The master planner role coincided with a conceptualization of self-direction as a life-long personal attribute. Kasworm asserted that from the perspective of an entire adult life cycle, individual learning episodes assumed different forms and served multiple purposes. The adult master planner wove the strands of varied learning episodes together to form the tapestry of life long self-directed learning. The master planner saw credit-bearing courses as individual learning episodes.

As master planners, adults involved in collegiate study can create their own learning structures as well as choose to participate in pre-defined ones. They can agree with the socially defined role of student and choose typical student learning behaviors or they can learn from features of the academic environment in unique ways that differ from well-known study skills and actions. They may also choose to accept the socially defined judgment and evaluation structures of the credit-bearing classroom or to appraise their learning according to idiosyncratic judgments or self-determined standards.

Findings

The 1991 and 1992 Kasworm studies illuminated four patterns of *interaction* between the adult self-directed learner and the college classroom. Kasworm argued that these interaction patterns are based on sets of cohesive and related behaviors which evolve from inner meaning schemes. She concluded that although all of the participants in her studies of adult undergraduate students identified themselves as self-directed learners and could give examples of extra-institutional learning projects, not all "presented themselves as learners who developed their own structures and processes for learning through the undergraduate experience" (1991, p.56). Within the institutional context, some preferred to use structures and processes already in place. The place of individually created self-directed learning structures and processes was unique within each of four identified patterns. Kasworm has named the patterns accommodation, transformative, withdrawal, and conflict.

Accommodation pattern. This interaction pattern between adult learner and collegiate setting is the most common, according to Kasworm. It contains three subcategories: validated expertise, measured expertise, and exploration beyond expertise. Within the accommodation pattern, the learner's own perspectives and beliefs agree with many institutional norms. Accommodating master planners define and monitor learning through socially established norms.

The first of the three above-named subcategories in Kasworm's studies, validated expertise, includes adult undergraduates who sought a socially valued credential (bachelor's degree) and planned to use familiar skills and behaviors to attain it. As master

planners, they judged the professor's capabilities, screened the knowledge for its utility and pragmatic application, sought to understand the structure of the knowledge; and readily accepted classroom learning structures into their personal meaning schemes.

The second of the three subcategories is that of measured expertise. In Kasworm's studies, adult undergraduates within this group seemed to be operating on overload. Their lives were consumed by diverse and demanding roles and responsibilities. They valued the expert/novice teaching-learning situation of a classroom because of its efficiency. They also sought publicly validated credentials, believed in degree attainment, and tended to focus on the immediate and near future. As master planners they set boundaries for their learner role and other life roles; allocated and distributed finite personal resources; judged the relative importance of classroom content and the need for related learning actions; and evaluated the balance between input (time and energy spent in studying) and output (grades and progress through their program).

The final (third) subcategory for the accommodation pattern is exploration beyond expertise. Adults of this group in Kasworm's studies valued expertise because it opened doors and built foundations. They expected to create and use their own meaning schemes once the instructor's expertise helped them lay a foundation. They were often focused on a global reevaluation of themselves and their life course. In contrast to the measured expertise subcategory, they were focused on their entire future life rather than the immediate future. Some *discovered* that collegiate involvement was a personally effective means for exploring alternative future courses and promoting personal development; others *expected* collegiate involvement would produce these outcomes. As

master planners, they functioned in ways that orchestrated and directed their personal growth and self-discovery within the classroom context.

Kasworm's findings reveal that outward, observable learner behaviors are poor indicators of internal cognitive activity and concept creation and underscores the importance of the learner's perspective. All of the accommodators gave evidence of acting in ways congruent with expected student behaviors, but the quality of the constructs they created varied markedly. The validated expertise group accepted collective constructs, but assigned them personal meanings. The findings related to the beyond expertise accommodators indicate that foundational knowledge or the presence of existing subject-matter concepts supported increased self-direction. Beyond expertise accommodators appeared to be engaged in modifying the knowledge they had previously created. They were less dependent on a professor's knowledge and needed to judge the accuracy of their construct modification according to their own criteria. Thus, they were able to be self-directed to a greater degree than those with no prior knowledge of the course content.

Transformative pattern. The next most common pattern of adult learner/collegiate learning interaction identified by the Kasworm studies is the transformative pattern. Kasworm (1991) sees this pattern as the most integrative and complex of the four. During her study, Kasworm found that the learners in this group had a broad, encompassing approach to learning that touched all areas of their lives. They sought to develop knowledge that transferred among settings and roles. Beginning with classroom-based knowledge, they interpreted and recreated it in personally meaningful

ways in order to make personal applications. A continuous cycle of action and reflection seemed to characterize learning for those in this category. Kasworm noted that learners in this group were more often involved at the graduate level of study. As master planners, these learners consciously differentiated between shared meaning structures (related to content, the student role and learning experiences) and their own created structures. They used both shared (culturally common) and individual knowledge to unify many aspects of their lives. Their overall goal appeared to be the careful construction of viable personal knowledge. In their classroom and course participation, they noted the importance of shared knowledge. These learners experienced a particular kind of power in their learning when they were able to attach a name to concepts they had already constructed. This occurred when they recognized something they were studying as an instance of "X" which they already knew because they had constructed it. They were then able to attach a particular conceptual name to "X" and knew that others who had named the phenomenon shared their knowledge.

The transformative learners in Kasworm's studies possessed many characteristics Candy associates with autonomous persons (Candy, 1991). They conceived of goals and plans, exercised freedom of choice, reflected rationally, followed through on their plans, and seemed to have a concept of themselves as autonomous. They constructed high quality knowledge, thought deeply about its meaning, assigned their own meaning to the knowledge they constructed and used their knowledge to guide their present and future knowledge.

The characteristics and actions of Kasworm's transformative learners group provide some evidence that self-direction and autonomy are related. As highly self-directed learners, they also illustrate the importance of collective constructs and of being members of the learning community within a knowledge discipline. If those who are highly self-directed value collective knowledge creation, there is compelling reason to question the assumption that social isolation defines self-directed learning. Transformative learners' beliefs and actions verify that learners who possess subject-matter constructs are highly self-directed. Kasworm notes that many in this group were graduate students. They already possessed a rich resource -- their own subject-matter knowledge. With these schemes in place they were better able to judge the value of classroom perceptual input and better able to determine what they needed to know than subject-matter novices.

Withdrawal pattern. The withdrawal pattern involves a significantly negative interaction pattern (Kasworm, 1991). Adult undergraduates in this group of Kasworm's study participants had a past history of positive experiences in collegiate settings and believed themselves to be competent learners. However, their current experiences contradicted the past. They felt that classroom evaluation procedures did not reflect their extensive practice-based knowledge and their disappointing grades were more a reflection of unfair evaluation practices than of the extent or quality of their knowledge. Whether they were victims of unfair evaluation or not, their perception of themselves as competent students and learners was being challenged. These study participants responded with passive resistance to classroom norms, limited their social interaction with the teacher

and fellow students, and continued to equate learning with good grades. Their self-directed learning projects outside of educational settings were relatively constricted and confined. As master planners, they functioned to protect their psychological and emotional integrity. They sought to determine what the teacher wanted so that they could give the teacher what would earn them good grades.

Seen from a constructivist view, withdrawal learners are confronted with perceptual information that challenges their existing meaning schemes, but apparently are unable to move on to modify their existing schemes or create new ones. They appear to be greatly constrained by their perceptions of their current learning situation. This finding supports Candy's (1991) assertion that a student's perceptions of the demands of the learning situation can limit the degree of self-direction.

Conflict pattern. The least common of the four patterns identified by Kasworm (1991) was the conflict pattern. Study participants in this group placed great emphasis on their own needs and desires, were highly autonomous in their learning pursuits, and held extremely focused expectations of themselves and their collegiate interactions. They also had highly specific goals and sought a self-defined level of expertise that often involved several academic disciplines. Kasworm (1991) noted that the individuals in this group had often faced a series of adverse situations and life circumstances. They viewed education and learning as a critical means of moving beyond the existing restrictions in their lives. They sought to use the form and resources of the university setting without being bounded by the structures. As master planners, they pursued individualized faculty-student relationships and attempted to create their own path to a degree. They

also placed great value on their own meaning structures. Their approach to the course content began with their own knowledge structures. Once they had interpreted the consensual knowledge structures of the course content, they carefully chose which, if any, aspects of these consensual knowledge structures they would add to their own meaning schemes. Further, more conflictors chose to evaluate learning primarily from their own reference points rather than judging their learning solely by academic standards.

The adult undergraduates in Kasworm's studies who fell within the conflict pattern group demonstrated that the classroom structure and form does not actively inhibit the expression of self-directed learning. However, for this set of adult learners, classroom forms, structures, and transactions constrained and modified their self-direction. The interesting feature of the findings related to this group was the refusal of this type of learner to allow the constraints of the university to limit their learning. Conflict learners were determined to find a way to make the system serve their personal purposes and goals.

Summary

Kasworm's (1988, 1991, 1992) work has yielded compelling evidence of interaction between the self-directing learner and his/her learning situation. The actions of the learners in her studies were influenced by their beliefs, values and expectations, their past and present experiences, and their perceptions of themselves as learners as well as classroom social relationships. In essence, their actions *flowed from* their cumulative personal histories and knowledge. In discussing constructivist views of learning, von

Glasersfeld (1989) and Kelly (1955) indicate that existing knowledge is, in fact, the starting point for action. Their arguments are a departure from the idea that the learner, plans, **acts**, and then generates knowledge.

Among all the patterns identified by Kasworm, individuals in the conflict and transformative groups seem to have the most psychological individuality and to be the most personally autonomous. This group also seems to exhibit the greatest level of self-awareness, which is one of the key characteristics of personal autonomy (Candy, 1991).

The learners in Kasworm's studies were involved in learning situations similar to the participants in this study, and it was clear that they were self-directed in their classroom learning. There was evidence of the creation of different qualities of constructs and evidence that their self-direction was effectively constrained by their personal meaning schemes. In the past, adult educators have assumed that the majority of the constraints to self-direction in the classroom were found in the environment and could be altered, removed or reduced by the teacher who wished to help the adult learner become more self-directed. Kasworm's findings, which fall within the constructivist tradition, refute this common belief and suggest that the key limitations on self-direction lie within the learner's own cognitive structures. Her findings lend further credence to the importance of the focus of the current study which is the learner's perspectives of self-direction in the classroom.

Taylor Study

Taylor's (1987) study sought the perspectives of a group of adults in a graduate-level course exclusively using self-directed teaching methods. She used a series of qualitative interviews to understand the learners' perspectives of the course and their self-directed learning experiences. The objective of the course was to learn *about* self-directed learning by *being* self-directed. Learners decided what aspects of the topic to study and how the topics would be studied and set their own evaluation procedures. The instructor restricted her roles to those of consultant and resource person.

Taylor undertook the study because she perceived a mismatch between her own experiences as a learner in a graduate program and the picture of learning she encountered in academic literature. To place her perspective in constructivist terms, she had encountered perceptual input that challenged her personal meaning schemes and set out to understand the discrepancy through a uniquely self-directed approach. She assumed at the outset that adult learning had a common pattern which could be identified through rigorous study, an assumption congruent with constructivist tenets that human beings have similar ways of thinking and reasoning. In her analysis of her interviews with the learners in her study, Taylor was able to identify a learning pattern involving eight distinct steps. She labeled four of the eight steps "phases." The remaining four, she considered accompanying "phase transitions." She labeled the entire process "the transition to self-direction" (p. 182).

Taylor argued that each of the four phases of the process is preceded by a phase transition. The process itself is a cyclical, potentially recurring process. In her study as

the process began, learners were confronted with a classroom learning situation that could not be explained using their existing constructs for classroom learning. Their initial perceptions initiated the transition cycle. Taylor describes the four phases with their related transition points as follows:

> **Disconfirmation** ([first] phase transition) - a major discrepancy between expectations and experience.
>
> **Disorientation** [first phase] - a period of intensive disorientation and confusion accompanied by a crisis of confidence and withdrawal from other people who are associated with the source of confusion.
>
> **Naming the problem** ([second] phase transition) - naming the problem without blaming self and others.
>
> **Exploration** [second phase] - beginning with relaxation with an unresolved issue and intuitively-guided, collaborative, and open-ended exploration with a gathering of insights, confidence and satisfaction.
>
> **Reflection** ([third] phase transition) - a private reflective review.
>
> **Reorientation** [third phase] - a major insight or synthesis experience simultaneous with a new approach to the learning (or teaching) task.
>
> **Sharing the discovery** ([fourth] phase transition) - testing out the new understanding with others.
>
> **Equilibrium** [fourth phase] - a period of equilibrium in which the new perspective and approach is elaborated, refined and applied. (Taylor, 1987, p. 183)

The first phase, disorientation, is marked by a number of strong feelings including confusion, anxiety, tension and a crisis of confidence. There is an accompanying psychological withdrawal of the learner which Taylor indicates is *phase-specific* rather than a function of the learner's personality. Problem identification is confirmed through interaction with others. Social interaction reconnects the learner with others and moves

him or her into phase two, which is exploration. This phase is marked by collaboration with others, living with the problem and gaining insight. The transition to the third phase, which Taylor calls reflection, involves a period of private mental activity and contemplation to which some learners felt irresistibly drawn. Phase three, reorientation, involves a major synthesis and a sense of resolution of the disorientation phase (phase one). The fourth phase transition, sharing the discovery, moves the learner back into the negotiated social arena where the new knowledge (synthesis) is shared with others. The final phase, equilibrium, is a return to a period of stability where the learner is able to explain what (s)he is experiencing.

Taylor (1987) found that individual learners move through the four phases and four transitions of her model at idiosyncratic rates. Further, in harmony with constructivist tenets, classroom events are interpreted in individual ways by each learner. Taylor found that her study's participants interpreted class sessions in unique ways. Participants often moved forward to the next phase in the transition to self-direction cycle after experiencing and interpreting a particular class session.

Taylor also found that intuition plays a significant role in the second phase (exploration) of her four-phase model. That is, intuition is important during early phases of a learning episode. In contrast, previous discussions of self-directed learning episodes have emphasized the logical and rational processes of planning as central to the initial phases of a learning episodes.

Taylor (1987) refers to her model as a "transition to self-direction" model and provides some insight about the process of creating new concepts and meaning schemes.

For example, during Taylor's first phase transition (disconfirmation) and first phase (disorientation), her participants were totally occupied (mentally, emotionally and even physically) in developing new ways of behaving as classroom learners. Learners in her study experienced numerous strong emotions as they moved through this first phase (disorientation). Other emotions accompanied other phases as well. This range of emotions suggests that the creation of constructs is not an emotionally neutral proposition. However, there has been a limited discussion of the emotional aspects of self-direction in the literature (Brown, 1983). Thus few reliable conclusions can be offered related to the emotional aspects of knowledge creation.

The fact that Taylor's learners were attracted to reflective processes in the third phase transition indicates that some aspects of knowledge construction are private and conducted in isolation from others, since reflection is primarily a private process. However, it is also clear that the entire "transition to self-direction" cycle that Taylor describes alternates between periods of learner isolation and periods of social involvement. The cycle begins with disconfirmation within the learner, who is situated in a group learning context. The learner subsequently withdraws at the end of the first phase (disorientation). The second phase (exploration) brings the learner back to the group context. The second withdrawal occurs during the third phase transition (reflection) and ends when the learner reengages with others to test his/her new understandings in the fourth phase transition (sharing the discovery). This repetitive cycling between private cognitive activity and public interaction has not been described elsewhere.

Hodgson and Reynolds Study

Hodgson and Reynolds (1987) studied adult learner responses to a participative classroom learning structure in the context of a business or business management degree program. They described both teachers' and learners' perspectives derived from unstructured interviews and participant observation data. The program and its structure were designed by Hodgson and Reynolds in an attempt to test their assumptions and beliefs about adult self-direction in the higher education classroom.

Every course in the program was conducted within a learning structure which the authors described as open. Courses were designed and directed by groups of learners and followed a nontraditional timetable. The open structure included an initial five-day workshop during which students and teachers together negotiated course content and teaching methods. The subject matter was proscribed by the degree program plan. Once the course content and teaching methods were negotiated, teachers assumed resource provider and consultant roles. Each workshop was followed by regular meetings of self-selected student tutorial groups, each of which included one of the teachers. These groups met for classes throughout the remainder of the course. The open structure also included the notion of a learning community.

The authors believed that learners' self-direction in the collegiate classroom would be supported and encouraged within a learning community mutually created and established by students and teachers. Hodgson and Reynolds envisioned self-direction within the learning community as a process that could and would be socially controlled

and directed, and sought to inculcate a responsibility ethic within students wherein students accepted responsibility for both their own and others' learning.

Hodgson and Reynolds began their study with the assumption that a learner's responsibility for learning involves concern for others as well as for him or herself. They believed that the establishment of a learning community was the appropriate means for expressing mutual responsibility for learning. Hodgson and Reynolds believed that within a learning community, teachers and learners would function as equals. The responses of the students to Hodgson and Reynolds's assumption suggests that students' beliefs about appropriate teacher behavior were significantly challenged when the teachers in this study attempted to behave in ways that the teachers believed expressed a co-learner role.

In the study described by Hodgson and Reynolds, learners encountered a variety of different teacher roles. The teachers in the study viewed themselves as consultants, resource persons, and co-learners and attempted to act in ways congruent with their beliefs about these roles. The teachers also believed they were responsible for classroom learning events, especially during evaluation sessions held during workshops. During these class sessions teachers functioned as facilitators, taking responsibility for "helping everyone avoid some of the potential pitfalls of democratic decision making" (Hodgson & Reynolds 1987, p. 149). Thus learners were alternately confronted with teachers acting in accordance with socially constructed and reinforced conceptions of teachers and with teachers acting in new ways that challenged existing meaning schemes.

Hodgson and Reynolds indicated that they were consciously aware that they were imposing their participative course design, and that students in the program had no opportunity to choose an alternative design. They acknowledged that learners might have preferred a more traditional directive design. They indicated that they expected that their own beliefs might be challenged, and that they were aware of potential problems in attempting to mesh the teacher's responsibility for judging learning outcomes with student-determined evaluation criteria. In other words, these investigators expected challenges to their own existing meaning schemes and that the learners' meaning schemes would also be challenged. However, they did not view responding to these challenges as self-directed classroom learning. Instead, they viewed the *activities* associated with the altered classroom structure and with the establishment of the learning community as self-direction.

Hodgson and Reynolds found that the course teachers believed that they had been able to assume roles of greater equality with the learners and had avoided maintaining control over the content. Teachers had sought to maintain an open mind while assessing students' products in order to challenge the assumption that only grade-related criteria mattered. However, from the adult learners' perspective, the teachers' refusal to assert control during class sessions created a vacuum that was filled by power plays among students. Some students felt that the power plays actively impeded their own learning. Others also felt it was useless to pretend a teacher and student were on the same level except in regard to certain aspects of content. They acknowledged the faculty's inevitable responsibility for evaluating student learning. Students were acutely aware that their

teachers held legitimate power by virtue of their academic positions. Teachers and students both knew that this legitimate power could not be transferred to the students. Within the learning community, the students remained uncertain as to when or where the teachers might exercise their legitimate power because the rules governing the exercise of this power within the community had to be developed.

Students in the Hodgson and Reynolds study believed their learning was enhanced to the degree that certain learning communities were able to develop high quality relationships among peers and instructors. However, they found the concept of the learning community novel and difficult to implement. The relationship of individual needs to group needs constantly required negotiation and renegotiation. Some learners were perceived to be manipulating the public forum discussions (evaluation sessions) to meet personal needs at the expense of others in the group. Others were uncomfortable with the continual need for negotiation and noted that they had no sense of belonging to the group, and that they sometimes felt a need to be self-protective in the negotiated climate. Learners valued the learning community, however, and felt it was worth understanding for its own sake and that it had contributed significantly to their learning. One learner noted with surprise that his or her concept of learning as a solitary experience had been challenged, and that he or she now saw an interactive and social dimension to learning.

The learning community created by Hodgson and Reynolds required the individuals involved to create a new common discourse. Since the learning community was a socially structured group situation, each community created a common discourse to

communicate the group's normative values within each new course and learning group. Hodgson and Reynolds found that learners did not participate equally in the creation of the norms in the participatory learning community. Further, some learners were unable to fully embrace the norms once they were created. Hodgson and Reynolds finding seems to indicate that learners constructed a wide variety of concepts relative to the learning community. Some of these concepts were able to guide learners' actions. Others who felt no sense of ownership were apparently unable to construct meaningful personal concepts for a learning community, or rejected the usefulness of learning community concepts. These individuals were unable to make use of the learning community's benefits to enhance their learning.

Adult educators have tended to focus on the individual learner when suggesting that participative structures enhance self-direction in learning. They have failed to consider the *mutuality* of interactions between and among learners and teachers in a classroom context. Hodgson and Reynolds explicitly acknowledged the importance of interaction and created a structure which promoted more extensive learner-learner interaction than that found in most classroom learning situations. They found that learners valued this interaction, but that negotiating new guidelines for behavior was a time-consuming process. The negotiation process and its outcomes apparently alienated some learners in the study. Hodgson and Reynolds interpreted the continual need for negotiating behavioral rules and norms for the group as a problem. However, the constructivist paradigm suggests that the negotiation was part of constructing new meaning schemes for some participants. If this is so, negotiation is an important strategy

for new knowledge construction and might enhance learning if expressly incorporated in the structure of a course. The learners in Hodgson and Reynolds study were confronted with a need for new meaning schemes to explain and guide their actions in this unique learning situation that did not fit their existing schemes for classroom learning. They responded by creating new meaning schema; some of which were collectively created, and some of which were unique.

Finally, it is apparent from the Hodgson and Reynolds' findings that teachers were poor predictors of learner interpretations of and responses to instructional events. Hodgson and Reynolds learned that researchers cannot assume that teachers and learners share common perspectives.

Sgroi Study

Sgroi (1990) used unstructured interviews and participant observation to discover the views of adult women involved in learning artistic performance in a dance classroom. This study, like Kasworm's (1990b), presents self-directed classroom learning as part of a developmental and lifelong process under the personal control of the adult learner.

Sgroi's study revealed that even without being formally given the freedom to make pedagogical choices through a self-directed teaching method, learners assume responsibility for those choices. This finding was consistent with constructivist views of learners as inherently self-directed and therefore responsible.

Sgroi found that the women involved in the dance classroom decided what they needed or wanted to learn, selected the place, time, and particular teacher, and determined

when and where to follow the teacher's guidance. The women chose to follow the teacher's direction in order to create specific knowledge; understand the scope and limits of dance movements; enhance their motivation; refine their knowledge. In these instances, Sgroi's participants seem highly self-directed in seeking out the specific perceptual input they needed to create and modify their personal meaning schemes. These women felt able to construct their own knowledge and possessed the skills to be able to do so using the form and structure of the dance classroom. Sgroi's participants did not appear to be blindly following a teacher's leadership nor to be passive in responding to the teacher's directions. Instead, they appeared to carefully chose the precise teacher contributions they needed to proceed with their knowledge construction.

The women in this study saw the teacher as a guide who knew the map for the territory they wished to traverse. Because the teacher knew the territory, she was able to offer suggestions regarding the benefits or problems associated with different ways of learning various aspects of dance. In fact, the women saw the services of the teacher-as-guide as essential to their learning. They also evaluated their learning by comparing themselves with others and by using their own specific internal standards. These women chose to be involved in the classroom as part of a inclusive learning pattern. Sgroi noted that their control and direction of their learning processes became even more apparent when viewed from a whole-life perspective. Sgroi's learners appear to have operated as master planners in ways similar to Kasworm's learners.

Participants in Sgroi's study actively sought what they needed to construct new knowledge in their chosen artistic discipline. They seemed to have a well-defined sense

of what they needed, and they evaluated and interpreted new perceptual input according to its utility in the development of new knowledge.

Sgroi's study revealed that learning highly specific and well-defined content (in this case prescribed dance movements) does not automatically equate with a lack of self-direction as old views of self-direction imply. An observer looking at the dance classroom might assume that the teacher was directing learning and that the learners were all learning the same material in the same way with similar performance outcomes. From the perspective of the learners in this study, however, there was a strong sense of personal control and freedom to learn and very deliberate decisions to follow the teacher's direction or to follow their own ideas. Sgroi's study underscores the importance of understanding the learning process from the learner's perspective and the dangers of assuming that teachers and learners share similar concepts and/or meaning schemes.

Blowers Study

Blowers (1993) investigated a group of adult undergraduate students in two adult-degree programs at liberal arts colleges. She used semi-structured qualitative interviews to examine their self-directed learning choices, actions, and preferences.

These adults were self-directed in their educational choices, in setting their own goals and objectives related to collegiate learning, and in their choices of when and where to temporarily follow the teacher's direction. Like many of the Kasworm (1988, 1991, 1992) and Sgroi (1990) students, these adult undergraduates also saw their collegiate learning episodes as meaningful within a broader adult life context.

Blowers found that the undergraduates in her study believed that they were not in a position to choose course content, teaching methods or textbooks. They interpreted these decisions as dependent on an understanding of the content and its specific knowledge structures. They felt that decisions made in the absence of such knowledge would not only be inaccurate, but also costly in terms of their subsequent learning efforts. A few who had taken classes that covered topics they knew a lot about indicated that they would be comfortable making *some* of the curricular decisions, but not with assuming responsibility for choosing course content and the means by which it should be learned. This finding suggests that these learners were not unwilling to participate in planning their classroom learning, but that they believed they lacked an essential component necessary for planning.

Beyond the classroom, at the level of the degree program, some of the participants in Blowers's study indicated that they would like to choose courses for their degree programs. At the degree-program level they saw individual courses as more or less appropriate in helping them to achieve personal learning goals and objectives. However, those who desired choice at this level spoke of being constrained by disciplinary requirements and the fear that their choices would not match professional requirements.

According to Blowers's findings, not only is self-direction in learning exercised in varied ways and to varying degrees across individuals, but also *within* individuals. Further, learners' choices depend on their purposes for learning.

Like the Hodgson and Reynolds (1987) participants, adults in Blowers's study had well-established meaning schemes related to the roles of teachers and learners involved in

a classroom context. They believed it was appropriate for the teacher to challenge them to develop or modify content-related knowledge. In fact, they spoke of enjoying such a challenge. However, when their assumptions about appropriate teacher behavior were challenged (when one professor instituted oral final examinations, for example), they reacted with a high degree of discomfort and focused on the discrepancy between their expectations and the perceived reality.

Shores Study

Shores (1986) conducted a two-phase qualitative study. She initially carried out an extensive content analysis of the adult education literature on learner/classroom interaction. Her content analysis revealed a dearth of qualitative investigations related to learner/classroom interaction and few studies which sought learners' perceptions of the classroom. Shores concluded that these studies provided no cohesive assumptions about learner/classroom interaction, that classroom learning has been described almost exclusively from the teacher's perspective, and that almost nothing was known about learners' perspectives of the classroom.

In the second phase of her research, Shores used field study methods to examine the experiences of fifteen adult women and one man[1] involved in a lecture-method classroom situation. The classes were designed to prepare the learners for a professional certification examination. She conducted a two-level analysis of her field study data. She

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[1]Shores felt that she had no basis for commenting on gender differences and presented her data according to the dominant female responses. In discussing her study, the participants will be referred to as female.

examined the same learners in succeeding classes during the course as well as different learners within the same class session. Her investigation acknowledged the interactive and situation-specific nature of learning and the learner as a self-directing individual.

Intra-individual Findings

Shores' first level analysis dealt with her findings related to differences within individuals. Shores found both similarities and differences in individual learners from class to class. The majority of differences were related to biological factors such as varied attention spans, emotional stress, or fatigue levels. Shores called these varying perceptions "momentary states." These class-to-class differences within learners were transient and superficial. Because these differences were momentary and unpredictable, their effects on classroom learning were difficult to assess and interpret.

Learners were also different because they were motivated by different goals and objectives. Shores thought that her learners' multiple goals and objectives could be organized in a hierarchy, but she had difficulty clarifying such a relationship among each woman's differing intentions. Shores's analysis indicated that goals and objectives were not stable entities, but changed from week to week and even from hour to hour during a single class session.

The women in Shores's study were consistent from class to class in their learning style preferences. While learning styles are often seen as innate factors existing within the learner and guiding learning, Shores's data indicated that learning preferences may be *developed from past experiences*. She speculated that her participants' learning style

preferences were derived from past successes. On the basis of these successes, her participants had concluded that a particular approach to learning worked and should be used again. Shores speculated that the learning style preferences were learned behaviors rather than innate tendencies. On the basis of their created meaning schemes for ways to learn, Shores's study participants directed their present learning. Shores's participants had apparently developed skills that led to successful learning in the past and were continuing to use these learning skills. The constructivist notion of action as the *product of learning* rather than the result of learning was substantiated by this finding.

Inter-individual Findings

In her second level analysis, Shores considered her participants as a group. Each woman in Shores's study based her course participation on her own goals and objectives. Shores found some commonalities among her participants' intentions. For example, three study participants attended classes because they were scheduled to teach future sessions. These women scrutinized the teacher's performance carefully and distinguished performance from content. Shores interpreted their responses as a "mirror effect" because they seemed to see something of themselves in the lecturer.

On the other hand, participants who were in the classroom for reasons other than preparing to teach did not separate teacher from content. When they reported a positive interpretation of a teacher, they held a concomitant positive interpretation of the content; when they thought poorly of a teacher, they also evaluated content negatively. This association between teacher and content was not influenced by a participant's level of

knowledge. Even when a woman knew something about the topic being presented, she did not use her knowledge to judge the quality of the presentation. Instead, she continued to judge the presentation and the content according to her reaction to the teacher. These findings relative to the interpretation of teacher and of content indicate that learner's goals and objective influence the way they interpreted classroom events.

Study participants also differed in their level of autonomy and in their perceptions of the relevance of the course content. They were autonomous in focusing their attention and in interpreting and responding to the content. Shores concluded that learner autonomy is a "layered" concept with varied degrees of control and freedom. She also concluded that perception of subject-matter relevance is "layered." For example, some of her participants believed the course content was relevant because they could immediately make sense of it in terms of their own practice. Others judged the content relevant within a broader context of their general field of practice or clinical specialty. Still others believed the content might be relevant for others, but that it held little personal meaning for them. They therefore judged the content as irrelevant.

Shores identified both similarities and differences among women related to the set of interpretive schemes they applied in the classroom. The women were alike in attending to the same features of the classroom and in following a similar sequence as they attended to those features. At each class session, they tended to focus initially on the teacher as a person, then on the course content, and finally on the method of content delivery. However, each woman was unique in her interpretive conclusions, according to her current goals or objectives, prior knowledge and past experiences with the content,

and learning preferences. The richness of past experiences related to the course content was particularly important. When a particular past experience was especially vivid, it had great power to influence the present learning situation. For example, one woman's daughter was afflicted with the disease being discussed. She found it particularly easy to pick out what was important about this disease and to learn the information that was new to her. Shores was intrigued to discover that this woman's past experiences with managing her daughter's disease also served as a consistent interpretive framework for her learning in other class sessions as well.

Summary

Shores expected "that differences for an individual learner across situations would yield data about situational effects, while differences between learners would identify idiosyncratic effects," but she found that "such clear cut interpretations were not possible to make. In both sets of analyses, similarities and dissimilarities in response were potentially attributable to *either or both* [italics added] individual and situational elements" (p. 391-392).

Constructivism situates the learner in a social context. Shores's findings provide a specific example and description of learner-situation interaction. Her description indicates that women in classroom learning situations follow similar sequences when they attend to classroom perceptual data, since her participants initially focused on the teacher; next, they paid attention to the teacher's speech and actions; and finally, they focused on the meaning of the message being conveyed.

Shores's findings suggest that a learners' goals and objectives significantly influence the direction and evaluation of classroom learning. Her discovery that individual learners possess a *network* of interacting and shifting learning intentions (goals and objectives) is noteworthy.

Shores's study participants felt no constraint in their interpretation of course content. Various aspects of the content were meaningful as they were interpreted on the basis of idiosyncratic meaning schemes. These women clearly perceived themselves to be personally potent in the classroom learning situation.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule Study

Belenky, et al. (1986) studied 135 women, 90 of whom were students in six different kinds of educational institutions (including baccalaureate institutions and a community college). In-depth interviews were guided by an interview schedule. The interview questions related to education sought the women's assessments of long lasting effects (what had been good and bad about their experience at their present institution). Interviewees were asked them to describe changes in their thinking which they attributed to their educational experiences, to talk about ideas they found challenging, and to identify any perceived deficits in their programs. The women were also asked to describe a powerful learning experience. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Belenky et al.'s study sought to extend the theoretical work of Gilligan and Kohlberg, as well as that of William Perry (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986). The heart of this study, however, was the identification of a range of perspectives

related to "truth, knowledge and authority" (p. 3). Five "ways of knowing" were identified, each composing a complex set of cohesive meaning schemes that provided the women in each category with a unified set of beliefs to guide their actions as knowers and learners. Belenky and her colleagues (1986) identified five perspectives or ways of knowing that included silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge (p. 15). They found that study participants could change their perspectives, moving from a simpler way of knowing to a more complex one. For a number of women, the change to a more complex way of knowing followed a powerful life-related learning experience. Classroom learning was not cited as a factor that preceded movement from one way of knowing to another.

Silent knowers, the first category of knowers, perceived themselves as "mindless and voiceless" and dominated by authoritative others. They did not seem to understand the idea that women had a mind of their own, or to have the ability to express or communicate in words what they knew or thought. Women in the second category (receivers) believed that other persons, especially authority figures, knew things, but that they did not. They attempted to take in others' knowledge and reproduce it. They also had markedly restricted abilities to express and communicate their thinking. Both the silent knowers and the receivers were most likely to have little or no higher education experience.

The third category, subjective knowers, saw knowledge as personal and private and derived through intuition. They possessed an ability to use words to describe some of what they knew and to communicate some of their knowledge to others. Some of these

women had experience in higher education classrooms, often in community colleges. Women in the fourth category, procedural knowers were "invested in learning" (p. 15) and had learned to use a variety of procedures to construct their knowledge. The majority of procedural knowers learned their procedures for knowledge construction in higher education classrooms. Some valued objective strategies for knowing and sought to construct their own knowledge according to the procedures experts had used. That is, they sought to appropriate a learning method and to make it their own. Other procedural knowers valued connectedness with others and sought to construct their own knowledge by understanding others and what others knew through empathy.

Women in the fifth category, constructing knowers, "view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 15). Constructing knowers represented the most complex of the five "ways of knowing" identified by the researchers. These women have a broad range of strategies available for creating their own knowledge, view themselves as potent learners, and also feel a profound sense of connection with other learners. Key characteristics of constructing knowers include an ability to integrate and use "reason *and* intuition *and* the expertise of others," and an ability to move "outside the given" (p. 133). They also tolerate conflict and "internal contradiction and ambiguity," abandon "either/or thinking," and acknowledge the complexity of life and of knowledge and knowing (p. 137). They examine, question and develop the "systems that they will use for constructing knowledge" (p. 139). That is, they are autonomous in creating the means for acquiring

perceptual input needed to construct meaningful knowledge. When constructing knowers assess expertise they qualify it in some way; the only expertise that is fully acceptable is the expertise of shared experience. They also value "real talk" which is true dialogue that involves the exchange of ideas and experiences (as opposed to shared monologues.) Belenky and her colleagues concluded that a sense of responsibility is a key characteristic of constructing knowers, because they "feel that women have a special responsibility to try to communicate to both men and women how they view things and why they value what they do ..." (p.147).

Belenky et al. (1986) concluded that "women's self concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined" (p. 3). That is, knowledge of self and views of what can be known and how it may be apprehended cannot be separated from all that a women is and has experienced. Their findings emphasize the importance of trying to understanding who a woman believes herself to be and the meaning schemes that support her responses in learning situations.

The findings in the Belenky et al. study provide important information about the quality of knowledge construction and the relative freedom and autonomy possible in relationship to the type and quality of available meaning schemes. For example, the women in the silent and received knower positions were usually from backgrounds with restricted social and economic opportunities. Their learning situations were chiefly life-context learning situations rather than classroom circumstances. They appeared to have constructed their knowledge on the basis of perceptual input that was more restricted and less varied than that available to women in the more complex epistemological positions.

They had no sense of a life of the mind and their actions were directed through their interpretations of others' visible and observable behaviors. Their wordless meaning schemes directed their actions as responders rather than as initiators. In agreement with Resnick's (1987) assertions, the knowledge of silent knowers seems to be more unconscious than conscious.

In contrast, the subjective knowers of Belenky et al.'s study had come to a point where they thought of themselves as having a conscious mind and that they were capable of acting in ways to achieve their own purposes, but they "saw what they wanted to see and ignored the rest, listened to the inner voice and turned a deaf ear to other voices" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 98). These women were conscious in their knowledge construction and used perceptual input from their life experiences as well as from the classroom. They believed themselves to be self-directed because they were responsive to their own meaning schemes and inner voice and free from the direction of others. Their knowledge construction had moved to the conscious level, but was still dependent on selective perceptual input.

The separate and connected procedural knowers in the study constructed knowledge consciously and deliberately, attended to a wide variety of perceptual input, and were active in seeking the perceptual input they needed to create workable constructs. They functioned as both actors and reactors and saw themselves as both separate from and connected to others. These women appeared able to construct both individual and collective meaning schemes and valued both. Their perceptual input was varied and they seemed able to construct knowledge from both everyday experiences and the classroom.

The constructing knowers seemed to possess a high degree of self-direction. They saw themselves as potent, consciously choosing the standards by which to judge expertise and the standards for evaluating their own knowledge. They appeared to be actors more than reactors, seeing their own constructed knowledge as important and valuable for themselves and for others. They sought to use their knowledge not only to achieve individual purposes, but also to achieve common purposes. Constructors had developed an extensive repertoire of skills and procedures for knowledge construction through everyday and classroom experiences. In addition, more than knowers in other categories, they saw themselves as evolving and continuing to evolve in their knowledge. They appeared able to predict many of the outcomes likely to ensue from their actions as learners, and to be emotionally independent if others reacted negatively when they communicated their constructed knowledge. Their concepts of themselves as learners seemed to incorporate many of the characteristics of autonomy identified by Candy (1991).

Summary of the Literature

These studies suggest that learners and teachers have different views of classroom events (Hodgson & Reynolds, 1987; Taylor, 1987), that learners possess idiosyncratic views of learning (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), and that classroom social transactions are a vital part of classroom learning (Hodgson & Reynolds, 1987; Sgroi, 1990; Taylor, 1987).

While constructivism indicates that it is possible for learners and teachers to create similar constructs of the content and classroom teaching-learning transactions, idiosyncratic constructs are also created. Furthermore, there is no way to predict nor control the creation of these unique constructs. Learners may choose to make sense of their classroom learning by using a collectively held meaning scheme created in the course of the class interactions or their own unique meaning scheme or some combination of the two.

According to the studies discussed, women in the undergraduate classroom are often relationally focused to a significant extent (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Shores, 1986). Classroom relationships, especially the teacher/learner relationship, are not only vital to learning, but are able to color the interpretation of course content (Shores, 1986).

The studies discussed show that adult undergraduate women possess a wealth of distinctive ways of learning and approaches to content. For example, Belenky, et al. (1986) identified five broad cohesive sets of meaning schemes affecting women's ability to construct knowledge. Shores (1986) found that women learners may follow a common sequence when attending to classroom perceptual data. That is, Shores's study participants chose to focus on similar features of the classroom and followed a similar sequence when perceptually scanning the classroom (teacher, course content, method of content delivery). These gender-specific studies (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Sgroi, 1990; Shores, 1986) suggest that women are able to utilize traditional academic learning and evaluation structures to construct personally meaningful

knowledge and achieve personal goals. The Belenky et al. (1986) findings also suggest that the amount and type of perceptual data available for knowledge construction is vitally important. Once a woman has become conscious, deliberate, and reflective in her knowledge construction, the importance of ideas and cognitively generated perceptual input becomes increasingly important.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

To examine the perspectives of adult undergraduate women concerning self-direction in classroom learning, the investigator used a qualitative design. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of participants from an existing data base of qualitative interviews. The interview transcripts served as the primary data for iterative analysis procedures based on methods advocated by Miles and Huberman (1984, 1993).

Criteria for Selection of Participants

Nine women who met the selection criteria were identified for inclusion in this study. The study sample was drawn from an existing data base using a purposeful, criterion-based sampling strategy compatible with qualitative inquiry (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The existing data set from which the study sample was drawn consisted of 90 interviews with men and women who were pursuing undergraduate studies (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994). All of the men and women interviewed during the creation of this data set were 30 years of age or older, currently enrolled, and in good academic standing at their respective institutions.

In addition to the *sampling criteria that were inherent* in the data base, *additional criteria* were identified for this study. The additional criteria were congruent with the study's purpose and designed to identify a select group of undergraduate women. Participant interviews were selected from the existing data base if the interviewee was a

woman who had been originally interviewed by the investigator, and was attending a public university or community college part-time.

A gender-specific sample was selected because according to previous research gender-related perceptions of learning and interpretations of classroom reality are likely to impact beliefs about self-directed learning. In addition, while including both women and men in the sample would have increased the study's breadth, its depth would have been compromised. The investigator chose to emphasize understanding the constructions of fewer participants rather than explore the variety of possible constructions of self-direction in learning.

Although the data base from which the sample was drawn contained interviews conducted by two investigators, only those conducted by this study's investigator were included in the sample. This criterion is important in assuring the stringency of the study since in qualitative approaches the researcher not only collects data, but is the "instrument" through which data is processed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rew, Bechtel & Sapp, 1993). In addition, within the constructivist paradigm, the interviewer and the participant join in creating meaning within the interview situation. The resulting dialogue is influenced by the interviewer's unique personal and professional characteristics. Excluding interviews from the original study that were conducted by the second investigator reduced the interview data base from which this study's interviews were drawn from 90 to 51.

Part-time students were selected because this pattern of collegiate involvement reflects a common experience for many adults and especially for women (Crimmins &

Riddler, 1985; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1991; Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller & Tabor, 1993). It is also likely that the experiences of full-time students differ from those of part-time students (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994).

Finally, because there is also some evidence that students vary in the way they perceive different institutions according to features such as reputation and size (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994), women attending public universities and community colleges were included. The public university and community college environments were selected because they were believed likely to attract a more diverse group of adult undergraduates. Including women from two types of collegiate institutions furthered the breadth of the study.

It was assumed that the women in this sample were knowing beings who used their knowledge to interpret actions and that they were able to form sophisticated meaning schemes (Magoon, 1977). Furthermore, they were assumed to be innately self-directed in their own efforts to create knowledge. It was also assumed that these women held some collectively constructed meaning schemes related to classroom learning that they had constructed during their lifelong involvement in classrooms as children and young adults. It was further assumed that these particular meaning schemes influenced their present learning (Magoon, 1977). Finally, it was assumed that the accounts these women gave of their undergraduate learning experiences during data collection were a valid source of their beliefs about self-direction in learning in these settings.

Design

This section discusses the qualitative design of the study. Initially the data collection process will be discussed. The qualities of researcher-as-instrument will then be presented. A description of the analysis procedures and summary conclude the chapter.

Contacting the Participants

Participants were initially introduced to the investigator through a letter (See Appendix A) which explained that the investigator was interested in their experiences as adult undergraduates. The letter included an invitation to schedule an interview time. Participants could schedule an interview time by calling a secretary at their campus if they desired. However, the majority of interviews were scheduled through phone contact. This contact occurred approximately ten days after the initial mailing. During this phone call, receipt of the introductory letter was verified, the study was again explained, questions were sought and clarified and an interview time was scheduled at the participant's convenience. Interview appointments were confirmed by the interviewer by telephone the day before, or in the case of evening appointments, the morning of the interview. Participants were usually greeted at the entrance to the building by the researcher. They were thanked for their willingness to participate and escorted to the interview location.

Setting and Interview Procedures

The setting for each interview was the participant's campus. Interview locations on campus such as the student center and centrally located buildings which were familiar to the participants and easily accessible were selected. The interview rooms were either small meeting rooms or offices. Chairs were comfortable and arranged around a table which held the recording equipment. The investigator took care to sit at the table in a way that minimized the table as a barrier and maximized communication with the participant.

At the outset of each interview, the investigator introduced herself and gave participants an additional opportunity to ask questions. She then presented the consent form which had been approved by the appropriate institutional review board (See Appendix B). The investigator and participant signed the consent form and each participant indicated her desire to receive a summary of the results. All of the participants wanted a summary and were subsequently mailed a copy of the findings for adult undergraduates for the first study. Each participant then completed a demographic sheet (See Appendix C). Permission to turn on the audio-tape recorder and back-up recorder (to prevent data loss) was sought from the participant. Interviews lasted from one to two hours. At the close of the interview, the participant was again thanked and escorted to a building exit. Any relevant comments the participant made while leaving were summarized in notes attached to the demographic sheet.

While a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix D) provided general guidance for the interviews, no two interviews were the same. In relating their

undergraduate experiences, participants frequently discussed many of the protocol themes without being prompted. Probes were used to obtain responses for protocol themes not addressed. The investigator's approach to the interview was conversational and focused on understanding participants' accounts. Protocol themes included participants' past experiences in higher education, their campus experiences during their current enrollment period, their classroom experiences, their perceived self-directed learning activities, their preferences for self-direction in the classroom, and their learning in everyday adult life.

Researcher-as-instrument

Researcher-as-instrument is an important concept in research designs within the qualitative and constructivist paradigms. As "instrument," the researcher is concerned with the specific nature of his/her participation in both data collection and analysis. Rew, Bechtel, and Sapp (1993) have identified qualities of the researcher-as-instrument which influence data collection.

The first of these is "appropriateness," which involves the researcher's capacity to identify the boundaries of his/her relationship with the participant. In this regard, the investigator was reflectively aware during the interviews of a tendency to respond to participants based on her experience as a member of a helping profession. Thus, she was tempted to respond as a helper rather than according to her stated role as a researcher. Her conscious awareness of this tendency allowed her to avoid inappropriate responses and to maintain the boundaries of her role as researcher.

The second researcher quality is that of "authenticity," which is the ability to draw on relevant personal experience and history to respond to the participant. Since the investigator was an adult student herself at the time of the interviews, she felt a sense of kinship with the participants. She was, however, aware that, as a graduate student, her level of participation differed from the women who were sharing their stories. She was careful to avoid assuming that their experiences were like hers.

"Credibility" and "receptivity" are the third and fourth important qualities of researcher-as-instrument. The investigator's credibility was established with the participants through the introductory letter, courteous treatment of participants, clearly communicated interest in their stories, and by the sanction of their participating universities. Her receptivity was consciously expressed in attentiveness which was revealed through direct eye contact, an attending body posture, and frequent verbal encouragement. She was also consciously careful to avoid conveying any negative judgments of participants' communication or their interaction during the course of the interview.

The final researcher qualities include "intuitiveness," "reciprocity" and "sensitivity." Intuitiveness involves the researcher's engagement in the life experience of the participant through empathy. Intuitiveness was expressed through frequent questions that identified, named, and verified participants' feelings. Reciprocity is the assumption of an equal-to-equal relationship with the participant. The investigator expressed reciprocity through her frequent attempts to verify that she had an accurate understanding of the experiences being related by each woman, and through respecting their

communication style. Initially, the investigator avoided any attempt to direct the course of the interview and allowed each woman to relate her experiences in a way that was meaningful to her. Three of the women tended to focus on life-space issues more tangential to their undergraduate experiences. The investigator was more directive in these interviews in order to maintain a focus on learning and the college classroom. Sensitivity is the ability to "see and hear accurately what is reported as data" (p. 301). The investigator believes she heard the participants accurately because she often experienced a sense of surprise at the participants' revelations which challenged her own beliefs and meaning schemes about adults' collegiate experiences. This sense of surprise indicated that she differentiated their experiences from her own.

Data Analysis

The primary data for analysis in this study consisted of audiotapes and transcriptions of those tapes for each of the nine interviews. The accuracy of each interview transcript was validated by reviewing the entire audiotape while examining the transcription text. Analysis proceeded in four phases data reduction, descriptive phase, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification phase (Miles & Huberman, 1993). Each phase will be discussed in the following sections.

Data Reduction

Data reduction began with a period of intensive interaction with the interview transcripts. Each transcript was read several times and passages marked that related to anything the participant said about her learning, learning-related actions, motivation for learning, or sense of autonomy as a learner. These passages were subsequently copied from the transcript into separate computer files. These files were read, and the related text portions grouped together. For example, at the beginning of her interview, Winona talked about her experiences with one professor and added information about her experiences with this professor at the end, these two portions of text were grouped together in the same section of the file. Once these files were created, they became the primary working text, and the descriptive phase of analysis began.

In some instances, quotations used to create data displays during subsequent phases of analysis were also reduced in order to facilitate identification of the key idea in the quote. An example of quotation reduction is found in Appendix E.

Descriptive Phase

The descriptive phase involved the creation of individual portraits of the participants. It is referred to as descriptive because it is very close to the data and involves a minimal amount of intervening investigator interpretations. Each participant was briefly characterized using her own descriptors of herself, significant aspects of her personal history, and a historical description of her collegiate experiences.

Thematization and Data Display

This phase of analysis began with the investigator rereading the transcripts. Next the reduced files were examined and themes identified. The themes were then compared for commonalities and differences. The themes became the basis for the creation of data displays including lists, summary tables, and diagrams. Quotations were used to create the majority of data displays. The initial data displays were working, temporary documents which became more data sensitive as analysis proceeded (Miles and Huberman, 1984). In this investigation, the displays allowed comparison of sets of themes (categories) and subsequent refinement.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The data displays were used to identify and refine the major categories comprising the findings of the study. These major categories were used to construct a conceptual model. Each participant's experience was then compared to the model and the model was refined.

Methods to Assure Quality

Methods to ensure trustworthiness included using an "analysis/activity log" and prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The log was used to track the various forms of the data and the decisions of the investigator, as well as to provoke self-awareness of the investigator's own meaning schemes. Prolonged engagement in this

investigation took the form of an average of 40 hours of intense engagement with each participant's interview text.

The participants' words were used in data displays in order to interpret data with fidelity and precision. Whenever a theme was used in a data display, its source was identified to remain true to contextually specific meanings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Summary

As a design issue, the research-researcher dialectic (Parse, Coyne, & Smith, 1985), or the relationship between the researcher and research phenomenon has been expressed in this study through the investigator's conscious choices. She chose to study the topic of self-direction in learning because, like Taylor (1987), her personal experiences did not match what she read in the literature. In her selection of the constructivist paradigm, she chose to examine this phenomenon from a perspective seldom used in past research. She believed a different perspective would be more helpful because past research seemed to be incomplete and the perspectives used precluded many questions about self-direction the researcher felt were important. In particular, past perspectives had masked adult learners' interpretations of the classroom and their learning in this context was also poorly understood. Finally, constructivist views of the learner and learning were more congruent with the investigator's personal observations and experiences than past theoretical frameworks.

Data collection procedures and methods were congruent with constructivism, as was the analysis. The inductive analytical procedures described were developed as the

analysis proceeded in order to make sense of the data and allow a consensus construction of self-direction in classroom learning to emerge.

CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This study focuses on adult undergraduate women's perceptions and interpretations of events related to the direction and evaluation of classroom learning and on the beliefs which affect their actions as learners in this setting. Within a constructivist theoretical framework which informs the study, the investigator has sought to uncover participants' meaning schemes for learning in the classroom in order to extend understanding of self-direction in the classroom. This chapter briefly summarizes participants' demographic data and introduces each woman to provide a context for her self-directed learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion of themes common to the participants as a group and a summary. All *proper names* used in this chapter are *pseudonyms*.

Demographic Data

The nine women who participated in this study attended a Southeastern public university with more than 15,000 students, a large public university enrolling over 25,000 students, or a community college with nearly 8,000 students. One of the participants attending the smaller public university was an employee; two at the larger university were employees. Participants ranged in age from 32 to 50; eight were European American, and one was African American. Three of the nine had earned associate's degrees, two in a

technical field and one in humanities. The two with technical degrees were pursuing their bachelor's degrees in engineering. The other six had varying amounts of prior college credit, ranging from none to approximately 60 credit hours. Three had previously attended other schools and three had attended only their present institution.

Two of the participants came from families that could afford to send them to college as young adults, but only one attended. At the time of the study, the majority of participants were from middle class homes.

All but one of the married participants came from a dual-income family. The one who was from a single-income family could afford to participate as a full-time student at the community college she attended, but she chose to limit her involvement to part-time. One participant from a dual-income household could afford private college tuition. Table 4 summarizes key demographic information about the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Participants

Participant	Age	Major	Degrees Held	Higher Education Experience*	Current Institution	1st Generation College Student	Ethnicity
Candace	50	Business Management	None	Private four-year; CC	CC and private four-year	Unable to determine from interview	European American
Frances	34	Computer/ Electrical Engineering	Associate's	Public four-year (three); CC (two)	Public four-year	Yes	European American
Angie	47	Speech Communication	None	Public four-year	Public four-year	Yes	European American
Olivia	45	Theater	None	Private four-year; public four-year	Public four-year	Yes	European American
Michelle	32	Wildlife Management	None	Private four-year; public four-year; CC	CC and public four-year	No (father earned Ph.D. as an adult)	European American
Judith	50	None declared	None	CC	CC	Yes	European American
Laurel	36	Education	Associate's (two)	Public four-year; CC	Public four-year	No (mother had bachelor's)	European American
Sarah	47	Business	None	Public four-year	Public four-year	No (father has bachelor's)	European American
Winona	34	Engineering	Associate's	Public four-year; CC	Public four-year	Yes	African American

* CC = Community College

Portraits of the Participants

The following sections introduce each woman and describe key features of her background that illustrate how she came to her current involvement in higher education classrooms. Each portrait describes one or two key personal characteristics that contribute to their self-direction in learning.

Candace

After years of volunteering in numerous community organizations, Candace is now a full-time lunchroom manager in the public school system. She noted that her career "just evolved." At first, she worked in her children's school lunchroom on a voluntary basis. Without actually seeking employment, she became a full-time staff member when the position was offered, then manager, and eventually the first Food Service Supervisor in the school system. She became involved in college in a similar manner, stating to the investigator that she "just got started and couldn't quit."

Candace began her adult involvement in classroom learning in non-credit, continuing education courses offered by Bayville Community College at a satellite site near her home. Her success in these courses led her to attempt some credit-bearing courses at the satellite site. She then began courses at Bayville's main campus. When a small, private, four-year college in her community (Commons College) described undergraduate degree possibilities for adults in a newspaper advertisement, Candace had her credits evaluated by Commons' continuing education staff. The evaluation revealed that she had accumulated a significant number of credits that would apply toward a

business degree at Commons and Candace decided to seriously pursue her bachelor's degree.

Candace is very pragmatic in her approach to learning and is highly self-directed. She possesses a wealth of management skills which she applies to manage her degree progression and her daily classroom activities. While Candace can afford the costly tuition at Commons, she uses her management skills to achieve the best educational value for her dollar. One semester, she sold a new full-size car her husband had bought her, bought a compact car, and used the difference to pay her tuition at Bayville Community College. Whenever she can, she takes courses at Bayville that will apply toward her degree at Commons because it is more economical.

As an adult learner in the classroom, she feels free to interact with her professors as a fellow adult. She believes that "sometimes you give and sometimes they give." She believes inexperienced teachers are more difficult because they see everything in "black and white," "have to go with a set of rules," and haven't learned to "bend." Candace finds it more difficult to be self-directed in classes taught by unseasoned teachers because they insist that she follow their rules.

Candace describes herself as competitive, curious, and hard to scare. She easily sets goals and welcomes the challenges she encounters in achieving them. Candace regards a degree highly not only because her parents taught her to value education, but because she seeks to finish something she started years ago as a young adult. In addition, she admits with some embarrassment that her academic record as a young adult was poor. An acknowledged competitive spirit spurs her to demonstrate her real abilities during her

current involvement. Candace is an action-oriented individual who likes to "get started" and see "where things lead." She says, "I have a goal now. I'm 50 years old and I don't know that I will use this degree for anything other than self-satisfaction, but that in itself will be enough."

Frances

Frances is a single, career-oriented woman who comes from a lower middle class economic background. She has been involved in higher education courses for the majority of her adult life. She took her first college course a year following high school graduation and continued to take courses part-time for the next decade. Eventually she completed her associate's degree and immediately began work on her bachelor's, but ran out of funds.

As a child, Frances "always liked taking things apart and putting them back together." She describes her siblings as mathematically inclined and speaks of an uncle and grandfather who were mechanics. Frances concludes that her mathematical abilities and interest in computers express family proclivities. Frances works as a systems analyst and data base administrator, but would eventually like to be an engineer with state certification. Consequently, she returned to college to complete her bachelor's degree in electrical computer engineering.

Frances indicated that her desire for a bachelor's degree was not enough to provoke her recent reentry until several other factors strengthened her resolve and led to action. One factor was Frances's awareness of the current job market. She regularly read

newspaper employment ads and noted that a bachelor's degree seemed to be the only thing that really counts for prospective employers. A second factor was an improved personal financial picture. She had fewer debts and a better salary and then discovered that she could defer some of her tuition until her employer's tuition assistance program paid the balance upon completion of the course. Finally, Frances indicated a desire to meet people other than those with whom she works. Thus, despite a long-held desire for a bachelor's degree, Frances enrolled only when her personal needs and life circumstances together provided cumulative impetus.

Frances is a detail-oriented individual. During her interview, she carefully described the precise dates and times associated with each of her episodes of higher education involvement. She took delight in enumerating the varied institutions she had attended and the credits she had accumulated at each.

She described herself as someone who needs challenges in her life. She enjoys mastering new subject matter and refining her existing knowledge of computers. In her previous job, she continually sought to advance her knowledge and felt she experienced discrimination when male colleagues were given opportunities to learn about new equipment, but she was denied similar opportunities. She eventually left and sought new employment. Her new job proved to be a challenge for about five years, but then she "started to miss" the challenges she had experienced as an undergraduate student in the past. This desire, too, pushed Frances to take action. She says, "I've put my foot down! I've got to go to school if I'm going to get this degree."

Angie

Angie is an administrative secretary at Fremont University, where she has worked for nearly 20 years. Her oldest daughter is a senior at Fremont and her youngest daughter will soon graduate from high school. She feels her involvement in a degree program is the result of changing life circumstances including her children's decreasing need for her time and attention, her husband's willingness to assume a more active parenting role, and his support for her involvement.

Angie never envisioned college as a possibility because her family could not afford college tuition. She married soon after high school graduation and became involved in family responsibilities. She took her first college course with a friend who was preparing to take the certified professional secretarial certification examination (CPS). Angie decided to prepare for the same exam and supported her friend by joining her in taking an accounting course. Through hard work and perseverance, Angie passed the accounting course. According to Angie, she was astonished and thrilled that she had passed a college course. Subsequently, she selected other courses to help her prepare for her own CPS certification. Once she was certified, she began taking psychology courses hoping to learn some things that would help her understand interpersonal conflicts she was experiencing with colleagues at work and with her in-laws and oldest daughter.

When mandatory advising was instituted at Fremont, she learned that she had enough credits to declare a major and earn a degree. Angie "gradually built up" the courage to move from taking one course per semester to taking two and "even ventured into mini-term," an intensive course offered between spring graduation and the beginning

of summer school. With each success in a course, Angie's confidence grew and she now believed in her own ability to earn a bachelor's degree in business communication.

Angie is deeply grateful for the opportunity to take college courses and earn her degree. She feels her university employee benefits have provided her with a special opportunity.

Angie's more than 20 years with Fremont University have led her to identify strongly with the institution. She delights in knowing details about faculty careers through her work. At times, she half brags about faculty achievements almost as though they were her family members. She is proud of her boss and feels fortunate to have his full support to pursue a degree.

Angie's demeanor is reserved, but she expresses her opinions decisively when a subject has personal significance. She describes herself as a competitive person who likes to do very well as a student. Angie will be the first member of her family to graduate with a college degree. She says, "[Graduating] will be something to be proud of -- not to get a diploma and hang it on the wall and say, `Oh, I'm a graduate of Fremont University,' but it's all that's happened in between -- everything that I've learned, the contacts that I've made, the enjoyment I've gotten out of my classes."

Olivia

Olivia dropped out of high school and went to work in a factory. When she was introduced to a young soldier who treated her well and brought her gifts, she assumed she

must care for him since he cared for her. Her loneliness, desire to leave factory work, and intense pressure from her family led to her marriage.

During one period in her marriage when her husband was overseas, Olivia completed her high school diploma through an independent study course. After joining him, she took several college courses through the military's overseas extension program. After returning to the United States, she took several theater courses at a university near the base where she and her husband were stationed.

Unfortunately, Olivia's marriage proved difficult and emotionally devastating. Professional help provided little relief. Finally, Olivia, her young son and daughter, and ailing mother-in-law fled the abusive circumstances in the middle of the night. Her mother-in-law died soon thereafter. Olivia became the family's major support and related that she began to grow up as she faced the daunting challenges of single parenthood and being a wage earner. With only a high school equivalency diploma, Olivia struggled to support her family. She took advantage of the Job Partnership Training Act provisions to learn word processing. Her skills in this area led to part-time employment at Fremont University and finally to full-time employment. As an employee, Olivia quickly took advantage of the opportunity to take a course per semester as part of her employee benefits. She said she "loved learning so much" that she planned on taking courses as long as she works at Fremont, which she anticipated would be until her retirement in 15 years.

Olivia's ultimate goal is to have a career, not just a job. Her chosen career is the theater because she has acted in plays "all her life" and her acting is "part of me." She is

pursuing a liberal arts degree at Fremont and majoring in theater. She is determined to meet the bachelor of arts requirements despite her poor preparation for college courses and her difficulties with math. Following her retirement she anticipates using her degree to free lance as an actress.

Olivia contends with difficult personal circumstances that include an ailing mother, a rebellious daughter and a son with mental illness. She feels largely unsupported in her educational efforts and struggles to manage her anger and resentment at "being a woman," because she has "it all piled on me." She characterized herself as someone who "loves learning" so much that her professors enjoy teaching her. Olivia believes she was unprepared for college and that her "lack of educational background" makes it harder to learn. She says she always compares herself with others who are educated and often concludes that her efforts are inadequate. She is afraid professors "give" her high grades because they "feel sorry" for her. Nonetheless, she believes she "must be doing something right" since she has a high grade point average at an institution she feels is "not an easy school."

Michelle

Michelle is a word processing specialist who resents what she feels are the condescending attitudes of the men for whom she works. She longs to demonstrate her true abilities through achievements in the wildlife field. Michelle has had a lifelong interest in this field, but has received no encouragement from anyone in her pursuit of a wildlife career. Her father discouraged her interests in biology as a child, conveyed the

message that education was for men and not necessary for women, and offered no financial support when she wanted to go to college. Now she finds herself working in an unrewarding job in order to support herself and her animals and again feeling devalued. Consequently Michelle feels disheartened and discouraged and wonders if she will ever realize her dream.

Following high school, Michelle found a way to attend college because friends were going, but was shocked to find out how poorly she was prepared for college work. She left after one semester, went to work in the airline industry, and took general education classes at a local community college where she says she did very well. However, when she attempted full-time study at a different four-year institution, she again found herself unprepared and unable to obtain financial support.

When her second collegiate experience ended, Michelle did not take any courses for 6 years. To support her wildlife interests, she worked as a volunteer at sanctuaries and read extensively in wildlife literature available at the sanctuaries. After losing her job due to airline industry cutbacks, Michelle moved to the city where a sister lived. She learned that Fremont, the major public university in the city, offered a degree in wildlife management. Michelle decided to take advantage of the opportunity to earn the credentials to enter the wildlife field. Even though she "may be the oldest forest ranger out there," Michelle is determined to earn her degree and practice in her chosen field.

Michelle is currently taking remedial courses at a local community college to prepare for advanced courses in her major. She feels disenfranchised at Fremont because she lacks regular contact with professors and other students in her field and has a limited

amount of time on campus to cultivate these relationships. Michelle feels that time is closing in on her and feels she must complete her degree with the highest grades since this will "prove" that she is intelligent. She thinks that a record of high academic achievement will substitute at least partially for a lack of experience in her field. Michelle enjoys learning and "if I felt like I was prepared [academically] and I had all my fears and all my concerns set aside, there's no end to what I could do. But it is such a struggle now, so it is kind of a negative experience. The circumstances are making it a negative experience."

Judith

Judith was originally inspired to consider college attendance by an article in Parade magazine about older women and their experiences on college campuses. The article was so significant that she passed it around to several friends and still keeps it in her files. At the time she read the article, Judith was approaching a transition period in her life and felt a need to develop her own interests outside of her roles as wife and mother. When her daughters became students at Bayville Community College, she decided to attempt a college course because she thought her daughters could "hold her up" until she knew what was involved in being a college student. She wondered whether she could be a college student after years of being a homemaker.

Judith grew up in a small coal mining town in the Kentucky hills and characterizes her parents as very backward. She stated they "couldn't help" their socioeconomic status, but she blamed them for failing to prepare her for life. When she

left home after high school graduation, she set out to learn about other people through a systematic reading program. Her goal was to understand how others thought and felt so that she might overcome some of her shyness and introversion. She has been proud of the job she has done as a wife and mother but also felt that she had "a real need for learning" and that learning has a special place in her life because of her poor background. She credits her college success as a factor in her willingness to try other new experiences such as travel outside the continental United States.

Judith has now progressed to the point where "the classroom's gotten to be a pretty comfortable place." She feels she is different from the majority of students, and even from other adult learners because she doesn't have a job or career as "an objective." She is financially free to take whatever courses she wishes at whatever pace she wishes, but chooses to put boundaries on her educational involvement. She comments, "I love my home life and I love my friends. I love going to church and [school's] just a part. I have to keep it in perspective and I have to allot it its time and space and that's all I want to give it. I don't want to take 12 credit hours."

Laurel

Laurel's mother was a teacher and from early childhood Laurel planned on entering the teaching profession herself . Her family could not afford to send Laurel to college after high school, so she worked two jobs and attended a community college. As a full-time employee and full-time student, she earned enough credits for two associate degrees.

Laurel then married and began taking upper division education courses. She stopped taking courses when she had her first child because she reasoned, "if you're going to teach children, your own should come first."

Laurel planned to begin taking courses again when her youngest child entered school. When this occurred, Laurel was anxious to begin, but financial considerations delayed her entry for a another year. Then she learned she lacked lower division requirements and could not take courses in her major. While she completed these requirements, Laurel competed for and won a state fellowship which was going to make it possible for her to attend school the following year full-time without needing to work to fund her tuition. Just as she finished the semester, she learned her husband had been transferred and she was moving to another state. She was disappointed and discouraged, but hopeful the move would not defer her dream any further.

While she waited to obtain the credentials to practice as a professional, Laurel nourished an identity as a teacher. She modeled a love of learning for her children and read regularly and consistently about teaching and educational issues in many different types of publications. She volunteered in her children's schools and worked in parent-teacher organizations with her husband. She taught in preschool as a lead teacher and saved all her lesson plans. When she found a story or materials that could be used for learning activities, she used her own children as "guinea pigs," observed their responses, made notes about possible modifications and added the materials to her files. Laurel's current purpose in the classroom is to continue to add to her store of teaching resources

by "just [being] a leech basically, [and] taking all the information from them [professor's]."

Laurel commented that she grew up during a turbulent social time that included much controversy about women's roles. Laurel's family is very important to her, but "it's very fulfilling that . . . I can be an individual and . . . have goals and they're attainable and I can be looked upon as more than just a housewife. I feel like it's my turn. It's kind of selfish, but I don't feel guilty about that." She plans to complete her bachelor's and immediately enter a Master's program before she begins teaching. She thinks she has a good 20 years to make a contribution and influence others' lives as a professional teacher.

Sarah

As a high school senior, Sarah was offered a full scholarship to a newly opened community college near her home as a high school senior, but Sarah refused because she didn't want to stand out from the crowd. She didn't even tell her parents of the offer. Instead, she went to secretarial school and then to work. After she married, she continued to work except for a brief period when her oldest child was young. When she returned to work, she held several different positions, each an advancement over the previous one. Eventually she became a secretary in the College of Education at Delta University, the regional state university campus. When she learned she had the option of taking a course per semester tuition free, she thought "I don't dare do that." She didn't want to stand out as an older student among the younger undergraduates although she was only 26 at the time. In addition, as a child she had been inculcated with the idea that the only

satisfactory level of performance was perfection. Consequently, Sarah often avoided challenges for fear she could not be perfect. However, because it was possible to take up to 18 hours as a non-degree student, Sarah decided to risk one course.

Her worst fears were realized when the teacher in her first course publicly lauded her for returning to school. She felt exposed and humiliated. She believed that the younger students in the class were much more intelligent than she and was awed by their comments which she presumed reflected extensive knowledge. When she discovered that most of them failed the course and that she had earned one of the highest grades, she was shocked. Suddenly, she saw herself as a capable student who could do college work and even do it well. She enrolled in other courses and made the additional discovery that those students in her first class had merely been parroting information from general education courses. Sarah remarked, "They weren't so smart after all!"

Sarah considered majoring in history and Spanish because she enjoyed both these subjects, but she didn't think they would be very useful degrees. One day, she settled on business as a major because she thought "You're stupid. You should major in business! This is what you have done all your life. You must like it; you are still here."

While Sarah fully intends to earn her bachelor's degree, she sees her collegiate involvement as primarily a means of personal growth. She has been consistently involved for 10 years, with the exception of one brief interruption. Taking courses is so important to her that she is determined to persevere despite her daughter's adolescent problems and her lack of support from a new boss. She watched her sister interrupt undergraduate studies to pacify a teenage daughter and feels that her sister's sacrifice was needless

because it did nothing to improve the daughter's behavior. Sarah doesn't intend to repeat her sister's mistake. Neither does she intend to allow a new boss's demands to curtail her participation. She comments that she has always been able to get her work done even when she leaves to take classes during the work day. She is unwilling to stop taking classes because a new boss doesn't think she needs to be pursuing a degree.

Sarah characterizes herself as an introvert. She says she discovered during the interruption in her studies that she "wanted that degree [mostly] for how I feel about me."

Winona

Winona lived up to her parents' expectations by graduating from high school. She had no expectations of furthering her education at this point in her life and soon married. As a newlywed, Winona dabbled in a few college courses and a variety of part-time positions, then had her first child, a son. Not long after her son's birth, her husband died suddenly. After struggling economically for several months, Winona decided to return to college. She qualified for financial aid and attended a technical school full-time, where she earned an associate's degree in engineering technology. Because she was a minority female with a good academic record, she was hired by a regional engineering firm and moved to the city where she now resides. She intended to immediately begin work on her bachelor's degree after her move, but she remarried and became involved in several community organizations. She did try one or two courses, but found she could not maintain her grades along with her family and community responsibilities. Then she became pregnant with her second child, a daughter.

Winona decided she needed her bachelor's degree because she was consistently denied promotions at work. After her daughter entered school, she began taking courses again as a part-time student. When her company changed its policies to allow a greater proportion of its employees to be permanent part-time workers and her new supervisor supported Winona's degree pursuit, she became a permanent part-time employee and full-time undergraduate student.

Winona admits that she struggles academically in some courses. She notes that many of her professors don't think a woman belongs in engineering, but Winona is determined to persevere. Winona's husband supports and encourages her in her efforts. When she encountered an intimidating professor who yelled at her and made her feel "like an idiot," her husband listened to her then asked, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" After she calmed down and thought about it, Winona went back to the professor to ask for help.

Winona's goal is to complete her bachelor's degree by the time her son enters college, but she constantly adjusts to semester by semester contingencies. If the course workload is too heavy, she says that she will drop a course, but she is committed to finishing because, "I'm not the type where I like to not finish something."

Themes Related to Participants as Learners

The study data revealed three themes common to all participants. First, learning was a central element for all. Most tended to have multiple learning interests; but several were more single minded, focusing their learning within one area. Second, all were

dealing with important adult developmental issues, such as career development or the empty nest stage of parenting. Third, all were highly self-directed in setting goals, making plans, and carrying out their plans in order to learn. Their self-direction in learning was profoundly influenced by classroom structures and processes.

Two additional themes were common to a majority of participants. First, a significant proportion of participants had extensive connections with educational institutions. Second, several participant characteristics differed from the descriptions of many adult undergraduate populations (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller & Tabor, 1993). For example, the literature indicates that the majority of adult learners are involved in higher education classrooms to obtain employment related credentials. While this was true for some of the participants, the majority participated for the sheer enjoyment and love of learning. A discussion of these themes is presented in the next section of the chapter.

Themes Common to all Participants

All of the participants held a strong orientation to learning. In addition, an abiding sense of curiosity was an important personal characteristic of most. They spoke of having many interests and of being fascinated with diverse aspects of their biophysical and social worlds. They enjoyed novelty and the process of discovery, had a love affair with books, and were excited when they encountered concepts they had studied in the classroom in other parts of their daily lives. The more they understood their experiential

worlds through learning, the more they wanted to extend their understanding through additional learning.

Three participants concentrated their learning in a specific field of inquiry. Two of the three, Michelle and Laurel, had identified their particular area of interest very early in their lives and passionately pursued their learning in their fields. The third, Winona, was also very focused in her learning, but did not indicate the same degree of passion for her major interest as the first two. This may have been because Winona's area of interest was an avocation in contrast to Michelle and Laurel whose areas of interest were vocational. All three of these women had developed extensive life long learning programs in their areas of interest using the classroom and extra-institutional experiences.

The second theme, facing adult developmental issues, affected a majority of participants as they pursued college study. One developmental factor was an altered parental role. Their children's changing level of maturity called for different parental skills and levels of involvement. These changes in parental responsibilities often created an opportunity for participants to act on long-held plans for collegiate study.

Five had children who were adolescents or young adults and had left or soon would be leaving home to establish their own households. Candace, Angie, and Judith responded to their children's leaving by deliberately cultivating new interests through classroom-based learning. Sarah and Olivia both dealt with children who had problems -- rebelliousness and mental illness. They used their classroom learning experiences to provide some relief from the tensions of single parenthood. Classroom learning was one way they cared for themselves.

Two participants, Laurel and Winona, had school-age children. These children no longer spent the majority of their waking hours at home. Instead, they were in school all day. These women both remained active in meeting their children's needs, but now felt they could legitimately take some time to be involved in classroom learning to achieve their own learning goals.

The remaining two participants, who were single and had no children, faced a different adult development issue. Both of these women, Frances and Michelle, were conscious of time slipping away from them. Michelle was acutely aware that she would have a limited amount of time to practice her profession once she obtained the needed credentials. Frances did not want to spend any more time polishing the same skills and working at the same level in her job. She had a sense of restlessness and vague dissatisfaction that she interpreted as a need for a change, and she turned to classroom learning to meet some of her needs.

The third theme common to all participants was their high level of self-directedness in learning. All set learning-related goals, developed plans to meet those goals and persevered to achieve their goals. The majority chose to express their goals, plans and actions in relation to classroom-based learning. All but one chose to pursue a degree. All made semester-by-semester plans to progress toward degree attainment. All sought to perform as successful students and to refine their skills as classroom learners. As the demographic data indicate, one-third have been involved in college classrooms for a decade or more. The average duration of involvement in higher education classrooms for all participants was six years; the range was 1.5 years to more than a decade.

Themes Common to a Majority of Participants

The majority of participants were extensively involved in higher education. Five of the nine had been or were involved as volunteers in elementary schools or as employees in elementary schools or higher education institutions. One higher education employee worked specifically for educators; another participant both volunteered and worked in elementary schools. Just as more educated individuals seem to be those who seek to extend their educational level, so participants seemed to seek to extend their involvement in the college classroom as they accumulated additional experience with educational environments. Framing their learning by the classroom experience would seem a logical consequence of participants' extensive volunteer and employment contacts with educational institutions. Their physical proximity to college classrooms as employees, social familiarity with schools as volunteers, and well-practiced student behaviors following years of involvement are a powerful set of influences affecting and reinforcing their perception of learning as a classroom-based activity.

Many adults are motivated to engage in undergraduate study to obtain qualifications needed for employment, but often find it difficult to finance their education (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994; Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller & Tabor, 1993). While the participants were involved in college classrooms primarily because of their love of leaning, many also had vocational reasons for participation. Two of the participants needed bachelor's degrees for professional advancement. They were both seeking degrees in the male-dominated engineering profession. Two needed their bachelor's degree for professional entry. Classroom involvement for the love of learning did not mean that

participants saw their degrees as superfluous to their work. All chose majors that they believed were relevant to their jobs, but they did not seek degrees to progress in their occupations. One participant sought no degree at all.

Financially, two participants were easily able to pay for their education with their own funds because of their husbands' earning power. Four attended part-time with assistance from their employers (three were university employees and one received tuition reimbursement). The remaining three were more representative of the typical adult undergraduate who often experiences difficulty financing his or her education. One struggled to finance part-time attendance out of her limited salary. Two worked part-time to supplement their family income and finance their education.

Summary

All participants believed strongly that learning was a central facet in their lives and they were highly self-directed in acting on this belief. They appeared to view learning as a life long activity and worthy life goal. Their love of learning was a primary motivating factor leading to their lengthy and continued involvement in classroom learning. The majority also viewed learning as primarily a classroom-based activity even though they had all conducted their own learning projects outside of classrooms. Two of the nine saw classroom learning as one part of focused, life-long learning programs. Many had extensive personal and work-related links with educational institutions which framed their perceptions. Participants turned to classroom learning to help them deal with developmental issues and as a means of enhancing their self-esteem. Several were

working to overcome impoverished or limited educational backgrounds and most were first-generation college students.

CHAPTER 5

PARTICIPANTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF SELF-DIRECTION

Introduction

Adults construct a great deal of knowledge in the context of their everyday experiences. However, when adults think of deliberate learning efforts, they often think of classrooms and frequently choose to be involved in classrooms in order to learn (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965). According to constructivists, existing knowledge determines all subsequent learning. Thus, adults' conceptions of classroom learning and of self-direction in the classroom will significantly influence their learning choices and actions. This study focuses on the beliefs and learning-related actions of nine undergraduate women in order to understand self-direction in classroom learning.

The previous chapter introduced each participant and the context for her classroom learning efforts. It was apparent that each woman was highly self-directed in choosing to be involved in collegiate classrooms. Each chose the time, place and extent of her involvement, selected the course or courses she would take, and managed her classroom learning to accomplish varied goals and purposes. The majority of participants had been involved in college classrooms for extended periods of time and all highly valued their classroom learning.

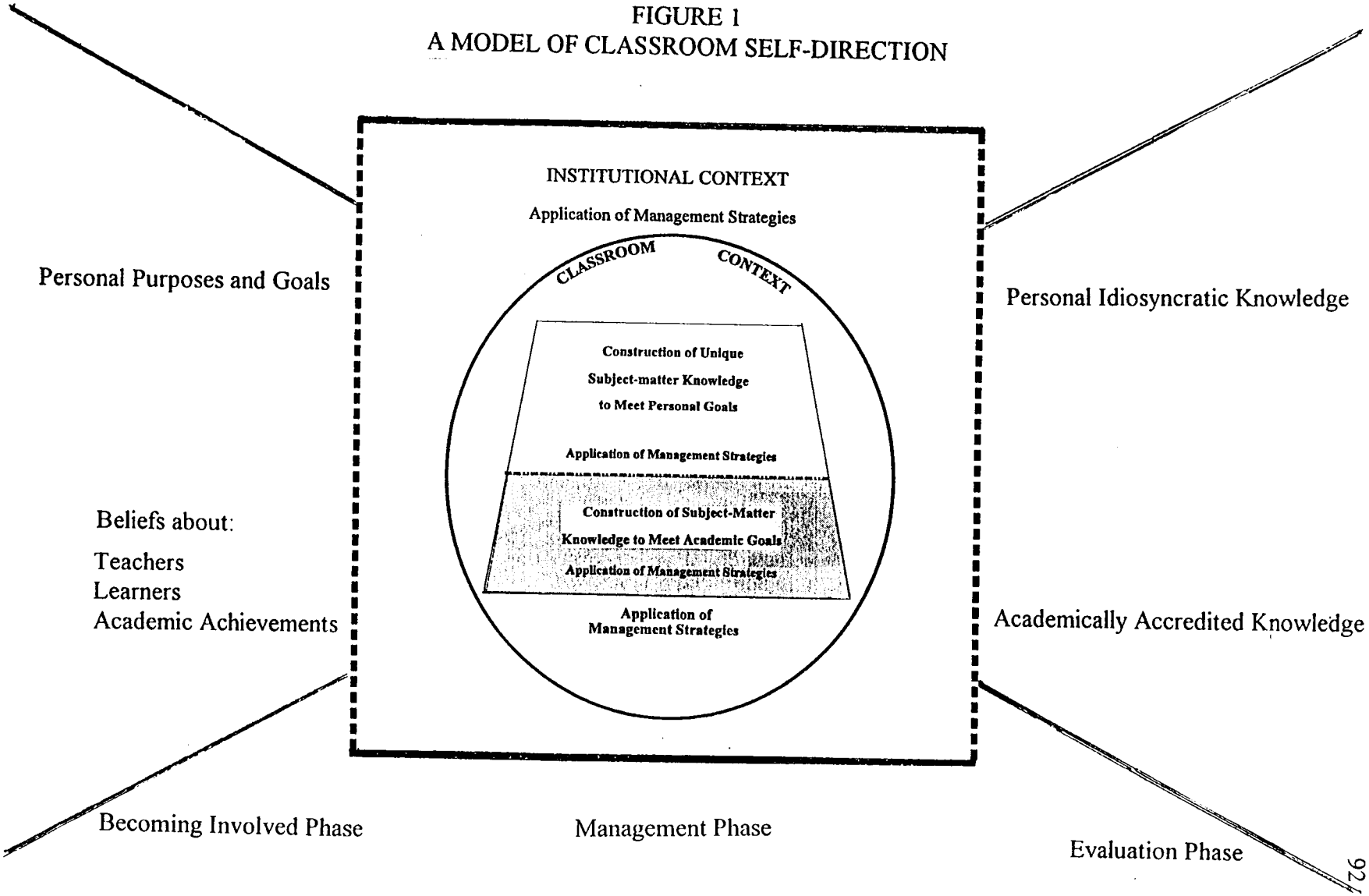
This chapter presents a model of self-direction in classroom learning based on the inductively derived themes and categories occurring across all nine of the participants' interview texts. The model is introduced and the components briefly described. Each

component is then discussed and illustrated using participants' quotes. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points. All material in the tables is taken directly from participants' interview texts. In some cases direct quotes are used and in others a summary phrase is given. All *proper names* in the chapter are *pseudonyms*.

A Model of Self-direction in Classroom Learning

The findings of this study suggest a model of self-direction in classroom learning that includes: a set of interacting learning related goals and purposes, multiple sets of management strategies, the construction of subject-matter knowledge, the possible construction of uniquely personal subject-matter knowledge, and evaluation of the knowledge created. According to this model, individual purposes and goals and beliefs about learning in the classroom influence learners' selection of the classroom as their desired learning environment. Classroom-based learners construct subject-matter knowledge within particular institutional contexts and specific classroom settings which affect the construction process. Learners apply two different sets of management strategies to direct their classroom-based learning, one at the institutional level and a second in the classroom. Learners use additional management strategies to construct both subject-matter knowledge that meets academic standards, and personal, idiosyncratic subject-matter knowledge. They subsequently evaluate their learning using academic criteria (grades and degrees) or personal standards. Figure 1 presents the model in graphic form.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF CLASSROOM SELF-DIRECTION



The model includes three phases: becoming involved, managing, and evaluating. The left hand side of the model with the converging lines represents the involvement phase. In this phase, two categories of factors influence learners' choices to be involved in a classroom: personal goals and purposes, and beliefs about teachers, learners, and academic achievement. Once learners choose collegiate involvement because they believe that their personal learning-related goals and purposes can be accomplished in this setting, they enter an institution's academic culture. Their construction of subject-matter knowledge is situated within particular classrooms within this culture.

The rectangle in the center of the figure represents the second phase of the self-direction in classroom learning model. The rectangle represents the institutional context, the circle represents a classroom. Learners manage learning at institutional, classroom and subject matter levels. Different strategies and actions are involved at each level.

Within the classroom circle, the trapezoid with the dotted line bisecting it represents classroom-based learning which is centered in the subject matter. Learners construct subject-matter knowledge which reflects the teacher's, but is not identical. Learners' knowledge reflects the teacher's because it is constructed from perceptual input the teacher provides and arranges on the basis of his or her knowledge of the content. Subject-matter knowledge enables them to satisfy specific academic requirements which teachers establish as well as their own academic goals. They also construct unique, subject-matter knowledge tailored to their private purposes. Since subject-matter knowledge of both types (academic and personal) is created from common perceptual input, they are both placed within the trapezoid at the center of the model. The dotted

line is a moveable line which may be placed close to the bottom of the trapezoid if the majority of the learner's time and energy can be spent in constructing personal subject-matter knowledge or close to the top if the majority of the learner's time and energy is invested in constructing subject-matter knowledge to satisfy academic requirements. The placement of the line indicates the degree of self-direction the learner expresses in particular classroom circumstances. Self-direction correlates with the construction of personal subject-matter knowledge. Thus, the more time the learner spends constructing personal subject-matter knowledge, the greater the expression of self-direction. The line placement varies from learner to learner and from class to class because the ease with which academic subject-matter knowledge may be constructed varies.

The bottom of the trapezoid, which is foundational, represents academic subject-matter knowledge which satisfies academic standards. Academic standards result from each teacher's distinct interpretations of the academic culture which (s)he translates within the classroom. In each course, the learner's time and energy is initially focused on constructing a certain minimum level of subject-matter knowledge that will satisfy the teacher's local standards and produce the grade the learner desires. As learners construct subject-matter knowledge to meet academic requirements and to achieve their own academic purposes and goals, they also lay the foundation for personal subject-matter knowledge. But because learners have finite amounts of time and energy to invest in their classroom-based learning, the effort required to meet academic requirements determines the amount of time and energy left to devote to constructing personal subject-matter knowledge.

The third and final phase of the self-direction in classroom learning model is represented by the divergent lines on the right hand side of the figure which move away from the (institution) rectangle. The aftermath of constructing new knowledge involves testing that knowledge in action. Learners evaluate the adequacy of constructed knowledge according to the type of knowledge. Learners use academic criteria such as tests and grades to establish that they have constructed academically-accredited knowledge. Unique personal standards are used to judge subject-matter knowledge constructed to achieve personal, private goals and purposes.

The Model's Components

The remaining sections of the chapter discuss the components of each phase of the self-direction in classroom learning model; becoming involved, managing, and evaluating. Representative quotes from participants illustrate specific points.

Factors Influencing Involvement

In the model's first phase, there were two broad categories that swayed learners' inclinations toward classroom learning. The first category was learners' goals and purposes. Goals and purposes had three different foci: professional achievement, academic achievement and, personal interests. Goals and purposes directed participants' choices and actions and were congruent with involvement in college classrooms.

The second category of the model's first phase also had three foci. It included participants' beliefs about key actors in the classroom (teachers and learners) and about

academic achievement. Participants simply assumed that learning occurred in classrooms and believed that teachers contributed specific things to the learning process. They had definite ideas about their own responsibilities as learners. In their eyes, academic achievement was worth significant personal effort and sacrifice and its realization brought many personal, lifelong rewards. The high value they placed on academic achievement was reflected in their beliefs.

The following section of the chapter presents participants' goals and purposes in a summary table (Table 2). Important features of the interrelated goals and purposes are discussed. Beliefs are then presented in a second summary table (Table 3) and illustrated in the accompanying discussion.

Individual goals and purposes. Each participant had multiple interacting goals and purposes for her involvement in classroom learning. Goals and purposes varied in their immediacy (achievable in near or distant future), specificity, and linkage with other goals. They also varied according to their primary focus (professional, academic, or personal).

Professional goals and purposes related to each participants' current and future work and affected their choices of degree programs, majors and courses. For example, Candace and Angie wanted their courses and degree programs to be useful in their current work; Olivia wanted hers to contribute to her future vocation. These three women wanted knowledge or skills or an increased understanding that would make them better workers in the immediate future. In a different vein, Frances and Winona wanted to move upward in their profession's ranks, obtain legitimate professional status through

their degrees, and achieve top earning power. Judith was the one participant who specifically indicated that she had no professional goals or purposes. Professional goals were fairly broad and future oriented. Some were derived in response to societal pressures and circumstances such as the demand for an educated work force which translates into a need for a bachelor's degree. Others were an expression of the participants' internal standards for performance such as Candace's desire to be an effective worker who understood what the certified public accountants she worked with needed and wanted.

Academic goals directed participants' semester by semester decisions related to educational standards. These aspirations were imbedded within personal value and belief structures based on each woman's individual history and personality. They guided participants' choices related to course selection and extent of subject-matter learning. Grade expectations, mastery of mathematics courses, and classroom preparedness were common themes included in participants' academic goals and purposes. Academic goals implied specific actions to a greater extent than professional or personal goals. That is, finishing a degree as soon as possible implies taking as many courses each semester as possible, whereas satisfying one's curiosity may be accomplished in a number of ways.

Finally, all of the participants had purposes that expressed their own personalities (personal goals). Many of these goals related to their desires to develop a sense of personal identity apart from other adult life roles as wives, mothers, daughters, and workers. These goals and purposes cut across participants' past, present and future lives. They were ongoing and consistently influenced daily decisions both within the classroom

and outside of it. Personal goals and purposes were more closely linked with academic goals and purposes than with professional ones. Common themes among participants' personal purposes were competitiveness, and enhancement of self-esteem. Table 2 summarizes goals and purposes in the three categories (professional, academic and personal) across all participants. In order to illustrate goals and purposes more clearly, Candace's and Michelle's goals and purposes will be discussed in more detail following the table.

Table 2
Participants' Goals

	Professional Goals	Academic Goals	Personal Goals
Candace	Take "useful" courses	Finish her degree ASAP Satisfy degree requirements a. prepare for comprehensive examination b. finish courses which meet degree requirements Contain educational costs Be prepared for tests	Give expression to a value inculcated by her parents Satisfy her curiosity Compete Satisfy herself Distribute her time and energy effectively
Frances	Advance in her career Make money Become [state] certified	Ease into school again Take all her math courses in sequence while math is "fresh" in her mind Shoot for A's Make a minimum of a C to be reimbursed by employer	Combat boredom Meet people Get involved in campus activities outside of class
Angie	Obtain useful skills and knowledge to use at work Have an efficient work schedule	Earn a degree Complete a double minor Get A's Remember what she has learned Be prepared for tests Meet math requirements	Achieve something no one else in her family has done Acquire "real learning" Improve herself Compete Feel good about herself Understand others Satisfy her interests
Olivia	Learn her "craft" Have a career [not just a job] Use her degree to free lance as an actress during retirement	Complete degree requirements for a liberal arts degree Go to graduate school Take courses that meet degree requirements Meet math requirements Fix "problems" that keep her from doing well as a student Get a study partner	Be secure Don't rush -- enjoy the experience Take "interesting" courses

	Professional Goals	Academic Goals	Personal Goals
Michelle	Become a forest ranger Contribute professionally in the years she has left to practice	Find a way to finance her education so she can attend school full-time Be thorough "Make up time" she has not had as a practitioner by being an outstanding student Meet math requirements Take something "out of" class Make A's	Fulfill a childhood desire
Judith	Stated she had none	Find out what the teacher wants Avoid being overwhelmed by tests Meet academic challenges	Let her children go by developing her own interests Compensate for her "poor background" Satisfy a "need" for learning Do what she wants until she dies ["dictate the terms" of her life] Enjoy learning
Laurel	Obtain entry credentials for teaching profession Use the 20 years she has to practice to make a contribution as a teacher	Earn bachelor's and master's degrees Figure out what the teacher wants Be an honors student Be perceived as a "serious" student Verify her ability to function as a college student Protect her GPA "Take" all the information from her teachers Be prepared for class Understand and learn from her mistakes	Be the "kind of mom and wife" she wants to be Put her family above academic achievement Have an identity as an individual apart from her identity as a wife and mother Fulfill a promise made to her deceased mother Learn how to be a "good teacher" by watching other teachers Create personal files of teaching materials and resources "Fit" school into the time she has available Enhance her self-esteem

	Professional Goals	Academic Goals	Personal Goals
Sarah	Stated that she had no current goals specific to her career	Choose a "useful" major Do what professors "insist" she do Get A's Learn to understand [go beyond "glazing the surface"] Prove she can do college work	Feel good about herself Avoid fruitless personal sacrifices [don't leave school to appease a teenage daughter] Personal growth Avoid standing out in any way Avoid mental stagnation Avoid failure at all costs Satisfy personal interests Do her best
Winona	Advance professionally Pass her licensing exam	Earn a bachelor's in engineering Get A's Be known as an individual so the teacher's subjective judgements favor her Learn the subject matter well enough to "use" it in subsequent classes	Finish what she starts Satisfy interests

As her portrait indicates, Candace is a "doer" who prefers to "get started." As she acts, she learns through action. Candace values education because her parents instilled that value and because she has some unfinished business from young adulthood (poor academic performance and failure to complete a degree program). These personal beliefs and values operate to keep Candace involved in college classrooms and focus her efforts on attaining her degree as soon as possible. Candace's major goal, to earn her bachelor's degree, has led her to set several subgoals related to degree attainment (finish as soon as possible and satisfy degree requirements before satisfying her curiosity).

Candace's goals varied in the degree of influence each exerted. The goal that initially led Candace to choose classroom-based learning was a personal one -- the desire to satisfy her curiosity. When she decided she wanted to complete her bachelor's degree, she became committed to a different goal -- satisfaction of degree requirements. Her new academic goal assumed a position of dominance over the original personal goal, largely because of its greater immediacy. However, her original, personal goal was not discarded.

> *I really wanted to take Lotus and DBase and personnel management and a nutrition class and . . . but I may not be able to fit those in. I may go back and take them later just because I want to take them. But I don't know that it's going to fit into my time schedule now. I've got these deadlines to meet now.*

Candace's original purpose continued to influence her, but her decisions and actions were focused on degree attainment. With an academic goal dominating and a personal goal exerting a consistent influence, Candace also had a less immediate professional goal. She

wanted a useful degree that "fits what I need." Thus, her work-related purpose informed her choice of major.

> *My degree is going to be in business management, but I'm planning on taking a nutrition class. . . . Since I do work in food services, I thought I'd better throw one of those in. But, it surprises some people that I'm getting my degree in Business Management since I work in food service. They think that I should be taking dietary guidelines -- this type of thing -- but running a lunch room is just like running a small business. . . . So I feel like business management fits what I need.*

This brief description of Candace's goals indicates that single goals and purposes offer incomplete explanations of adults' choices to be involved in classroom learning and of their ongoing decisions as classroom-based learners. Self-direction in classroom learning is incompletely understood apart from their interrelated goals. Several goals operate concurrently to guide Candace's daily decision-making relative to her classroom learning. Her personal goals maintain a consistent influence while her pragmatic ones such as finishing degree requirements expediently, exert an influence when she plans her semester schedule and selects from available courses.

In contrast to Candace, Michelle has one dominant professional goal that is linked with all of her academic goals. She further has one major personal goal which undergirds her professional goal. Thus, her goal network is more restricted in scope and the goals more closely linked than Candace's.

Michelle has a life-long dream that she is determined to fulfill. She wants to be a wildlife management professional, but she has been thwarted repeatedly in her attempts to achieve this goal. Thus, getting her degree has become a dominant purpose in her life.

Michelle definitively links her grades to her future as a wildlife practitioner. Consequently, one of her academic goals is to earn straight "A's."

> *Grades are so much more important because you don't have years and years -- Say, you have a twenty-three-year-old that gets out of college. She's going to have . . . fifty years to change jobs and to exceed and excel and to prove [herself]. But by the time I get my degree . . . I'll be 40 years old. I'm only going to have 20 years to be able to do what someone else has done in 50 years. And so, grades, I think, are real important. . . . If you have straight A's, it shows that you are intelligent and that you can do the work so, you don't have to prove [yourself].*

Michelle's need to perform well as a student is the logical outcome of her goals and purposes. However, she can only achieve her goal of earning straight "A's" by fulfilling the teacher's local classroom standards. This focuses her attention on finding out what the teacher thinks is important. Observers might conclude that Michelle's learning is being directed by the teacher. Michelle is, in fact, seeking to accomplish her own purpose which is not simply grade pursuit, but a means of compensating for lost years of professional practice. Her learning is a separate issue that she expresses in her desire to "take something out of" class. This is her own learning-related academic objective that is determined by her own assessment of what is valuable and worth retaining at the end of a course.

Michelle's network of closely related goals and purposes indicates a more uniform level of influence. The narrow scope of her purposes also carries a high degree of risk. If the goals and purposes within Michelle's restricted network are not fulfilled, she has expended her effort and energy to no avail. The centrality of degree attainment for Michelle and her belief that grades compensate for practice puts intense pressure on her

each time her efforts as a student are evaluated. She talks about the extreme anxiety she experiences during classroom evaluation.

> *Tests really bother me. I get this blockage. I can know the material inside and out. You can quiz me five minutes before a test and I could tell you every answer, but you get the test in front of me and I clam up. It's like I get nervous and I get shaky and I get teary eyed and it's like, "Oh, gosh I can't remember." My mind just goes blank and as soon as I turn my test in, I can walk out in the hall and I could tell you every answer on that test.*

In contrast to Candace, Michelle has no secondary personal purposes that carry significant meaning. In addition, her beliefs support and reinforce her goal and purpose network whereas Candace's beliefs are more independent of her diverse goal and purpose network.

In summary, participants' professional and academic goals and purposes were of two types: specific, short-term, and broad, long-term. Specific goals tended to demand daily investments of time and effort, but these expenditures usually accumulated to contribute to the attainment of their broader goals. Professional, academic, and personal goals could shift in importance at any given time and change the focus of a participant's learning efforts. This was illustrated when Candace set aside her personal goals and interests to satisfy her academic goals. Personal goals and purposes exerted a relatively constant influence and tended to be global across a participants' life. Personal goals and purposes were a more direct expression of a participants' personality than either professional or academic goals and purposes.

Beliefs about teachers, learners, and academic achievement. The second category identified in the first phase (becoming involved) of the model of classroom self-

direction was learners' beliefs. These were focused on teachers, learners and academic achievement. Great diversity characterized participants' beliefs about the key actors in the classroom. Each woman seemed to notice different things about the teachers they encountered and about their fellow students based on their experiences. The experiences which most profoundly affected participants' beliefs about teachers tended to have strong affective components and to be either very good or very bad experiences. Outstanding teachers promoted enthusiasm for learning the subject matter. Participants who had experiences with such teachers often looked for more sources that would provide addtional perceptual input to construct subject-matter knowledge that satisfied their curiosity or met purely personal learning needs. In contrast, experiences with teachers that intimidated learners or made it extraordinarily difficult to meet academic goals led to the adoption of defensive positions. They sought to learn the minimum that would allow them to complete the course and avoided any risky behaviors such as asking questions. Experiences with classroom peers seldom influences participants. Beliefs about academic achievement were the least diverse of the three categories. These beliefs were strongly normative in character and reflected assumptions commonly associated with schooling in American society.

Each participant's beliefs reflected her experiences, her personality, and her goals and purposes. For instance, Frances, who brought more subject-matter knowledge to the classroom than most of the other participants, expressed the belief that teachers might view knowledgeable students in a negative light. She implied that such students might challenge the teacher because they knew "real life" applications of the content. She also

expressed the belief that teachers could help learners refine knowledge. They could "pass on good points" and "better ways" to apply one's knowledge.

Frances believed that learner's participation in the classroom was essential to learning. She commented,

> *I'm going to try to ask questions, if I have questions. The way I believe, if you sit there and you don't try to participate . . . you're not going to learn anything. I've always participated in classes. . . . In the calculus class, he tries to encourage people to give the answers to the problems he puts up on the board. Sometimes you may catch him putting something wrong on there. So, you try to point that out. If it's wrong, I want to be sure that I'm not sitting here thinking, "That can't be right."*

Frances's beliefs about academic achievement were linked with her earlier experiences as a high school student when a counselor told her she wasn't "smart enough" to go to college. She feels good about herself when she earns high grades and believes good grades "prove" intelligence.

Table 3 summarizes participants' beliefs. The significant diversity and variability of each woman's beliefs makes a discussion of one individual less useful in understanding the findings. Thus, the discussion which follows the summary table presents the more common notions within each set of focused beliefs rather than emphasizing individual participants. Quotes from several participants illustrate various points in the discussion.

Table 3

Participants' Beliefs About Teachers, Learners, and Academic Achievement

	Beliefs about Teachers	Beliefs about Learners	Beliefs about Academic Achievement
Candace	have curricular "guidelines" they follow Inexperienced teachers are "more difficult." If they are enthusiastic about the subject matter, they will "make sure" learners "see" the content. Experienced teachers have a "give and take" relationship with the learner.	are responsible for "learning the material" can't plan a class without knowing something about the material can't learn if someone else "does the work" for them	A bachelor's degree is a worthy goal. "You've got to have something to go by" to evaluate academic learning. Grades gauge "if you have learned anything," but are not a good measure of "what" you have learned.
Frances	don't especially like students who know "real life" applications for the content that may challenge theory "pass on good points" that help learners do things "better" make the text understandable encourage learners	can't learn without asking questions and "participating" in the classroom Work and other adult responsibilities make it difficult to be the student you want to be.	Grades are important and high grades make you feel good about yourself. High grades are evidence that you are "smart enough" to go to college and capable of earning a degree.

	Beliefs about Teachers	Beliefs about Learners	Beliefs about Academic Achievement
Angie	make learners feel comfortable motivate learners free learners from the "fear of trying" have a "lot to say" give useful "practical advice" for everyday living demonstrate that they "care" judge the value of a learner's past experience with the content know best "overall" what should be learned, but not what a specific learner wants to learn	carry the "burden" of learning are responsible for doing their "own writing and own thinking" can make it through a class without really "understanding" what's going on have to get the material "in there" [in their minds] in certain ways in order to be able to pass tests are faced with tremendous "responsibility" if they are asked to plan a course without being "qualified" have to ask questions in order to "understand" may be shy or bashful can be "intimidated" can be convinced they are unable to learn certain subjects work "harder" when they must work alone "learn" to judge what the "teacher sees as important"	is something to be proud of An "A" is evidence of learning enough to pass an exam. High grades are "some kind of a reward."
Olivia	enjoy teaching learners who love to learn are the "current experts" should be "in charge" are helpful when they "give you time" to ask questions may give grades a student hasn't earned because they feel "sorry" for a student Teachers' time is valuable.	have unique learning styles ["I learn visually."] have a "right to be dumb" carry the full "responsibility" for studying and learning can be "intimidated" by classroom peers' responses to their questions need to know "where they stand"	Making a "C" is not good. A "lot of red marks" is not good. Earning a degree is one means of learning a discipline (along with trial and error and learning from experience).

	Beliefs about Teachers	Beliefs about Learners	Beliefs about Academic Achievements
Michelle	are "there to teach" should teach "on the student's level" have something to "offer"	are responsible for giving the teacher their "full attention" regardless of the content can "prove" what has been learned through their own creative products (reports) may be handicapped if they lack writing skills "always remember" what they learn, but may have difficulty "calling it up" especially in a testing situation "fears" and "concerns" can interfere with learning can "go blank" in testing situations will not ask questions if they feel intimidated may lack the ability to access information needed to learn A high degree of interest can carry a learner past skill deficiencies.	Studying for exams is a "skill" that can be taught. An "A" means you have learned "what was intended to be taught." High grades are "proof" of "intelligence." High grades indicate mastery of theory and a high level of mastery ["A's"] can substitute for knowledge gained through years of working as a practitioner. Degree programs are based on specific "guidelines" that certify a student has what "is needed."
Judith	"know a lot more than I do about the subject" share the learner's excitement in discovering something meaningful about the content "brings out" the subject matter show learners things they "didn't see" should be patient with "dumb questions" have "good" and "bad" days just like learners have a right to their own opinion, but not the right to imply that others must agree with that opinion	try to find out "what the teacher wants" want to "retain" what they learn Adult learners are more free of concerns about peers' social judgments than traditional-aged college students. It's alright to ask "dumb questions." Adult learners may not see school as their first priority. Learning the same subject matter has the power to bond classroom learners.	Meeting academic challenges and succeeding makes one "feel good." Preparing for tests is not the only reason for being in a classroom.

	Beliefs about Teachers	Beliefs about Learners	Beliefs about Academic Achievement
Laurel	have information they can give to others should know a "vast amount" of knowledge may be hard or "impossible" to figure out can operate at a mechanical level ["present the lecture and that's it"] will work to see that the student really "understands" if they "care" make inaccurate personal judgments about adult students have gone through a lot to earn their credentials deserve respect for their credentials and knowledge require special handling [Don't put them on the defensive or insinuate that they have done a poor job.] Knowing the curriculum and knowing the learner are two very different matters. Effort and talent are required to "come down" to the learners' "level" and explain subject matter so it can be understood.	should rely on their own "intelligence" are responsible for "focusing their attention" should be "prepared to learn" when they come to class take the primary responsibility for thinking and writing about the subject matter can feel "singled out" in the classroom are capable of "improving" a curriculum designed by a teacher may find their motivation changes over the duration of the semester deserve respect need help deciding what to focus on A high level of interest leads to branding out on one's own. A student's own creations supply evidence of "true" ability.	Each class has a set of demands that learners must meet to get an "A." There are common behaviors that are associated with high grades. Tests validate ability to function as a student. The structure of tests assists or penalizes students academic achievement. Professors are "watch dogs" for universities and may deliberately set standards students cannot achieve. Tests reveal what is really "important."

	Beliefs about Teachers	Beliefs about Learners	Beliefs about Academic Achievement
Sarah	can fail to motivate may lack teaching skills rely on a standard teaching technique or a contrived role to compensate for poor teaching skills should be experts should know what is important within a discipline and what "needs to be taught" can bring the text to life possess more than textbook knowledge	are responsible for being prepared must adjust expectations when disappointed with a professor may be motivated by fear of failure learn at different levels ["glaze the top" or "understand"] may be participating mentally even when they are saying nothing make sense of the content though their persona experiences learn little when bored will seek out learning in areas of interest Being a novice is uncomfortable.	Earning grades represents the minimum level of learning. Degree programs have "patterns" that expose the learner to a broad range of topics. Traditional degree programs and traditional faculty are the only ones that are "up to par." Understanding test structure leads to high grades.
Winona	are the key persons in the classroom may respond to learners based on prejudices [Women don't belong in engineering.] should be more concerned with a student's level of understanding than with "covering the material" facilitate students' learning when they answer students' questions have a public persona and a private one misjudge students based on appearances may be unable to communicate what they know may "teach to the test" look bad if they "flunk the whole class" may make no effort to know students as individuals Know the resources for leaning within a discipline	meed to be "positive" about what they are doing Increased effort leads to increased achievement. What a student "writes out" on their own is a better indicator of their knowledge than a teacher's tests. If you can't "put it down on paper," you haven't learned. Studying wit others can be a liability if you have to take responsibility for their learning as well as your own.	Tests can be passed with memorization alone. Grades are not a good indication of what a student knows. Tests are capable of measuring what a student knows if the teacher "gives some thought" to haw a test is constructed. Academic disciplines require different study techniques and approaches to learning. God textbooks have a significant influence on learning. Some teachers make academic achievement "easy," others make it hard or impossible. Knowing what to expect in a teacher's classroom makes it possible to tolerate circumstances that do not support learning.

Participants' beliefs about teachers, learners and academic achievement indicate that participants choose to be involved in classroom-based learning because they have three primary beliefs about teachers. They believe teachers are experts who understand the subject matter and have knowledge learners need and want. Second, they expect that teachers will be concerned about learners and interested in helping them attain subject-matter knowledge. Third, participants anticipate that teachers will motivate them to study and learn.

The majority of participants see teachers as experts in their field and respect them for their knowledge. Laurel comments that professors have "gone through a lot of schooling to get where they are and deserve respect for that." However, participants are not awed by teachers' expertise. They view teachers as individuals much like themselves. Judith notes that teachers have a "right to their opinions," and that "people are just people anyway. And you run into all kinds [of teachers] and one day they may be in one mood and the next another. You just have to take them as you find them."

There was no guarantee though that every classroom would meet participants' expectations. Instead, participants often found little support for their expectations. One major difficulty participants encountered was access to the teacher's expertise. According to participants, there were two problems that prevented a teacher from sharing his or her expertise with the learner: a lack of teaching skills, and an inability to communicate in a way that made sense to learners.

Sarah believed that "most of the professors out here have never had any skills [courses] in teaching. They just come straight from college. And it seems like they

ought to have to have it." She thought that when teachers lacked pedagogical skills they "either get up and lecture or . . . play some kind of role [such as acting like a historical character]." Sarah felt, "You learn in spite of them when you could learn a lot more and a lot easier if they just had [teaching] skill."

Laurel indicated that expertise could prevent some professors from dealing effectively with learners who were subject-matter novices. She spoke of one professor she encountered who "knew his field and was very well versed in it, but it was almost like he was a few levels above the class. And it was hard for him to come down onto our level and explain things so that we could understand them." She believed that "it takes a very gifted professor to be able to come down to the level of the [students in the] course they're teaching."

Participants believed that teachers should be concerned about learners and focused on learners' attainment of subject matter knowledge. Michelle commented that, "They need to be accessible. And I think they also need to have a general interest in students other than just having that be their job and worrying about whatever it is that they worry about. They're there to teach and I think it's important that they make sure that they're teaching." Candace believed that teachers who relished their subject were likely to be particularly interested in the learner and his or her learning. She commented "Someone who knows their material and enjoys what they teach [will care] because, if they're into it and they enjoy it then, they're going to make sure you learn something about that. They're going to pull it out so that you can see." Unfortunately, participants found that this belief was also challenged in some classrooms. Winona found that,

Some professors are there to do a job and if they know they have to cover A to Z in this many weeks, they're going to cover A to Z. And whether you're getting it or not, they just keep going. And I've had a couple of professors that if you ask questions, they'll stop and they'll go back over something. And to me, they're doing their job. They're teaching us something. Where on the other end if they just keep going from A to Z and you got lost back here at B ... What was the point? Nothing was accomplished.

When teachers were "doing their job," they made several contributions to participants' knowledge construction. Table 4 summarizes these contributions.

Table 4

Teachers' Contributions to Learners' Knowledge Construction
Teachers help learners to construct subject-matter knowledge when they: ▸ interpret the textbook. ▸ explain the subject matter. ▸ identify important information. ▸ present the subject matter from different perspectives. ▸ help learners refine their existing subject-matter knowledge. ▸ assess the adequacy of learner's existing subject-matter knowledge.

Participants believed that they should be able to come into class and have the content explained. Olivia believed they had "a right to be dumb," and Judith, that they should be "forgiven" for asking "dumb questions." Michelle felt demeaned when teachers made sarcastic remarks about learner's lack of subject-matter knowledge.

A good professor would be someone who doesn't belittle you by saying, "Well, I can't believe you didn't know the answer to that!" Or, "Obviously

> *you haven't studied such and such in the past." You know, it's like, "Well, no, I'm in your class now. I want to learn. We're not discussing [the past].*

Participants believe that textbooks can augment the teacher's presentation of the subject matter. In fact, Winona feels that some textbooks can substitute for teachers who aren't helping learners master the subject matter. "Books . . . designed as a workbook kind of drill you on things. . . . You can write in them and they will repeat things often enough that if you go through the book you can just about teach yourself. . . .And if you have something like that textbook, it doesn't matter if you don't have a professor that can give you all this stuff." However, some participants believe the teacher's explanation of the text is important. Sarah thinks that the teacher's explanations help students remember and "when you read the text it is not so cold." Laurel relies on teacher's explanations and the textbook in order to discern important and worthwhile aspects of the subject matter.

Learners in the classroom value the opportunity to be exposed to different views of the subject matter and to be presented with examples of real life applications of the theory. Teachers can provide different views through their explanations. Laurel described this process in one classroom.

> *This professor genuinely cared about each student in the class understanding the information because he would go over the same thing over and over again. And each time it would be from a different angle, because it was obvious to him that the first time he presented it only part of the class got it. So then he would come about it from a different angle and if there was still a question then he'd come about it from an entirely different angle and present it again.*

Teachers provide real life applications of the theory that are not in textbooks through "anecdotes." Learners value this type of explanation highly. Teachers who encourage

learners to contribute to classroom discussions expose additional viewpoints and illustrative instances of subject matter application. Learning is facilitated to the greatest extent when learners and teachers freely discuss the subject matter and its application. Interaction with teachers and peers in the classroom is an effective means of actively engaging the learner in the process of constructing subject-matter knowledge. Sarah commented that,

> *If there is a lot of interaction, as there was in my education class, I'm more likely to speak up. If there is just not very much I most likely never say a word. But typically, you learn more because you get more than one viewpoint, or you get side stories that help emphasize the point. You feel better; you typically make the "A's" in those courses.*

Frances spoke the most about bringing existing subject-matter knowledge into the classroom. She believed that when learners reengage content they already know to some degree, teachers help refine that knowledge and perhaps promote the modification of learners' skills. She believed the teacher's contribution to knowledgeable learners was to "pass on good points that they know."

Participants rely on teachers who are "doing their job" to assess and judge learners' background knowledge and preparedness for courses. They don't want to waste their time and energy trying to pass a course if they lack the ability to do so because of an adequate background. This was an important consideration for several of the participants. Angie talked about telephoning a teacher and describing her subject-matter background in detail. She asked him, "Do you even think I can pass this course?" On the basis of his assessment, she was successful in completing the course. Michelle's experience was not as positive. The teacher indicated that she could pass his course if she "busted her butt."

However, she found that extensive effort and hard work failed to compensate for her lack of specific background information. She felt she had been poorly advised and that the professor should have been more straightforward in defining the background knowledge Michelle needed for the course.

In addition to believing that teachers would share their expertise and that teachers would be focused on learners, participants had a third major reason for seeking to learn in classrooms. They expected that teachers would stimulate interest in the subject matter and positively influence learners' motivation. Participants' experiences in some classrooms validated this expectation. Some classrooms engendered positive emotional responses in general and enhanced motivation. Others led to negative emotional reactions and affected motivation in negative ways. Table 5 summarizes teachers' influence on learners' motivation and the general affective state in the classroom.

Table 5

Teachers' Influence on Learners' Affective States
Actions which produced a positive emotional response include: ▸ providing encouragement. ▸ displayiing confidence in the learner's ability. ▸ stimulating the learner's motivation and interest. ▸ promoting the learner's confidence in their own knowledge. Actions which produced a negative emotional response include: ▸ misinterpreting and demeaning the learner as a person. ▸ stimulating fear through threats and intimidation.

Laurel described an exceptional teacher who supplied encouragement, was confident in learners' abilities, and motivated students.

> *He encouraged everybody from day one in the class and continued to do it almost after every class. "If you feel like you're not [doing] well . . . bring your notes to my office and we'll go over your notes. Chances are you're just not catching the drift of things in the notes and you need to make an adjustment." When he came in [to lecture] the whole hour and a half just flowed. He said, "Any question you want to ask I'll answer it. And if I don't know it then I'll find out." And there were 150 students in this class! He made it so interesting that you kind of branched off on your own and you would investigate other areas of [the content].*

Promoting learners' confidence in their newly constructed knowledge also enhanced their motivation. For example, Winona wanted to be "sure" of her problem solving ability and disliked one professor who used the discovery method of learning in his review sessions because she left these sessions unsure of her abilities. During these

discovery review sessions, Winona was assigned to work with other students who were having difficulties with the same problems. The group usually worked out the answer eventually, but remained unsure of the accuracy of the processes they had used. After attending one or two of these discovery method review sessions, Winona avoided them for the remainder of the course.

In another classroom Laurel's motivation to learn was dampened.

> *I almost felt like she thought I was just a little housewife that had nothing left to do with my time and was just taking this course for fun. And it didn't really matter what I got as a grade or that I really didn't have anything pertinent or important to present when it came to discussing topics because she usually wouldn't acknowledge me if I raised my hand. And I couldn't figure out what I needed to do to make her realize that I was very serious. And that I wasn't some stupid person because I hadn't finished my college degree. Nobody wanted to be in [that class]. They just wanted to get out of that class and get a passing grade. Your motivation changed. Your motivation changed from wanting to get an A to keeping a B.*

Laurel's comments indicated that this teacher focused primarily on the content rather than on learners and their knowledge construction. In addition, this teacher actively discouraged students' independent investigations of the subject matter. Her condescending treatment of Laurel and the other students significantly affected their motivation. They moved into a self-protective defensive position focusing almost exclusively on a grade.

Frances described feeling put down by professors who made it clear that they were not student advocates.

> *I've had some professors that talked down to you and try to make you fail [their] class. I had an instructor who said his main purpose was . . . to*

> *weed people out. I don't like [that]. No. I like a professor that encourages you.*

These teachers appear to be operating primarily from an institutional perspective. They are more concerned with academic standards and their own reputation than with creating an atmosphere where learners are free to learn. They seek to uphold their definition of high academic standards at the expense of learners and learning. Laurel calls them "the watchdogs of the university."

The previous section discussed participants beliefs about teachers. The next section presents participants' beliefs about learners. Beliefs about learners are the second focus in the category of participants' beliefs. There was one dominant theme in the set of beliefs about learners: Learners are responsible for their own learning in the classroom. While they expected teachers to make certain contributions (see Table 4, p. 114), they believed, as Angie stated, that "the burden of learning falls on me." They believed that they had to do their own writing and thinking in order to learn.

When other students avoided personal responsibility for learning, participants were critical. Laurel commented, "I think that's a horrible thing that people don't think they can rely upon their own intelligence to do well in a class." She went on to describe a situation that occurred when one of her professors asked if she would be willing to share her class notes with several foreign students. Laurel was willing to share her class notes, but she was indignant when one of the foreign students asked for her textbook notes.

> *One [foreign] student wanted to copy all my notes from the [textbook] chapters and I said, "No!" I just feel that they need to read the chapter. It's not my job to read the chapter for them and take all the notes; the book is there. . . . You have to take the responsibility . . . yourself.*

Winona and Candace agreed that even in a required course the learner has the responsibility to "come prepared" and to do their best to learn. In fact, Winona believed that if a student wasn't coming to class because it was a required class in which they had little interest, that they then had the responsibility to "get it on their own."

The third and final set of beliefs were beliefs about academic achievement. These beliefs are organized and summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Beliefs About Academic Achievement
Academic achievement contributes to self-esteem because: ▸ academic achievement is a source of pride. ▸ a degree is a source of self-satisfaction. Grades and tests are important because: ▸ classroom learning must be evaluated. ▸ tests are key indicators of what a teacher wants. ▸ academic standards are interpreted primarily within each individual classroom.

There were two dominant themes within the set of beliefs about academic achievement. The first was that academic achievement significantly influences self-esteem. The second was that academic achievement is judged by student test performance and grade attainment. The majority of participants chose involvement in a collegiate classroom because success as a college student symbolized significant ability

and attainment. They believed that degree programs were based on standards that assured they were participating in a high quality endeavor. In addition, high grades "prove you are intelligent and can do the work," according to Michelle. Some participants explicitly linked self-esteem and academic achievement. Laurel noted,

> *My goal when I started back was to get straight "A's." I'm determined to graduate with honors because I know I can do it. It is very important to me to be on the Dean's list and to do things like that. . . . My self esteem is hinged on this.*

Earning a college degree was especially effective in stoking self-esteem for participants who were the first members of their families to attain the status of college graduate. Five of the participants were first generation college students. Candace's status was unknown, but it was probable that she too was the first person of her generation in her family to earn a college degree. For Candace, academic achievement and degree completion were a significant source of self-satisfaction because her past performance as a college student had not been a source of self-esteem. She had been highly successful and valued in her work without academic credentials, but the only way to erase her past failures was to complete what she started as a young adult.

Several participants also enhanced their self-esteem by winning academic contests. That is, they bettered their peers' performance on tests and papers, or they survived a difficult teacher or course. Several were somewhat surprised by their competitiveness. Judith indicated that meeting the challenge of a difficult course was especially satisfying, especially when others dropped out.

> *Even like in one history class I've taken, the teacher was a pretty tough teacher. In fact I haven't run into any [other] teachers like her. And I*

> *made it and I made it well. . . . [Her quizzes] were so difficult and there was so much reading and so much depth that I had to come up with, that I [didn't think I] could come up with it and pass. Of course, I wasn't the only one. I struggled better than the rest of them. . . . A lot of the kids were failing. . . .So, I felt good about getting through that tough class having a terrible time.*

The second common theme in participants' set of beliefs about academic achievement was that academic achievement is virtually synonymous with test performance and grades and that tests were indicative of local classroom requirements for academic success. Angie noted that high grades are "some kind of a reward," and that "A's" are evidence of "learning enough to pass an exam."

Participants had great difficulty imagining any other efficient way to certify academic knowledge other than tests and exams. Several felt that learners' creative products accurately indicated the quality and extent of their subject-matter knowledge. They viewed these products as superior to tests, but recognized that the professor's time limitations often prohibited using such products. Angie commented,

> *I don't know what I would do so far as tests go. I've thought about that a lot. And I do study real, real hard for tests but they don't measure everything I have learned. We had a quiz . . . on a book and I had read the whole book and summarized each chapter and out of the whole book he gave us three questions. And we had to pick one to write about. . . . I learned a lot about the subject and I could sit here and probably talk for about thirty minutes on everything I've learned but yet that one quiz is not going to adequately reflect what I have learned. I don't imagine the professor has time to sit down and talk to everybody one on one -- do a personal interview.*

Angie wanted to reveal the knowledge she had constructed, to demonstrate that she was learning. She frustrated by a test's inability to reveal what she really knew and her

proposed alternative for grades was a way to communicate the depth and breadth of the subject-matter knowledge she had constructed.

Understanding local classroom standards was the key to successful academic performance. Participants were well aware that each teacher interpreted academic standards within his or her classroom and that each teacher had his or her own definition of satisfactory academic performance. Judith said, "You've got a different teacher. You don't know what she's wanting. You've got to learn her. . . . You've got a new subject, a new focus. Everything's new. It's all a different challenge each time."

According to participants, teachers vary considerably in their ability and willingness to reveal their standards. Some, like the teacher Laurel described as phenomenal, make their requirements clear and then assist students to achieve those requirements. Others refuse to reveal their standards or set impossibly difficult objectives students will be unlikely to achieve. Tests that the learner cannot interpret are one way to obscure the requirements that will equal success. Winona commented about such tests.

> *Some classes, like the class I got the "D" in -- I just could not figure out -- and I wasn't the only one. I just couldn't pass the man's tests because his tests didn't come from the book, it didn't come from his lectures. It was like it was taken off the top of his head and it wouldn't be something that was real obvious to you as far as how to approach it.*

Teachers may also simply refuse to consider any student effort worthy of top grades. Laurel described such a situation.

> *I worked my tail off to try to get an A and the best I ever got from her was a B+. I went to see her to find out what I needed to do and she just kind of gave me the brush off. And I said, "But I need to know if I'm doing the right thing in this class because I want to do well." And she says, "Well it looks alright to me." And that was it. It was very upsetting, because I*

didn't know what I needed to do to get the A. And I felt like I had made the effort to find out what it was she wanted from me and I couldn't find out.

Further, the structure of tests can hinder or facilitate participants' academic success. Tests with few questions mean the learner has little leeway for mistakes and that each mistake is costly. The format of questions also makes a difference. Winona talks about this.

Maybe you have to work out a problem and you make one mistake. That doesn't mean you didn't know it. You just made a mistake. I hate multiple choice tests. I had a professor whose tests were always like a combination; you had a comprehensive part; you had a multiple choice part; you had a part where you could get partial credit. So between the combination of all those things, if you just screwed up on multiple choice ones, you still had a chance to recoup.

Summary of the Becoming Involved Phase

Learners choose to be involved in classroom-based learning because they have multiple goals and purposes they believe they can achieve through such involvement. Participants goals and purposes are interrelated in complex ways. Goals and purposes are linked with three components of their lives: work, school, and personal identity. Participants' work-related goals may be driven by circumstances or spring from internal desires to be more skillful workers. Academic goals are most often oriented toward degree attainment and enhancement of self-esteem. Personal purposes and goals originate from personal values and personality preferences.

Involvement in classroom-based learning makes sense in the context of learners' interrelated goals and purposes. When goals or purposes (such as degree attainment)

demand conformity to academic standards, learners are obligated to satisfy academic requirements in order to attain their goals. Learners may be viewed as self-directed in their conformity to academic standards when their purpose in that conformity arises from self-determined aims.

Participants also choose to be involved because they believe certain things about teachers, learners, and academic achievement. They believe that they will be able to gain access to an expert's knowledge, save time, effort, and energy in learning subject matter, and support and enhance their motivation through environmental structures. Participants see themselves as the primary responsible parties in the classroom, believing strongly that learning is their obligation. According to participants, academic achievement enhances self-esteem and is explicitly linked to grades and tests. In instances where teachers focus on the learner's knowledge construction, make their academic standards explicit, and construct tests which support academic achievement, learners succeed in meeting their academic goals.

Participants' goal and purpose networks and beliefs are congruent. Their beliefs lead them to choose classroom involvement to learn and support the goals and purposes they establish.

Managing Classroom-based Learning

This section of the chapter discusses the middle segment of the self-direction in classroom learning model. The key aspect of this portion of the model is management. Learners apply three related sets of management strategies to direct their classroom-based

learning. One set directs their involvement at the institutional level and deals primarily with access to collegiate classrooms. A second set of management strategies deals with the classroom and the course and directs the ability to satisfy academic standards. Learners apply a third set of management strategies to direct their knowledge creation.

Participants' management strategies affected their ability to achieve their goals and purposes. Those with a wide repertoire of strategies made steady progress toward goal and purpose attainment. For example, Candace was particularly skilled in managing the institutional context. Her major academic goal was to complete her bachelor's degree as quickly and expediently as possible. Using her institutional level management skills, Candace was able to maximize her access to needed classes. She was also able to work around institutional restrictions that impeded her progress.

In contrast, Michelle had a restricted range of management skills at all three levels. Consequently, even though she too would like to complete her wildlife management degree and begin working in the wildlife field, she finds herself continually frustrated in her attempts to make progress. Because she did not know about her institutions' academic calendar, she was unable to access a course ideally suited to her schedule and needs. Because she lacked classroom management skills, she had difficulty recognizing and responding to the cues teachers provide about the importance of certain aspects of the subject matter. She felt this was a "skill" she should have been "taught" when she was in high school. And because she lacked a range of management strategies for constructing subject-matter knowledge, she had difficulty successfully completing the courses required for her degree.

In the next portion of the chapter each set of management strategies will be discussed. Tables will summarize participants' approachs within each level.

Managing at the institutional level. In order to access the classroom, learners must first gain entrance to the academic culture at the institutional level. Table 7 summarizes participants' management strategies related to institutional entry and access to classes.

Table 7

Strategies Participants Used to Manage the Institutional Environment
Within the broader institutional context, participants: ▸ selected the institution(s) they would attend and their major. ▸ fit courses into their daily lives. ▸ monitored progress toward academic goals. ▸ determined the accuracy and value of advisement.

Participants selected institutions on the basis of travel time, cost, and degree programs available. All of the participants theoretically had access to a public university, a private four-year college and a community college. In reality, access was determined by the amount of time they were willing to commit to commuting and class attendance. Laurel described some of the factors she considered.

> *It's city driving, so it takes me close to an hour to get here. That limited the amount of courses I could take. I could only go Tuesdays and Thursdays because I worked Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. And*

> *Tuesday, Thursday classes are an hour and a half. And then you have to add two hours of that for your commute and I took two courses. That was five or six hours out of that day.*

Michelle planned to take as many courses as possible at the community college near her work site and transfer the credits to Fremont where she intended to get her wildlife management degree because she worked nearly a 45 minutes from Fremont and could not fit this time into the middle of her work day. Because of this she could not access the day classes she needed. Michelle's decision to attend the community college was a way of managing her access dilemma.

Three of the participants had an ideal situation. Because they worked on campus, they could freely access any course they needed for their degree if their supervisor adjusted their work schedules. The constraint that most affected this subgroup was their energy level and ability to mentally focus if they left work to attend class or attended at the end of the work day.

Candace is especially skilled in managing the institutional environment in order to access the classes she needs and those she wants to take for personal reasons. She plans her semester schedule carefully in order to have study days in between her class days. She learned she needed this type of schedule after one semester when she almost burned out because she had clustered her classes on consecutive days. She took courses at Bayville Community College whenever she could because they cost less. She also took courses at Commons' College where she intended to obtain her degree. And she was planning on taking courses at Fremont University (the local public university) during the summer to more quickly complete her degree program. When she found herself

temporarily unemployed one semester on the day before registration at Bayville, she "just rushed right over and enrolled and took 17 hours. I thought, `Well, I'm off from work. I'll take everything I can while I have an opportunity. Then I started back to work. So now I'm back to part-time [enrollment]."

Candace's familiarity with policies and procedures enabled her to arrange shedules that fit her lifestyle and schedule. For example, Commons' College admits adult nontraditional students to day classes only after the traditional students needs have been met. When Candace registers for such a day class, she also registers for an evening class that will substitute if her day class is unavaliable.

Candace also evaluated the mandatory advisement policy at Bayville Community College and decided she received little benefit. However, she cannot register at Bayville without an advisor's signature, so, she has developed a strategy to manage this requirement.

> *The faculty advisors that I came to at Bayville gave me advice that I didn't agree with and I didn't follow and I think it's been a good thing. I really knew just as much about what I wanted as they did. And a little trick I learned -- I'd have a meeting with the advisor and I'd say, "I'm a transfer student to Commons' College. I've already transferred out, but what I need this semester is this, this, and this and they signed [my registration form]. I took [charge] and did my own advising.*

Olvia had a different viewpoint. She decided she needed an advisor's assistance in managing progress toward her theater degree. She was assigned an advisor in the Theater Department, but he was very popular and she had difficulty getting appointments with him. She decided to switch advisors and self-selected a faculty member who worked near her. She uses her advisor's assistance to monitor her degree progression.

When I turn 60 hours I will be a junior and at 90 hours, I will be a senior. I have a file folder with everything in it and everything that my advisor tells me to take, and we mark it off as I take it. My first advisor just won an award for his advising, but he's way across campus from me and it seemed to be difficult to get appointments with him because he was pretty much in demand. So, I just kind of switched over to one of the people in my office. . . . [who] knows what I want and knows all the requirements and he's two doors down from me. I have no problem pecking on the door and saying, "Hey, have you got time?"

Managing in the classroom and the course. The second set of strategies participants use to direct their classroom-based learning is related to the classroom and the course. Table 8 summarizes these strategies.

Table 8

Participants' Strategies for Managing in the Classroom Environment
Within the classroom, participants: ▸ maintain a level of interest. ▸ set their own performance standards. ▸ identified behaviors the teacher wouldl reward. ▸ establishd adult-to-adult relationships with the teacher. ▸ determined the effort required to reach their desired academic goals.

Most participants were trying to learn subject matter that was not directly related to their personal interests because most were involved in required courses. And not all encountered master teachers who loved their subject matter and could successfully communicate it. Thus, one of the classroom management strategies participants needed

was the ability to maintain sufficient interest to keep them engaged with the content. Three techniques helped them do this: establishing a baseline understanding of the subject matter, applying the subject matter to their own experiences, and combating boredom.

Laurel established a baseline understanding through careful attention to reading assignments in the textbook. She found that when she read ahead and came to the classroom that she ". . . understood the lecture better. And I also knew what was more important to the professor about the chapter." She also found that establishing a baseline helped her motivation. She noted, "I've had enough professors to know there are just going to be some that aren't going to really motivate you. You're going to have to motivate yourself." Sarah found her interest kindled when she heard others' views of the subject matter during class discussions and when she was able to adapt a required assignment to incorporate some of her own knowledge. She also worked to combat boredom by seeking other perceptual stimuli in the classroom. She says, "I am guilty of sitting in class sometimes, especially with rambling professors, and reading areas in the book that are interesting to me because he is boring me to death. So my mind is gone. That is how I deal with it."

Another means participants employed in managing the classroom was establishing an adult-to-adult, equal-to-equal relationship with the teacher. Such a relationship helped to narrow the expert-novice gap between teacher and learner and often contributed to participants' ability to take full advantage of the teacher's assistance. One means for doing this was to identify commonalities between oneself and the teacher. Judith

described an example of this. "You're reading a book [for class] and you see this phrase in there and it clicks in your head and it means something to you and you go to class and it happens to the teacher too. She'll say, `Doesn't that grab you?' Then she'll smile real big and [you know] you're not the only one that this word and these phrases and books get to." This could also be accomplished by seeking one-on-one interactions with the teacher. Such interactions provided both teacher and learner with an opportunity to know each other as persons. Winona found that, "Some of them will give you a hard nose in class, but when you go talk to them, they're not as bad as they seem." She was one participant who especially wanted to be known for who she was. She went to see each of her teachers at least once at the beginning of the course and evaluated whether they were sensitive to adult learners and the constraints of adult life that often impinged on an adult's academic life. She also evaluated whether her teachers were willing to give her individual help and took advantage of this opportunity if they were.

A vital classroom management strategy employed by participants was to identify student behaviors that the teacher would reward. This was one reason participants felt class attendance was so important. They did not want to miss any cues the teacher might give about desired behaviors. Sarah described misinterpreting one teacher's emphasis on the textbook. "I will never forget in psychology one time, not paying attention to the [textbook] pictures. I just read the material, didn't pay attention to the pictures. He had three questions on the test that had to do with the pictures. I said, `Well, live and learn.' I didn't think they were that important, but they were. They looked like cartoons."

One key to determining what would be rewarded was the first test. Michelle commented, "I think your first test is always the hardest. And with some teachers you can pretty well figure out what their design is going to be for the remainder of the class." Knowing a teacher's design allowed participants to focus their efforts. However, this was not foolproof. Laurel noted that the second test in one class surprised her. She missed more questions than she had expected to miss and sought out the professor to understand how she had misinterpreted the subject matter. Tests also reveal what the primary text for a course will be. Winona describes this.

> *When I took sociology, she had loads of notes that she'd give you. But she told you up front, her tests would be from her notes and lectures and from the book. So, read the book. Whereas the class I'm taking now, he told us up front, the tests will come from my lectures. "If there's something in the book, don't ask me about it if I didn't cover it." So you kind of learn to pick what's important and what's not important. And then some professors will just give you all this work to do from the book and only a fraction of it will be covered in the test. So, I usually kind of judge it after the first test whether or not he or she really sticks with the notes, [or] the lectures or combines.*

Knowing the primary text allows the learner to focus his or her efforts and gives the maximum reward for the effort expended.

Specific comments teachers make on students' written work are obvious sources for determining what will be rewarded. Angie's response to one teacher's comments indicate she recognizes a call for a particular approach to the subject matter. "He said, `Not enough detail. So that tells me he's going to be a detail person. And to do better on the next quiz, I'm going to have to know specifically more about the question I write about."

Participants also manage the classroom environment by determining the amount of effort they will expend in meeting subject matter requirements according to their own performance standards. Each woman's performance standards are expressed in her academic goals and purposes. Angie and Judith allocate their time and energy resources through part time involvement. Judith is careful to "allot school its time and place." Angie indicates that she has high standards and that part time attendance is the only way she can fulfill them.

> *And I feel that taking two classes a semester I can put everything I've got into it. If I were going full time and had five or six classes I don't think that I would do as well. Because there's no way that I could accomplish everything that I would want to. I couldn't give everything that I wanted to in [each] class.*

Michelle struggles to make her energy last during evening classes. She comments, "What's so hard about working is that, you know, you put in an 8 hour day and then, you go to class. And personally, I'm brain dead and it's really hard for me to concentrate, especially if it's exam time. I think you put in twice as much work trying to remember things." On the other hand, Olivia has trouble managing her time and energy effectively and ends up being frustrated because she feels as though she should be "doing more." She manages by controlling her physical environment.

> *One thing I have found, and that is, if I need to study, don't go home. If I go home I get busy with something else and I won't study. Every time I'll set up a study time, something comes up, something interferes. But, if I'll stay at work, I do my best studying at my desk when everybody's gone at night.*

Managing the construction of subject-matter knowledge. The third and final set of management strategies that comprise the central portion of the self-direction in

classroom learning model deal with the management of knowledge construction. Participants apply a wide variety of strategies in order to actively create subject-matter knowledge. Table 9 summarizes the strategies participants identified.

Table 9

Strategies Participants Used to Construct Subject-matter Knowledge
Participants' learning-related strategies included: ▸ reading various texts. ▸ memorizing discrete facts such as dates, definitions or formulas. ▸ listening to others. ▸ participating in class. ▸ studying written materials. ▸ writing their own version of experts' words. ▸ comparing their own thinking with experts' thinking.

Participants managed their knowledge construction in ways that provided a wide range of perceptual input. Visual, kinetic, aural, and cognitive strategies were all identified. Participants judged the effectiveness of each strategy in helping them learn. Strategies varied according to the characteristics of the subject matter. The variety of strategies applied often depended on the amount of time available. With more time, participants applied more strategies. Participants used their strategies to construct subject-matter knowledge that met academic requirements as well as to create uniquely personal subject-matter knowledge.

The most common visual strategy is reading. Participants most often read textbooks and notes. Textbooks provide access to expert knowledge, and may substitute for a teacher's expert knowledge according to Winona and Laurel. If the required text fails to reveal the subject matter in a meaningful way, many participants seek other printed materials to provide them with alternative explanations of the subject matter.

As they read, many participants underline, highlight, or flag the text in some manner to call attention to noteworthy points. Frances says she "always highlighted" in the past. Judith's purpose in marking subject matter texts is not simply to prepare for examinations, but to call attention to passages she finds personally meaningful.

Participants were hampered in their ability to effectively use subject matter textbooks by three factors: an inability to differentiate important passages, an inappropriate reverence for books, and a lack of library skills. Michelle was hampered by two of these problems. She described taking detailed notes on textbook chapters and then retyping her notes in order to "make them look good." In the process, she felt she often missed what was important to the teacher. In addition, she found academic libraries intimidating and avoided them because she had never been "taught how to use" them.

Kinetic approaches include note taking and recopying notes. Participants vary in their note taking activity, often according to the subject matter. Participants indicate that note taking in history courses calls for summarization of textbooks and lectures. Sociology requires few notes because it is a "common sense" subject. On the other hand, Winona writes down "everything" in her engineering classes and Laurel's notes in the geography class are so thorough that they serve as an example. Sarah is very aware of the

strategies that assist her the most in her learning and relies on note taking in most of her classes because,

> *I have discovered that whatever I write down is typically going to be retained more than what I just hear. It is true for me, but I don't know if it is true for other people [that] the action of writing it plus seeing it makes you able to remember it.*

Parcitipants use note taking to create personally meaningful textual material that can provide important perceptual input. Notes are a record of participants' interpretations of experts' knowledge. As a learning strategy, notetaking is linked most often with lectures, and with reading the textbook.

Aural strategies included listening to the teacher and to other students and verbal repetition of small portions of the subject matter. These strategies were used when participants needed to memorize subject matter. Olivia finds aural strategies particular effective and consequently wanted to find a study partner to provide the aural input she needed in order to learn.

Cognitive strategies include comparing one's thoughts and conclusions about the subject matter with others' thoughts and conclusions, and studying. Angie talks about studying and indicates that she works hard to get the subject matter into her head in just the way she wants in order to be prepared for tests. This implies that studying includes cognitive manipulation of the subject matter in specific ways. Frances indicates she is mentally active in her calculus class in tracking the teacher's calculation procedures. She compares her answers with the teacher's and looks for errors if the two do not agree.

Combination strategies that encompassed two or more visual, kinetic, or cognitive approaches included participating in class, and applying the subject matter. Class participation demanded consistent mental engagement on participants' part. The activity that promoted engagement the most was questioning. Olivia liked the teacher to ask questions and to be able to ask questions in return. Winona linked students' ability to ask questions in class with effective teaching. However, not all participants participated overtly in class discussions. Some, like Michelle, found it too personally risky to comment verbally.

> *I'm pretty shy, but if a discussion starts, then, I will start in the discussion. But I'm always afraid to ask a question. Because I have had this happen on many occasions where I've asked a question and the professor has told me I was stupid for asking that question. And, so, you just kind of sit back and think, "Okay, I will never ask another question again."*

Participants used their knowledge construction management strategies to construct two types of knowledge. Initially they focused on constructing knowledge that allowed them to respond to teachers' tests in such a way that they could achieve their desired grades. The variety and extent of their strategies indicate that they were extremely active in manipulating the subject matter mentally and through their senses. They tested their knowledge through their ability to respond to test and examination questions.

Once participants satisfied the academic requirements and met their personal performance standards, they were free to construct idiosyncratic subject-matter knowledge for their own purposes. For example, Angie and Sarah came to the classroom with the intention of constructing idiosyncratic subject-matter knowledge to use in the

course of their everyday lives. They chose to use the classroom learning experience as a means of constructing this knowledge. Angie sought to understand interpersonal relationships at home and at work. Sarah sought to expand her store of personal knowledge in order to expand her horizons and avoid "stagnation."

Both Sarah's and Angie's personal subject-matter learning was designed to satisfy learning needs related to problematic family interactions. Sarah observed her mother's current intellectual poverty and had an emotional aversion to being like her mother in this regard. She sought to use her learning in the classroom for personal enrichment. Angie had experienced a number of interpersonal conflicts with various family members and at work. She was deeply troubled by these interactions and sought to construct knowledge that would help her explain and understand the behaviors involved. Angie's construction of personal subject-matter knowledge is described more fully in order to illustrate the creation of this type of knowledge.

As indicated by Angie's portrait, she began taking courses in order to prepare for a professional certification examination. After she was certified, she began taking other courses because she enjoyed learning and because she thought she might learn things to help her understand interpersonal relationships at work.

> *Another reason [to take courses] too [was that] I had had problems in the office. I was just real upset by the way I had been treated by a couple of women. I didn't know how to handle it. And I was really punishing myself and doing a lot of introspection and blaming myself because they were treating me that way. And I started taking psychology classes here on campus and trying to figure out what was going on.*

Later, during courses in her major (speech communication) Angie found that she could construct personal knowledge that helped her understand interpersonal relationships in her family as well.

> *[In] a communication and conflict class where we did a lot of role playing, I role played a conflict that I have . . . with my oldest daughter. There was another girl in there who has a similar situation to mine so far as in-laws go and she role played that conflict. We had to choose three conflicts to write about. And I chose her's to write about and that helped me. [It had to be] a research paper on something that really bothered us and I did research on conflict with in-laws. I married an only son; she married an only son. And his parents have never accepted me; his siblings have never accepted me. And it's caused a lot of conflict over the years. And it wouldn't make any difference if my husband had married Mary Brown. They wouldn't accept her either -- is basically what I found out. So that class really helped me with that.*

In several interpersonal situations, Angie was experiencing severe distress. In searching for solutions, she decided to try psychology classes. These did prove useful to her in constructing an alternative understanding of her work situation that relieved her distress. She did not choose her communication and conflict class specifically to learn about her in-law situation, but when she recognized an opportunity to construct personal subject-matter knowledge to help her interact more effectively with them, she took advantage of the occasion.

Angie's personal knowledge store was deliberately augmented through her classroom learning, but her knowledge construction in this area was not limited to the classroom. She had already created certain constructs to explain her in-laws' behavior, but her classroom learning allowed her to create a new construct for "normal parental reactions to only son's wives" which helped her explain their behavior in a way that held

promise for future conflict reduction. Angie's direction of her personal, subject-matter learning involved determining what she would learn (how to understand her in-laws' behavior) and how she would learn it. She decided that she would use the course writing assignment as the vehicle for her learning. Her personal frame of reference (conflict she had experienced with her in-laws) guided her interpretation of the materials she read. She decided she had reached resolution of her learning when she was able to explain her in-laws' behavior from a new frame of reference.

Angie's ability to construct personal subject-matter knowledge was facilitated when a class assignment allowed her the freedom to respond in a personal way and to receive academic credit for her personal response. Participants' focus on satisfying academic subject-matter requirements makes it clear that this is a priority for them. Because many of their goals and purposes are closely linked with academic success, they cannot afford to ignore these requirements. However, as Angie's experience indicates, constructing personal subject-matter knowledge is possible when as long as academic requirements can be satisfied.

Angie's experience as a non-degree student illustrates the type of classroom situation that most favors learners' freedom to construct personal subject-matter knowledge. When Angie's major reason for classroom involvement was preparing for her certified professional secretary examination, she chose only those classes that she believed she needed based on her own assessment of her existing knowledge. The grades she received were personally satisfying, but she believed the learning she achieved was of greater importance. Her focus on learning gavie her relative freedom from the need to

achieve high grades. She was able to use her time and energy primarily to construct personal subject-matter knowledge. She needed only to meet minimum academic requirements in order to continue to access classes. Once this was accomplished she was free to construct knowledge that would allow her to accomplish her certification goal. It appears that academic structures and learners' own academic goals and purposes restrict their classroom learning in specific ways.

The teachers' local academic requirements must be met if learners want to obtain high grades and meet degree requirements. They must direct their learning according to academic standards. They cannot afford to focus exclusively on their own learning because such a focus is unlikely to help them reach academic goals. In contrast, when participants focused on non-academic goals and purposes, they were free to pursue their own agendas and to construct personal subject-matter knowledge they evaluated according to their own criteria. They were also free to construct personal subject-matter knowledge once they had achieved their academic goals. Teachers who revealed their academic standards clearly, often enabled learners to readily satisfy their academic goals and to move on to the construction of unique subject-matter knowledge. That is completely autonomous classroom learning runs a parallel course with academically constrained learning.

Summary of the Managing Phase

Managing classroom-based learning is a complex enterprise. Multiple strategies and skills are needed at the institutional level, at the interpersonal, classroom level, and at

the intrapersonal knowledge creation level. Institutional level strategies demand a knowledge of regulations which govern individual students' access to courses and degree programs and affect their progression. Not all classroom-based learners possess the institutional level strategies they need. Classroom level strategies affect a learner's ability to satisfy academic requirements -- the minimum level of achievement expected by teachers, learners and the institution. Learners' abilities to discern and interpret teachers' behaviors affect their success. Intrapersonal management strategies impact the ability to construct subject-matter knowledge which will satisfy a teacher's locally defined academic standards. Knowledge construction strategies are active processes that provide learners with the perceptual input needed to construct subject-matter knowledge.

Management strategies impact a learner's ability to make progress toward his or her learning goals. When learning goals are academically focused, the learner concentrates on constructing subject-matter knowledge to satisfy academic requirements. When learning goals are personal and only tangentially related to academic requirements, learners are free to direct their learning and to construct personal subject-matter knowledge in totally autonomous ways. Learners are also free to construct personal subject-matter knowledge if they have met academic requirements.

Evaluating Knowledge

The final phase of the self-direction in classroom learning model is evaluation. Participants use two types of evaluation when judging the effectiveness of their learning. When they judge required subject-matter knowledge, they use academic criteria such as

test scores and grades. When they judge personal subject-matter knowledge, they use their own criteria including problem resolution and increased understanding of one's world.

Once participants constructed academic subject-matter knowledge, they verify its accuracy and effectiveness. They apply their knowledge during tests and examinations. And if they perform well enough to answer the teacher's questions and well enough to achieve academic rewards (high scores and high grades), they believe they constructed appropriate academic knowledge. Even when participants' self-confidence about the adequacy of their knowledge is low, good grades confirm the belief that something has been learned. Olivia illustrates this when she says, "I don't do that well with my studies. Even with my 3.5 [grade point average on a scale of 1 - 4], I don't feel I do that well. I must be doing something right, but still, it doesn't feel really good." Good test scores can prove intelligence and ability to learn. According to Laurel,

> *I was extremely nervous about the first test. And I was petrified that I just wasn't going to function [intellectually] on [a high] level anymore. [Doing well on] the first exams -- then I knew that I really could still function on a college level and think in those terms after being home with three children for so long.*

Participants also evaluated their academic subject-matter knowledge through an ability to use what they have learned in subsequent courses. The ability to use the knowledge one has constructed includes the ability to recall it and apply it. It implies that one has constructed one's own knowledge in a way that goes beyond mere memorization. Winona explains this evaluation standard.

Like the class I got the "D" in -- I've had to use that course [content] in other courses and I haven't had a problem, so I figured, "Well, I did learn." And the "D" wasn't necessarily a good reflector of what I learned. It's just like, you may have [a student] who had [another professor] and they may have gotten an "A," but that professor may have taught them straight from the book and given tests just like the examples in the book -- just changed the numbers. So, does that mean they learned any more, or did they just learn how to do that particular problem and that was it?

Participants applied their own criteria for learning when they evaluated personal subject-matter knowledge. Successful problem resolution is one criteria that can be applied to evaluate such knowledge. Angie's problem was significant emotional distress. She was satisfied with the knowledge she had constructed when it reduced her emotional distress over her office interpersonal conflicts.

I was just real upset by the way I had been treated by a couple of [women in my office]. It really bothered me and I didn't know how to handle it. And I was really punishing myself and doing a lot of introspection and blaming myself because they were treating me that way. I'd come home crying and [my husband] would say, "You shouldn't let it bother you." But it did. It really bothered me. So that was another reason I started taking a lot of psychology classes and trying to figure out what was going on. And finally I realized that I had not done anything to them and that it was their problem.

A second criterion is an increase in the breadth and depth of one's understanding of one's world. Sarah describes an instance when she used this criterion to judge what she had learned in biology class.

I was amazed every time I opened a newspaper and read things. I said, "Golly, it just goes right along with the course I'm taking. This is weird. This is strange." And I thought, "People don't even know what they don't know." Sad. Because you just read the paper and you never see the stuff because it doesn't mean anything to you. You get the gist, but you don't really know what they are talking about. Suddenly you understand things you have never understood before. You thought you did, but you didn't. You glazed the top.

Summary of the Evaluation Phase

Participants evaluated learning in global terms. The criteria they applied are appropriate to the type of knowledge they constructed. When subject-matter knowledge had been constructed, academic criteria were applied; when personal subject-matter knowledge had been created, personal criteria were used.

Chapter Summary

The inductive analysis procedures used in this qualitative study reveal a model of self-direction in classroom learning that consists of three phases. The first phase includes two categories of factors: goals and purposes, and beliefs about students, teachers and academic achievement. These categories indicate that learners chose to learn in classrooms because they have purposes that are congruent with the deliberate kind of learning that occurs there. Further, learners' beliefs about teachers and learners are powerful and reinforce their goals and purposes.

Goals and purposes form a complex network that guides the decisions and actions of each learner. Within goal and purpose networks, separate goals and purposes interact and at various times learners subsume some under others. Goal and purpose networks touch many aspects of the learners' l ives and personalities.

Beliefs lead learners to expect certain results when they engage in classroom-based learning. They expect to develop subject-matter knowledge through their own efforts with specific assistance from the teacher. They are disappointed when they don't receive the assistance they need to construct subject-matter knowledge. However, unmet

expectations in one class seldom alter their basic beliefs that classrooms are good places to learn and that teachers are able to help them.

The second phase of the model indicates that learners apply a variety of management strategies to direct their classroom-based learning. Strategies vary according to the level at which they are applied: the institutional level, the interpersonal, classroom level, and the intrapersonal knowledge construction level. Institutional level management strategies affect access to classrooms. Interpersonal management strategies operate in the classroom to assist learners as they construct subject-matter knowledge that satisfies the teacher's particular academic standards. Satisfying these academic requirements is the first priority for learners. Intrapersonal management strategies are used to direct knowledge construction. These strategies control and guide the type of perceptual input learners use to construct their knowledge. These strategies are active rather than passive.

Once knowledge has been constructed which meets academic standards, learners are free to construct personal subject-matter knowledge that fulfills personal goals and purposes. The ease with which academic requirements are met affects the available time and energy a learner can devote to constructing personal subject-matter knowledge. Teachers who make their standards explicit can facilitate learners' personal subject-matter knowledge construction.

Learners are self-directed in creating their academic subject-matter knowledge and in interpreting the teacher's academic standards. Once they discern the teacher's standards, they are bound by them in order to meet their personal academic goals and

purposes. They are self-directed in setting purely personal goals and purposes, and in the way they use their classroom-based learning experiences to fulfill these personal purposes. When learners are focused satisfying nonacademic goals and purposes they construct uniquely personal subject-matter knowledge. Thus, the degree of self-direction participants exercise and the ways they exercise it are related to the type of knowledge being constructed.

The third phase of the model includes evaluation. Learners evaluate their learning according to the type of knowledge they have constructed. Test scores and grades validate the creation of academically-accredited knowledge. Personal, idiosyncratic criteria are used to judge personal subject-matter knowledge construction such as the learners' judgment that a problem has been resolved as a result of their learning.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the study's purpose and design. Key findings are briefly reviewed and their implications considered. Suggestions for further research are offered and recommendations for practitioners proposed. The chapter ends with a conclusion and a brief personal post scriptum indicating the impact the research has had on the investigator's own teaching in the college classroom.

Summary of the Study Purpose and Design

This qualitative study began with the intent of describing the meaning schemes and related actions adults use as they engage in self-direction as classroom learners. Nine women undergraduates who had been previously interviewed about their collegiate classroom experiences for a larger qualitative investigation provided their perspectives. They were all over age 30, currently enrolled part-time at a public university or community college, and in good academic standing. All the participants had been interviewed by the investigator during the previous study. The interviews were semi-structured and dealt with many aspects of the women's academic lives. This study involved a new analysis of the transcribed interview texts to achieve different research objectives.

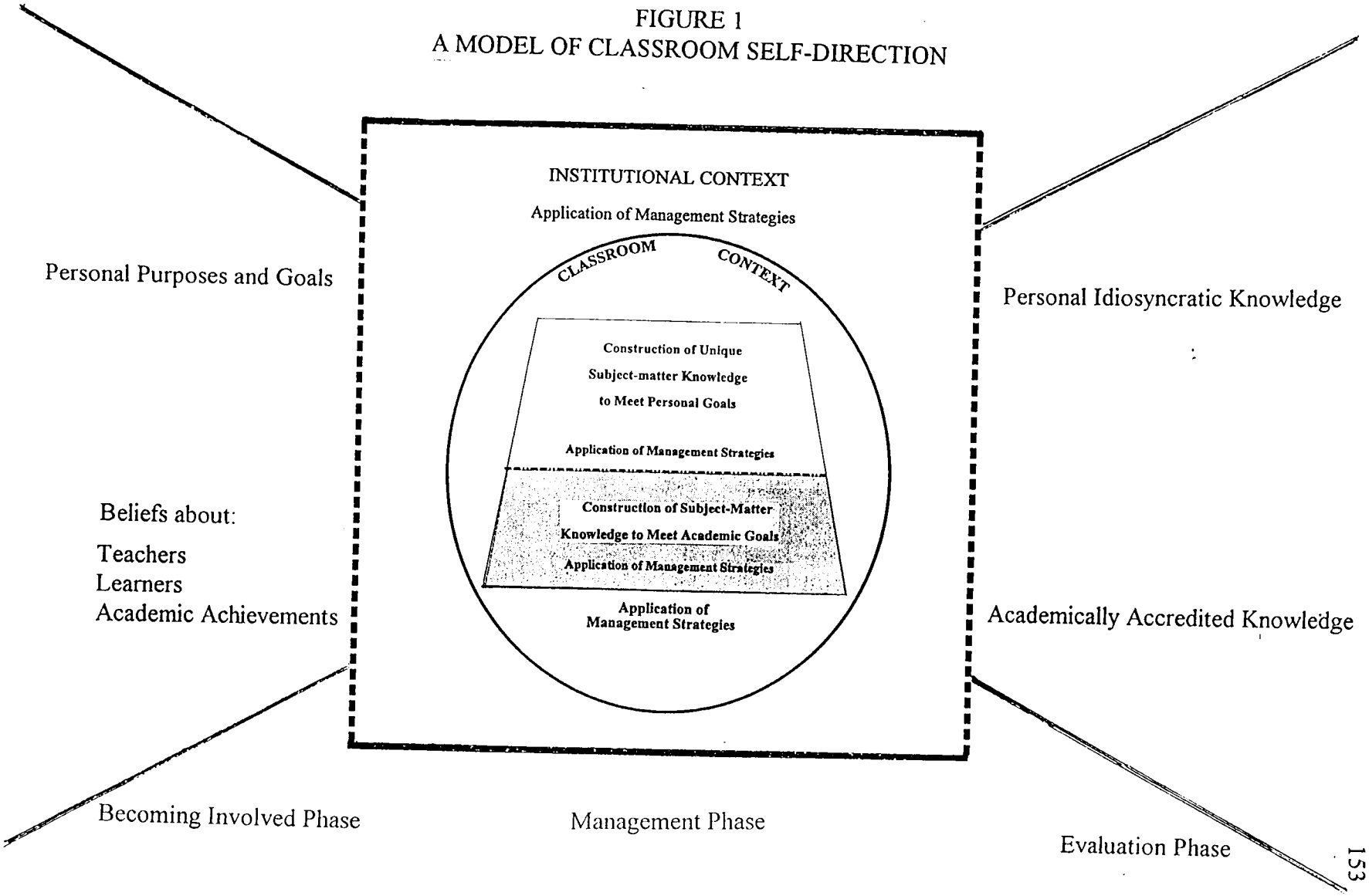
Data analysis included prolonged examination of the transcribed interview texts. As they were examined, varied data displays such as diagrams, lists, and tables were created and used to identify and clarify the themes that emerged.

Summary of the Findings Related to the Nature of Self-direction in Classroom Learning

The study focused on understanding the nature of self-direction in traditional college classrooms where conventional teacher-directed, teacher-centered instructional methods were used. A conceptual model of classroom self-direction was developed based on the themes identified in participants' interview texts. Additional themes emerged related to the participants as learners.

The model includes three phases: becoming involved, managing, and evaluating. Figure 1, which depicts the model, is repeated below.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF CLASSROOM SELF-DIRECTION



Involvement in classroom-based learning is influenced by two significant factors. Adults decide to learn in classrooms because they want to accomplish goals and purposes that are academic in nature. Often they want to achieve other goals and purposes that are nonacademic as well. Learners seek the simultaneous satisfaction of many interrelated goals and purposes. Classroom-based learners firmly believe that teachers can help them learn efficiently and effectively, that learners are primarily responsible for their own learning, and that academic achievement is valuable.

Phase two of the model represents the classroom context. In order to manage their classroom learning, adults use an extensive variety of management strategies. They apply one set of strategies at the institutional level to enter the courses they want. In the classroom, they apply different strategies to construct subject-matter knowledge. They focus initially on constructing knowledge which demonstrates to the teacher that they have met academic standards. Their classroom management skills also allow them to create their own unique subject-matter knowledge if they chose. Knowledge construction strategies focus on obtaining subject-matter perceptual input that learners find meaningful.

Learners' ability to satisfy academic requirements depends on the teacher's clear communication of the academic standards that will operate in the current classroom. Satisfying academic requirements also depends on the learner's ability to discern and interpret what the teacher thinks is important.

During evaluation, the final phase of the model, learners judge the knowledge they have constructed by testing it. Learners test subject-matter knowledge chiefly in the

classroom. The construction of subject-matter knowledge is designed to enable the learner to respond to the teacher's questions. Teacher's ask the learner to demonstrate their subject-matter knowledge based during test and examinations. Therefore, the learner assesses his or her subject-matter knowledge as adequate when he or she can answer test questions correctly. High scores on tests and consequent high grades mean learners have constructed useful subject-matter knowledge. If learners have constructed unique, personal subject-matter knowledge, they apply different criteria for evaluating it. Personal subject-matter knowledge is valued if it helps the learner solve a particular problem or if it broadens a learner's understanding of the world (s)he lives in. Personal subject-matter knowledge exemplifies what has been called the unintended consequences of classroom instruction. Classroom-based actions influence its development, but it is the exclusive province of the learner. The teacher has no way of predicting such learning or of directing the processes involved in its construction.

The model of self-direction in classroom learning derived from the themes in participants' interview texts shows that adults in the classroom act as autonomous, self-directed learners. They assume responsibility for their learning and direct it through multiple management strategies. They evaluate their learning based on the quality of the knowledge they construct. In other words, they possess the skills and behaviors of self-directed learners.

However, although adult classroom learners' actions fit the essential criteria for self-direction (accepting responsibility, directing and evaluating learning), the scope and range of their behavior are clearly dominated by socially constructed beliefs and

assumptions about classroom learning. This finding raises an important issue. Is it sufficient to consider self-direction merely as a set of skills and actions without considering factors in the classroom context that affect learners' ability and autonomy in applying those skills?

Study participants were not constructing subject-matter knowledge in a vacuum. They were constructing it in the context of an academic culture. Their activities and their learning made sense to them because of the socially constructed beliefs and assumptions that govern academic life. Participants were locked into particular expressions of self-direction because of their meaning schemes. These meaning schemes that govern their expectations of themselves and of teachers have been constructed during years of exposure to classrooms as children and reinforced by their experiences as adults in higher education classrooms. Adult learners are autonomous in controlling and directing classroom learning to the extent that they interpret classroom social features as allowing self-direction. The model of self-direction in classroom learning developed in this study indicates that adult self-directed learners in academic settings are products of their context rather than creators of it.

Besides the model, several significant themes related to the participants as learners emerged. The findings of the study show that for this group of nine adult undergraduate women:

> Academic structures and behavioral norms are extremely powerful influences that direct classroom learning. Learners' beliefs and expectations are predicated on a history of classroom involvement and reinforced by experiences that fit their

expectations. The academic culture defines the nature of learning for the learner, indicates how constructed knowledge will be used (to meet classroom expectations), and sets standards for evaluating the adequacy of knowledge (tests and grades).

The teacher is a dominant influence in the classroom and his or her behavior constrains the learner's academic achievement and the quality of the subject-matter knowledge the learner constructs.

Other learners in the classroom play an insignificant and tangential role in the construction of subject-matter knowledge.

Academic achievement is an important and significant source of self-satisfaction and self-esteem. It contributes to the development of a unique, individual identity apart from the roles of wife, mother, and worker.

Classroom learning *contributes to* learners' self-directed life long learning programs when learners need credentials to access jobs and occupations where they expect to apply their knowledge. Classroom learning may also be viewed as the *core* of a life long learning program when a learner is characterized by an abiding love of learning, a fascination with discovery, and a sense of curiosity.

While constructing subject-matter knowledge to satisfy academic requirements and meet self-esteem needs, learners may also construct uniquely personal subject-matter knowledge. Constructing such knowledge is related to the time and energy a learner has available once academic requirements have been met. Learners create unique subject-matter knowledge when their primary purpose for involvement in the classroom is more personal than academic.

Construction of unique subject-matter knowledge parallels the construction of academic subject-matter knowledge and may or may not involve the use of academic structures and processes. The learner evaluates unique subject-matter knowledge using criteria other than tests and grades.

Comparing the Findings to the Literature

The next section of the chapter compares participants' experiences to the experiences of participants in the studies cited in the literature review. This is followed by a discussion that relates key findings to selected additional literature.

Participants' Experiences Compared with Participants in the Literature Review Studies

In Kasworm's (1988, 1991, 1992) studies, classroom-based learners' were clearly self-directed in their classroom learning. They had clear purposes and goals they wished to accomplish and used their classroom-learning to move them toward realizing their

goals. Participants in this study were also clearly self-directed and influenced by their purposes and goals. However, study participants had goals and purposes that were highly congruent with involvement in a higher education classroom. Few participants had the variety of goals and purposes evidenced among Kasworm's learners.

Kasworm's withdrawn learners were frustrated by their inability to achieve the high test scores and grades they wanted. They had been successful as classroom learners in the past, but their current experiences challenged past successes. Participants' experiences in this study may help to explain withdrawers' experiences. Participants' ability to achieve the test scores and grades they wanted depended on their ability to understand what the teacher's academic standards were and on their ability to act in ways that the teacher would reward. Some participants were better than others at discerning what the teacher wanted and at interpreting the local academic standards. Those who had difficulty knowing what the teacher wanted were unable to act in ways that earned them the test scores and grades they wanted. This finding suggests that one factor that might have been affecting Kasworm's withdrawers was an inability to interpret current classroom standards.

Kasworm's conflict learners found that institutional structures and forms interfered with their ability to achieve their personal purposes. They were able to achieve some of their purposes, but they had to struggle against academic conventions to do so. The experiences of participants in this study many also inform conflictors' experiences. This study identified three sets of management strategies needed by classroom learners: institutional level strategies, classroom strategies and knowledge construction strategies.

Because conflictors were clearly going against the grain, they would benefit from highly developed institutional management skills. Their level of frustration suggested that they may not have had the skills and strategies they needed *at this level* to achieve their objectives.

In addition, conflictors appeared to be focused on constructing personal subject-matter knowledge for their own purposes. The findings of this study suggest that academic standards must be satisfied. Conflictors may have resented the time and energy they had to expend in meeting academic requirements since this detracted from the time they wanted to spend constructing unique subject-matter knowledge.

Participants indicated no challenge to their socially constructed beliefs about normative teacher and learner behaviors. In contrast, Taylor's (1987) learners experienced a profound challenge to their conceptions of teachers and learners. Their teacher was physically absent from the classroom. Peers assumed new roles as co-instructors, and the basis for grading was an individual learning contract rather than tests or exams. Taylor's learners' responses showed that challenging deeply ingrained beliefs about classroom learning requires a major investment of time, and both cognitive and emotional energy for learners to reorient themselves and construct new meaning schemes relative to these roles.

In the Hodgson and Reynolds study (1987), the "learning community" classroom structure the teachers created exposed the value and significance of peer learning relationships. Hodgson and Reynolds noted that their participants *discovered* that peers had knowledge and experiences that could contribute significantly to learning. These

authors indicated that few of their participants came into the classroom expecting that their peers would make a contribution to their learning. The women in the current study expected the major contribution to their learning to come from the teacher. Only one mentioned that peers contributed to her learning; she valued fellow adult learners' examples of ways the subject-matter had been applied in the peers' lives. The lack of vision among this study's participants regarding peers' role in their learning lends support to the idea that classroom learners need help to see that peers are an important learning resource.

Hodgson and Reynolds (1987) believed a participatory structure was needed for self-direction in classroom-based learning, but found that the participatory structure failed to deal with issues of power and with issues of the teacher's legitimate grade-related responsibilities. Participants in the present study needed no participatory classroom structures to be self-directed in constructing their personal subject-matter knowledge. Nor did they require a participatory structure to construct academic subject-matter knowledge in the classroom. However, participants in this study also faced the problem of the teacher's legitimate power. The most effective means of dealing with the academic power issue, according to study participants, was for the teacher to make his or her performance standards explicit.

Sgroi's (1990) participants sought learning assistance from a teacher in several specific ways. Study participants also had definite ideas about the assistance a teacher should provide. Like Sgroi's students, participants wanted the teacher to enhance their motivation and help them refine their existing subject-matter concepts. However, most of

the participants, tested their subject-matter knowledge only in the mental realm, whereas Sgroi's learners tested their knowledge both cognitively and as they danced. Because Sgroi's learners were constructing performance knowledge, the perceptual input they sought was clearly different from the input sought by study participants who were primarily constructing mental concepts. The type of desired perceptual input may influence a learner's expectations of the teacher.

Both Shores (1986) and Kasworm (1988, 1991, 1992) identified the existence of multiple purposes and goals among their classroom-based learners and suggested that some purposes may dominate others at various times. The present study provided additional evidence that learners have multiple interrelated learning goals. As participants sought to accomplish their learning goals, they found it necessary to choose which ones would guide their behavior during various learning activities. When they were focused on their academic learning goals, they often had to set their personal life-related goals aside. When they sought fulfillment of life-related goals, they made learning decisions specific to those goals and acted in different ways. For example, when Angie's life-related goal was to pass her secretarial certification exam (CPS), she chose her classes on the basis of her assessment of her knowledge of the subject matter included in the exam. When her academic goal of degree attainment was upper most, she selected classes on the basis of degree requirements. Thus, her learning was affected by the learning goal that was currently dominant.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) provided five descriptions of ways women make meaning and construct knowledge. They found that classroom

learning experiences and the prevailing academic views of knowledge and learning could influence a woman's movement to a different way of knowing. Their five ways of knowing were presented as hierarchical, moving from silence to knowing by receiving knowledge, to knowing through listening to one's inner voice, to constructing knowledge using others' procedures, to constructing one's own knowledge that one seeks to contribute to others. Belenky et al. linked each way of knowing with a woman's sociocultural context and experiences.

The learning experiences this study's participants described and their views of themselves as knowers bore some resemblance to several of the ways of knowing described by Belenky and her colleagues. Five participants might be viewed as received knowers; three appeared to be separate procedural knowers and one described beliefs congruent with subjective knowers.

For example, received knowers learn primarily through listening to the voices of authorities. They take what they hear *into* themselves and believe that their ideas and beliefs are held in common with those of their friends and peers. They look to authorities for information *and* direction. They perceive themselves as capable of knowing through mastery of the knowledge of others.

The majority of this study's participants believed that teachers were authorities and wanted to learn what the teacher knew. They believed that the teacher's knowledge represented what was known by all those in the discipline. They saw themselves as novices and believed they were responsible for constructing their own knowledge so that it agreed with the knowledge of the respected authorities.

Frances was the study participant who best fit the subjective knower position described by Belenky and her colleagues. She was confident of the value of her own experience and believed that the knowledge she had constructed in the "real world" was superior to the theoretical knowledge of the classroom. Frances had not yet found it necessary to abandon her past because of the new ways of seeing that she was developing, as many of the women in this position had done according to Belenky et al. But Frances was having some difficulty moving ahead in her subjective way of knowing. She was hesitant to commit herself to a major that would limit her learning primarily to the "hardware" and equally hesitant to commit herself to a major that emphasized the "people" side of computers. However, she clearly saw herself as potent in the learning process and as capable of constructing knowledge that was better than the knowledge of authorities.

The remaining three participants appeared to be procedural knowers. They maintained some trust in authority, applied their own standards of judgment, sought to gain new procedures for constructing knowledge and to effectively express that knowledge. All were "practical, pragmatic problem solvers" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 99).

The participants who had learned to know by practicing the intellectual ways of knowing common in the collegiate classroom were those who were deeply invested in the value of higher education and had extensive experiences in higher education institutions. The separate knower participants were comfortable asserting their own opinions, challenging their peers, and mentally disagreeing with their teachers. However, they were often reluctant to give voice to their knowledge, feeling that the classroom

environment did not encourage them and that the teacher and his or her knowledge was dominant in this context.

Study participants' higher education classroom experiences seemed to play an important role in their development as knowers. They came to classrooms because they were experiencing adult developmental transitions. It appeared that these transitions played a role in readiness to experience new ways of knowing. Once inside the classroom, study participants were exposed to different ways of knowing and seemed ready to learn these new ways.

The Findings Related to Selected Additional Literature

The next section of the chapter has three parts. In the first section, study findings are compared with Candy's (1991) views on self-direction. The second section discusses the nature of the dominant belief system that organizes academic culture and profoundly influences classroom learning. The third section briefly discusses gender related issues.

Candy's views. Candy (1991) says that autodidaxy, his term for the noninstitutional, intentional pursuit of learning opportunities in everyday life, is different from self-direction in the classroom which he calls learner-control (p. 23).

Autodidaxy requires the individual to occupy the role of teacher and learner simultaneously. The process is influenced by random circumstantial events and demands the constant adjustment of plans as the learning project unfolds. Autodidaxy is an uncertain process concerned with learning something entirely new, making personal changes, or solving a specific problem. It is impossible to set specific, predetermined

outcomes in autodidaxy. Autodidacts seek sources of information and often establish helping relationships that depend on the type of assistance sought, the assistant's identity, and the nature of the learner/helper relationship.

In contrast, classroom learning is profoundly influenced by beliefs that educational institutions are places where one learns. Learners expect support and encouragement and further expect to deal with a well-defined amount of specific subject-matter knowledge. The teacher-learner relationship dominates and both teachers and learners occupy respective, socially-sanctioned roles. Self-direction in the classroom is definitively linked to *instructional actions and processes* (Candy, 1991).

Candy further asserts that classroom learners are influenced by aspects of instructional situations that are culturally shared, such as the nature of the content and the duration of the learning episode. These specific aspects influence learning rather than the random circumstances of a natural social environment. Teachers are viewed as knowers/resources; learners are submissive to the teacher *in order to learn.*

The findings of this study lend some support to Candy's (1991) beliefs that self-direction in the natural social environment differs from self-direction in the classroom. The study participants' beliefs corroborated the characteristics of the classroom Candy enumerated. The management strategies participants used to construct subject-matter knowledge to satisfy academic requirements were primarily instructional strategies. Study participants viewed the dominant relationship as the teacher-learner relationship.

Participants believed that one significant classroom learning task was to learn to interpret the teacher and to identify what the teacher thought was important about the

subject matter. They wanted to focus their learning efforts on these aspects of the subject matter. Such an interpretation of learning task suggests that an important classroom management skill is the learner's ability to identify and interpret teachers' cues. According to Candy (1991), this type of interpersonal competence is an addition to the previously identified interpersonal competencies associated with autonomous learners (p. 462-63).

This study found that participants were also capable of constructing unique subject-matter knowledge to satisfy their own personal purposes. When participants constructed such knowledge, they appeared to be acting as autodidacts. The construction of unique subject-matter knowledge was often serendipitous and related to the participant's discovery that something they encountered in the classroom was related to an idiosyncratic learning need. When this happened to Angie and Laurel, they assumed the role of both teacher and learner. Both of these women established additional learning relationships with librarians and other learners. Both were completely autonomous in deciding what it was they wanted to learn and how they would learn it. Once they learned they evaluated their learning according to their own idiosyncratic criteria. In both Angie's and Laurel's situation, their classroom teachers were totally unaware that these women were seeking to learn in this manner or that they had unique learning goals. In addition the classroom behavioral norms that governed Angie's and Laurel's academic subject-matter learning had no influence on their autonomous learning. Neither woman deemed their beliefs about classroom learning relevant to their idiosyncratic learning even though the stimulus for their idiosyncratic learning came from their classroom

involvement. This finding also supports Candy's contention that autodidaxy is not a method a teacher may use, but is the exclusive territory of learners. differentiation between autodidaxy and learner-control.

Because participants' autodidactic learning originated in the classroom it was constrained to some degree by classroom structures. Participants acting as autodidacts in the classroom seemed to be influenced by what Spear and Mocker (1984) called the "organizing circumstance." In their 1984 study, these authors asserted that self-direction in the natural social environment was not totally fluid and open to any possibilities. Instead, they suggested that learners were constrained by their current environment. For the autodidactic participants in this study, classroom structures appeared to act as a key environmental determinant.

The nature of the academic belief system. The finding that participants readily accepted academic conventions and conformed their beliefs to prevailing academic customs, seems to deny their self-direction. However, the participants' demonstrated a high level of self-direction in their actions, a sense of responsibility, and a belief in themselves as learners. None indicated doubt about their personal sense of potency and agency in the classroom. This apparent contradiction makes sense if the emerging views of self-direction are considered. Emerging views conceptualize self-directed learning as a acts of learning within particular social contexts where the learner and his or her environment are interdependent. Learners who feel personally potent and autonomous in constructing their own knowledge in the classroom, yet follow academic customs are self-directed learners.

Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1968) work provides evidence that the grading structure is indeed a principle organizing framework of academic culture. In their landmark study of academic college life, Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) found that the social organization of higher education institutions is permeated by what they called a "grade point average perspective." Key elements of the perspective include grades as tickets to participation in the institution, as a pervasive reward structure in and outside the classroom, and as the definition of success in the classroom and in one's life outside the classroom. Since grades virtually define both success and worth for students, they become the basic priority of all students.

According to Becker et al. the perspective "directs students to orient their activities toward getting `good' grades, . . . is a realistic way to orient oneself toward the academic aspects of campus life, . . . has the force of being `what everyone knows,'" and organizes campus life (1984, p. 35-6). The grade point average perspective is an important and significant feature of the collegiate context for classroom self-directed learning. Being self-directed in learning within a context permeated by grades demands a set of skills very different from those required to be self-directed in learning in the context of everyday life.

Participants' beliefs and actions coincided with the grade point average perspective and indicated that it is a viable means of organizing one's involvement in higher education classrooms. The majority managed the academic learning environment successfully. They understood the system and the actions needed to produce the grades

they sought. They felt able and potent as learners in the classroom context when their managing produced the results they sought.

Michelle was one participant who, by her own admission, lacked the ability and skill to work well within the grade point average perspective. While she was a highly skilled learner in the context of her everyday life, she was poorly prepared as an autonomous learner in the classroom.

Becker, Geer, and Hughes also indicate that "other interests may suggest rewards other than grades to be sought in academic experience [but] where the actions necessitated by the pursuit of grades *conflict with other interests, the latter must be sacrificed* [italics added]" (1968, p. 34). This conclusion by these authors was also supported by the findings of this study. Participants primarily sought to attain the grade they desired in the classroom. As long as this was accomplished, they could also satisfy their "other interests." Within this study, participants who were the most successful in their management of the academic environment in order to direct their learning were also those who reported acting as autonomous learners in the construction of unique personal knowledge.

Gender-related Issues. Hayes and Flannery (1995) note the paucity of studies of adult women's learning in higher education and urge the careful examination of common assumptions. One issue of importance is the prevailing classroom climate in higher education. Feminist scholars have identified a chilly classroom climate for women (Collard & Stalker, 1991). Participants' experiences were marked by a significant number of negative classroom incidents. Seven of the nine participants reported classroom

interactions that were intimidating or demeaning. Laurel spoke of feeling excluded, and Winona of active hostility. Despite their recognition of a negative classroom climate, none of the participants indicated an expectation that the climate could be any different.

Collard & Stalker (1991) argue that gender issues in classrooms reflect gender issues in the wider society. They note that "curricula are expressions and reflections of what we consider worth knowing" (p. 75). Study participants' perceptions indicated that they readily accepted the teacher-designed curriculum. They believed that it represented was what was worth knowing about the subject-matter. Except for Frances, none provided evidence that they could create a curriculum that was as worthwhile as the one the teacher created.

The participants in the current study demonstrated an observable compliance to the expected norms of the classroom and a high level of academic performance which is consistent with overall findings dealing with females' educational experiences (Stockard, 1980). However, their beliefs and meaning schemes revealed an internal sense of autonomy, they indicated a sense that they had a voice, and they were determined to accomplish their goals despite any classroom barriers that existed. Their external compliance was a poor indication of their internal state.

The majority of participants also acted more as separate and autonomous learners as opposed to connected and relational learners in contradiction with the prevailing theme in feminist literature that identifies relational learning as women's preferred way of knowing (MacKeracher, 1993). This may indicate that participants had not yet grown to

the point of connected knowing or lend support to Baxter Magolda's (1992) contention that ways of knowing are gender-related, but not gender-specific.

In one of the few gender specific studies related to students' higher education experiences, Saul (1992) found four themes common among her women: a belief that teachers' set the climate for learning, that learners' own actions affected the quality of the learning experience, that the women's backgrounds influenced the quality of learning interactions, and that knowing about women's lives aids in understanding their learning. These themes were reminiscent of the participants' experiences, especially the emphasis on the influence of the teacher.

Finally, it was evident that married participants struggled with balancing their many adult roles. They experienced frustration and conflict especially in their attempts to maintain their family roles while adding the student role. Gerson (1985) suggests, like Collard and Stalker (1991), that this conflict also reflects larger societal issues. Gerson maintains that adding a work role to one's family roles is an acceptable action for married women in today's society. Adding the student role is not yet viewed as a normative behavior. This leaves women in the position of having limited support for collegiate involvement and in finding a way to accomplish their usual duties *along with* acting as students.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study indicate that participants' constructions of self-direction in the college classroom are related to the type of knowledge being constructed. The

extent of self-direction and the actions which express it differ according to each type. Participants acted with varying degrees of autonomy to construct subject-matter knowledge according to the particular classroom situation they encountered and the ease with which such knowledge could be created. They acted with greater autonomy when they also constructed unique subject-matter knowledge in the classroom.

The findings suggest a number of potentially fruitful areas for further study:

1. The study lends support to Candy's (1991) conceptual differentiation between autodidaxy and learner-control of instruction. The theoretical development of self-direction in learning would be enhanced by additional studies which seek empirical evidence for the validity of this conceptual differentiation.

2. Study findings indicate that it is the *academic culture* itself which constrains self-direction in the classroom, rather than the presence of the teacher or the structure of classroom learning activities. This suggests that self-direction in academic classrooms needs to be studied in a more holistic manner than past investigations have used. It also intimates that learners in academia will have difficulties being self-directed learners if they lack the cultural capital to function in an academic culture.

3. Candy (1991) indicates that learners' skills in managing learning are important factors influencing self-direction in the classroom. The findings of this study indicate that management strategies are more complex and varied than has

previously been thought. Management strategies applied to the classroom alone are insufficient to create a self-directed learning situation. Further research is needed to identify the scope and effectiveness of the management strategies needed by self-directed learners.

4. Learners' skill in determining what the teacher's academic standards are and identifying the behaviors the teacher will rewarded is important for academic success according to the findings of this study. Further research is needed to determine how teachers communicate their standards and how learners master the ability to read the teacher.

5. The learners' verification of the centrality of teacher-learner interaction in classroom-based learning indicates a need for additional research focusing on the nature of this interaction. How do teacher's and learner's perceptions of their interaction compare? What is the range of affective components of teacher-learner interaction and how do they affect self-direction?

6. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) suggest that the later ways of knowing are positions that allow women to perceive the value of other learners' knowledge. Study participants seemed to be at the earlier positions in the hierarchy of ways of knowing. They also failed to see value in peers' contributions to learning. This finding suggests that further research into the

relationship between ways of knowing and ability to learn from others in the classroom might be fruitful.

Suggestions for Practitioners

The model of self-direction in classroom learning uncovered in this study has a number of implications for practitioners. Adult educators who practice in classrooms and desire to promote self-direction in learners in this setting can benefit from an appreciation of participants' perspectives which indicate a sense of autonomy and significant interaction between learner and environment.

The findings suggest a number of practices which are likely to support self-direction in classroom learning:

1. Most classroom learners have multiple academic goals they desire to achieve. Their desire for high grades is not an indication that they are uninterested in learning or that they are not self-directed. Practitioners may need to reconsider their views about grades. A desire for "A's" can be a powerful incentive to learn.

2. As a teacher, consider making one's local performance standards obvious. Classroom learners who know the standards are able to plan their learning actions and participation level.

3. Learners' beliefs that the teacher should be a fountain of knowledge may be unreasonable and lead to disappointment and dampened motivation to learn.

Practitioners may want to consider a frank discussion of the issue of expertise and its role in learning.

4. Adult learners believe they should be prepared to learn in the classroom, but often find it difficult to find the time to be as prepared as they would like. Practitioners could help adult learners be better prepared by carefully considering the role of homework and the benefits or liabilities of the assignments that are to be completed outside the classroom.

5. Learners may possess a limited repertoire of management strategies for constructing subject-matter knowledge. Practitioners could help classroom learners by discussing how to learn the content along with their presentation of that content.

6. Management strategies are needed at the institutional level as well as in the classroom in order for classroom learners to be autonomous. Advisors would be most helpful to students by helping them understand institutional policies and how they affect student access to courses and progression in degree programs.

7. Because classroom learners use academic standards to judge their subject-matter knowledge, practitioners need to consider the impact of tests and the kind of test questions they develop. Using tests as a basis for authentic dialogues with

learners allows both learner and teacher to understand each others' assumptions about the subject matter.

CONCLUSION

This study began with a disconfirmation. As an adult classroom learner, the investigator *felt as though she were self-directed*, yet the literature said that she was not unless she accepted the responsibility for deciding what she would learn and how she would learn it. However, being willing to accept responsibility for planning and directing classroom learning is not the learner's unilateral choice. Academic classrooms are the province of teachers and are governed by powerful, socially constructed and reinforced normative assumptions. Interactions between teachers and learners express a particular relationship and self-direction in classrooms must be expressed within the boundaries of that relationship.

The existing literature places teachers and self-directed learners in adversarial positions. In order to be self-directed, learners must *take from* teachers and teachers must *give up* valued responsibilities. Such views mitigate against other constructions of the teacher-learner relationship which might be more compatible with learner self-direction.

The assumptions which govern classroom relationships place learners on one plane and teachers on another. Learners assume that those on the same plane, their learning peers, have little to contribute to their knowledge construction. Further, classroom conventions and the assumption that learners are responsible for their own

learning make it difficult to believe that a learning peer *would or should* contribute to one's learning.

Socially constructed beliefs and assumptions are designed to govern social relationships. If self-directed learning in the classroom is viewed as a relational phenomenon, then it follows that new beliefs and assumptions about classroom relationships need to be constructed in order to move beyond simply applying the skills of self-directed learning. The model of classroom self-direction in learning developed in this study depicts the application of self-directed skills. Participants inability to move beyond traditional academic beliefs and assumptions in the application of those skills illustrates the need to consider not only the construction of subject-matter knowledge, but the social construction of relational knowledge as well.

However, the experiences of Taylor's (1987) learners and to some extent the experiences of Hodgson and Reynolds's (1987) learners indicates that constructing new normative roles is a time consuming and emotionally laden process. As Daloz (1996) notes,

> *The kind of transformation we seek will not be accomplished simply by training or pruning [merely applying skills]. What we are pulling on is deeply rooted in the entire organism, and good teachers will honor the magnitude of the struggle -- the student's struggle -- to change and entire order of consciousness. The bromides and myths of culture seep deep into our bones over the years, and we need to recognize the power they have, particularly in the lives of our older students.*

Learning to be more "self-directed" entails a complex metamorphosis that takes time (p. 116).

Daloz assumes that adult educators (teachers) have themselves made the transition to new orders of consciousness. In traditional academic institutions, this assumption cannot necessarily be made. In such contexts, a learner who metamorphoses alone may well find him or herself socially isolated. Teachers in such contexts may best serve the learner's self-direction by offering to enter into the mutual reconstruction of traditional teacher-learner roles in ways that support learner's self-direction.

Post Scriptum

I am deeply indebted to the participants of this study who so willingly shared their lives with me. I am convinced that I saw a side of them that their teachers never knew. The discoveries of this research have made me determined to seek every opportunity to uncover learners' perspectives of the subject-matter. I have become particularly curious about their questions and have been continually astonished by the revelations my current students' questions provide. I have implemented some of my own suggestions for practice and found them fruitful and valued by my students. And most of all I have become an outspoken advocate of the student perspective within my discipline where it is often devalued or undervalued.

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Appendix A

Letter Introducing Researchers to Participants

Dear :

You are a member of a large and growing group. Adults who are 25 or older currently represent 40% of the undergraduate population. However, almost nothing is known about their experiences on college campuses. You are being asked to participate in the first major national study of adult undergraduates to be funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Your school was selected as a study site and is supporting this research.

Your name was selected **at random** from a list provided by your institution. Students on the list met the following criteria: at least 30 years old, currently enrolled, in good academic standing, [next criteria change by institutional type] cumulative hours totalling 15-59 and pursuing an undergraduate degree. Only [number also changes by institutional type] 10 students from your school will be interviewed. With this small number, your contribution is very important and significant.

We believe these criteria will lead us to persons like yourself who have direct knowledge of what it is like to be an adult learner in a college classroom. We would like to conduct one interview with you sometime during the week of [varying dates]. Past interviews have generally lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

We would like to ask you about your current classroom experiences, your past experience, if any, with post-secondary schools, your reasons for being in school and what helps and hinders your learning. You can reveal only what you choose regarding each of these topics. No embarrassing questions will be asked and your responses will be **completely confidential**. Because the words you use are very important, the interview will be audio taped. The tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the two researchers. No one at your institution will have access to the tapes.

Although it is not possible to pay you for your time, we will try to conduct the interview at a time convenient for you. We recognize that you are a busy and involved person. In volunteering to participate in this study you have an opportunity to make a significant contribution to our understanding of adult learning experiences and possibly to gain an increased understanding of your own goals and perceptions.

If you have questions about participating or would like to have more information, you may contact [researchers' names, address and phone #s]

Appendix B

Consent Form

Subject No. _____ Institution _____

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROJECT STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I acknowledge that I have been adequately briefed about the research study "Adult Undergraduate Students: Patterns of Involvement" which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. I believe I can make an informed decision about participating and I acknowledge that:

a. I understand the purpose of the study and my role in providing my perceptions during the interview.

b. my participation is voluntary, not mandatory; my involvement in the interview indicates my consent to participate and that, if I so choose, I can refuse to continue the interview process at any point.

c. my responses will be made anonymously and that at no time will my identity be revealed in reports of the research findings; I give my permission for the investigators to anonymously quote selected responses when publishing results in scholarly journals and proceedings.

d. following the study, feedback regarding the findings will be furnished at my request.

_____

Subject Signature Date

_____

Interviewer's Signature Date

I wish to receive a synopsis of the study findings. Please send a copy to:
____(Participant's name and address)_____

Appendix C

Demographic Sheet

Subject No. _____
(Office Use Only)

ADULTS AS UNDERGRADUATES
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

Please <u>circle</u> the appropriate choice:

Male / Female Married / Single / Divorced / Widowed / Other
Caucasian / Afro-American / Hispanic / Asian / Other
Freshman / Sophomore / Junior / Senior

Please <u>fill in</u> the blanks:

Age _____

Number of hours (current course load) _____

Academic major _____

Job Title _____

Full or Part-time _____

If not formally employed, please indicate current status:

_____

Reason(s) for selecting this academic institution/program:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please circle <u>ALL</u> that apply:

Which of the following campus services have you used?

admissions	registration	financial aid
library	advisement	counseling
student health	career placement	other_____

Who provides support/assistance to you in your student role?

child/children	spouse	parents
siblings	friends	fellow students
employer	work colleagues	faculty
campus personnel		other_____

How are you paying for tuition and school expenses?

loans	scholarships	employer assistance
savings	personal earnings	spouse
parent(s)		other_____

Have things changed at work because of your student role?

job responsibilities	number of hours worked
work related travel	relationships with work colleagues
involvement in new projects	other_____

Are you the primary caregiver for:

child/children	parents	other family members
others_____		

Have you changed your participation in any of the following community activities since you became a student?

church
leadership roles
organizations
children's extracurricular activities
activities
volunteer service
community
neighborhood
other_____

Please circle:

Do you participate in campus activities outside of the classroom?
yes / no

Because we believe that adult experiences in higher education are affected by a person's overall life experiences, part of the interview will ask you to recall major life events and past experiences with other schools or colleges. If you have some time, it would help the interview process if you could give some thought to these events before you come. **THANK YOU!**

Appendix D

Interview Procedure and Protocol Topics

PROCEDURE AND TOPICS

I. INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

A. Meet participant at building entrance, and guide her to the interview room. Thank her for coming and for being willing to participate in the research. Introduce myself and express interest in her adult college student experience. Begin a conversation with the participant based on something she says about her own experience in responding to my comments.

B. Present informed consent and obtain participant's signature and sign myself. Emphasize the anonymity of responses and present demographic sheet for participant to complete. Answer participant questions about the demographic sheet and clarify as needed.

C. Ask if there are questions or a need for clarification about the research and respond. Place microphones for recording and ask for permission to begin audio-recording after explaining the reason for two tape recorders.

II. BODY OF THE INTERVIEW

A. No two interviews were conducted in the same sequence or order. The order was determined by the participant's comments. My conception of the interview was one of a conversation and my intent was to understand the participant's accounts. Consequently, I frequently made statements designed to verify meaning. If I felt a need to clarify something the participant said, I asked further questions. If the participant spontaneously discussed a topic covered in the interview probes, and I felt I understood her comments, the interview probe was omitted. The following topics were included:

B. Interview probe topics

1. The participant's past educational experience was assumed to play a significant role in her perceptions of her current experience. The metaphor of an educational journey was used to make the transition to a discussion of past experiences in higher education of any type. The point of departure was often high school graduation.

2. The participant's current educational experience was typically explored next as it seemed to flow logically in terms of the journey metaphor. Typical probes involved the circumstances that led to their current enrollment, the meaning a bachelor's degree held, and their experience of the first class in the first course and how their perceptions were altered by continued involvement.

3. The affective aspects of being an adult student were explored through probes that sought the positive features of collegiate involvement as well as the negative and through a probe about the enjoyment of studenthood/learning.

4. The social relationships which were important for the participants were sought through probes about family, friends, fellow learners and collegiate personnel.

5. The relationships the participant saw between school and work and family were sought with an emphasis on her perception of their mutual interaction.

6. The participant was then asked to describe in detail her involvement in the classroom in various courses. Probes sought to uncover her perceptions of professors, fellow students and self as well as behaviors and practices which she commonly enacted. Learning actions, academic structures such as the syllabus and the effects of evaluation practices were also the topics of selected probes if the participant did not naturally include these topics on her own initiative.

7. The last topic to be discussed was usually the participants' involvement in her own self-directed

learning projects not connected with her academic life and practices.

8. The participant was also asked for her perceptions of learner control in the classroom and within the context of her academic program.

III. CLOSURE

A. When I had some sense that the majority of the interview topics had been covered, I quickly reviewed the protocol sheets. If any topics had been missed, the appropriate probe was used. If participants had not discussed their current community involvement, they were also asked about this at this point.

B. The following questions illustrate those which typically served to bring the interview to a close.
   (1) If you could change your college/university what would you do to make it a better place for adult undergraduates?
   (2) Do you think you'll go on after this degree?
   (3) Is there anything else you want to say about the adult undergraduate experience?

C. The participant was thanked for her time and participation and escorted to the building exit. If any significant comments were made during the conversation that occurred during this time, notes were made on the demographic sheet.

Appendix E

Example of Data Reduction Procedure for Quotes

Data reduction included the creation of condensed participant quotes that contained the essential theme. The objective was to make the theme as plain as possible. In order to do this, nonessential words or words and phrases that were part of the participant's verbal style were deleted for some quotes. An example of a typical condensed quote is shown below:

ORIGINAL QUOTE WITH DELETED WORDS ITALICIZED:

> I tend to go to the library and see if there's like a workbook or some book that explains something in a different manner. I purchased outline guides *or steps to solve -- whatever*. I've done stuff like that or I have even asked the professor, *if I think I need to do that,* "Can you give me some additional work or refer me to a book or whatever?"

CONDENSED QUOTE

> I tend to go to the library and see if there's a workbook or some book that explains something in a different manner. I purchased outline guides. I've done stuff like that or I have even asked the professor, "Can you give me some additional work or refer me to a book or whatever?"

Appendix F

Complete Set of Participants' Goal/Purpose Quotations

Candace's Goals:
Life/Career Related
I just started looking ahead last year at the things I had to have [to graduate] and started planning when to take them. I want the degree.

> Running a lunch room is just like running a small business, so I feel like business management fits what I need.

[I'd like the master's degree, but it's] the time. I should have started this a few years ago. I'm fifty already -- maybe if I was thirty, or forty. If they change the [time frame] it's offered, [I might still consider it.]

Personality/Temperament Related
I just started picking up classes because I wanted to; I was just curious, curious and I enjoy going to school now.

> I don't know that I will use this degree for anything other than self-satisfaction.

I had an opportunity [between jobs] so I just rushed right over and enrolled for full time and took seventeen hours last spring.

> I guess I'm more competitive than I would have ever thought about years ago.

School/Class Related
I use all the resources I can. Where ever [library] I can get my information, that's where I go.

> Since I do work in food services, I thought I'd better throw one [nutrition course] in.

I am already working on my senior thesis. It's at least a two semester project. I said interim period in January is the best time, since I work for a school system and I'm out of school [then]. I can devote myself to the research. I want to start. So they agreed to let me do that.

> I have a tendency to pick the things I want to take, although I do take the required classes too.

In [the required financial management class] on the final night, the instructor [suggested using the company we had analyzed in his class] when [we did our] senior thesis. And I thought, "What can I do on that that would tie in with my senior thesis?

> I have my days set up. I found I don't want to go [to classes] back to back [evenings].

Sometimes I'm fully prepared and sometimes I'm not. I like to be prepared.

> I'm basically trying to learn three classes to get through this one.

I intend to enroll for Lotus this fall. If I had realized that I needed it as much, I would have taken it sooner.

> And I may check into [Fremont's evening school] because I had hoped to get several hours out of the way this summer.

Common's will let night students get into a day class, if there are openings available, [but] the cost at Common's is triple the cost at Bayville.

> I prefer to go one night, four hours, while I'm there and get it out of the way.

I plan my semester at the beginning.

> [Common's] comprehensive examinations are comprehensive. They really are. It's averaged in your GPA. [This pass/fail] class I'm going to take] is a class to get ready for comps. I won't have to worry about the type of grade; I just have to worry about learning the material.

I would do extra work even though my grade would already be okay; I would do it.

> I really wanted to take [four particular classes], but I may not be able to fit those in. I may go back and take them later just because I want to take them, but I've got these deadlines to meet now.

I really knew just as much about what I wanted [to take] as [the advisor's did]. I took and did my own advising.

> Sometimes the lady that's in charge of the [Common's CE] program get's a little set in her guidelines, but you can work around those things. [She] called me because you [will be over the allowed number of hours for summer] and it's not allowed. So, I called the department head, and said I have a problem here. I'm thinking he can go over her head and he comes up with a much better solution. I didn't break [the guidelines]; I just bent them a little.

Frances' Goals:

Life/Career Related

I'm going to try to get that degree.

> [I'm in school] knowing that I need the degree to advance career wise.

Money may have a little something to do with it 'cause I know you can make a lot of money in the field of engineering. A lot of people are trying to hire female engineers.

> If I'm going to get the degree, I want to be certified [state exam].

I think I want an MBA.

> I want to go into a certain field.

Personality/Temperament Related

I need something to enhance my life, to make it feel like I'm learning something new. I get bored very easily if I don't have something to challenge me.

I need to get out and meet people beside the people I work with.

School/Class Related

I only wanted to take one class to get into it.

If I can get my advisor to let me, I'm going to go ahead and get all the math out of the way while it's still fresh in my mind, then I can concentrate on the other stuff. I've got to talk to my advisor 'cause my advisor was saying I needed to take all my freshmen classes [first].

I would like to get more involved in activity that's going on outside of class.

I have to make at least a C to get reimbursed. Grades have always been important to me. I like making As. It's what I shoot for.

Angie's Goals:

Life/Career Related

So, for about the past three years, my goal has been a degree.

I sort of eased into [school] at the time when [my family] really didn't need me.

Going to college is always something I wanted to do. No one in my family really has graduated from college -- not that that's my main motivation or goal, but it will be something to be proud of.

After I finished my CPS, I was just taking things that I liked for self-improvement and classes that would really help me on the job.

Personality/Temperament Related

I do like to do real well and I find that I am competitive.

I really enjoy learning. That makes me feel good about myself. It's a lot of fun; it does something for me personally.

I'm learning things I didn't know. My [history] class helps me to understand what happened in the past, to understand the older Americans around and what they've gone through.

That's one thing that inspired me to take a lot of psychology classes, just to understand other people's behavior.

When I finish with this degree, I'd like to learn to play the piano.

I ventured into mini-term this past year and took History of World Religions for my own interest.

School/Class Related

The ideal schedule for me is to have a Monday, Wednesday, Friday class where I'm just away from the office for about fifty minutes and then to have an evening

school class. This semester, I'm going to class everyday. It's sort of difficult to be out of the office everyday. It cuts into my work schedule.

I'm working on a minor in psychology and maybe one in history.

I want to get an A in all my classes. I guess that's like some kind of a reward for me. I guess the A is the end result, but it's what goes on in between, the real learning that goes on is what I value.

I don't want to just learn and forget it, although I know you can't retain everything.

I have been known to take like a day of annual leave to stay home and study to be well prepared [for tests].

A math class is one of the liberal arts requirements, so in order to get a background, I had to go out to [a local high school] to understand algebra.

Olivia's Goals:

Life/Career Related

I've done theater since the second grade. I've been in plays all my life and I just... I love it. It's part of me. I won an `honorable mention' for best actress [in a nation-wide army post competition] and that made me feel like I really did have something, but I needed to learn my craft.

I want a career.

I'll have my degree and hopefully get to work locally [in theater]. I've got to be an actress. It's something that's got to be a part of my life.

I would love to go to graduate school.

Personality/Temperament Related

I want to go to school for me.

Don't get in a big rush here, just enjoy the experience.

I'm the kind of person -- I have to have security.

School/Class Related

I would like to have my degree before I'm fifty and that's just sort of a goal.

I have a lot of interests and I've got all these things I want to take, but I've got to get the ones I have to have first.

I've got at least fifteen years [and] I'm just going to get degrees.

I've got to pass math. I don't have to if I take the less degree, but I want the other degree. There's two degrees and I'm going for the bigger one.

I feel like I should do more and different -- a lot more, especially for this class.

With all my classes, if there is a problem and I can go to the instructor, I do. I want to correct it. I don't want to continue with it and keep doing poorly.

I've tried to get a study partner.

> I need that extra little break [as an evening school student], but I want the education.

[Instructors] know the subject and I don't, so I want them in charge.

Michelle's Goals:

Life/Career Related

I have a lot of time to make up. I want to participate

> I may be ninety, but I will get my degree. I may be the oldest forest ranger out there or something, but that's what I want.

A twenty-three year old's going to have fifty years to change jobs and to excel and prove themselves, but by the time I get my degree, I'll be forty years old. I'm only going to have twenty years to be able to do what someone else has done in fifty years.

> I'm trying to figure out a way to get [cooperative education programs] to work for me.

I've always had the desire to work in biology -- always, since I was a child and [my degree is the way to get into my field]. It's the only way I can do it.

Personality/Temperament Related

I try to be really thorough.

School/Class Related

I couldn't really go any further in my major classes until I got my math skills up to par.

> My grades are very important. If I don't make As, even if I make a B, I feel horrible. Grades, I think, are real important because you don't have as much time to prove [yourself]. If you have straight As, it shows that you are intelligent and that you can do the work.

I want to learn. We're not discussing what I've learned [in the past]. I'm in your class now.

> I am there because I want to be there and there is something I want to take out of that class.

Judith's Goals:

Life/Career Related

I don't have no objective as a job.

> I just go to enjoy it. It's something I really wanted to do. I'm at that stage in life [where] my children are grown and they're gone and I don't want to hang on to them. I want to let them go and best way I can let them go is to be involved myself.

I feel like I'm at a point in my life I can sort of dictate the terms. If I want to take two or three or four classes, I could, but I don't want to.

> All this learning's important to me because I came from a poor background.

Personality/Temperament Related

I've just got a real need for learning.

> Now it's my turn to do what I want to do until I'm too old to do it. I want to live until I die.

School/Class Related

I want to know what she's got on the test. It's a focus, but it's not the only focus. I don't want to go in there and just be overwhelmed. And you can circumvent that a little bit by studying and find out what that teacher wants.

Laurel's Goals:

Life/Career Related

I wasn't sure I could handle the course work and maintain my academic level that I wanted and also still be the same kind of mom and wife that I wanted to be and make the [30 mile] commute to get here.

> There was a time when I had a test and I had a sick child. Well, I couldn't say I'm sorry and I can't hold you and I can't give you the love and attention that you need because I have a test tomorrow. And I didn't do as well on that test, but she has to come first.

I taught pre-school and I've saved all my lesson plans. And I volunteered in a public school for the last seven years in classrooms, so I've learned a lot from that. And I read a lot on it -- child development books, any kind of education articles that would be in a magazine and I would make notes on it and I would think -- that's something good to remember because I knew one day I was going to be doing that [as a professional teacher].

> I found that I was more critical [of my professors]. I was looking at them as a teacher and evaluating it. I was there I think, sitting in on the class seeing how to be a good teacher. I was looking at it like that when I was younger and was in school because I knew that I wanted to be a teacher and the only way you can learn to be a good teacher is to watch others.

I want to get the bachelor's and then the master's immediately after it and then get a job.

> I don't have the freedom of saying I can come in [to school] and hour earlier and get this class since you [see that] you have room for me. I have to make plans

Personality/Temperament Related

You kind of have to play see-saw with it all. I just have to fit more into my time.

> I'm getting my master's too right after the bachelor's because it's just going to be too hard to try to work full-time and then go to school at night because it's very important to me to be there at the end of the day when they come home from school. There's time with my husband and that's the same.

[School's] for me. It's kind of selfish, but I don't feel guilty about that.

> I figure I still have a good twenty years that I can teach school and make a positive influence on somebody.

School/Class Related

And I couldn't figure out what I needed to do to make [my professor in one course] realize that I was very serious and that I wasn't some stupid person because I hadn't finished my college degree. And I worked my tail off to try to get an A in that class and the best I ever got from her was a B+. I went to see her after the first exam and she just kind of gave me the brush off. And I said I [needed] to know if I [was] doing the right thing in this class because I [wanted] to do well.

> The other history professor made the offer that if you were concerned before the first essay, she gave sample essay questions. So I took advantage of that and she handed them back and made notes as to what I needed to do. I really needed that [the] first semester 'cause it had been a long time since I'd answered and essay question and I needed to know what I needed to focus on.

The first exams were the hardest. [After taking them] I knew that I really could still function on a college level -- the brain cells had not died over those years.

> Everybody wanted out of the European History class with the younger professor. We just wanted to get a passing grade. [My] motivation changed from wanting to get an A to keeping a B.

I'm determined to graduate with honors because I know I can do it. It is very important to me to be on the Dean's list and to do things like that. It motivates me and my self esteem is hinged on this.

> I had studied for the second test and felt like I really knew the information and then I missed more than I thought I would, so I asked [the professor] could I please come a just look at the test to see why I missed what I did.

[I] come prepared to learn, even if it's a required course.

> I like to do the reading for the lecture ahead of the lecture and then I understand the lecture better and I also know what was more important to the professor about the chapter.

I mean, that's why I'm here -- just to be a leech basically and take all the information from the [professors].

Sarah's Goals:

Life/Career Related

I discovered that wasn't really so much that I wanted that degree for anything other than how I feel about me.

I don't want to stagnate and never learn anything else like [my mother]. I told [my daughter] recently, "I'm not quitting school to please you. You are going to have to live with this."

I have learned everything [home management and handwork] I could possibly get my hands on. I've just got to do it and I want to do it by myself.

Personality/Temperament Related

I've been doing this [school] now for ten years and I don't want anybody [such as a new boss] to try to stop my personal growth.

You have to prove to yourself that you can [do college work]. I didn't like to be singled out. I was just part of the crowd. I am very much an introvert. I was afraid I would have to go to college. The year I graduated [from high school] it was not really the thing to do. I kept myself out of college. [The professor in the first college course] was insensitive to the point that she said she admired me for coming back as an older student and I wanted to fall our of my desk on the floor. I was so embarrassed.

I have this inner thing of . . . I have to do the best I can do. I have to. [My father's comments] made a terrible impression. [Consequently] rather than fail at something, I wouldn't do it. I still don't like to, but I'm not going to let it stop me from trying.

I'll read anything that's "how to." [If] I see it may be something that will help me, I will read it. As long as it is for a purpose, I will read it.

School/Class Related

I can do whatever [professors] insist I do, but if they don't insist, than I am not going to go out and get it on my own because I'm so darn busy.

I got Cs and Bs [in my first college course] and to me a C and a B was the pits and to not be able to get an A drove me wild. I discovered that a lot of the words I thought I understood, I didn't and I catch myself going to the dictionary a lot now. I make sure I understand the words now because I've discovered it makes a big difference.

Unless I feel very strongly, I don't say anything at all, but if I feel strongly I'm going to contribute, that's it. I had to mae the A [when I was in a class taught by someone I worked with]. No, you can't give me an A. That feels very bad to me. And I would always look at it and think, you didn't earn that one [if I had let him do that].

You learn from [unconventional teachers] too partly because you are scared not to because it will embarrass you.

I need to sort of plan my life by what is on the syllabus.

As bad as I dislike tests, there is only one fear that drives me to really drill things in and that is the test.

If I have an interest, I will [go beyond what a class requires].

Winona's Goals:

Life/Career Related

Initially my goal was 1994, but I'm just playing it by ear. Right now my goal is to finish engineering.

I may take a few refresher courses until I can take my licensing exam and then if I have an interest in something, I may pick up a class.

You just try to strike a balance. And there's some things I refuse to give up. I've go all these things I want to do and they're all important.

Personality/Temperament Related

I'm not the type where I like to not finish something. If I have to take something over, I'll take it over. I'm not going to just quit because of that.

School/Class Related

Now sometimes I know from the start that it's going to be hard and I probably won't get an A but that's my first goal.

Grades are important to me. It's important to my employer. It should be important all the way around.

[Some professors] say they don't care to know you. The only way they may know you is if you've been to talk to them. So, that's one reason why I at least let them know who I am. [If] you're on the borderline, I want to think that he knows who I am. He can give me an upper grade.

VITA

Sally Slater Blowers was born on March 30, 1943 in Rochester, New York. After graduating from East High School in 1961, she attended Houghton College where she completed her pre-nursing studies. She completed the five-year nursing curriculum at Columbia University in New York City, earning her Bachelor of Science degree in 1966.

After working as a staff nurse in New York City and Rochester, she entered the master's degree program at the University of Rochester, selecting nursing education as her major concentration. In 1969 she completed the degree requirements in that program with a thesis titled "Response of the Aging Integument to Soap and Water Cleansing."

In 1969 she also married Malcolm Blowers who has been her loving partner for twenty-seven years. With her husband, she has had the joy and privilege of raising three sons, Mark, Todd, and Chad who have brightened her life, taught her much, and continue to be the source of considerable pride.

After teaching in baccalaureate nursing programs for fifteen years, she entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to pursue doctoral studies. Because of her work with adults and her interest in nurses' knowledge, she chose adult education as her area of concentration, expecting that her learning in this area would enhance her work as a nurse educator. During this period she taught part-time in the university's baccalaureate nursing program and in a health services management master's degree program, cared for an aged mother-in-law, dealt with a commuter marriage and the adolescence of her third son, and moved five times.

During graduate study, she also developed a love for research . She was involved with two significant research projects, one a state level educational evaluation project, and the other a federally supported qualitative research study where she served as a co-investigator with her major advisor. The latter research won two national awards, the National University Continuing Education Association Research Award and the prestigious Imogene Okes award from the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education. She also presented several papers at national research conferences. In August, 1995 she returned to the university classroom at East Tennessee State University in the College of Nursing. In April, 1996 she celebrated a special kind of independence by completing her dissertation.

Her desire for the future is that she might continue her involvement with adult learners. She also intends to pursue her research interests in the hope that she might contribute to the development and growth of the knowledge base for professional nursing through qualitative inquiry.