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PREDICTORS OF STRESS AND HELP SEEKING:
EXPLORING GROUP DIFFERENCES AMONG TRADITIONAL AND
NONTRADITIONAL FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY
STACEY PRIYA RAJ

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2008

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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ABSTRACT

Enrollment of nontraditional women in colleges continues to increase but despite their academic strengths, nontraditional students have higher attrition rates. Although psychological counseling may support the academic pursuits of nontraditional women, little is known about their attitudes toward help seeking. Recognizing the diversity among nontraditional female students, this study explores factors which predict stress and help seeking among 3 groups of female students: traditional age (24 and younger), nontraditional age (25 and older) non-parents, and nontraditional age parents. One hundred seventy-six female students between the ages of 18 and 57 completed measures of role responsibility and support, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989), the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988), a barriers to help seeking questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (Fischer & Turner, 1970), and a demographic questionnaire. Despite reporting greater role responsibility, nontraditional parents had higher levels of self esteem, lower levels of perceived stress, and more favorable attitudes toward help seeking than traditional women. Although traditional students perceived having more social and emotional support than women in both nontraditional groups, they had the highest levels of perceived stress and the least favorable attitudes toward help seeking. Higher self esteem and fewer barriers to help seeking were significant predictors of lower levels of stress and more favorable help seeking attitudes among student parents, and these predictors were more salient to student mothers than women in the other groups. Scores of nontraditional non-parents fell between the two other groups on most of the measures and possible reasons for this pattern are discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS.....	2
RETURNING WOMEN.....	4
ROLES.....	7
PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING.....	8
SOURCES OF SUPPORT.....	9
STUDENT PARENTS.....	10
HELP SEEKING.....	13
PRESENT STUDY.....	15
METHODS.....	18
PARTICIPANTS.....	18
MEASURES.....	21
PROCEDURE.....	25
RESULTS.....	26
DATA TRANSFORMATION.....	26
ROLE RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLE SUPPORT.....	26

SELF ESTEEM AND PERCEIVED STRESS.....	29
BARRIERS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD HELP SEEKING.....	30
PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED STRESS.....	33
PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD HELP SEEKING.....	35
DISCUSSION.....	36
ROLE RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLE SUPPORT.....	36
SELF ESTEEM AND PERCEIVED STRESS.....	37
BARRIERS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD HELP SEEKING.....	39
CLINICAL AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS.....	42
LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	44
CONCLUSION.....	46
REFERENCES.....	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Mean Scores on Responsibility Ratings as a Function of Participant Group	55
Table 2.	Mean Scores on Eight Sources of Support as a Function of Participant Group	56
Table 3.	Mean Scores on Four Barriers to Help Seeking as a Function of Participant Group	57
Table 4.	Mean Scores on the Four ATSPPHS Factors as a Function of Student Group	58
Table 5.	Intercorrelations for Perceived Stress, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Traditional Students	59
Table 6.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Stress Among Traditional Students	59
Table 7.	Intercorrelations for Perceived Stress, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking and Sources of Support for Nontraditional Students	60
Table 8.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Stress Among Nontraditional Students	60
Table 9.	Intercorrelations for ATSPPHS Score, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Traditional Students	61
Table 10.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Help Seeking Among Traditional Students	61
Table 11.	Intercorrelations for ATSPPHS score, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Nontraditional Students	62
Table 12.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Help Seeking Among Nontraditional Students	62

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Mean scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale for women in the traditional group ($n = 79$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 21$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 63$). 63
- Figure 2. Mean scores on the Perceived Stress Scale for women in the traditional group ($n = 84$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 26$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 66$). 64
- Figure 3. Mean scores on the ATSPPHS for women in the traditional group ($n = 84$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 26$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 66$). 65

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A.	Role Responsibility Measure	66
Appendix B.	Sources of Support Measure	67
Appendix C.	Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale	68
Appendix D.	Perceived Stress Scale	69
Appendix E.	Barriers to Help Seeking	70
Appendix F.	Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale	72
Appendix G.	Informed Consent for Traditional Students	74
Appendix H.	Informed Consent for Nontraditional Students	75
Appendix I.	Feedback Statement	76

Predictors of Stress and Help Seeking: Exploring Group Differences Among
Traditional and Nontraditional Female College Students

Enrollment in post secondary education has grown steadily over the last few decades. Colleges saw a 16% increase in student enrollment between 1985 and 1995, and a 23% increase between 1995 and 2005 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008). Coupled with this increase have been significant changes in student demographics (deBlois, 1993; Kasworm, 1990), with an increase in enrollment of nontraditional students (Kasworm, 1990; Kasworm, 2003; Leonard, 2002; Macari, Maples, & D'Andrea, 2006; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005). Much of the growth in enrollment has been due to increased numbers of women attending college. Enrollment of women increased by 27% between 1995 and 2005 while enrollment of males during the same time frame saw an increase of 18% (Snyder et al.). Between 2003 and 2004, women made up 57.6% of students enrolled in college (Snyder et al.) and their numbers are projected to increase (Nathanson, 2001). Besides shifts in gender demographics, changes in age have also been observed. Although enrollment of students aged 24 and younger increased at a more rapid pace between 1990 and 2005 than older students, the U.S. Department of Education expects this trend to change and predicts that for the 15 year period beginning 2005, the number of students aged 25 and older will increase by 21%, while the number of traditional age students is expected to increase by 15% (Snyder et al.).

Back in 1980, only 4 million college students were aged 25 years or older. In 2000, students in this age group increased to over of 6 million (Chao & Good, 2004) and in 2005, over 38% of students at degree-granting institutions were aged 25 and older (Snyder et al., 2008). Combining gender and age trends, it follows that colleges have seen

an increase in enrollment of older women. In fact, nontraditional-age females are the fastest growing group of students enrolling in college (Clayton & Smith, 1987), and this trend is expected to continue (Padula, 1994). In 1970, only 10% of students at institutions of higher education were women aged 25 and older, but by 1991, older women made up 26% of the total undergraduate student population (Choy & Premo, 1995).

Changes in student demographics make it essential for educators and administrators to develop a thorough understanding of nontraditional students, in particular older women. This study hopes to aid in the development of such an understanding. A good place to begin this endeavor would be to explore differences between nontraditional students and their traditional peers, who have been the focus of most research pertaining to college students (Kasworm, 1990). This will be followed by a summary of research pertaining to nontraditional students, and factors associated with strengths and challenges of nontraditional students will be introduced. An overview of research specifically related to nontraditional student parents will then be presented, followed by a discussion on help seeking. The review section concludes with a summary of research to date and an overview of hypotheses tested in this thesis.

Nontraditional Students

According to the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.), the term *nontraditional student* applies to any student who meets at least one of the following criteria: is enrolled part-time, has had a lapse of time before enrollment, has a full time job while enrolled, is financially independent, has a dependent who is not a spouse, is a single parent, or is a student who has not attained a high school diploma. Given this broad description, 75% of college students enrolled between 1999

and 2000 had one or more nontraditional attributes (Choy, 2002), and would thereby be considered nontraditional.

Despite the definition given by the Department of Education, the research definition of the term nontraditional student is varied, and this variation can lead to complications when discussing and comparing findings (Kasworm, 2003). Researchers have generally focused on one or two aspects of the nontraditional student and have frequently assigned nontraditional status to students on the basis of age or dependent status. For example, Dill and Henley (1998) characterized nontraditional students as those who managed multiple roles, and had a gap of at least one year between graduating from high school and attending college; Bauman, Wang, DeLeon, Kafentzis, Zavala-Lopez, and Lindsey (2004), assigned nontraditional status to students aged 25 and older; and Chartrand (1990), considered students who managed two or more significant life roles in addition to being a student at the start of an academic term as nontraditional.

Nontraditional students are different from their traditional peers in many respects and previous research has found differences in sources of motivation (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway, 2007; Landrum, McAdams, & Hood, 2000), levels of support received (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002), academic performance (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Spitzer, 2000), life roles (Chartrand, 1990; Dill & Henley, 1998; Medved & Heisler, 2002), and psychopathology (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Dill & Henley, 1998; Roehl & Okun, 1984). Recognizing the trend for increased enrollment of nontraditional female students, some researchers have focused their attention specifically on this group.

Returning Women

The terms *reentry* or *returning women* have been used to describe women who return to higher education after leaving school to assume vocational or family roles (Lewis, 1988). Female students over the age of 25 are often described as *reentry* or *adult students* (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006) and these women have likely accumulated various life roles during their time away from education. Their decision to return to education is often difficult as returning women may have to sacrifice things such as steady income and free time, and they face the challenge of integrating their responsibilities as a student to their existing roles. Recognizing these challenges, researchers have been interested in identifying factors which motivate women to make the oftentimes challenging decision to return to education.

Reentry women have reported a number of factors which influenced their decision to return including wanting better employment (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Bauman et al., 2004), wanting to improve themselves and their family (Bauman et al. 2004), and a desire for self-actualization (Clayton & Smith, 1987). Nontraditional students have reported a sense of hopefulness, reflected in positive perceptions of their ability to achieve goals, as a central factor to their decision to return to college (Chao & Good, 2004). Many students return with the aim of increasing their earning potential (Chao & Good, 2004), and families can often reap benefits from this financial gain (Scott & Booney, 1996).

Badenhoop and Johansen (1980) explored motives given by women who returned to college. In their study, undergraduate level women who were aged 28 and older, and those who had a gap of at least 5 years between graduating from high school and

enrollment in college were considered nontraditional. While more than half (63.8%) of traditional students reported wanting to please parents or a spouse as *at least somewhat important* in their decision to pursue a college education, 88.6% of nontraditional women rated this to be *not at all important*. Nontraditional women's decision to return was thus not an attempt to please others.

Researchers have identified strengths and challenges associated with nontraditional student status. Strengths include having higher grade point averages (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Spitzer, 2000), taking more pleasure out of college, and learning more than traditional-age students (Landrum et al., 2000). Nontraditional women have higher aspirations for school, in that more of them desire to further their education to the Master's and PhD level compared to traditional women (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980). Differing sources of motivation may help account for these strengths, as nontraditional students report higher levels of intrinsic motivation than traditional students (Landrum et al. 2000), and intrinsic motivation has been associated with positive affect (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another factor which may influence these strengths is nontraditional students' sense of hopefulness, which may provide them with psychological hardiness that helps them stay motivated and manage hurdles they encounter (Chao & Good, 2004).

Landrum et al. (2000) explored sources of motivation among college students by administering Rei's 1991 Motivation Outcomes Assessment Instrument (MOAI) and a demographic questionnaire to 327 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university. The researchers divided students into two groups based on age, and students 25 and older formed the nontraditional group. Older students rated items reflecting an

intrinsic source of motivation as significantly more important than did traditional students. For example, nontraditional students gave high importance ratings to trying “my best even if I don’t get the best grade” and wanting to “understand myself better” (p. 90). Conversely, traditional students rated items reflecting extrinsic motivation as more important such as, wanting to “impress my friends favorably with my performance” (Landrum et al., p. 90).

Bye, Pushkar, and Conway (2007) compared the relationship between sources of motivation, interest, and positive affect in 300 Canadian students. Similar to the findings of Landrum et al. (2000), nontraditional students reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation and student interest was found to be its best predictor. Intrinsic motivation was a predictor of positive affect, which was congruent with other studies, and this factor was second only to level of interest (Bye et al.).

In spite of these strengths, nontraditional students are less likely to complete their college degree than traditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Horn, 1996), and students who have a lapse of time before enrolling in college are more likely to drop out (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002). A number of factors have been implicated in nontraditional student attrition including having children, being a single parent, working full time while enrolled in college, and not being financially dependent on parents (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002). Other factors that can affect the academic pursuits of nontraditional women are stress, support, and role responsibility (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Research on these and other related factors are summarized below.

Roles

Reentry women have life experiences which are distinct from those of traditional students and many manage a myriad of roles, both in and away from the home. Examples include being a parent, spouse, caretaker, and wage earner. Nontraditional students report having more responsibility and tasks to perform in the home (Dill & Henley, 1998), and face challenges integrating their various responsibilities (Chartrand, 1990). Many nontraditional students balance a variety of roles and this can lead to difficulty within their personal and academic lives (Medved & Heisler, 2002). For example, nontraditional students who are parents have the added responsibility of managing child care (Choy, 2002) and coping with situations such as a sick child. These challenges often impact how nontraditional students manage their academic roles (Medved & Heisler, 2002).

For nontraditional female students in particular, starting college can be very stressful as they incorporate another role into their lives and must engage with traditional students whose life experiences differ from their own (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Many female students experience challenges due to multiple roles (Home, 1998), and unlike male students, women with partners are more likely to be expected to add the role of student without affecting their performance as a parent and spouse (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). In a survey conducted by Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992), female graduate students reported receiving less support from family and academic programs than their male peers. Additionally, married men in this study reported receiving more support from family than married female students. It is no surprise then that female students have reported that demands on their time and the requirements of various roles to be sources of strain (Kirk & Dorfman, 1983). Research on stress and psychological functioning of

nontraditional women have found some contradictory and counterintuitive findings which are outlined below.

Psychological Functioning

College students face many academic challenges, such as deadlines and tests, as well as life challenges such as relationship and financial difficulties. Although it would seem important to examine the impact of stress on psychological functioning, research in this area is scarce for nontraditional students, and previous research on stress and depression have found conflicting results (Dill & Henley, 1998). For example, Roehl and Okun (1984) found that nontraditional female students experienced depression scores which were double those found in a normative sample. In another study, female students aged 30 to 49 were less likely to show symptoms of depression or anxiety than their traditional counterparts aged 18 to 22 (Sands & Richardson, 1984). More recently, Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) compared psychological functioning of female students aged 18 to 22 to those aged 35 to 44, and no between group differences were found for levels of depression and anxiety.

A number of factors may have influenced contrasting findings found in the previous mentioned studies. Roehl and Okun (1984) only included women who were in their first semester of their first year at college, and it has been suggested (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002) that their elevated depression scores may have been due to the transition phase which these women were experiencing. It is also possible that experiences of older women in college 25 years ago were different from how they are now and Carney- Crompton and Tan's findings lend support to this notion.

With regard to stress, Dill and Henley (1998) compared perceived stress and stressors reported by students aged 23 and below to those aged 24 and older, and found that older students reported less stress related to academic matters. The authors hypothesized that the confidence nontraditional students have in their other roles may serve as a buffer against academic work related stress. Although nontraditional students viewed homework as more desirable and reported taking pleasure from attending classes, their attendance was poorer than traditional students, likely due to the demands of their other roles (e.g., needing to care for a sick child and unavailability of a babysitter). In addition to these factors, psychological health of nontraditional women may be influenced by the amount and quality of support they receive.

Sources of Support

Social support has been found to be important in the functioning of students and Chartrand (1992) found that increases in social support was related to absence of psychological distress among nontraditional students. In another study, Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) found no significant differences between psychological health of traditional and nontraditional students. Although nontraditional students reported fewer people providing them with support, they were just as satisfied with the support they received as traditional students who had more people available for both instrumental and emotional support (Carney-Crompton & Tan). This finding suggests that quality of social support may be more important than quantity, and having more sources of support does not necessarily increase satisfaction.

Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) found that amongst female students, stress, anxiety, and depression were related to increased student roles, demands placed on them,

and role strain. Social and instrumental support may mediate the relationship between negative psychological functioning and role demands (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002), and psychological functioning of students who expressed more satisfaction with their social and instrumental support was superior to those who were less satisfied (Mallinckrodt & Leong). Caution needs to be taken when generalizing these gender differences as students of all ages were included in the study, including those with and without children.

Student Parents

Student parents are one subgroup of nontraditional students who may face unique challenges which require research attention. While once an anomaly rather than the norm, enrollment of student parents has been increasing and data gathered by the United States Department of Education show that student parents made up 27% of total undergraduate enrollment between 1999 and 2000 (Horn, Peter, Rooney, & Malizio, 2002). Nevertheless, few studies have explored the needs of this particular subset of nontraditional students (Medved & Heisler, 2002).

A qualitative study conducted on female student parents in Australia found possible benefits and strengths of student parenting. Kelly (1982) interviewed 40 undergraduate female student parents between the ages of 29 and 41 who were involved in committed relationships; their partners were also interviewed. All but one of the women in this study had at least one child living in the home when the study was conducted. Even though the women and their partners agreed that the mother's were spending less time with their children after returning to school, more than half the

mothers (52%) believed that their relationships with their children had improved and 35% of the mothers believed that they portrayed a good education role model to their children.

The finding that the relationship between mother and child can improve once a mother returns to college (Kelly, 1982) was encouraging; however, the author identified factors which affect the generalizability of the study. These factors include the fact that all the couples interviewed were volunteers and may thus be happier families, and that the families were from a middle class background. Therefore, the findings may not apply to families from lower income, single parent households, or affluent homes. Additionally, the study was conducted in the early 1980s in Australia and may not apply to families living in the U.S. 25 years later.

Although there are possible benefits of returning to school, many female student parents face great challenges raising children while attending school, and nontraditional students cited the time required to raise children as being a major hurdle in completing their education (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980). Mothers of young children expressed the most difficulty in managing their role as student along with their parental responsibility (Kirk & Dorfman, 1983). Scott, Burns, and Booney (1996) found that the biggest difficulty faced by student mothers was accommodating the role of student to their already full lives. To add to this challenge, there are expectations for female student parents to fulfill their domestic and parenting roles first, and have their academic responsibilities come second (Scott, Burns, & Booney).

Student parents must manage parenting issues such as child care cancellation or a sick child in addition to their own work responsibilities, and these factors can affect their performance at college (Medved & Heisler, 2002). Scott, Burns, and Booney (1996)

surveyed student mothers in Australia who dropped out of college before completing their education and found that 73% of the women surveyed cited the burden of family responsibilities as their reason for dropping out.

The multiple roles managed by student parents can contribute to elevated levels of stress. Quimby & O'Brien (2006) explored how psychological well being of student parents was affected by internal and external influences. This was the first study to examine these factors amongst nontraditional age (over 25 years old) student mothers. The authors' sample consisted of 209 undergraduate female students who were primary caregivers of at least one child. Participants completed a survey which included measures of attachment, social support, self esteem, psychological symptoms, and life satisfaction. In their sample, 70% of the students were either married or involved in a relationship, 28% were single, divorced, separated, or widowed, and the remaining 2% did not report their relationship status. Student mothers reported good levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction, and did not manifest many symptoms of psychological distress. These findings paint a favorable picture of the nontraditional age student mother; however, the researchers did not compare the scores of their sample to those of traditional age students or of nontraditional age non-student parents. Without this comparison, it is not possible to determine the functioning of these students in comparison to their academic peers.

Home (1998) explored factors which predicted role conflict, role overload, and role contagion among female students who managed at least three major roles in their lives. Participants in this study were final year undergraduates and graduate students who balanced family, employment, and education. The researcher found that single mothers and mothers whose youngest child had yet to reach adolescence were more likely to

report not having enough time to meet the demands of each of the roles they managed. Mothers with younger children reported experiencing more challenges managing the concurrent and conflicting demands of their different roles. Apart from child care demands, income level was determined to be the strongest predictor of role conflict, with poorer students experiencing more role conflict than their more financially able counterparts. With regard to stress, Home found that participants with at least three children reported lower levels of stress than mothers of fewer children and recommended this as an area for further study. One possible reason for this counterintuitive finding is that older children may assist with caring for their younger siblings. In this study, students who reported more support from family and friends also had lower levels of stress.

Help Seeking Behavior

Clearly nontraditional students, student mothers in particular, face various challenges and stressors in their lives. Although managing multiple roles may lead to emotional strain which could be eased through counseling (Padula, 1994), there is limited research addressing help seeking among nontraditional students. Research on help seeking has generally examined the attitudes of racial and ethnic minority groups as well as international students, and has not looked at the differences in attitudes between other subsets of college students. Chao and Good (2004) reported that few studies have investigated the nontraditional student's counseling requirements and suggested a need to identify the differences between traditional and nontraditional students, to ensure that nontraditional students are offered services appropriate to their needs.

Vogel, Wester, and Larson (2007) conducted a literature review on psychological factors which hinder help seeking from mental health professionals. Among the hindrance factors identified by Vogel et al. were “social stigma” (the apprehension an individual feels that others would perceive them negatively if they sought help), “treatment fears” (for example, the fear an individual may have about how they will be treated or how they will be perceived by the mental health professional), and expectations of the benefits and risks of therapy (p. 410). Few studies have looked at the role of self esteem on help seeking, and further research in this area was suggested (Vogel et al., 2007).

In a literature review pertaining to reentry women’s satisfaction with their student role, Padula (1994) reported that reentry women appeared to be less satisfied with counseling services at college and hypothesized that this could be due to the perception that these services were targeted toward traditional age students. Padula identified areas for further study and Bauman et al. (2004) followed suggestions offered, and conducted an exploratory study looking at the counseling requirements of nontraditional undergraduate students (students aged 25 and older). Their sample included 53 students, 87% of whom were female, 61% were married, and 74% were parents. Both part-time and full-time students were included. More nontraditional students surveyed (76%) reported that they would likely seek career counseling services and only 42% reported they would likely seek personal counseling. The researchers did not explore factors which would promote or hinder nontraditional students from seeking psychological help which would be useful.

Present Study

Nontraditional student is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of students including older students, those with multiple life roles, parents, as well as part time students (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Research on nontraditional students has generally focused on one or two aspects of nontraditional status, and age has frequently been used to compare traditional and nontraditional students, thereby not delineating between the different subsets of nontraditional students. It is possible and highly likely that the various subsets of nontraditional students such as single female parents, single male parents, and married students face different challenges and have unique experiences. The diversity amongst students labeled as nontraditional affects the ability to generalize findings of the reviewed studies.

Recognizing the trend toward increased enrollment of nontraditional female students in colleges across the country (Snyder et al., 2008), it is essential for us to gain a thorough understanding of these students in order to support their well being and academic pursuits. I hope to expand our knowledge of different subsets of nontraditional female students by comparing two different groups of female students commonly considered nontraditional (i.e., nontraditional age non-parents and nontraditional age parents), and a group of traditional age female students.

Although researchers have identified strengths and challenges associated with nontraditional status, no study to date has compared help seeking attitudes among different subsets of nontraditional students. I hope to fill this gap, and also explore the receptiveness of different student groups to seeking psychological help at a university or non-university counseling center if they were to develop a personal, emotional, or

psychological problem. This information would be useful to college administrators and counselors hoping to reach out to different student groups.

Student parents face unique challenges due to the roles they play, yet research has not compared psychological functioning and help seeking attitudes of student parents and non-parents. In addition to evaluating attitudes towards psychological help seeking, the relationship between self-esteem and levels of perceived stress will be explored. Factors which hinder help seeking will be identified in order to help mental health professionals more effectively reach out to nontraditional students.

Based on the research detailed in the preceding literature review, the primary research questions and associated hypotheses are as follows:

1. *With respect to roles, do nontraditional students differ from traditional students in perceived:*

a. Role responsibility. By very definition, nontraditional students can be described as those with multiple roles (Dill & Henley, 1998) and nontraditional students in this study are expected to report higher levels of role responsibility than traditional students.

b. Role support. Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) found that although nontraditional age students reported fewer people providing them with social support than traditional students, they were just as satisfied with the support they received as traditional students. Increases in social support amongst nontraditional students has been associated with an absence of psychological distress (Chartrand, 1992), and is therefore an important factor to consider when examining stress and help seeking among nontraditional students. Considering the paucity of research addressing role/ social support amongst nontraditional students, no hypothesis on this research question is

presented. However, consistent with Carney-Crompton & Tan, it is hypothesized that nontraditional students will report different sources of support from traditional students.

2. *Do nontraditional students differ from traditional students with respect to:*

a. *Self esteem.* Quimby and O'Brien (2006) found nontraditional age female student parents to report good levels of self esteem, and self esteem has generally been shown to increase with age. It is therefore hypothesized that nontraditional students will report higher levels of self esteem than traditional students.

b. *Perceived stress.* Nontraditional students have been found to perceive stressful situations differently from traditional students and to report less academic related stress (Dill & Henley, 1998). However, global perceived stress taps into other areas of a student's life and although Dill and Henley found nontraditional students to express less academic related stress, it is hypothesized that nontraditional students in this study will report higher levels of global perceived stress due to the multiple roles they manage.

3. *Do nontraditional students differ from traditional students with respect to:*

a. *Perceived barriers to help seeking.* The paucity of research on barriers to help seeking amongst nontraditional students makes it difficult to speculate differences between nontraditional and traditional students in this area. However, as nontraditional students are expected to have greater role responsibility and it is hypothesized that they will report greater barriers to help seeking (e.g., lack of time). Furthermore, it is expected that they will report different barriers from traditional students.

b. *Attitudes toward help seeking.* Researchers have yet to compare attitudes toward seeking psychological help between traditional and nontraditional students and it can therefore only be speculated that due to increased demands of their time (due to

managing multiple roles), nontraditional students will report less favorable help seeking attitudes than traditional students.

4. *For nontraditional students, which study variable or combination of variables best predicts perceived stress?*

It is hypothesized that barriers to help seeking, self esteem, and role support will predict level of perceived stress. In addition, higher levels of role support and self esteem are expected to be negatively correlated with perceived stress.

5. *For nontraditional students, which variable or combination of variables best predicts help seeking attitudes?*

It is hypothesized that higher levels of self esteem and role support will predict more favorable attitudes towards help seeking while higher levels of role responsibility and greater barriers to help seeking will be negatively correlated with attitudes towards help seeking.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were 176 female students enrolled at a midsize rural Midwestern university. All participants were between 18 and 57 years of age ($M = 29.11$, $SD = 11.59$), and they were divided into three groups based on age and parent status. The *traditional group* was made up of 84 students aged 18 to 24 who had no children, the *nontraditional non-parent group* consisted of 26 students aged 25 and older who did not have children, and the remaining 66 women were mothers aged 25 and older who formed the *nontraditional parent group*.

Women in the traditional group ($n = 84$) were between 18 and 24 years of age ($M = 19.12$, $SD = 1.20$) and had no children or stepchildren. The majority of students in this group were freshmen ($n = 56$, 66.7%), followed by sophomores ($n = 18$, 21.4%), juniors ($n = 7$, 8.3%), and seniors ($n = 3$, 3.6%). Almost all the students were enrolled full-time ($n = 79$, 94.0%). Most of the women ($n = 78$, 92.9%) attended all their classes on campus, and the remaining 7.1% ($n = 6$) attended classes on campus and online. Eighty one students (96.4%) were single, two (2.4%) were cohabiting, and one (1.2%) listed her status as other. With regard to race and ethnicity, 68 (81.0%) of the women were Caucasian, 9 (10.7%) were African American, 3 (3.6%) were Latino/ Hispanic, 2 (2.4%) were Asian, and 2 (2.4%) considered themselves as other. Three traditional women (3.6%) were international students. Most of the traditional women were unemployed ($n = 52$, 61.9%), 29 (34.5%) worked between 1 to 34 hours each week ($M = 13.28$, $SD = 6.48$), and the remaining 3 (3.6%) worked over 35 hours each week ($M = 36.17$, $SD = 1.26$). The majority of traditional students ($n = 61$, 72.6%) lived with a friend or roommate, 12 (14.3%) lived alone, and the others lived with family members and friends.

The nontraditional non-parent group consisted of 26 students between 25 and 49 years of age ($M = 33.38$, $SD = 8.09$). Most of the women were seniors ($n = 12$, 46.2%), two (7.7%) were juniors, one (3.8%) was a sophomore, and two (7.7%) listed their status as other. Nine (34.6%) of the women were graduate students enrolled in Master's programs. *T*-tests revealed no differences between graduate and undergraduate students on the variables studied (i.e., ATSPPHS score, self esteem, barriers to help seeking, perceived stress, and support received), and on demographic variables. For this reason, graduate women were included in all analyses. Half of nontraditional non-parents were

full-time students ($n = 13$, 50%), and the other half were enrolled part-time. Most took classes on campus ($n = 14$, 53.8%), six (23.1%) were enrolled in off campus or online courses, and the remaining six (23.1%) took classes on and off campus. Sixteen students (61.5%) were single, nine (34.6%) were married, and one (3.8%) was cohabiting. Caucasian women made up 84.6% ($n = 22$) of the group, one student (3.8%) was African American, one (3.8%) was Asian, one (3.8%) was Native American, and the remaining student (3.8%) considered herself as other. Of the 24 women, one (3.8%) was an international student. Five nontraditional non-parent students (19.2%) were unemployed, eight (30.8%) worked part-time ($M = 16.31$ hours, $SD = 8.84$), and 13 (50%) worked over 35 hours each week ($M = 41.27$, $SD = 3.61$). Twelve women (46.2%) lived alone, 11 (42.0%) lived with their spouse or partner, and 3 (11.5%) lived with a friend or roommate.

The nontraditional parent group consisted of 66 student mothers between 25 and 57 years of age ($M = 40.15$, $SD = 8.63$). The mean number of children was 2.29 ($SD = 1.15$) with a range from 1 to 6. Most of the student mothers were in their senior year of college ($n = 38$, 57.6%), 12 (18.2%) were juniors, 1 (1.5%) was a sophomore, and 3 (4.5%) considered their class standing as other. Twelve (18.2%) of the women were graduate students pursuing Master's degrees. These women were included in all analyses after t tests found no significant differences between them and undergraduate student mothers on all the study variables (i.e., ATSPPHS score, self esteem, barriers to help seeking, perceived stress, and support received) and demographic variables. Just over half the student parents ($n = 37$, 56.1%) were enrolled part-time and the remaining 29 (43.9%) were full-time students. Most were taking classes on campus ($n = 27$, 40.9%), some ($n =$

21, 31.8%) were only taking classes off campus or online, and the remaining 17 (25.8%) were enrolled in classes on and off campus. Most of the student parents were married ($n = 43$, 65.2%), 14 (21.2%) were divorced, 1 (1.5%) was cohabiting, and 8 (12.1%) were single. Similar to the other groups, most student mothers were Caucasian ($n = 57$, 86.4%), six (9.1%) were African American, two (3.0%) were Hispanic/ Latino, and one (1.5%) was biracial. The majority of the women had full time jobs ($n = 43$, 65.2%) and worked an average of 41.62 hours a week ($SD = 6.12$). Fifteen women (22.7%) worked part time ($M = 18.97$ hours, $SD = 8.68$), and the remaining eight women (12.1%) were unemployed. Most of the women lived with their children ($n = 54$, 81.8%), and their spouses or partners ($n = 45$, 68.2%). Some women lived with their parents ($n = 4$, 6.1%), and five women lived alone (7.6%).

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic survey which included questions on age, ethnicity, year in school, academic status (i.e., full-time student or part-time student), academic major/ program of study, employment status (i.e., full-time, part-time, or unemployed), marital status, number and age of children, and makeup of household (e.g., living with parent, spouse, children, grandparent, etc.).

Role responsibility. To measure role responsibility, participants rated how much responsibility they held for eight roles commonly cited in literature pertaining to nontraditional and traditional students. These included, for example, the role of student, mother, employee, and spouse/ partner. Participants rated their level of responsibility for each role using a 6 point ordered response scale ranging from 0 (*no responsibility/ not applicable*) to 5 (*significant responsibility*). In addition to the eight specified roles,

participants could record and rate one other role they were responsible for. Two separate scores were computed for this measure, and they were a total role responsibility score and a common role responsibility score. The total role responsibility score was calculated by summing ratings for all items (including the additional role), which yielded a total role responsibility score of between 0 and 45. The common role responsibility score was computed by summing scores for three roles commonly held by women in all 3 groups, which were the role of daughter, friend, and student. The common role responsibility score ranged from 0 to 15. Higher scores on this measure indicated higher levels of responsibility.

Role support. To measure sources and quality of support, participants rated the amount of personal and emotional support they received from other individuals and institutions. A total of 10 potential sources of support were listed: children (item 1), spouse/ partner (item 2), mother (item 3), father (item 4), other family member (item 5), friends (item 6), classmates (item 7), an organization on campus (item 8), an organization off campus (item 9), and an employer (item 10). Participants could record and rate support they received from one additional unlisted source. Each item was rated using a 6 point ordered response scale ranging from 0 (*no support/ not applicable*) to 5 (*significant amount of support*). A total score on this measure was computed by summing ratings for items 3 through 9, which yielded a sum score of between 0 and 45. These 7 items were selected as they were sources of support relevant to most traditional and nontraditional women. Higher scores on this measure indicated greater levels of personal and emotional support received.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE). The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989) was used to measure global self esteem. The RSE contains 10 statements, and participants rated their level of agreement to each statement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Examples of statements on this measure are, “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” (item 2) and, “I take a positive attitude towards myself” (item 6). Level of self esteem was measured by first reverse scoring items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10, then summing scores on all 10 items. Total scores range from 10 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher levels of self esteem. The RSE is among the most frequently used measures of self-esteem (Vispoel, Boo, & Bleiler, 2001) and has a Cronbach’s alpha value of .78. The computerized version of the RSE has very minimal effect on the psychometric properties of the measure, and scores obtained are comparable to those on the paper and pencil version (Vispoel et al.).

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Levels of perceived stress were measured using The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). The PSS measures global perception of stress during the preceding one month and consists of 10 self report items/statements. Examples of these statements are, “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed” (item 3) and, “In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling so high that you could not overcome them” (item 10). For each item, participants indicated whether they *never* (0 points), *almost never* (1 point), *sometimes* (2 points), *fairly often* (3 points), or *very often* (4 points) experienced the feeling listed. Some items are reverse coded, and a total score was calculated by first reverse scoring items 4, 5, 7, and 8, then summing scores for all items. Total scores on the measure range from 0 to 40, with higher scores being indicative of greater levels of

perceived stress. The PSS is widely used for research purposes, and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .89 when tested with a college student sample (Roberti, Harrington, & Storch, 2006).

Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS).

Fischer & Turner's (1970) Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale was used to measure help seeking. The measure consists of 29 self report items which are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items on the ATSPPHS are, "I would want to get mental health attention if I was worried or upset for a long period of time" (item 18) and, "At some future time I might want to have psychological counseling" (item 25). The 29 items form 4 factors that are, factor 1: awareness of need for professional psychological help, factor 2: tolerance of stigma associated with psychological difficulties, factor 3: level of openness with others, and, factor 4: assurance in the ability of mental health professionals. Fischer and Turner (1970) advise the use of factor scores in conjunction whole scale score, as the factor scores are less stable than the sum score. The whole scale internal consistency is estimated at $\alpha = .83$, with internal consistency of subscale factors ranging from $\alpha = .62$ to $\alpha = .74$ (Fischer & Turner). Total scores on the ATSPPHS range from 0 to 87, and are obtained by reverse scoring relevant items, then summing scores across the measure. Higher scores suggest more positive attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. In order to make the measure more applicable to the sample being studied, researchers (e.g., Good & Wood, 1995) have replaced the term *psychiatrist* used on the measure with *counselor* or *psychologist*, and in this study, *psychiatrist* was replaced with, *mental health professional* (i.e. *psychologist, counselor,*

psychiatrist). The ATSPPHS has been widely used by researchers to assess psychological help seeking attitudes.

Barriers toward help seeking. Vogel et al. (2007) explored research on barriers to help seeking and identified 5 major barriers (i.e., “social stigma,” “treatment fears,” “fear of emotion,” “anticipated utility and risks,” and “self disclosure,” p. 410). To explore barriers to help seeking, 10 statements reflecting the barriers identified by Vogel et al. were created, along with 2 items related specifically to university counseling centers. Examples of items on this measure are: “I am worried of what my friends would think if they knew I was seeing a mental health professional” (item 6) and, “I am afraid my confidentiality would be violated” (item 10). Participants rated how likely each barrier would prevent them from seeking the help of a mental health professional if they encountered a personal, emotional, or mental health problem. Each item was rated using an ordered response scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). A total barrier score was computed by summing scores on 8 of the 10 items (2 items were omitted from the sum score due to overlap between them and other items on the scale and items on the ATSPPHS). Total barrier scores ranged from 8 to 40 with higher scores indicating greater barriers to seeking psychological help. In addition to the 10 general barrier items and the 2 university counseling center barriers, participants also rated how likely they would be to seek help from a university, and non-university counseling center if they were to develop a personal, emotional, or mental health problem.

Procedure

Students enrolled in introductory psychology classes at Eastern Illinois University were invited to complete an online survey, and received research credit for participating.

Other students at the university were recruited through an email invite sent by the School of Continuing Education to all enrolled students aged 25 and older. Students recruited through email were eligible to enter a drawing to win one of three bookstore gift certificates valued at \$15 each.

All participants completed an identical online survey which took an estimated 30 minutes to complete. The survey which was hosted on the university's web server was accessible from all internet providers and could be reached 24 hours each day during the data collection period. Participants provided consent by clicking an icon on the informed consent page and the survey could only be accessed once consent was gained.

Results

Data Transformation

Relevant items on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989), and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988) were recoded and a total score was computed for each measure. Items on Fischer & Turner's (1970), Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale were also recoded as required, then the total score and four factor scores were computed.

Role Responsibility and Role Support

The first set of analyses examined differences in role responsibility and role support between women in the three groups.

Role responsibility. A one-way ANOVA was conducted using the three student groups (i.e., traditional age, nontraditional age parents, and nontraditional age non-parents) as the IV and the total role responsibility score as the DV. The analysis of variance revealed significant between group differences on total role responsibility

ratings, $F(2, 169) = 19.89, p < .001$. Tukey post hoc comparisons showed that student mothers had significantly more role responsibility ($M = 29.84, SD = 5.65$) than non-parents ($M = 22.81, SD = 5.98$), $p < .001$; and traditional students ($M = 24.52, SD = 6.00$), $p < .001$. No significant differences were observed between traditional students and nontraditional non-parents.

Recognizing that student parents would probably have higher levels of responsibility as they were the only group having parental responsibility, and were more likely to have the role of spouse or partner, a one way ANOVA was also conducted with the DV being sum score for common role responsibility. These roles were: being a daughter (item 3), being a friend (item 4), and being a student (item 5). Results of the analysis of variance revealed that there were significant between group differences for common role responsibility ratings, $F(2, 172) = 14.10, p < .001$. Tukey post hoc tests using an alpha level of .05, showed that traditional students reported significantly higher levels of responsibility for the three roles ($M = 13.57, SD = 1.62$) than nontraditional non-parents ($M = 12.15, SD = 2.41$), $p = .005$; and student mothers ($M = 11.91, SD = 2.24$), $p < .001$. Scores of parents and nontraditional non-parents were not significantly different.

A multivariate analysis of variance was then conducted to examine between group differences in responsibility ratings for six roles which women in all groups rated (i.e., being a daughter, friend, student, employee, volunteer, and caring for a family member other than a child). The Wilks' lambda multivariate test for overall differences was significant, $F(12, 322) = 5.57, p < .001$. Tests of between subjects effects show that there were significant differences in responsibility ratings given by the different groups for the following roles: being a daughter, $F(2, 171) = 12.11, p < .001$; friend, $F(2, 171) = 16.19,$

$p < .001$; employee, $F(2, 171) = 6.81, p < .005$; volunteer, $F(2, 171) = 4.54, p < .05$; and caring for a family member other than a child, $F(2, 171) = 5.61, p < .005$. Post hoc Tukey tests using an alpha level of .05 showed that traditional women reported greater levels of responsibility for most of the roles and these results are summarized in Table 1.

Role support. A one-way ANOVA was carried out with the DV being sum score for support items 3 through 9 (items 1: your children and 2: your spouse/ partner were excluded as they did not apply to women in all the groups), and the IV being the three student groups. The analysis of variance found significant differences in role support ratings across the three groups, $F(2, 158) = 29.65, p < .001$. Post hoc Tukey tests using an alpha level of .05 found that traditional students reported receiving significantly higher levels of personal and emotional support ($M = 21.79, SD = 5.64$) than nontraditional non-parents ($M = 15.76, SD = 5.74$), $p < .001$; and student parents ($M = 14.42, SD = 6.10$), $p < .001$. Support received by women in the two nontraditional student groups were not significantly different.

A multivariate analysis of variance was then conducted to explore differences in sources of support reported by women in the three groups (with the exception of support received from children which was excluded from this analysis). The Wilks' lambda multivariate test for overall differences was significant, $F(18, 296) = 7.40, p < .001$. Tests of between subjects effects show that there were significant differences in ratings given by the different groups for amount of support received from a spouse/ partner, $F(2, 156) = 21.19, p < .001$; mother $F(2, 156) = 15.72, p < .001$; father, $F(2, 156) = 26.73, p < .001$; other family member/s, $F(2, 156) = 6.71, p < .005$; friends, $F(2, 156) = 22.02, p < .001$; an organization on campus, $F(2, 156) = 10.24, p < .001$; and an employer, $F(2, 156) =$

5.52, $p < .01$. Results of post hoc Tukey tests show that traditional women reported receiving higher levels of support from most of the sources listed. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Role responsibility and role support for student mothers. Separate analyses were conducted on student mothers to examine parental responsibility, and to compare responsibility rating for being wife/ partner and support received from a partner/ spouse. The vast majority ($n = 55$, 83.3%) of mothers gave their role of parent the highest responsibility rating, a 5 ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.78$), and 43 women (66.2%) gave the same rating to their responsibility for being wife/ partner ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.94$). A paired samples t -test was conducted on student mothers responsibility rating for being a wife/ partner (role responsibility item 1) and level of support received from their spouse/ partner (role support item 1). Results of the t test showed that student mothers gave significantly higher responsibility ratings for being a wife/ partner ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.94$) than ratings for amount of support received from their spouse/ partner ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 2.08$), $t(63) = 2.66$, $p = .01$.

Self Esteem and Perceived Stress.

The second set of analyses examined differences in self esteem and perceived stress between women in the three groups.

Self esteem. A one way ANOVA was conducted with total self esteem scores obtained on the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale serving as the DV and the three groups being the IV. This analysis of variance found significant differences in levels of self esteem between the groups, $F(2, 173) = 3.65$, $p < .05$. Post hoc Tukey tests showed that student parents had significantly higher self esteem ($M = 33.94$, $SD = 5.53$) than

traditional students ($M = 31.79$, $SD = 4.28$), $p < .05$. Scores of women in the nontraditional non-parent group ($M = 32.00$, $SD = 5.80$) fell between the two other groups and were not significantly different from either (see Figure 1).

Perceived stress. To explore group differences in levels of perceived stress, a one way ANOVA was conducted with sum scores obtained on the Perceived Stress Scale as the DV and the three student group as the IV. The analysis of variance found significant differences in perceived stress scores between the groups, $F(2, 173) = 7.09$, $p = .001$. Post hoc Tukey tests using an alpha level of .05 revealed that traditional students ($M = 19.88$, $SD = 6.47$) had significantly higher levels of perceived stress than student parents ($M = 16.06$, $SD = 6.62$), $p = .001$. Perceived stress scores of nontraditional non-parents ($M = 16.73$, $SD = 5.79$) fell between the other groups and were not significantly different from either (see Figure 2).

Barriers and Attitudes Toward Help Seeking

The third set of analyses examined differences in attitudes and barriers to help seeking between the three student groups. Mean ratings given by the groups on likelihood of seeking help at a university and a non-university counseling center were also compared.

Barriers to help seeking. A one way ANOVA was conducted with the DV being the sum score of rating on eight barrier items and the IV being student groups. The analysis of variance found significant between group differences on barrier ratings, $F(2, 160) = 3.89$, $p < .05$. Post hoc Tukey tests using an alpha level of .05 found that traditional students reported significantly higher levels of help seeking barriers ($M = 20.04$, $SD = 6.54$), than nontraditional non-parents ($M = 16.33$, $SD = 3.81$), $p < .05$.

Barrier ratings given by student parents ($M = 17.95$, $SD = 6.25$) were not significantly different from either of the other groups.

A multivariate analysis of variance was then conducted to explore group differences on responses to each of the eight individual items which formed the barriers sum score. The Wilks' lambda multivariate test for overall differences between the 3 groups was significant, $F(16, 306) = 2.35$, $p < .005$. Tests of between subjects effects found significant differences in ratings given by the different groups for item 1 (I do not think it would help), $F(2, 160) = 3.51$, $p < .05$; item 6 (I am worried of what my friends would think if they knew I was seeing a mental health professional), $F(2, 160) = 3.71$, $p < .05$; item 8 (I am concerned about what a mental health professional would think of me), $F(2, 160) = 6.26$, $p < .005$; and item 9 (I feel uncomfortable sharing my problems, thoughts, and feelings with others), $F(2, 160) = 3.99$, $p < .05$. In general, post hoc Tukey tests showed that traditional women were more concerned about each barrier than nontraditional women. These results are summarized in Table 3.

To explore group differences for specific barriers to help seeking at a university counseling center, two separate one way ANOVAs were carried out with the IV being student groups and the DV being rating for: student belief that professionals at a university counseling center are not be able to help someone like themselves (item 1), and student belief that mental health professionals at a university counseling center are not trained to counsel individuals with their personal life experiences (item 2). Results of the two separate analyses of variance revealed no significant group differences on barrier ratings for item 1, $F(2, 164) = 1.50$, $p = .23$, or item 2, $F(2, 163) = 0.87$, $p = .42$.

Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPHS). A one way ANOVA was conducted with sum scores on the ATSPPHS as the DV and the three student groups as the IV. The analysis of variance showed significant group differences in ATSPPHS scores, $F(2, 173) = 9.00, p < .001$. At an alpha level of .05, post hoc Tukey tests revealed that the traditional student has significantly less favorable attitudes towards seeking psychological help ($M = 50.06, SD = 12.43$) than parents ($M = 58.52, SD = 14.08$), $p < .001$; and non-parents ($M = 57.65, SD = 10.73$), $p < .05$. Scores of the two nontraditional groups were not significantly different (see Figure 3). To examine whether this result could have been influenced by prior experience to counseling which has been associated with more favorable attitudes in other samples (Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, Tata, & Jolly, 1994), a Pearson chi-square was conducted to examine group differences in whether participants had seen a mental health professional in the previous 12 months. The chi-square revealed no significant group differences $\chi^2(2, N = 176) = 2.62, p = .27$, suggesting that these results were not influenced by recent counseling experience.

Four separate one way ANOVAs were then conducted to examine group differences on each of the 4 factors that form the ATSPPHS. Results of four separate analyses of variance revealed significant between group differences on each of the four factors, factor 1 (awareness of need for professional psychological help): $F(2, 173) = 3.90, p < .05$; factor 2 (tolerance of stigma associated with psychological difficulties): $F(2, 173) = 3.97, p < .05$; factor 3 (level of openness with others): $F(2, 173) = 12.08, p < .001$; and factor 4 (assurance in the ability of mental health professional): $F(2, 173) = 7.06, p = .001$. Results of Tukey post hoc comparisons using an alpha level of .05 are

summarized in Table 4. For the most part, student parents had more favorable help seeking attitudes than traditional women.

University and non-university counseling center use. Two one way ANOVAs were carried out to examine group differences on ratings given for likelihood of seeking psychological help at a university counseling center and a non-university clinic, if participants were to develop a personal, emotional, or mental health problem. Results revealed no significant group differences in ratings for seeking help on campus, $F(2, 162) = 1.90, p = .15$; or off campus, $F(2, 163) = 1.04, p = .36$.

Separate paired samples *t*-tests were then conducted to compare participants' likelihood of seeking help at a university versus a non-university counseling center. While nontraditional parents and non-parents were equally likely to seek help at both places, traditional students reported a preferences for a non-university counseling center ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.21$), than one located on campus ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.21$), $t(78) = 2.40, p < .05$.

Predictors of Perceived Stress

Two separate multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine factors which best predict perceived stress among traditional and nontraditional students. For both analyses, scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale, the sum score of eight barrier items, and the sum score of the seven common support items were inputted as predictor variables using the enter method, with an inclusion criteria (PIN) of .05 and an exclusion criteria (POUT) of .10; perceived stress scores were the outcome variable.

Traditional students. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict perceived stress using scores on the RSE scale, barriers measure, and support measure.

Results show that this set of predictors accounted for 22.3% of the variance in perceived stress scores among traditional students, $F(3,71) = 6.80, p < .001$. Lower self esteem was the strongest predictor of higher levels of perceived stress, accounting for 20.0% of the variance ($p < .001$). A summary of the inter-correlations and multiple regression analysis are found in Table 5 and Table 6.

Nontraditional students. Results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to predict perceived stress from self esteem, role responsibility, and role support scores found that this set of predictors accounted for 49.7% of the variance in perceived stress, $F(3,71) = 23.35, p < .001$, with lower self esteem and higher barrier ratings predicting higher levels of perceived stress. Self esteem accounted for most of the variance (26.6%, $p < .001$), followed by perceived barriers (7.7%, $p < .05$). A summary of the inter-correlations and multiple regression analysis are found in Table 7 and Table 8.

Separate multiple regression analyses were then conducted for the two nontraditional student groups (i.e., student parents and non-parents) using the same set of predictors. For nontraditional non-parents, the set of predictors was not found to predict perceived stress, $F(3, 13) = 0.84, p = .50$. However, only 17 non-parents were included in the analysis as other women in the group did not complete all items on the predictor measures. As for student parents, the set of predictors was significant, $F(3, 54) = 25.09, p < .001$, accounting for 58.2% of the variance in perceived stress, with higher self esteem and lower help seeking barriers predicting lower levels of stress. Self esteem accounted for most of the variance (35.2%, $p < .001$) in perceived stress, followed by help seeking barriers (7.7%, $p < .05$).

Predictors of Attitudes Toward Help Seeking

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine how self esteem, identified barriers to help seeking (sum of 8 items), and sources of support (sum of seven mutual sources of support) predicted scores on the ATSPPHS.

Traditional students. Among traditional students, results of the multiple regression was significant and the set of predictors accounted for 37.2% of the variance in ATSPPHS scores, $F(3, 71) = 14.04, p < .001$, with higher levels of self esteem and support, and lower barrier ratings predicting more favorable help seeking attitudes. Barrier ratings accounted for most of the variance in help seeking attitudes (34.5%, $p < .001$). A summary of the inter-correlations and multiple regression analysis are found in Table 9 and Table 10.

Nontraditional students. When scores for parents and non-parents were analyzed together, results of the multiple regression analysis found that the set of predictors accounted for 45.9% of the variability in ATSPPHS scores, $F(3, 71) = 20.07, p < .001$. Higher self esteem and support, with lower barrier ratings were predictive of more favorable help seeking attitudes. Scores on the barriers measure accounted for most of the variance observed (29.4%, $p < .001$). A summary of the inter-correlations and multiple regression analysis are found in Table 11 and Table 12.

Separate multiple regression analyses were then conducted on both the nontraditional student groups. For student mothers, the set of predictors was significant and accounted for 54.6% of the variance in ATSPPHS scores, $F(3, 54) = 21.67, p < .001$. Higher levels of self esteem and support, with lower barrier ratings predicted more favorable help seeking attitudes. Barriers to help seeking was the strongest predictor,

accounting for 33.4% of the variance, $p < .001$, followed by self esteem (8.3%, $p < .05$). For nontraditional non-parents, the model was not a significant predictor of ATSPPHS scores, $F(3, 13) = 0.28, p = .84$. This insignificant result may have been due in part to the small sample size used for this analysis ($n = 17$).

Discussion

Although enrollment of nontraditional women is expected to increase, research on this student group is limited. Given their increased presence on campuses across the country, it is important to gain an understanding of the pressures and protective factors associated with reentry women. This study adds to the limited body of research in this area and provides useful findings that can benefit those supporting the academic pursuits of nontraditional women.

Role Responsibility and Support

The first hypothesis regarding levels of responsibility was supported as nontraditional student parents reported significantly higher levels of total role responsibility than traditional and nontraditional non-parents. This finding is congruent with views held by other researchers (e.g., Home, 1998; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Student parents were the only group who had parental responsibility and they were also more likely to be responsible for a spouse or partner than women in the other groups; these factors probably influenced their high responsibility ratings. However, when the analysis was restricted to level of responsibility for roles commonly shared by women in the different groups, traditional women reported being significantly more responsible for these roles (i.e., being a friend, daughter, and student) than both nontraditional student groups. One possible explanation for this result is that nontraditional women, student

parents in particular may have rated responsibility for these common roles in comparison to their parental and spousal/ partner responsibilities, thus giving these items lower ratings based on the comparison that they made.

As for amount of support received, women in the nontraditional non-parent group reported receiving the least amount of support, though not significantly less than student parents. Due to different roles managed by women in the different groups, it was hypothesized that the different groups would report different sources of support; this hypothesis was supported. Traditional women received significantly more support from their parents, friends, and campus organizations than did women in the two nontraditional groups. This finding supports findings by Carney-Compton and Tan (2002) that traditional women depended on their parents more than nontraditional women, who more often received support from a spouse/ partner and children. Nontraditional non-parents reported the least amount of support as they are probably less reliant on their families than traditional women, but are less likely to be in a committed relationship than student mothers; thus, they do not receive much parental or spousal support.

Self Esteem and Perceived Stress

The second set of research questions examined differences in self esteem and perceived stress among the three student groups. Although all three groups demonstrated good levels of self esteem, there were interesting differences in scores. As predicted, there was a significant difference in self esteem across the three groups, with student mothers reporting higher levels self esteem than traditional students, while self esteem of nontraditional non-parents fell between these two groups. These scores suggest that although nontraditional non-parents may benefit from increases in self esteem attributed

to age (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002), they may not benefit from other factors commonly associated with getting older such as being in a committed relationship and having children. Quimby and O'Brien (2006) found that having secure attachments and being in supportive relationships predicted self esteem among nontraditional women. Non-parents in this sample were less likely to be married and therefore may not have benefited from these self esteem enhancers.

Levels of perceived stress followed the trend observed for self esteem, with scores of nontraditional non-parents falling between the two other groups, though not significantly different from either. Although nontraditional parents were predicted to have higher levels of perceived stress due to their increased levels of responsibility, this hypothesis was not supported. Traditional students reported significantly higher levels of perceived stress than did student parents. However, as the overwhelming majority of the traditional women were freshmen, their higher levels of stress may have been due in part the transition phase they were experiencing (e.g., living away from home). In addition to offering support to Dill and Henley's (1998) idea that confidence which nontraditional students have from managing various life roles buffer them from academic stress, this finding suggests that this confidence may also protect student mothers from global stress.

Taken together, the findings on self esteem and perceived stress provide a favorable view of student parents, who despite having more responsibility, report greater self esteem and less global stress than traditional age students. Nontraditional non-parents may benefit from age effects associated with self esteem and stress, but not other factors which differentiate them from student parents, such as having children and being in a committed relationship.

Stress is an important factor in student satisfaction and researchers (e.g., Bean & Metzner, 1985) have proposed that it is associated with nontraditional student attrition. In this study, the combination of low self esteem, lower levels of support received, and perceived barriers to help seeking were found to be significant predictors of stress in traditional women and student mothers. The set of predictors were much more salient for student mothers and accounted for over half (58.2%) of the variation in global perceived stress. Additionally, stress among student parents was negatively correlated with self esteem and women who received more support reported lower levels of stress.

Barriers and Attitudes Toward Help Seeking

Few studies have examined help seeking among nontraditional students and this is the first known study to examine this issue using an established measure of help seeking attitudes. Following from the initial assumption that nontraditional students would have to manage a greater number of roles than traditional students, it was hypothesized that they would report greater barriers to help seeking due to factors such as greater demands on their time and financial responsibilities. Contrary to this prediction, traditional students in this study reported the greatest barriers to help seeking and significantly more barriers than nontraditional non-parents. Specifically, traditional students were more concerned about what their friends would think compared to non-parents, and they were also more concerned about what the mental health counselor would think of them than student mothers.

These results follow the earlier findings on role responsibility and support. Traditional women reported significantly greater responsibility for being a friend and receiving significantly more support from their friends than nontraditional parents and

non-parents. Given traditional women's involvement in their friendships, it is no surprise that they more concerned about how their friends perceive them. Another possible explanation is that traditional women in this study were predominantly freshmen and many of their friendships may therefore be less established than those of nontraditional women who have had time to develop stable relationships. Nontraditional women may feel more secure with their friendships that have persevered through problems and challenges that younger friendships have yet to encounter. They may also feel more confident that their friends would not perceive them differently if they were to seek psychological help, and are therefore less concerned.

Women in all three groups rated concern for affordability of mental health care as being the greatest barrier to the likelihood of them seeking help if they were to develop a personal, emotional, or mental health problem. This finding has significant implications for mental health professionals as students may be reluctant to seek psychological help due to misconceptions about cost.

In addition to reporting the most barriers to help seeking, traditional women showed the least favorable attitudes toward help seeking. Previous research on African American students found that years in school was associated with more favorable attitudes on factor 4 (assurance in mental health professional) of the ATSPPHS (So, Gilbert, & Romero, 2005). Class standing of women in the traditional group may therefore have influenced their lower scores as they were predominantly freshmen.

With regard to likelihood of seeking help at a university counseling center, Padula (1994) suggested that nontraditional students would be less likely to seek help at a university counseling center due to their perception that the services offered are directed

towards traditional women. This study did not support this notion as women in all three groups gave similar ratings to likelihood of using a university counseling center.

However, when likelihood of using a university versus a non-university counseling center were compared, nontraditional women were just as likely to seek help at either while traditional women were significantly more likely to seek help from an off-campus clinic. This result is surprising and warrants further research attention.

Similar to the model examined to predict perceived stress, predictors of help seeking attitude were more salient to nontraditional parents than traditional women. Self esteem, support received, and barriers to help seeking accounted for 37.2% of the variance in ATSPPHS scores for traditional students while the same predictors accounted for 54.6% of the variance for student mothers. Perceived barriers was the strongest predictor for both groups, and suggests that women who report greater barriers have less favorable help seeking attitudes.

Overall, scores of women in the three groups followed a similar pattern for each of the variables measured with scores of nontraditional women differing significantly from one or both of the nontraditional student groups. For the most part, nontraditional non-parents had scores that fell between the other groups (i.e., level of responsibility for common roles, amount of support received, self esteem, perceived stress, and help seeking attitudes). An interesting observation was that scores of nontraditional non-parents were closer to those of traditional women for some of the measures, while being closer to those of student parents on other measures. This interesting dynamic suggests that nontraditional non-parents are a unique student group who are more similar to

traditional women in some areas, while being more like nontraditional age student parents in others.

Clinical and Research Implications

Results of this study support previous research that has found differences between traditional and nontraditional students. In addition to replicating other findings, this study has shown that traditional and nontraditional students differ on factors which previous research has overlooked (i.e., barriers and attitudes to help seeking). Findings of this study can aid college administrators and mental health professionals in a number of important ways.

First of all, the findings on barriers and help seeking attitudes amongst the different student groups have significant implications for mental health professionals and college administrators. Those keen to support students' psychological functioning should keep group differences in mind when engaging with different kinds of students. The differences noted also indicate different ways of approaching and reaching out to students. For example, an outreach framework for traditional students could take from these results and focus on reducing stigma that traditional student have and also focus on the important role that friendships hold for traditional students. Traditional students are more involved in their friendships and could be encouraged to look out for and support their friends' psychological health, as given how responsible they feel for their friends, they may be in a good position to offer help to a friend in need. Nontraditional women reported being less responsible for their friends, and may therefore not benefit from this form of outreach, and may find peer counseling programs less attractive than traditional women.

Traditional women were also very concerned about the stigma associated with mental health care and may benefit from education on this issue. An interesting finding from this study was that traditional women reported being more likely to seek counseling from a non-university clinic than one located at a university. This is a rather surprising finding and one that requires further exploration. Future research could examine factors that cause traditional students to favor non-university counseling centers as this information would be useful for university counselors. It may be that traditional women who are more concerned with how others perceive them, may be concerned about the lack of anonymity at a campus clinic. Due to higher level of stigma they associate with mental health care, traditional women may be concerned and afraid of being noticed entering a college clinic.

Although nontraditional women in this study had more favorable attitudes towards help seeking, there is strong evidence that they are more likely to drop out of college than their traditional peers (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Horn, 1996). Nontraditional women may benefit from being reminded that support is available to them and counseling centers aiming to help student parents should keep in mind the high levels of responsibility that these women manage and be flexible where needed.

Women in the three groups all rated the financial cost of mental health care as being the most significant barrier to them seeking help. It is possible that these women have misconceptions about the cost of mental health care and it may be more affordable than students believe. Many universities (including the one that this sample was based) offer free counseling services to full-time students. There are also numerous mental health agencies across the country that provide services based on a sliding fee scale, and

numerous non-profit organizations provide affordable counseling. This information however, may not be known by college students. It follows that there is good utility in disseminating information on mental health care costs to incoming students so that their decision to seek help is not hampered by fear and misconceptions about the cost involved. This might also serve as an interesting area for further study as students may overestimate the cost associated with counseling.

Student parents in this study expressed that their responsibility to their partner/spouse was significantly greater than the amount of support they received from them. The implication of this has great significance yet research on marital satisfaction among nontraditional women is scarce (Galvin, 2006). This then, in an area that invites further exploration.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Findings from the present study should be viewed in light of a number of limitations in terms of its sample composition and design. First of all, although effort was made to have a balanced sample with regard to class standing, the majority of traditional students were freshmen while most nontraditional women were seniors or graduate students. This difference may have influenced the results seen and although graduate students were no different from their undergraduate peers in this study, they likely have different concerns and experience different challenges. Due to this limitation, further research is recommended, using groups that are matched for year in school.

Secondly, women in this study were predominantly Caucasian and although this was representative of enrollment trends at the university which they attended, minority

students were underrepresented and this affects the ability to generalize findings of this study.

Thirdly, the relatively small sample of nontraditional non-parents was a weakness. Although 26 women formed this group, only 17 women were included in the regression analyses as others did not complete all measures. This small size may have contributed to the insignificant findings. Furthermore, this study intended to include a group of traditional age parents to allow comparisons of four distinct student groups. However this group had to be excluded from the study due to lack of participants ($n = 4$). Traditional age parents are a distinct group of students that require attention and further research is needed to explore their psychological functioning and help seeking attitudes, in comparison to other female students.

Lastly, traditional and nontraditional women were recruited in different ways and this could have biased the sample. Traditional students who received research credit participated to fulfill class requirements whereas nontraditional women may have participated out of interest for the study, rather than for any compensation. This is further supported by the fact that less than 25% of the nontraditional women requested to be entered in the drawing for bookstore vouchers. These nontraditional women may have been a self selected group of highly motivated students and subsequent studies may want to consider matching groups on academic variables such as GPA.

Combining the results of this study and its implications for college administrators and mental health professionals, further research is needed to explore help seeking barriers and attitudes of different student groups. Future research should build upon the

limitations of this study and aim for samples that are representative and matched on key variables such as class standing and GPA.

Findings of this study highlight the importance of delineating between groups of nontraditional students who are commonly combined together for research purposes. Recognizing these differences, subsequent researchers should aim to further delineate between different groups of students who are considered nontraditional (e.g., traditional age parents, nontraditional age single parents, nontraditional age male parents, etc.). This will help expand the research base of unique nontraditional student groups that are often overlooked.

Conclusions

In addition to supporting previous research which has found differences between traditional and nontraditional college students, findings of this study indicate that nontraditional age female students are not a homogenous group, and there is utility in delineating between different subgroups of nontraditional women for clinical and research purposes. Scores of nontraditional non-parents were observed to follow a trend of falling between the two other groups on most of the measures, suggesting that their psychological functioning and help seeking attitudes were influenced by some factors they had in common with nontraditional parents and others with traditional women.

Despite challenges associated with nontraditional status, nontraditional students in this study fared better than traditional women on most of the factors examined. Student mothers in particular demonstrated various strengths. In spite of having more responsibility and receiving less support, student mothers had significantly higher levels

of self esteem, lower levels of stress, and more favorable attitudes towards help seeking than traditional women.

This study puts forth some important findings on female college students which are useful for college administrators and mental health professionals. Given enrollment trends of nontraditional women, research on this student group is imperative and this study adds to the limited but growing body of research.

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Table 1

Mean Scores on Responsibility Ratings as a Function of Participant Group

Responsibility for	Student group					
	Traditional students (<i>n</i> = 84)		Nontraditional non-parents (<i>n</i> = 26)		Nontraditional parents (<i>n</i> = 64)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Being a daughter	4.25 _{a,b}	0.85	3.46 _a	1.33	3.23 _b	1.69
Being a friend	4.67 _{a,b}	0.65	4.15 _a	0.88	3.92 _b	0.95
Being an employee	2.99 _{a,b}	1.99	3.96 _a	1.69	3.96 _b	1.66
Being a volunteer	2.63 _a	1.61	1.54 _a	1.58	2.28	1.67
Caring for a family member (other than a child)	2.82 _a	2.03	1.42 _a	1.70	2.17	1.96

Note. Means in a row that share subscripts are significantly different ($p < .05$). For all items, higher scores indicate higher levels of responsibility.

Table 2

Mean Scores on Eight Sources of Support as a Function of Participant Group

Source of support	Student group					
	Traditional students (<i>n</i> = 80)		Nontraditional non-parents (<i>n</i> = 21)		Nontraditional parents (<i>n</i> = 58)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Your husband/ partner	1.19 _a	1.88	2.29	2.22	3.43 _a	2.08
Your mother	4.24 _{a,b}	1.32	3.24 _b	1.67	2.71 _a	1.91
Your father	3.90 _{a,b}	1.52	2.10 _b	1.90	1.79 _a	1.99
Other family member/s	3.70 _a	1.54	3.14	1.71	2.67 _a	1.73
Your friends	4.34 _{a,b}	0.78	3.05 _b	1.43	3.24 _a	1.32
An organization on campus	2.08 _{a,b}	2.08	0.48 _b	1.08	0.98 _a	1.46
Your employer	1.80 _a	1.85	2.29	1.79	2.86 _a	1.89

Note. Means in a row that share subscripts are significantly different ($p < .05$). For all items, higher scores indicate higher levels of support received.

Table 3

Mean Scores on Four Barriers to Help Seeking as a Function of Participant Group

Barrier	Student group					
	Traditional students (<i>n</i> = 79)		Nontraditional non-parents (<i>n</i> = 21)		Nontraditional parents (<i>n</i> = 63)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 1: I do not think it would help	2.70 _a	1.10	1.95 _a	0.97	2.60	1.26
Item 6: I am worried of what my friends would think	2.20 _a	1.23	1.48 _a	1.03	1.86	1.13
Item 8: I am concerned about what the MHP would think of me	2.10 _a	1.19	1.48	0.75	1.51 _a	1.03
Item 9: I am uncomfortable sharing my problems, feelings, and thoughts with others	2.72 _a	1.20	1.95 _a	1.02	2.38	1.20

Note. Means in a row that share subscripts are significantly different ($p < .05$). For all items, higher scores indicate greater barrier rating.

Table 4

Mean Scores on the Four ATSPPHS Factors as a Function of Student Group

ATSPPHS factors	Participant Group					
	Traditional students (<i>n</i> = 84)		Nontraditional non-parents (<i>n</i> = 26)		Nontraditional parents (<i>n</i> = 66)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor 1: Awareness of need	13.74 _a	4.13	15.35	4.71	15.59 _a	4.21
Factor 2: Tolerance of stigma	8.64 _a	2.63	9.04	2.52	9.97 _a	3.28
Factor 3: Level of openness	11.58 _{a,b}	3.76	14.85 _b	3.51	14.30 _a	4.22
Factor 4: Assurance in mental health professional	16.10 _a	4.41	18.42	3.62	18.65 _a	4.62

Note. Means in the same row sharing subscripts are significantly different ($p < .05$). Each factor has a different score range due to differences in numbers of items used to compute each factor. For all factors, higher scores indicate more favorable help seeking attitudes.

Table 5

Intercorrelations for Perceived Stress, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Traditional Students (n = 75)

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Stress Scale	--	-.47*	.15	-.08
2. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale		--	-.37*	.17
3. Barriers to help seeking			--	.04
4. Sources of support				--

Note. * $p < .005$.

Table 6

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Stress Among Traditional Students

Variable	B	SE B	β
Self esteem score	-0.73	0.17	-.48*
Barriers to help seeking	-0.03	0.11	-.03
Rating of support received	-0.01	0.12	.00

Note. $R^2 = .22$ ($n = 75$, $p < .000$).

* $p < .001$.

Table 7

Intercorrelations for Perceived Stress, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Nontraditional Students (n = 75)

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Stress Scale	--	-.66**	.52**	-.32**
2. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale		--	-.50**	.31**
3. Barriers to help seeking			--	-.22*
4. Sources of support				--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 8

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Stress Among Nontraditional Students

Variable	B	SE B	β
Self esteem score	-0.58	0.11	-.51**
Barriers to help seeking	0.25	0.10	.24*
Rating of support received	-0.11	0.09	-.11

Note. $R^2 = .50$ ($n = 75, p < .001$).

* $p < .02$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 9

Intercorrelations for ATSPPHS Score, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Traditional Students (n = 75)

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. ATSPPHS	--	.21*	-.61**	.05
2. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale		--	-.37**	.17
3. Barriers to help seeking			--	.04
4. Sources of support				--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 10

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting ATSPPHS Score Among Traditional Students

Variable	B	SE B	β
Self esteem score	-0.11	0.31	-.04
Barriers to help seeking	-1.23	0.20	-.62*
Rating of support received	-0.18	0.22	-.08

Note. $R^2 = .37$ ($n = 75$, $p < .001$).

* $p < .001$.

Table 11

Intercorrelations for ATSPPHS score, Self Esteem, Barriers to Help Seeking, and Sources of Support for Nontraditional Students (n = 75)

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. ATSPPHS	--	.48**	-.65**	.22*
2. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale		--	-.50**	.31**
3. Barriers to help seeking			--	-.22*
4. Sources of support				--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 12

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting ATSPPHS Score Among Nontraditional Students

Variable	B	SE B	β
Self esteem score	0.47	0.26	.19
Barriers to help seeking	-1.24	0.23	-.55*
Rating of support received	-0.07	0.20	.03

Note. $R^2 = .46$ ($n = 75$, $p < .001$).

* $p < .001$.

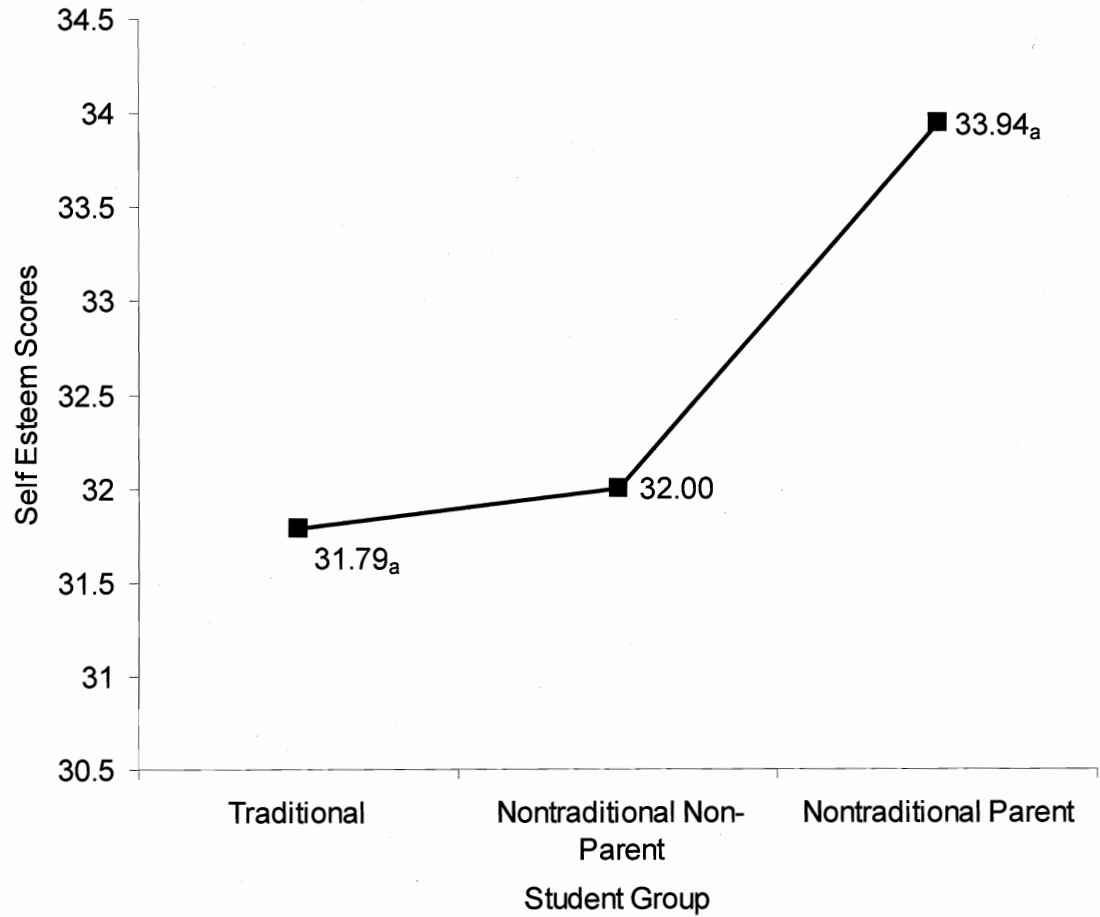


Figure 1. Mean scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale for women in the traditional group ($n = 79$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 21$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 63$). Higher scores denote higher levels of self esteem.

Note. Means having the same subscript are significantly different at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

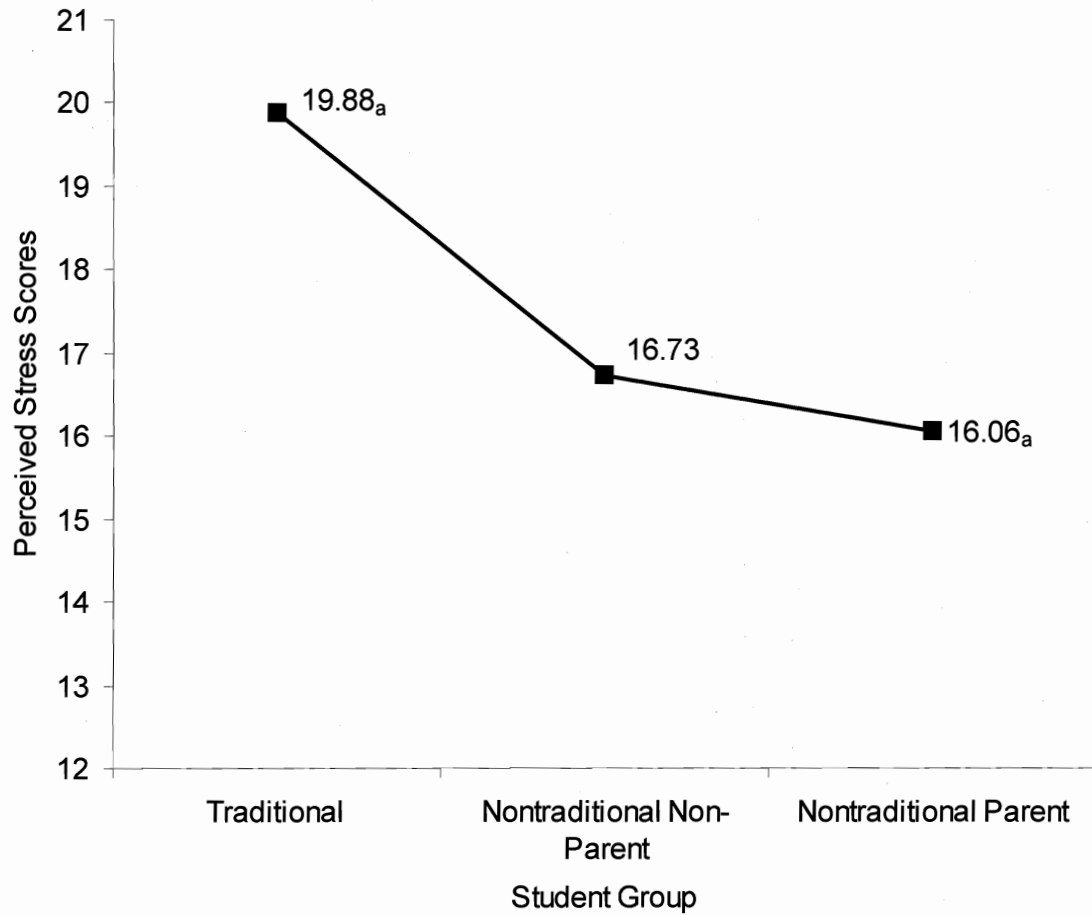


Figure 2. Mean scores on the Perceived Stress Scale for women in the traditional group ($n = 84$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 26$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 66$). Higher scores indicate higher levels of global perceived stress.

Note. Means having the same subscript are significantly different at $p < .005$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

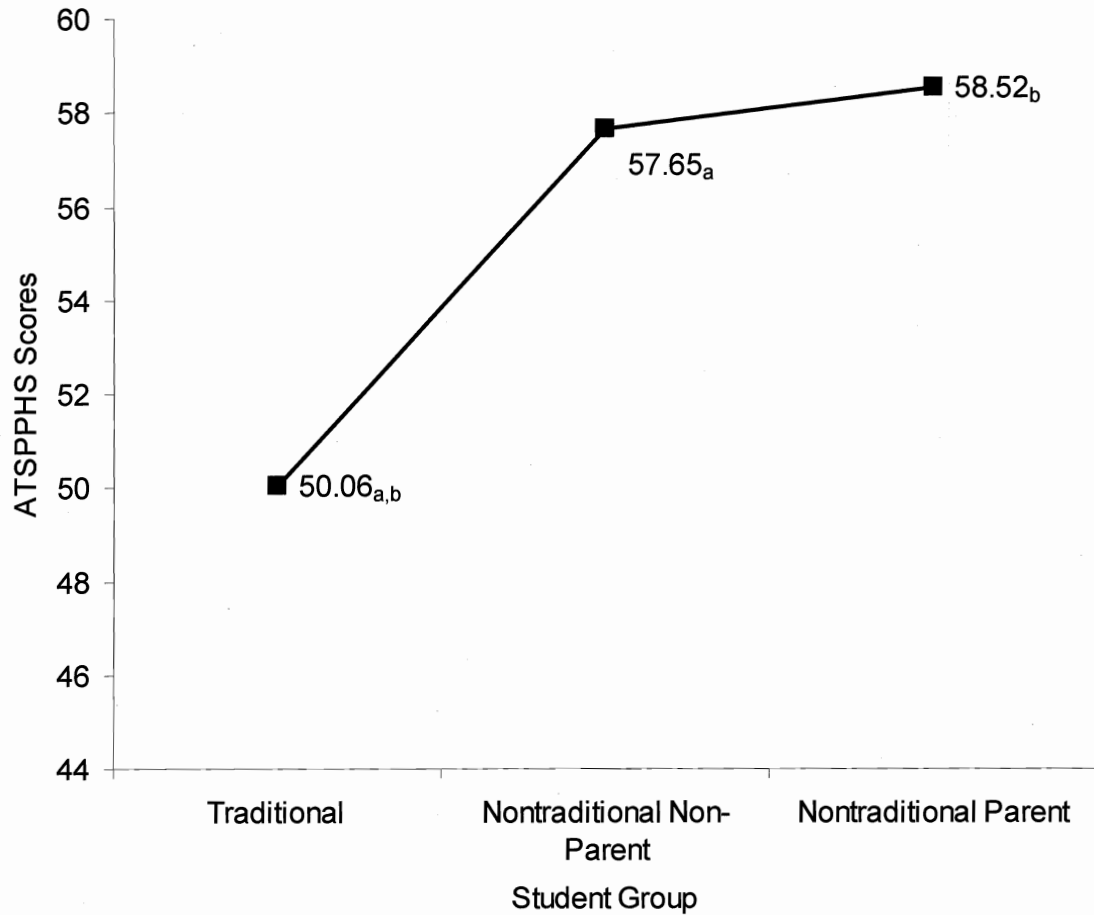


Figure 3. Mean scores on the ATSPPHS for women in the traditional group ($n = 84$), nontraditional non-parent group ($n = 26$), and nontraditional parent group ($n = 66$).

Higher scores indicate more favorable help seeking attitudes.

Note. Means having the same subscript are significantly different at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

Appendix A

Role Responsibility Measure

ROLE RESPONSIBILITY. For the following question, please rate your responses to each item using the scale provided. In considering the roles you have in your own life, how much responsibility do you associate with each of the following roles:

0- No Responsibility/ Not Applicable	1- Very Little Responsibility	2-	3- Some Responsibility	4-	5- Significant Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Being a mother
2. Being a wife/ partner
3. Being a daughter
4. Being a friend
5. Being a student
6. Being an employee
7. Being a volunteer
8. Caring for a family member (other than a child)
9. Other

If other, please specify role:

Appendix B

Sources of Support Measure

SOURCES OF SUPPORT. For the following question, please rate your responses to each item using the scale provided. Please rate the amount of personal and emotional support you receive from the following individuals:

0- No Support/ Not Applicable	1- Very Little Support	2-	3- Some Support	4-	5- Significant Support
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Your children
2. Your spouse/ partner
3. Your mother
4. Your father
5. Other family member/s:
 - a. Please specify relationship to you:
6. Your friends
7. Your classmates
8. An organization on campus:
 - a. Please specify:
9. An organization off campus:
 - a. Please specify:
10. Your employer
11. Others:
 - a. Please specify:

Appendix C

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you **strongly agree**, select the **strongly agree** icon. If you **agree** with the statement, select the **agree** icon, If you **disagree**, select the **disagree** icon. If you **strongly disagree**, select the **strongly disagree** icon.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
4. I am able to do things as well as most people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
10. At times I think I am no good at all.

Appendix D

Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988)

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate by selecting the relevant icon how often you felt or thought a certain way.

- 0= never
- 1= almost never
- 2= sometimes
- 3= fairly often
- 4= very often

1. In the last month how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Appendix E

Barriers to Help Seeking

I. Please consider each question and answer by selecting the appropriate response.

1. Have you seen a mental health professional (i.e., counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist) for a personal, emotional, or mental health problem in the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No

2. How likely would you seek help from a mental health professional at a university counseling center, if you were eligible, and you developed a personal, emotional, or mental health problem?

1- Not At All Likely	2-	3- Somewhat Likely	4-	5- Extremely Likely
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3. How likely would you seek help from a mental health professional not practicing at a university counseling center, if you developed a personal, emotional, or mental health problem?

1- Not At All Likely	2-	3- Somewhat Likely	4-	5- Extremely Likely
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II. For each of the following, please indicate to what extent the factor would reduce the likelihood that you would seek help from a mental health professional (located at a university counseling center or somewhere else), if you encountered a personal, emotional, or mental health problem.

1- Not At All	2-	3- Somewhat	4-	5- Extremely
---------------	----	-------------	----	--------------

1. I do not think it would help
2. I do not have the time
3. I do not think I could afford it
4. I think that only weak people seek help
5. I am worried of what my family would think if they knew I was seeing a mental health professional
6. I am worried of what my friends would think if they knew I was seeing a mental health professional
7. I am concerned that family and friends would react negatively if they knew I was seeing a mental health professional
8. I am concerned about what a mental health professional would think of me
9. I feel uncomfortable sharing my problems, feelings, and thoughts with others
10. I am afraid that my confidentiality would be violated

III. For each of the following, please indicate to what extent the factor would reduce the likelihood that you would seek help from a mental health professional at a university counseling center, if you were eligible, and you encountered a personal, emotional, or mental health problem.

1. I do not think that mental health professionals at a university counseling center would be able to help someone like me

1- Not At All	2-	3- Somewhat	4-	5- Extremely
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2. I do not think mental health professionals at a university counseling center are trained to counsel individuals with my life experiences

1- Not At All	2-	3- Somewhat	4-	5- Extremely
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3. What might be other factors that would reduce the likelihood of you seeking help from a mental health professional, if you encountered a personal, emotional, or mental health problem?

Appendix F
Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale
(Fischer & Turner, 1970)

Read each statement carefully and indicate your agreement (3), probable agreement (2), probable disagreement (1), or disagreement (0). Please express your frank opinion in rating the statements. There are no "wrong" answers, and the only right ones are whatever you honestly feel or believe. Is it important that you answer every item.

3= Agree 2= Probably Agree 1= Probably Disagree 0= Disagree

1. Although there are clinics for people with mental troubles, I would not have much faith in them.
2. If a good friend asked for my advice about a mental problem, I might recommend that he see a mental health professional (i.e. psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist).
3. I would feel uneasy going to a mental health professional (i.e. psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist) because of what some people would think.
4. A person with a strong character can get over mental conflicts by himself, and would have little need of a mental health professional (i.e. psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist).
5. There are times when I have felt completely lost and would have welcomed professional advice for a personal or emotional problem.
6. Considering the time and expense involved in psychotherapy, it would have doubtful value for a person like me.
7. I would willingly confide intimate matters to an appropriate person if I thought it might help me or a family member.
8. I would rather live with certain mental conflicts than go through the ordeal of getting mental health treatment.
9. Emotional difficulties, like many things, tend to work out by themselves.
10. There are certain problems which should not be discussed outside of one's immediate family.
11. A person with a serious emotional disturbance would probably feel most secure in a good mental hospital.
12. If I believed I was having a mental breakdown, my first inclination would be to get professional attention.

13. Keeping one's mind on a job is a good solution for avoiding personal worries and concerns.
14. Having been a psychiatric patient is a blot on a person's life.
15. I would rather be advised by a close friend than by a mental health professional (i.e. psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist), even for an emotional problem.
16. A person with an emotional problem is not likely to solve it alone; he is likely to solve it with professional help.
17. I resent a person professionally trained or not- who wants to know about my personal difficulties.
18. I would want to get mental health attention if I was worried or upset for a long period of time.
19. The idea of talking about problems with a mental health professional (i.e. psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist) strikes me as a poor way to get rid of emotional conflicts.
20. Having been mentally ill carries with it a burden of shame.
21. There are experiences in my life I would not discuss with anyone.
22. It is probably best not to know everything about oneself.
23. If I were experiencing a serious emotional crisis at this point in my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in psychotherapy.
24. There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help.
25. At some future time I might want to have psychological counseling.
26. A person should work out his own problems; getting psychological counseling would be a last resort.
27. Had I received treatment in a mental hospital, I would not feel that it ought to be "covered up."
28. If I thought I needed psychiatric help, I would get it no matter who knew about it.
29. It is difficult to talk about personal affairs with highly educated people such as doctors, teachers, and clergymen.

Appendix G

*Informed Consent for Traditional Female Students***CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stacey Raj, a Master's degree candidate in the Clinical Psychology M.A. program at EIU, under the supervision of Dr. Anu Sharma of the EIU Psychology Department. The purpose of this study is to examine possible differences between traditional and nontraditional female students. These findings can potentially help university administrators support the well being and academic pursuits of female students.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Participation is fully voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The answers you provide will remain anonymous and used only for research purposes. There are no risks associated with this study. Students enrolled in Introductory Psychology will receive course credit for their participation.

Should you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, or any questions about the study in general, you are invited to contact the lead researcher via email at sraj@eiu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board , Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920. Telephone: (217) 581-8576. E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu.

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

By clicking the "I consent" icon below, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, and have read, understand, and accept the terms outlined above.

Appendix H
Informed Consent for Nontraditional Female Students

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stacey Raj, a Master's degree candidate in the Clinical Psychology M.A. program at EIU, under the supervision of Dr. Anu Sharma of the EIU Psychology Department. The purpose of this study is to examine possible differences between traditional and nontraditional female students. These findings can potentially help university administrators support the well being and academic pursuits of female students.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Participation is fully voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The answers you provide will remain anonymous and used only for research purposes. There are no risks associated with this study. Each student who participates will be able to enter into a drawing to win one of three bookstore gift certificates valued at \$15 each. Students wishing to be entered in the drawing should send their email address to the lead researcher at sraj@eiu.edu. Winners will be notified through email.

Should you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, or any questions about the study in general, you are invited to contact the lead researcher via email at sraj@eiu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board , Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920. Telephone: (217) 581-8576. E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu.

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By clicking the "I consent" button below, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, and have read, understand, and accept the terms outlined above.

Appendix I

Feedback Statement

Nontraditional female students are the fastest growing segment of students enrolling in colleges (Clayton & Smith, 1987) and student parents made up 27% of the total undergraduate enrollment between 1999 and 2000. Despite the number of nontraditional female students enrolled in colleges across the country, research on college students has generally focused on aspects of the traditional student aged between 17 and 22 (Kasworm, 1990). Furthermore, studies on nontraditional students have generally failed to delineate between the different subgroups of nontraditional female students.

This study is designed to compare help seeking attitudes of 4 different groups of undergraduate female students (i.e., student parents aged 25 and older, student parents aged 24 and younger, non-parent students aged 25 and older, and non parent students aged 24 and younger). The researcher also hopes to identify barriers to help seeking identified by different groups of students, in order to help mental health professionals understand and provide better services to nontraditional female students.

I want to sincerely thank you for participating in this study. If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me, Stacey Raj, at sraj@eiu.edu or Dr. Anu Sharma at 217-581-6089, at asharma@eiu.edu.

References

- Clayton, D., & Smith, M. (1987). Motivational typology of reentry women. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 37, 90-104.
- Kasworm, C. E. (1990). Adult undergraduates in higher education: A review of past and present perspectives. *Review of Educational Research*, 60, 345-372.

