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East Tennessee State University

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A Study of the Perceptions of Female Displaced Workers in a
Community College Regarding Their Educational Expectations and
Barriers to Their Achievement

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and

Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

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In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy

Analysis

_____

by

Pashia H. Hogan

August 2003

Dr. Terrence Tollefson, Chair

Dr. Amber Kinser, Committee Member

Dr. Louise MacKay, Committee Member

Dr. Russell West, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

A Study of the Perceptions of Female Displaced Workers in a
Community College Regarding Their Educational Expectations and
Barriers to Their Achievement

by

Pashia H. Hogan

Adult women enter or reenter college for a variety of reasons, one of which is because of the loss of a job and the need to retrain for reentry into the workforce.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners. Data were collected through interviews with 23 displaced workers age 25 or older who were either enrolled in or had graduated from an associate of applied science degree program at Northeast State Technical Community.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method. Achieving particular grades, obtaining a degree, and being able to get a job were the primary ways in which the participants initially defined success. In addition, they attributed the success they achieved to the encouragement and support of their teachers, their families, and their peers as well as to their faith and personal dedication and determination. The barriers they encountered included dispositional, situational, and institutional barriers. Furthermore, they found their initial fears of not "fitting in"

and of being too old to learn to be without merit. While they had underestimated the amount and level of difficulty of the work that would be involved, they had also underestimated their own abilities.

Recommendations for future practice included conducting annual orientation sessions for faculty; semester reviews of course offerings and instructional delivery formats; and a series of 10 one-hour workshops, provided at the beginning of each semester, to help alleviate the fears that were consistently expressed. Additional qualitative and quantitative research was also recommended.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my first "teachers," my mother and father: Ruby L. and the late John M. Honeycutt. The values I learned at home prepared me to accept the opportunities and meet the challenges that I have encountered throughout my life. It is to them that I credit this achievement.

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The 23 women who made time to participate in my study.

The original "Levi's ladies," who challenged me to be the best teacher that I could be and who provided the inspiration for my dissertation.

Sean, Tiffany, and Hank, the sons and daughter-in-law with whom I've been so richly blessed.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Fifty-eight percent of the 10.4 million students enrolled in the nation's 1,130 public and independent community colleges in the fall of 2000 were female. Nearly half of these female students were adult learners age 25 or older (Phillippe, 2000). In addition, Hayes and Flannery (1995) found that participation statistics indicated that adult female learners in recent years had been the most rapidly growing segment of the student population in both higher and continuing education in America.

St. Pierre (1989) defined the typical adult female learner as one "…who returns to school after an absence of several years to pursue higher education or complete her degree" (p. 227). The increased entry of women into higher education in the 1960s prompted several studies about women and learning. Hayes and Flannery (1995) in their critique of the literature related to adult women's learning found that assumptions made in the early literature were outdated and did not reflect many of the characteristics of contemporary female adult learners and feminist theory. The characteristics of adult female learners have changed, along with societal norms and expectations. Furthermore, they noted that "…adult learning theory and feminist theory support the proposition that adult women have distinctive needs and preferences as learners" (p. 30).

Adult women enter or reenter college for a variety of reasons, one of which is the loss of a job and the need to

retrain for reentry into the workforce. According to the Department of Labor (2002a), over 3.5 million women were displaced from jobs between January 1997 and December 1999, 3.1 million of whom were age 25 or older. Furthermore, DiNatale and Borass (2002) reported that displaced women age 25 to 34 were "…more than 4 times as likely as their male counterparts to have left the labor force" (p. 3). Hipple (1997) found that "…since the early 1980s, women have continued to increase their presence in the workforce while continuing to be concentrated in service-producing industries, in which the risk of losing a job has increased" (p. 27).

The federal government has defined displaced or dislocated workers as "…persons 20 years of age and older who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished" (Department of Labor, 2000b). In recent years, most displaced workers in the United States have been eligible for limited financial support, both in amount and duration, through the unemployment insurance system. In addition, limited placement and job referral services are provided through the Employment Service while more extensive services are provided through the Trade Adjustment Act and the Workforce Investment Act. The more extensive services make retraining available to those who qualify (Decker & Corson, 1995).

Purpose of the Study

Fifty-three percent of the students enrolled in 2001-2002 at Northeast State Technical Community College were female; 48% of the student population was made up of adult learners, that is, students who were 25 years old or older (Northeast State, 2002b). During the fall 2001 semester there were 1,091 females who were 25 years of age or older enrolled at Northeast State Technical Community College, which equated to 24.5% of the total student body (S. Graybeal, personal communication, June 4, 2002). Ten percent of those women were displaced workers who chose to take advantage of the federally funded resources available to them to enter college to retrain for reentry into the workforce (W. Lowe, personal communication June 7, 2002). However, no studies have been done at the college to identify the actual experiences of these nontraditional students compared with their initial expectations. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that the findings should enable community college administrators to revise policies, plans, and procedures to better meet the needs of these adult female learners. The findings should also enable community college faculty members, advisors, and counselors to interact more effectively with these students.

Research Questions

1. How do female adult learners who are displaced workers enrolled in an associate of applied science degree program in a community college define success in terms of their initial expectations?

2. What factors do adult female displaced workers identify as being essential for their educational experience to be a success?

3. What factors do female displaced workers identify as barriers to a successful educational experience?

4. What do female displaced workers experience in the college, as compared with their initial expectations?

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited by the degree to which the participants candidly expressed their perceptions.

2. Because this was a qualitative study of a limited number of participants at one community college, no generalizations were made to other populations.

3. The study was limited by the fact that only a small purposeful sample of the population of adult female learners who are displaced workers was interviewed.

4. The review of the literature is limited because of the lack of published research on female displaced workers as adult learners.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined on the basis of their use
in the context of this study:

Female displaced worker – a female 20 years of age or older
who lost or left a job she had held for three or more years
because the plant or company closed or moved, there was
insufficient work for her to do, or the position or shift was
abolished (Department of Labor, 2000b).

One-Stop Center – a member of a system required by the
Workforce Investment Act to directly deliver core employment
services and provide access to intensive and training services.
Centers must be located in each Workforce Investment Act area of
the state (Department of Labor, 1998b).

Demand occupation – "an occupation with projected positive
job growth or job replacement ratios within 12-24 months,
according to the best available sources of state/local labor
market information and according to needs identified by local
employers" (Northeast Tennessee, 2002, p. 14).

Workforce Investment Board – an organization made up of
members appointed by the chief local elected official in
accordance with criteria established by the governor. It must
include representatives of business, education providers, labor
organizations, community-based organizations, economic
development agencies, the One-Stop partners, and providers of
adult education and literacy services (Department of Labor,
1998a).

Adult female learner – a female 25 years of age or older enrolled in a college credit course (White, 1984).

Nontraditional female student – a student 25 years of age or older enrolled at a community college in credit courses (St. Pierre, 1989).

Associate of applied science degree program(s) – program or programs for individuals who want to enter specialized occupational careers immediately after graduation. These programs are not designed to transfer to baccalaureate degree programs (Northeast State Catalog, 2002).

Phenomenological study – as defined by Creswell (1998), a phenomenological study describes "…the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 51).

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners. Chapter 1 introduces the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to displaced workers and adult female learners, including retraining for displaced workers, characteristics of adult learners, emphasizing female adult learner characteristics whenever possible, barriers impeding the female adult learner's success, and programs and services to support adult learning in the community college. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research methodology that was employed

in completing this phenomenological study. The data analysis
including narrative description and dialogue where appropriate
to illustrate the categories of thought that emerged is
presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 reports pertinent findings,
recommendations for future practice, conclusions, and
implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

As Muench (1987) noted, the literature of the 1970s and early 1980s was "…replete with research studies identifying the psychosocial concerns of returning adult women students" (p. 3). However, Hayes and Flannery (1995) found that the database pertaining specifically to women's learning was very limited. I found it to be particularly limited in relationship to female displaced workers as adult learners. As a result, I concentrated my review on and divided this chapter into the following sections: retraining for displaced workers; characteristics of adult learners, emphasizing female adult learner characteristics whenever possible; barriers impeding the female adult learner's success; and programs and services to support adult learning in the community college.

I used the following databases in conducting my search for pertinent literature: the ERIC database, *Dissertation Abstracts*, the Tennessee Electronic Library InfoTrac/Galenet database, the Academic Universe/LEXIS-NEXIS database, and SIRS. I used the following descriptors independently, as well as combined with each other: "nontraditional," "student," "community college," "adult learner," "female," "women," "higher education," "displaced worker," and "dislocated worker." State and federal government websites were helpful in providing up-to-date

information about current legislation and funding allocations
for educational assistance to displaced workers.

<center>Retraining Displaced Workers</center>

As outlined in Leigh's (1994) study, the federal
government's involvement in providing financial assistance to
displaced workers seeking retraining through adult education
programs dates back to 1962, when both the Manpower Development
and Training Act and the Trade Adjustment Act were adopted. The
Trade Adjustment Act was designed specifically to assist
displaced workers. From the beginning, the Trade Adjustment Act
was intended to provide income support and other reemployment
services to workers who lost their jobs because of trade
agreement concessions. Further legislation amended the Trade
Adjustment Act in 1974 so that workers whose employment was
adversely affected by increased imports could apply for benefits
available through the Trade Adjustment Act (SIRS, 2001).

The Trade Adjustment Act provides a variety of benefits and
reemployment services to help displaced workers retrain and
prepare for as well as obtain reentry into the workforce. For
example, workers may be eligible for services including but not
limited to training, a job search allowance, and a relocation
allowance. In addition, the Trade Adjustment Act offers extended
unemployment insurance benefits through trade adjustment
allowances payable to eligible workers once their unemployment
insurance benefits have been exhausted. Trade adjustment
allowance monies are paid only to individuals enrolled in

approved training programs; for example, community college programs that meet specific eligibility provisions as codified (Northeast Tennessee, 2002).

The most recent extension of the Trade Adjustment Act program occurred in December 2001, when the United States House of Representatives extended the program. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (H.R. 3008) reauthorized the program for two years. Under the reauthorization, the program was extended to continue to provide job search assistance, 104 weeks of retraining, $800 in relocation assistance, and income support for up to a year for eligible displaced workers (Manufacturing News, 2001).

Displaced workers who do not meet the Trade Adjustment Act criteria may be eligible for services provided under the Workforce Investment Act, signed by President Bill Clinton on August 7, 1998. The Workforce Investment Act, which superseded the Job Training Partnership Act, "…reforms federal job training programs and creates a new, comprehensive workforce investment system" (Department of Labor, 1998b). The new law embodies seven key principles, two of which are particularly important to the displaced worker seeking retraining:

1. Streamlining services through better integration at the street level in the One-Stop delivery system. Programs and providers will locate, coordinate, and integrate activities and information, so that the system as a whole is coherent and accessible for individuals and businesses alike.

2. Empowering individuals in several ways. First, eligible adults are given financial power to use Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) at qualified

institutions. These ITA's supplement financial aid
already available through other sources, or, if no
other financial aid is available, they may pay for
all the costs of training. Second, individuals are
empowered with greater levels of information and
guidance, through a system of consumer reports
providing key information on the performance
outcomes of training and educational providers.
Third, individuals are empowered through the advice,
guidance, and support available through the One-Stop
system, and the activities of One-Stop partners
(Department of Labor, 1998a, p. 2).

The Workforce Investment Act provides three levels of
delivery service that are administered by local workforce
investment boards: core services; intensive services, including
general education diploma and adult basic education; and
training services, including technical certificate programs as
well as associate and baccalaureate degree programs (State of
Tennessee, n.d.).

Each local Workforce Investment Board is responsible for
outlining and implementing policy based on the broad criteria to be
used in administering the Workforce Investment Act. The following
policies, referred to as Local Workforce Investment Act 1,
"…outlined herein are intended to establish a general framework to
provide services to participants effective March 1, 2002, and may
be amended by the Northeast Tennessee Workforce Investment Board"
(Northeast Tennessee, 2002, p. 1):

C. Training

1. Local Workforce Investment Act 1 will assist
registered customers who have utilized a minimum of one
core and one intensive service and yet have been unable
to obtain or retain suitable employment.

2. Training services may be available to adults and dislocated workers who have met the eligibility requirement for intensive services and who require additional assistance to obtain or retain employment through these services.

3. Workforce Investment Act funding will be coordinated with other funding sources; i.e., every participant must apply for a Pell grant.

4. Training programs must result in a credential, certificate, or degree. Short-term training programs will receive priority consideration.

5. a. Minimum entry-level requirements for training will include a general equivalency diploma or high school diploma and an eighth grade reading level and eighth grade math level. Exceptions to the reading and math skills may be reviewed and waived by a Training Review Committee, which will consist of Workforce Investment Act Career Center staff and management.

    b. On-the-job training may be provided for individuals who do not meet the criteria described in 5(a) as determined by employer requirements.

6. A participant may not begin training prior to the execution of an Individual Training Account or prior to receipt of a fully executed On-the-Job Training or Customized Training Contract.

7. An Individual Training Account will be issued for an amount no more than the actual cost of the tuition and books not covered by other grants or financial assistance.

8. Tools, equipment, or other necessary training materials required by the course of study may be provided as a training expense. Items must be listed on the course outline and/or syllabus. Where available and appropriate, tools and other items will be purchased through the training institution.

9. Job Training Partnership Act participants who entered training prior to July 1, 2000, will be allowed to complete their training as outlined in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and Training Contract.

10. All participants registered in training services are required to meet standards of progress as follows:

     a. Attendance: Verified attendance forms will be required of all Workforce Investment Act participants in training programs. Workforce Investment Act participants will be required to adhere to attendance policies as established by the training institutions.

     b. Grade Requirement: Workforce Investment Act participants must maintain a cumulative 2.0 GPA (C average). If grade point average falls below this standard, the Workforce Investment Act coordinator may refuse to pay any future training costs.

     c. The Workforce Investment Act will not pay for any classes not required in the curriculum in which a participant is enrolled.

     d. Workforce Investment Act funding may not be utilized to pay for any courses to be repeated in the event of a failure to complete a course. Emergency and extenuating circumstances will be reviewed and addressed on a case-by-case basis.

D. Individual Training Account

    1. Training must be identified as a "demand occupation"; that is, an occupation with projected positive job growth or job replacement ratios within 12-24 months, according to the best available sources of state/local labor market information and according to needs identified by local employers.

    2. Cap: Maximum amount available for the duration of training is $7,300. In addition, maximum amounts may be adjusted according to increases in tuition and related expenses as approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) for two-year TBR institutions.

    3. Duration: Training must be able to be completed in a period equal to or less than 104 weeks.

    4. May not be used for prerequisite coursework.

5. May be used for bachelor's degrees for dislocated workers, provided that the individual can complete the degree within 3 semesters or 78 weeks, whichever is shorter (pp. 3-5).

As Feldman (1998) noted in his analysis of the Workforce Investment Act's implications for community colleges, community colleges have an important stake in the new system as major providers of employment and training services. He further pointed out that "…the broadened eligibility for adults should be particularly attractive to community colleges since they traditionally serve individuals regardless of economic status" (AACC, retrieved 5-30-02).

Characteristics of Adult Learners and Adult Learning

As noted by Thoms (2001), Knowles first used the term "andragogy," the art and science of teaching adults, in the 1960s. Furthermore, Knowles (1978) defined adulthood as "…the point at which an individual achieves a self-concept of essential self-direction" (p. 56). Kinzer and Wray (1982) emphasized the necessity to "…consider the relationship between adult development, life events, and resulting changes in learning patterns" (p. 173) when designing learning experiences for adults.

According to Knowles (1978), andragogical theory is primarily based on four assumptions that make it different from pedagogical theory: changes in self-concept, role of experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning. Similarly, Laird (1985) contended that andragogy was problem-centered,

rather than content-centered; encouraged active participation; reinforced the benefits of past experience; was collaborative; and incorporated experiential activities.

The College Board has been investigating the demands and motivations of adults in the classroom since 1980, when Aslanian and Brickell became the first investigators to develop research-based conclusions specifically on what life transitions and trigger events caused adults to enter or return to college. Their findings served to increase the knowledge about and improve the practices for serving adult learners.

The results of Aslanian and Brickell's 1980 study indicated that adults overall did not learn just for the pleasure of learning. That is, for most, learning was not its own reward. Some respondents enjoyed learning; some did not. It was not the process of learning nor the possession of knowledge that prompted most adults to learn. Most adults learned because they wanted or needed to use the knowledge they acquired.

In addition, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that adults learned to enable them to cope with changes in their lives. For example, regardless of their demographic characteristics, almost all respondents to the 1980 study pointed to their own changing circumstances as their reasons for learning. Consequently, it is being in transition from one status in life to another that causes most adults to learn. Adults tend to learn what is needed in order to be successful in the next phase of their lives.

Aslanian and Brickell's 1980 study further indicated that transitions occurred unevenly at various stages of adult life.

They found that transitions most often pertained to careers, health, or religion. However, the major transition,"…the major purpose for adult learning is to acquire career skills; the career motive outweighs all the others combined" (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980, p. xii).

Finally, the study indicated that adults who learned, "…because of a transition can point to a specific event in his or her life that signaled, precipitated, or triggered the transition and thus the learning" (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980, p. xiii). Events that tell adults it is time to learn something new include but are not limited to getting hired, getting fired, getting married, getting divorced, getting sick, or relocating. While there are millions of potential adult learners who may have a desire, a need, or a chance to learn, "…specific life events are needed to convert most of them from latent learners into active learners…the timing of their entry into the learning arena will be determined by particular events that permit or force them to do so" (Aslanian & Brickell, p. xiii).

Thoms (2001) described the adult learner in depth when she characterized the learner as having first-hand experience; having a set of habits and strong tastes; having a great deal of pride; having tangible things to lose, therefore, being very cautious in the classroom; having multiple commitments outside the classroom; being bewildered by options; having established a framework by which decisions are made; responding to reinforcement; having a strong feeling about the learning environment; having prejudices that may be detrimental to the

learning environment; having a strong need to apply what is being learned—immediately; and wanting a choice in what is learned.

The question of why adults choose to participate in various kinds of learning has not been definitively answered. In contrast to Aslanian and Brickell's 1980 findings, Cross (1981) wrote:

> Some people may engage in continuous lifelong learning simply because they have an itch to learn; others may participate when they have a need to know or when a specific reward for the learning effort is clear to them. These two motivations account for what might be termed "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" rewards for learning.

> Most adults give practical, pragmatic reasons for learning…They have a problem to solve, which may be as broad as the desire for a better job or as narrow as learning to raise better begonias. Many goal-oriented learners are apparently responding to transitions in which needs for new job skills or for knowledge pertaining to family life serve as "triggers" to initiate learning activity.

> Broad-scale surveys of adult learning interests and needs contain no real surprises. Learning that will improve one's position in life is a major motivation. Just what will "improve life" varies with age, sex, occupation, and life stage in rather predictable ways (p. 86).

Drawing upon their research and professional experiences working with adult learners, Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) identified three categories of factors that they said prompted adults' decisions to attend college: family, work, or personal issues. Furthermore, they emphasized that education was only possible for adults who could see it as both worthwhile and attainable. That is, adults would be committed to learning only

to the extent that they accurately estimated their abilities, their needs, and their likelihood of success.

Aslanian and Brickell's 1980 conclusions were reinforced by The College Board's 2000 study, which re-examined the characteristics of adult learners to describe what motivated adults to return to learning when they did and to profile adults' patterns of learning as they entered and reentered education:

> An adult sees that some benefit may be gained by moving from one status to another; the purpose of learning is to gain that benefit. The transition is the change in status—past, present, or future—that makes learning necessary. The adult needs to become competent at something he or she could not do before in order to succeed in the new status. Thus the topic of the learning is always related to the transition. But something has to happen in the adult's life to precipitate the decision to learn at that point in time. If that event had occurred earlier or later, the learning would have been triggered earlier or later. Furthermore, the trigger may or may not be connected to the transition…Most adults had to learn in order to get their jobs, keep them, or advance beyond them…Thus career transitions far outnumbered all others combined as reasons for learning. Career transitions are the compelling force that moves millions of adults into undergraduate and graduate study (Aslanian, 2001, pp. 16-17).

<center>Female Adult Learners</center>

Spratt (1984) characterized the "typical" adult student described in the literature as one who was "…threatened by the classroom, goal-oriented, limited in time by external demands of job and family, anxiety-ridden, driven by high standards, experienced in the skills of living, and attuned to economic reality" (p. 4). More recently, the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center, 1996) defined the adult

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student as one who demonstrated one or more of the following seven characteristics:

Delayed enrollment into postsecondary education (usually after age 25);

Part-time enrollment;

Financially independent;

Employed full-time while enrolled;

Has dependents other than a spouse;

Single parent;

Did not obtain a standard high school diploma (p. 2).

The adult student population has come to be dominated by women: 65% as compared to 53% among all adults who are age 25 or older (Aslanian, 2001). Furthermore,

The preponderance of women is probably due to the fact that they more often view education as a vehicle to success and that their more frequent entry and re-entry into the labor market lead them to education for the acquisition of needed and up-to-date skills and information (p. 12).

In addition, the female adult learner should be viewed as "…a unique individual who has to balance a wide variety of responsibilities while taking classes and pursuing her education" (St. Pierre, 1989, p. 22). Unlike the traditional female student, the adult female has lived long enough to have innumerable responsibilities to be managed in addition to the demands of college coursework and study. These responsibilities may include but not be limited to having the primary responsibility of caring for children, a home, and aging family members. In addition, in the case of the displaced worker, she

may have been the primary breadwinner as well. Consequently, "…while multiple-role women are coping with many difficulties, low income seems to be the most problematic" (Home & Hinds, 2000, p. 3). Johnson, Schwartz, and Bower (2000) noted that "…many adult women who want to further their education do not complete their programs because they cannot cope with the double or triple burdens of family, job, and school" (p. 289).

In relationship to female adult students as learners, Hayes and Flannery's (1995) literature-based research revealed three themes as being particularly evident throughout the literature: women's self-doubts, women as silent in the classroom, and women as connected learners. They found silence in the classroom to be linked to self-doubt. The literature indicated that women tended to be silenced by classroom interactions and men's tendency to dominate classroom discussions. In relationship to connected learners, Wlodkowski (1999) noted that "…connectedness in a learning group is perceived as a sense of belonging for each individual and an awareness that each one cares for others and is cared for" (p. 70). Furthermore, Spratt (1984) contended that "immediate rapport takes place" when several adult students are in the class (p. 5).

Hanner (1999) found that nontraditional female adult undergraduates typically express a strong desire to improve their math skills, speaking ability, and writing skills and need help in decision making and goal setting. She noted that female adult learners need more general guidance in career exploration

and preparation, such as enhancing job search, resume writing, and interviewing skills.

Barriers

According to Chickering and Obstfeld (1982), the barriers that impede an adult's transition to college student may be institutional, situational, or personal. Cross (1981), however, classified the barriers as situational, institutional, and dispositional, defined as follows: "Situational barriers are those arising from one's situation in life at a given time" (p. 98). Situational barriers may include but not be limited to cost, including tuition, books, and child care; lack of time; home and family responsibilities; job responsibilities; lack of child care; lack of transportation; no place to study; and lack of support from family and friends (Cross).

"Institutional barriers consist of all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities" (Cross, 1981, p. 98). Institutional barriers may include but not be limited to not wanting to go to school full-time, not wanting to commit to the length of time it takes to complete a program of study, not having classes scheduled as needed, not having enough information available about course offerings and requirements, being unable to adhere to attendance requirements, not meeting entrance requirements, or not being awarded credit for experiential or previous college credit course work (Cross).

"Dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner" (Cross, 1981, p. 98). Dispositional barriers may include but not be limited to feeling that one is too old to learn, lacking self-confidence in one's ability to learn, not having enough energy and stamina, or not enjoying studying or being in the classroom (Cross). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) referred to dispositional barriers as psychosocial barriers that "…are individually held beliefs, values, attitudes, or perceptions that inhibit participation in organized learning activities" (p. 137). In addition, Darkenwald and Merriam added a fourth category of barriers—informational barriers, which "…involves the failure of many adults, particularly the least educated and poorest, to seek out or use the information that is available" (p. 137).

Kegan (1994) referred to the problems associated with time management as the primary problems that the adult learner faces. In addition, he ranked the financial and emotional costs of becoming a student as secondary. However, St. Pierre (1989) found that the number one problem that adult female students mentioned was "…coordinating child care and family responsibilities" (p. 22). Rodriguez (1996) observed that the majority of women suffered a disproportionate amount of stress, guilt, and anxiety over their countless responsibilities. Rodriguez and Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) were in agreement that students' success was dependent on behavioral and emotional support from family members, which presented another possible source for discouragement. In addition, Rodriguez found that

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some institutions lacked support services designed to help women be successful in furthering their education.

Clearly, making the decision to enter college to retrain for a new career and re-entry into the workforce would be a stress-producing event. As noted by Johnson, et al. (2000), activities or events that are "…disruptive or life-altering in such a way that it causes a change in a person's normal, day-to-day routine can be stressful" (p. 290). The displaced worker who has decided to enter college would already be contending with a high stress level as a result of job loss.

As noted by Hayes and Flannery (1995), self-doubt is characteristic of the female adult learner. Women's self-doubt, or lack of confidence in themselves as learners, is reflected throughout the literature. As Gallos (1993) found, women's fears are quite strong:

> The women felt deep terror that they would not be able to understand, that they wouldn't know what to do, that they would demonstrate they did not belong, that they would show everyone their dumbness (p. 3).

Furthermore, as Johnson et al. (1995) outlined, entering college creates many causes for fear on the part of the adult female:

> …returning to the classroom is almost always a threatening experience. Some of the threat comes from fear of failure. Some comes from discomfort associated with an unfamiliar environment like the campus. Even mundane issues such as where to park can be challenging. Other fears may include fear of the unknown or fear of nonacceptance by other students or faculty. The greatest fear, of course, is fear of grades and, correspondingly, failure to succeed (p. 291).

Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) outlined five strategies that adult learners could use to reinforce their motivation and help overcome barriers, including focusing on their goals, pacing themselves through developing time-management skills, maintaining balance and harmony through effective stress management skills, celebrating each achievement to maintain attention on progression, and "…rearranging pre-existing responsibilities to allow for the additional demands school places on them" (p. 18), and recognizing the need for help from others.

Programs and Services

Agreement exists throughout the literature that adult female students need more support to help ensure their success than do traditional female and male students and adult male students, because of the unique burdens they carry. However, the majority of the studies examined categorized the needs of adult learners without reference to gender. Spratt (1984) enumerated the top needs identified by participants of the American College Testing Program's pilot test of the Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey in 1981:

1. Developing speaking ability;
2. Increasing skills in mathematics;
3. Increasing reading skill;
4. Learning about job opportunities;
5. Learning how to handle pressure;

6. Identifying strengths and abilities;

7. Learning to take tests better;

8. Learning how to make better decisions;

9. Learning what jobs are available near home (p. 7).

Based on their review of the research and experience in adult education program planning, Lenz and Shaevitz (1977) suggested the following "manifesto for learning in maturity" to be considered in planning adult education programs and curriculums:

> Adults respond positively to learning in which the information has some personal meaning for them. Because of this, adults are especially receptive to learning which is meaningful and can be related to their own experience.
>
> Adults benefit by relating what they are studying to what they need to know. Since they are goal-oriented and feel the pressure of time more keenly than traditional students, they tend to be impatient with courses or routines that seem unrelated to their needs.
>
> Adults are eager for new information and experience. Since they bring a certain amount of mental baggage with them, they do not react favorably to ideas that seem overly familiar and too stereotyped to provide fresh thought.
>
> Adults learn best when they are active participants in the learning process. Taking their model from life rather than school, they see themselves as involved in a give-and-take of teaching and learning between themselves, the faculty, and other students.
>
> Adults require long and uninterrupted learning sessions, which means they will gain more from a two-hour seminar once a week than from three weekly fifty-minute sessions.

Adults need to consolidate what they have learned
before going on to new concepts or skills.

Adults require feedback during learning in order to
avoid the difficulties of unlearning. For this reason,
lectures alone are not satisfactory.

A learning program for adult students should be
structured so that they do not feel rushed or
pressured by competition. Adult students are more
concerned about how learning will benefit them as
individuals than about coming out ahead of others
(pp. 148-150).

Other strategies for helping the adult female learner
succeed include recommendations such as those made by Thon
(1984) regarding which institutional services should become more
important as the older student population increases. Recent
literature reflects that the recommendations made by Thon (1984)
are just as important today in dealing with adult students as
they were when he made them 19 years ago. Thon promoted the
necessity of increasing institutions' awareness of the
increasing numbers and needs of nontraditional students. He
stressed that institutions could better serve their adult
student population by identifying a person and/or office to
serve as an advocate for adult students, providing a printed
resource manual for returning students, upgrading career
counseling and placement services, improving orientation
services, involving older students in providing student
services, emphasizing lifelong learning, and involving the
families of adult students in campus activities.

Furthermore, Hu's (1985) study indicated that adult learners'
success was directly related to academic advising, career guidance,

and counseling geared to raising the confidence levels of older students. The study further validated the literature's references to adults' lack of confidence. Hu suggested a variety of strategies for improving adult learners' self-confidence, including giving adult learners the opportunity to actively participate in the teaching-learning process; for example, to lead class discussion, to share life experiences pertinent to classroom topics, and to work in small groups to interact with others. Those strategies, Hu (1985) said, would help adult learners feel valued and accepted, helping them to gain self-confidence and lessen self-doubt and fear about being in the classroom.

In addition, Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) suggested that educational programming for adults should include showing learners how they could reach their goals, using orientation sessions to discuss and prepare for the problems they would be likely to encounter, structuring programs to complement adult responsibilities, providing reinforcement to adult learners as they made progress, and assisting in the development of on-campus support systems among the students.

Hanner's (1999) study said that college career and counseling centers should specifically tailor advisement services for older students, including services related to educational planning, college entrance and program completion requirements, and nontraditional methods for completing coursework. Furthermore, Hanner's study participants noted "…a lack of sensitivity in their professors to the age diverse classroom setting" (p. 98).

In relationship to instruction, Thoms (2001) classified the skills needed by those teaching adults into four categories: expertise, both in knowledge and preparation; empathy, including being understanding and considerate; enthusiasm, for the student, the course, and the content; and clarity, including being able to teach, explain, demonstrate, and lead classroom discussion.

Summary

As documented by the literature, adult women now comprise the most rapidly growing segment of the student population in higher education. Relative to community college enrollment, 58% of community college students are female, and 50.3% of those are adult learners 25 years old or older (Phillipe, 2000). Furthermore, a review of the literature revealed agreement among researchers "…that adult women may have distinctive needs and preferences as learners" (Hayes & Flannery, 1995, p. 30). In Chapter 3, the methods and procedures concerning the research methodology to be used in this study to investigate the educational expectations of female displaced workers entering community college as adult learners is discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners. The study was qualitative in design, specifically what Creswell (1998) defined as the phenomenological tradition, because the resulting data analysis describes "…the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 51). The purpose of this chapter is to identify the participants, describe the data-gathering process that was used, outline the process by which semi-structured interviews were conducted, and delineate the procedures that were used for data collection and analysis.

Design of the Study

The methodology that was employed was qualitative research techniques, specifically of the phenomenological tradition. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is

> …any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by any means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, stories, behavior, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships (p. 17).

As defined by Creswell (1998), qualitative research represents:

> "…an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social

or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

This methodology was appropriate to this study because "…qualitative researchers set up strategies and procedures to enable them to consider experiences from the informants' perspectives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 7). Furthermore, the data collected through qualitative research take the form of words or pictures, not numbers.

The initial expectations of female displaced workers were ascertained and compared with their actual experiences as adult learners in a community college. Information was obtained by interviewing a purposeful sample of those women who were either enrolled in or had graduated from an associate of applied science degree program at Northeast State Technical Community College in Blountville, Tennessee. The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews.

Participants in the Study

In keeping with the qualitative research design, purposeful sampling techniques were used. Purposeful sampling "…ensures that a variety of types of subjects are included, but it does not tell you how many or in what proportion the types appear in the population" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 65). Furthermore, purposeful sampling involves choosing particular informants "…because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (p. 65). The type of purposeful sampling used

in this study was criterion sampling; that is, all individuals studied were individuals who met the same criterion, having experienced the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consequently, each participant in this study was a female displaced worker age 25 or older who entered Northeast State Technical Community College after losing or leaving a because her employing plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for her to do, or her position or shift was abolished. Furthermore, the participants were either enrolled in an associate of applied science degree program or had graduated from an associate of applied science degree program at Northeast State Technical Community College between May 2000 and May 2003.

As noted by Creswell (1998), a key decision point in a qualitative study is the purposeful selection of participants. Furthermore, in evaluating Miles and Huberman's typology of 16 strategies for purposeful sampling, Creswell found there to be a narrow range of sampling strategies available for a phenomenological study, because it is essential that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, Creswell recommended criterion sampling "…when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 118). As defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), criterion sampling is useful for quality assurance, because all cases meet the same criterion.

Dr. William Locke, President of Northeast State Technical Community College, gave written permission for me to conduct the study on Northeast State's main campus in Blountville,

Tennessee. Once I secured permission from the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University to conduct the study, I worked with Mr. Wendell Lowe, of Northeast State's Career and Counseling Center, to identify potential participants, currently enrolled adult female students or graduates who were displaced workers age 25 or older whose education was currently being funded or had been funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Consequently, Mr. Lowe provided a list of 93 students who received WIA funding during the Spring 2003 semester; 47 of whom were female displaced workers age 25 or older. Of the 47, 24 were Office Administration Technology majors; 17, Business Management Technology majors; and 6, Computer and Information Sciences Technology majors. Of the 47, I interviewed 15: 14 of the Office Administration Technology majors and 1 of the Computer and Information Science majors. In addition, I interviewed five Office Administration Technology graduates, one Cardiovascular Technology graduate, one Electronic Engineering graduate, and one Computer Engineering graduate. The participants who were enrolled at the time of their interviews were primarily enrolled in day classes. In total, I conducted 23 interviews with students. Twenty-one of the participants were White; two, or 8.6%, were African-American. The African-American population comprises 2.3% of Northeast State's service area (S. Graybeal, personal communication, June 19, 2002).

Prior to scheduling interviews, I contacted each potential participant on campus, explained the purpose of the study, and

invited her to participate. In addition, I provided written verification outlining the purpose of the study to each woman who accepted my invitation to participate. Each research participant was asked to sign a consent form. Furthermore, I obtained permission to tape-record the interviews and transcribe them verbatim. Confidentiality was guaranteed in writing.

<u>Sample Size</u>

According to Creswell, the process of collecting information for a phenomenological study primarily involves in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals; I interviewed 23. Initially, I could not accurately predict the exact sample size; but I did expect that there would be a minimum of 20 subjects. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "There can be no a priori specification of the sample; it cannot be 'drawn' in advance" (p. 201). Furthermore, "the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (Patton, 1990, p. 185). In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that sampling should continue,

> …to the point of redundancy…If the purpose is to maximize information, then sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units; thus *redundancy* is the primary criterion (p. 202).

In contrast to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Seidman (1998) outlined two criteria for determining when enough participants have been interviewed: sufficiency and saturation of

information, or redundancy. Sufficiency is reached when "…there are sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it" (pp. 47-48). I continued to sample until both redundancy and sufficiency occurred.

Furthermore, Seidman (1998) emphasized that "…in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants" (p. 48). Consequently, "enough" in relation to the number of participants interviewed is relative to the purpose of the study and the goals of the researcher.

Interviews

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described the interview process as "…a purposeful conversation directed by one in order to get information from the other" (p. 93). Furthermore, interviews vary in the extent to which they are structured. "When the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, when the subject cannot tell his or her story personally in his or her own words, the interview falls out of the qualitative range" (p. 94). Lincoln and Guba (1981) suggested that nonstandardized interviewing techniques are appropriate when the researcher is dealing with subjects who have special knowledge or status; is pursuing some subject in depth; is interviewing to discover, rather than to verify; is trying to uncover the etiology of a

condition or some motive, intent, or explanation; or is attempting to ascribe meaning in some event, situation, or circumstance. Therefore, the semi-structured interviewing approach was appropriate for this study.

Interviews may be used in two ways in the qualitative research design: as the dominant method for data collection or in conjunction with participant observation, document analysis, and other techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the dominant strategy for data collection. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit descriptive data from the participants relating to their actual experience as female adult learners in a community college compared with their initial expectations. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A general interview guide provided a list of topics to be investigated so that each subject could tell her own story personally in her own words. According to Patton (2002), a general interview guide is used "…to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed" (p. 343). The exact wording and the sequencing of the questions was not written out prior to the interview; however, the general interview guide did enable me to collect data related to a set of topics common to each of the participants, yet left me "…free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The topics that were discussed were based on the needs and characteristics of adult female learners as revealed by the

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review of the literature. The interview guide is included in the appendices.

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1981), the format was nonstandardized; and I did not seek "..normative responses. Rather, the problem of interest is expected to arise from the respondent's reaction to the broad issue raised by the inquirer" (p. 156). Furthermore, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the goal of understanding how the person being interviewed thinks is at the center of the interview, not getting a series of questions or areas covered; that is, it is important that the researcher is "…captive to the larger goal of the interview—understanding—not to the devices, gimmicks, questions, or the like that were invented as strategies and techniques of obtaining information" (p. 97).

Data Collection

I was the primary data collector. I maintained a research journal as needed to chronicle events, participant interactions, and other occurrences that related to the study. Data was collected using semi-structured interviewing techniques. An interview guide allowed me to collect data involving a set of topics common to each participant. Twenty-three interviews were conducted. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The verbatim transcripts were audited. Ms. Joy Britz, a tenured assistant professor teaching transcription at Northeast State Technical Community College, served as the auditor for

this study by checking the transcripts against the audio tapes verbatim for accuracy.

Data Analysis

After each participant was interviewed, the recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. The information collected was analyzed using Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method, a research design for multi-data sources in which "…formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of the data collection" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 66). Glaser and Strauss (1967) described the constant comparative method in four stages: comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. Bogdan and Biklen broke these four stages into six steps, six steps that I followed in collecting and analyzing the data:

1. Begin collecting data.

2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.

3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus, with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.

4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.

5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships.

6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories (p. 67).

I began analyzing the data by coding each incident in the data into as many categories of analysis as was appropriate, as categories emerged or as data emerged that fit an existing category. Furthermore, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967),

> Coding need consist only of noting categories on margins, but can be done elaborately…To this procedure we add the basic, defining rule for the constant comparison method: *while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category*…This constant comparison of the incidents very soon starts to generate theoretical properties of the category (p. 106).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested certain operational techniques that could be used to establish trustworthiness or credibility. Activities that can be used to establish credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking.

I used referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and member checking in this study to establish credibility. Referential adequacy was established by audio taping and transcribing verbatim all interviews. Mrs. Lou Ann Sevier served as peer debriefer to ensure honesty and accuracy throughout the study, to help test emerging working hypotheses, to assist in the development and testing of the emerging methodological design, and to provide me an opportunity for catharsis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, Mrs. Sevier met the criteria for debriefer selection outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1985). She was a peer,

she was familiar with the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues, and she was prepared to take the role seriously.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "…member check…is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). For example, member check provides the opportunity to assess the respondents' intentionality, to correct errors of fact, to challenge interpretations, to gather additional information, to put the respondent on record, to begin summarizing data, and to assess the overall adequacy of the data that has been collected. Therefore, as I transcribed the interviews and completed preliminary data analysis based on the transcripts, I invited the participants to review the verbatim transcripts for accuracy as well as to review my interpretations and conclusions.

Summary

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research design, specifically of the phenomenological tradition, that was used to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared to their initial expectations as adult learners. The purpose of this chapter was to identify the participants, describe the data gathering process that was used, outline the process by which semi-structured interviews were conducted, and delineate the procedures that were used for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners. The study, which involved 23 participants, was conducted on the main campus of Northeast State Technical Community College in Blountville, Tennessee. Data analysis revealed that the participants primarily selected Northeast State because of its geographic location, small class size, and two-year associate of applied science degree offerings.

The College

Dr. William Locke, President of Northeast State Technical Community College, gave written permission for me to conduct the study on Northeast State's main campus in Blountville, Tennessee. Northeast State Technical Community College, affiliated with the State University and Community College System in Tennessee and governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents, is an open access, public two-year comprehensive community college. The main campus is located near Blountville, Tennessee. Additional teaching sites are located in Kingsport, Elizabethton, and Gray.

As the fastest growing community college in Tennessee, Northeast State experienced a record enrollment in the 2001 fall semester: 4,460 students enrolled for college-level credit courses. Northeast State offers over 67 two-year degrees, including associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of applied science concentrations. Seventeen certificate programs are offered (Northeast State, 2002a).

The college employs 235 full-time employees and has a current operating budget of $16,985,440, operating campuses at four locations. The college's new $12.8 million library opened in January 2002. The Northeast State Foundation currently has over $2.1 million invested, providing income for student scholarships (Northeast State, 2002a).

Vision Statement

"Northeast State Technical Community College shall be recognized for excellence in learning and service" (Northeast State, 2002c, p. 8).

Mission

> Northeast State Technical Community College, affiliated with the State University and Community College System in Tennessee and governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents, is an open access, public two-year comprehensive community college. Northeast State's primary service area includes Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington Counties and expands to include ten other counties for the delivery of Engineering Technologies. Because of the College's commitment to accessibility and diversity, educational opportunities are offered to all residents of its service area without regard to race, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

Northeast State provides programs of study leading to the associate of arts, associate of science, and associate of applied science degrees, as well as academic and technical certificates for programs of less than two (2) years. Within these academic areas, the College provides business, technical, and health-related professions programs which prepare students for immediate employment; university parallel programs designed for transfer to other institutions of higher education; honors courses for the academically talented; and a developmental education program to prepare students for college-level studies.

Northeast State is committed to providing a wide variety of high-quality services and programs at an affordable cost. To accommodate students, programming and comprehensive support services are offered at multiple sites through varied delivery systems and schedules.

Northeast State provides access to and the application of technology to enhance teaching, learning, and service to the community. Collaboration with other post-secondary institutions, as well as public and private K-12 schools in the service area, is promoted to advance high academic standards, ensure educational mobility, and encourage lifelong learning.

Northeast State promotes economic and community development through progressive public service activities. Specialized training for business and industry and government is provided through standard and customized delivery systems. Northeast State supports entrepreneurial activities and encourages business and industrial partnerships in support of workforce development. A program of continuing education and personal interest classes is offered for individuals desiring professional growth and personal enrichment. The College also sponsors a variety of public programs relating to cultural, artistic, and recreational interests.

Northeast State in all instructional and administrative processes incorporates rigorous planning and assessment procedures designed to improve effectiveness. The College is committed to equity and success for a diverse student body, thus enhancing the quality of life in the Northeast Tennessee region. (Northeast State, 2002c, p. 8).

Guiding Beliefs

   Northeast State's management style and organizational culture are reflected in its Guiding Beliefs:

Accessibility	All citizens should have the opportunity to reach their full potential through participation in higher education.
Accountability	Effectiveness and efficiency are achieved through the wise use of human and financial resources.
Cooperation	Forming partnerships and working with others facilitates the achievement of common goals.
Diversity	Creativity and achievement are fostered through respect for all individuals and their ideas.
Excellence	Quality is ensured by using information gathered through a continuous planning, assessment, and evaluation process.
Integrity	Success occurs in an environment of honesty, openness, fairness, and trust where people are treated with dignity and respect (Northeast State, 2002c, p. 9).

The Interviewees

   As originally planned, I collected data by interviewing female displaced workers age 25 or older who entered Northeast State Technical Community College after losing or leaving jobs because their employing plants or companies closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their positions or shifts were abolished. Each of the participants either had received or was receiving 100% funding for educational expenses, including tuition, books, and course-related materials, through

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the Workforce Investment Act to complete her associate of applied science degree, as long as she did so within 104 calendar weeks as stipulated by the funding guidelines.

In addition, the participants' ages, at the time of the interviews, ranged from 33 to 55; their ages averaged 43.5 years. Four of the participants were single with either no children or grown children, four of the participants were married with grown children, five of the participants were single parents with one or two children living at home, and 10 of the participants were married with one or two children living at home.

Fourteen of the interviewees were currently enrolled Office Administration Technology majors; five were Office Administration Technology graduates; one was a currently enrolled Computer and Information Science major; two were Computer and Engineering Technology graduates; and one was a Cardiovascular Technology graduate. The graduates who accepted an invitation to participate had completed their programs between May 2000 and May 2003.

The data collected through the study participants' individual interviews were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method to inductively identify themes of thought reflected in the participants' responses as provided by the verbatim transcripts. Consequently, Chapter 4 presents in narrative form the key categories of thought that emerged through data analysis.

Where appropriate, narrative description related to individual participants is provided prior to comments pertinent to the theme being discussed. Because confidentiality was assured, none of the participants is referred to by her real name; pseudonyms are used. Many of the participants appear repeatedly within a single section or among other sections.

Initial Feelings, Goals, and Expectations

Data analysis revealed initial feelings of both excitement and fear; initial goals based on a desire to do well academically, to be able to get a "good" job, or to gain new skills; and definitions of success based on meeting one's own or others' expectations, obtaining a degree, or being able to get a job as predominant categories of thought related to participants' initial feelings and individual goals and expectations prior to or upon entering Northeast State Technical Community College.

Initial Feelings

Returning to the classroom after having been absent for many years can be quite threatening (Johnson et al., 1995; Spratt, 1994). In fact, that was the sentiment reflected throughout the study in the participants' responses when asked to describe their initial thoughts and feelings about returning to school. Two categories of thought emerged related to initial feelings: feelings of excitement and feelings of fear. While four of the women expressed their excitement about having an

opportunity to attend college, the women predominantly described
thoughts and feelings related to being either "excited and
scared" or, for the most part, just plain "scared."

Feelings of Excitement. Melody, a seemingly shy woman with
a perpetual smile and timid demeanor, appeared to search for
just the right words to express the mixed emotions she initially
felt before saying quite simply, "I was just overwhelmed. I was
just so excited to have the opportunity to come back to
school…it's like I had a second chance…it was wonderful." Betty,
a single mother of one, who was displaced after 10 years and had
never had an opportunity to attend college, echoed Melody's
sentiments. Even though she admitted to being scared, it was
with greater emphasis and determination that she announced, "I
just couldn't wait to get in here and see what I could learn."

No one expressed more exuberance than Miranda did in
describing how she initially felt about entering Northeast
State. This 49-year-old who had been displaced twice literally
sat on the edge of her seat with her hands clasped and her eyes
focused upward as she described her initial feelings:

> I was very proud to be here, felt very blessed, was very
> pleased to be here. I was very, very grateful to God and
> to, to the State of Tennessee and to Northeast State, just
> a total feeling of gratefulness when I came here for the
> first time…when they made the announcement that Fingerhut
> would be closing, I had a feeling of joy and peace come
> over me, and when I was driving home that day, I said,
> Lord, I am so excited what you have in store for me next,
> because I just, I knew whatever it was, was going to be a
> good thing, and I can feel my spirit just filling up with
> excitement now just thinking about that, and this is what,
> this is what was in the plan, was for me to go back to

school. Because I believe that, and as God says, out of every situation and out of every bad situation, good comes of it, and here I am today. I mean I would not be here if I hadn't, you know, lost my job at Fingerhut.

In contrast to Miranda's exuberance, others' deep-seated fears consistently emerged throughout the analysis of the interview transcripts. As demonstrated in the literature, women have felt "deep terror" and characteristically expressed self-doubt about their ability to succeed (Gallos, 1992; Hayes & Flannery, 1995). The study participants' responses consistently reflected the fears, including self-doubt, that the women initially experienced.

Feelings of Fear. In relationship to initial feelings, feelings of fear were expressed by all 23 of the participants. The women expressed the following categories of fear, listed in the order in which they were most frequently mentioned: fear of not fitting in, fear of failure, and fear of unfamiliar surroundings.

Many of the interviewees were quite succinct in expressing their fears, particularly their fear of not "fitting in." For most, the fear of not fitting in was based on the women's expectation that college students are all "young people." Jill, the first woman to be interviewed, was also the first to comment that her greatest fear was of not "fitting in." A now slim brunette with an easy smile, Jill hesitantly entered my office for the interview. From her physical appearance and manner of dress, one certainly wouldn't guess that Jill is a 43-year-old

grandmother, displaced from a job that she had had for 14 years. Jill worked hard to "fit in": She lost weight, and she updated her hairstyle. In addition, she paid attention to the way her classmates dressed so that she could carefully choose the clothes she needed to "fit in." She made every effort to cope with her greatest fear:

> I think that was what I worried about more than anything: Is there going to be people here my age? Was everybody going to be kids? And my clothes…the biggest part of it was people my age—was I going to fit in?

Juanita, the oldest participant at age 55, who had always dreamed of going to college, was equally concerned about her age and her ability to fit in. She admitted that she was

> …very, very scared, very apprehensive at first. I didn't know what to expect. I had no idea. It's been many years since I'd been to school, and I knew that the majority would be younger people, so I wondered how I was going to relate to these young people. I wondered if my mind would be able to retain so much new knowledge and would I be able to keep up with those young enough to be my children?

Cynthia, one of the two youngest participants at 33 and a married mother of two, was just as afraid of not fitting in:

> I was scared to death the first time I walked in the front doors. This was way out of my league. Here I am a 33-year-old-married-forever woman with two kids wanting to fit in with a bunch of young, wet-behind-the-ears kids—what was I thinking?…As the first day of class came closer, my nerves started to become extremely taunt. I broke out in a rash all over my neck and chest. I almost backed out, but I knew that I couldn't let down my family, friends, or myself.

Sandra, a single mother of two, who entered Northeast State after being displaced twice, the first time from a job that she had held for 10 years and the second time from a job that she had held for three years, had mentally prepared herself to sit

"…in the class with younger students." Sandra was initially afraid that she "…would catch on slower than they did." Comments by others including, "I expected to feel like an old person among a bunch of teenagers and feel out of place," and "I expected it to be mostly young people" were numerous throughout the interview transcripts. Betty, a single mother of a teenage son, shared these concerns. Thirty years old at the time she began, she said she was apprehensive because of her

> …age and all the younger kids coming out of high school. I didn't know how I would interact with them. I didn't know how they would look at me because I was older. That was mainly the thing—the main thing I was scared about.

Johnson et al. (1995) noted that the greatest fear on the part of adult female students "…is fear of grades and, correspondingly, failure to succeed" (p. 291). Wanda, a petite 35-year-old, displaced from a job that she had held for 14 years, agreed to be interviewed even though she was obviously very nervous throughout the interview. She spoke of her fear in a tremulous voice. For Wanda, the worst fear was "the fear of actually starting." When asked what she feared about starting, she quickly responded, "Afraid I couldn't do it. I was afraid that I would fail." She commented that returning to school was "…something I had thought about doing for years but was just too scared to actually attempt it." Jeanne, a 42-year-old displaced healthcare worker, described her fear with a less serious demeanor when she laughingly but honestly replied,

> I was scared to death because I figured I'd be the stupidest one here…I really didn't expect a lot of older people to be in college…I was afraid of being an oddity.

Susan, like Cynthia and others, was afraid that she wouldn't be "able to do it," because she had been out of high school for "so long." She still vividly remembered the night before she attended her first class. When asked to recall how she felt just prior to entering the classroom for the first time, she responded,

> Terrified. I remember the night before I came. I cried and cried and cried and cried and begged James to let me go get a job instead of trying to come back to school, and he wouldn't let me. He said, "No, you need to go on to school."

Louise feared that she might not be "able to do it" because of her age and her background:

> I feel like that I wasn't sure when I first started school if I would be able to do it, especially at my age. For the record, I'm 47 years old, and I'm just so far behind in technology and things that I never had.

Many simply feared entering an unfamiliar environment, what Johnson et al. (1995) called "fear of the unknown" (p. 291). Without realizing that so many others felt just as she did, Rachel accurately expressed the group's uncertainty in knowing what to expect when she attributed her concerns to not having "any clue" about what to expect or what attending college would be like. Like Rachel, Stephanie, who had enrolled quite unexpectedly and hurriedly, had "no clue" as to what to expect. In anticipating her first day, Stephanie remembered that she had been

> …terrified…I got in as sort of a last-minute thing because our company was closing at the beginning of the semester. Actually, it wasn't closing until a week after the semester started, so I was kind of rushed in…So when I came my very first day, I didn't even know what my classes were, so I

was kind of nervous about that. I didn't have books…I had been out of school, you know, 17 years…And I guess the main thing was, you know, am I going to get to my class on time?

Patsy quit school 30 years ago at the age of 16; and another 16 years went by before she completed her general equivalency diploma (GED). After being displaced from a job that she had held for 14½ years, Patsy chose to enter Northeast State so that she would "never, ever" have to "go back into a sewing factory." In her own words, she described her initial feelings of fear:

Scared to death. I mean I had quit school at 16. I got a GED in '88, and nobody in my family had went to college; and I was literally scared to death. So when I came over here and I took the test, I had to go into some developmental classes. I was still scared; but in coming through this hallway, it was like starting back in first grade. I had no idea where to look for the door numbers. I had no idea where to look for anything.

For Patsy, it was "like starting back in first grade"; for Terry, however, it was like entering a totally new environment:

I was eager to attend, but I was scared to death…I had worked in a manufacturing company for 30 years. I had this one little circle of life; my world was just one little small place and then it was just like coming out into a new country. I mean it was all, everything was new to me.

Individual Goals and Expectations

In addition to revealing categories of thought related to the participants' initial thoughts and feelings prior to entering the classroom, data analysis revealed key themes related to participants' goals and academic expectations. These themes of thought were reflected in the participants'

descriptions of their initial goals and academic expectations as well as the criteria by which they planned to measure success. Overlap existed among participants' responses related to initial goals and criteria by which they planned to measure success; for example, some participants described "getting a good job" as their initial goal while others referred to "getting a good job" as the criteria by which they would measure success.

Initial Goals and Academic Expectations. Analysis of the transcripts revealed three predominant themes of thought related to respondents' initial goals and academic expectations: to do well academically, to be able to get a "good" job, and to gain new skills, listed in the order in which they were most frequently mentioned.

The desire to do well, to make good grades, was voiced by many participants throughout the interview transcripts. Jill, the first to be interviewed, was also the first to describe her initial goals. She quite simply said, "I expected A's. That was my goal. To do it, to have at least a 3.5." Patsy, on the other hand, didn't have specific grade expectations in mind, she "…just knew I had to study and make sure that I did it right and make sure that I got the good grade."

Annette, a married mother of two, who was displaced from a job that she had held for eight years and who had never before attended college, began by saying that she wanted "Just to be able to pass…"; however, she finished that sentence by adding,

"…with an A or a B," indicating that she wanted more than "just to be able to pass."

Like Patsy, Miranda didn't have specific letter grades in mind. She had, however, set for herself a very specific performance level. Furthermore, Miranda was just as exuberant in expressing her desired performance level as she had been in describing her initial feelings about entering college. She outlined her goals and expectations as follows:

> My expectations were extremely high. I'm a very goal-oriented personality. And when I asked for prayer in church and in my Sunday school class, what I asked for in prayer was to pray for excellence. That my expectations of coming to college was that I am here to excel. That is my main goal.

Whereas Miranda's motivation to excel came from "inside," Mary's motivation came from "outside." Mary, at the age of 44, was displaced from a job that she had held for 19 years. Exhibiting an animated personality with a genuine warmth that made her instantly likeable, Mary openly and eagerly responded to the interview questions. Like most of the other participants, she had no prior college experience. When asked whether she had set initial goals related to grade expectations, Mary laughingly replied:

> This is funny because my kids—I have a son and a daughter—and we always encouraged them to make good grades. And so I thought now, I cannot go to school and make bad grades because they'll never let me live this down. I mean, I can't do that. So that helped me, too, to know now I've got to, you know, my kids are looking up to me, and I've always taught them, if you apply yourself, you're going to make good grades…And I thought, I cannot disappoint them. I cannot tell them that they have to make good grades and

then I not make good grades. I thought if I can make Bs, I'll be okay. They won't say anything.

Cynthia said she had set three primary goals when she initially entered Northeast State: "To make straight A's. When I first decided to come to school, what I wanted was to have great grades. I wanted to be able to finish and get my associate degree and to get a better job." Betty was just as determined to meet her goal: "I wanted to graduate with honors. I wanted to have the high grade point average. I wanted to do everything perfect."

While a majority of the participants said that getting good grades was their primary goal, others emphasized the desire to get a "good" or "better" job; that is, a job that would enable them to support themselves and/or make a contribution to their family, that would prevent them from having to reenter factory work, that would provide them with enjoyment, or that would provide a reasonable measure of job security. Two participants' responses were particularly emotional. Patsy said that she wanted to "Get a better job so that I would not have to never, ever go back into a sewing factory. I wanted to get in some kind of office work because that's what I always wanted to do." I was struck by the intensity behind the words "never, ever" and the longing in "that's what I always wanted to do."

Nadine, on the other hand, came to Northeast State when she "…got tired of getting laid off." Although she willingly interviewed, Nadine's answers were rather short and to the point. She had most recently been displaced from a job that she

had held for 12 years. She described her typical school day as one in which she attended class and then went home to take care of her mother. She said that she "…took care of her from the time I got out of school until I went to school." Furthermore, Nadine's initial goal was, "Finding a good job and taking care of my mother." Nadine's mother unexpectedly passed away before Nadine could realize her goal.

While her ultimate goal was to get a job, Stephanie was one whose initial goals were "to get that paper" and to gain new skills. Stephanie expressed her desire as follows:

> I wanted to have a skill that I could take places. Where I worked, I was a highly skilled worker in that plant, but it wasn't a skill that I could really put on a resumé and take just anywhere and say, "Look, I can do this." And I wanted to be able to have a choice, you know, to be able to say, I have this degree, and I can work here or here or here or here and be qualified. I guess that's what I wanted. I wanted qualifications that I could measure.

In addition to outlining her initial goals, each participant was asked to describe how she planned to measure her success relative to meeting those goals. As reflected in their responses, the women took different approaches to measuring success.

Measuring Success. While each expressed her individual concept of success, key themes of thought revolved around meeting one's own as well as others' expectations, particularly in relationship to making "good grades"; simply obtaining the degree; and being able to get a job, particularly one that would be enjoyable.

To Becky, success meant being able to move through her program of study as quickly as possible:

> I wanted my success to happen very quickly because of my financial bearings at home. So the more credit hours I could take, the sooner I could get through the program…that pretty much kept me going to push myself to get through the whole program.

Jennifer, a 50-year-old single woman with adult children, entered Northeast State after having been displaced from a job that she had held for three years. In addition to being a full-time student, Jennifer routinely worked as many as 30 hours per week to satisfy her employer's expectations. When asked what "success" meant to her, Jennifer replied, "Success is meeting expectations of others and meeting my own expectations and doing it in a manner that is pleasant for all the people involved in it, teachers as well as me." She went on to define what her "own expectations" were

> Meeting the grade level that is necessary that when I get a job and an employer looks at those grades, and says, "Okay, the grades are showing effort, and they're showing a degree of difficulty that will meet their criteria." And, it's a way of saying, okay, a wide range of skill levels learned. That's what I want, it's just getting a lot of different skills.

While Jennifer wanted to meet a grade level that would be attractive to potential employers, Jeanne set a higher standard for measuring success:

> By my grades. The first time that I got a B, it almost killed me, because I felt like a failure. And then my son told me, he said, "Well, you know, Mom, a C is average; and 90 percent of the population are just average people."

Susan began with a lesser expectation of using grades to measure success; but then when success came, her standard changed

Initially, I thought just pass, just, you know, just get through. If I make a C, that's great. But then after the first semester when I finished with a 4.0, it was like I wanted those A's, so I finished with a 3.98 average.

Mary, too, planned to use grades as a measure of success in addition to other criteria:

By what I learned and by my, of course, my grade, and by the way that I felt about myself. Just knowing that I could do it and that I did it was such an accomplishment that that was, that right there was enough to, you know, to know that I succeeded.

Jill is an example of one who intended to gauge her success by whether or not she successfully completed her degree. She wanted to get "something" to meet her family's expectations and to accomplish at least a portion of what her mother and her siblings had accomplished. Her heartfelt desire was evident in her choice of words and in her tone when she was asked how she planned to measure her success, and she responded:

My mom. Which she's already been through this and got her degree and worked on her master's. I wanted at least something. My brother, he's got one from college; and my sister, she's got a CPA, and I have nothing.

Success for some lay in getting the degree, the "piece of paper." For others, success would be measured by their being able to get a job. Most who mentioned getting a job as a measure of success, put it as simply as Annette did when she answered that success meant being "…able to get a job when I finish."

Stephanie, in addition to getting a job, wanted the job to be one that could help her regain what she had lost:

> If I can, after five or six years out of school obtain the same measure of pay that I had when I lost my other job, to me, that will be success.

Terry, single and displaced after 30 years, was eager for the opportunity to enter college. When her employing plant shut down, she "…was offered the opportunity to come back to school, and I took it." She described entering the workforce right after high school because

> The way we was brought up, you went to work right after high school, if you went to high school, which you didn't even have to go to high school if you didn't want to, but it was encouraged. But we just didn't have the money financially to go to college, and I always wanted to go.

Therefore, Terry, 30 years out of high school and finding herself out of a job, "took the opportunity" while she had it. She offered her definition of success in a rather straightforward, matter-of-fact tone of voice:

> Being able to do what you enjoy doing. If you don't enjoy it, I mean, you've not succeeded, but I figure that's with anything in life.

Abigail, another 30-year veteran of the manufacturing industry, echoed Terry's sentiments, emphasizing the hope that her next job would be enjoyable, because for the 30 years she had spent in manufacturing, she

> …was there really mostly because of the money. I didn't enjoy what I was doing, and so I just felt like if I went to school, I could find a job that I liked to do.

She went on to provide her personal definition of success:

> …being able to study, to get the kind of work that you want to do and not necessarily the salary but get into something you enjoy doing…When I first began school, I was working seven days a week at work. And when I first started school, I just, there was days I wanted to give up on it, because I had to work so much. But then I felt like it would be worth it because I would be able to do a job that I'd like to do instead of the job I was doing.

Actual Experiences Compared With Initial Feelings, Goals, and Expectations

The 23 displaced workers, ages 33 to 55, who participated in this study, had eagerly, nervously, and apprehensively entered Northeast State. They were armed with their individual hopes, dreams, and aspirations as well as burdened by their individual fears and doubts. For most—19 in fact—it was their first classroom experience beyond completing a high school diploma or GED.

Facing Initial Fears

Without exception, each of the participants had described an initial fear or fears of going back to school. The two most often mentioned fears were a fear of not "fitting in" and a fear of failure. As previously described, the women, whose ages ranged from 33 to 55 and whose ages averaged 43.5 years, were most concerned about not fitting in with the "kids" they expected to find in the college classroom. Individually they expressed this concern, wondering how they were going to relate to or keep up with the "young people."

Dreading but ready to face reality, 55-year-old Juanita, who at first had been "very, very scared," entered the classroom only to find that

> …after the first day of school, I felt so at ease with the young people that I didn't even notice the age difference at all. I was pleased to see a variety of ages, we all could integrate well after all. It just made me feel like I was part of them…There was nothing to fear or be frightened of. Every new student, young or old, had the same anxieties I did.

Again without exception, each participant who had expressed a concern about not fitting in because of her age found that she did, in fact, fit in quite well with the students she encountered. Fifty-year-old Jennifer found that she wasn't as "intimidated by the younger people" as she thought she'd be. In addition, she discovered that the "older" students and the "younger" students could be of significant benefit to each other by working together, sharing their strengths:

> …there's one little girl in my math class…she was having a really, really difficult time of it. So we had a group test, and she was excellent on one part, and I was pretty good on another part of it, and between the two of us, we come out of it with a decent grade.

Jill, whose greatest worry was whether there would be people her own age, was pleased to be able to report, "It's not just kids like I was afraid of." Betty, only 30 when she began, seemed awestruck to have discovered, "There was actually a few more older than I was!" Jeanne, who had feared being the "stupidest" or an "oddity" for being in college at 42, was quite pleased to learn that "…the classes are just a diverse range in ages. Some kids have just graduated school; other people are

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coming back for a second career." Forty-three-year-old Melody, initially "overwhelmed," found that her age simply wasn't a factor. She said, "Even though you're older than some of the students, they make you blend in. You're right there with them. You're all the same." Forty-one-year-old Becky essentially put the "not fitting in because of my age" fear to rest with her observation, "Once I got here, I realized over half the students was my age, and the younger students were the minority."

Secondary to the fear of not "fitting in," was the participants' fear of failure, of simply not "being able to do it." Patsy, who had initially felt that "coming through this hallway" had been "like starting back in first grade," said with a confident smile,

> I think it has been—actually, I guess it has been easier than what I expected, because I expected it to be just so hard by looking at the kids' books, the elementary, the grammar books, and from what I had done. And I guess everybody's explaining it to me sitting in a classroom setting has helped me with it, and it's not been as hard as I thought it would be.

Cynthia, the "33-year-old-married-forever woman," who initially worried about being "way out of" her league in trying to compete with those "wet-behind-the-ears-kids," reported

> …once I started…I wasn't as scared as I used to be. I was more confident. I felt like I could do the work. I don't feel like it's really as hard as I thought it was going to be. And switching between home life and coming to school was a lot simpler. And I'm not really expecting an A—a B will be fine!

Sandra, who had prepared herself to sit in the classroom with younger students and "catch on slower than they did," was able to say, "I was fine. I had to study, but I was okay…It

wasn't as hard as I thought. I'm glad I done it." Every participant who had voiced a concern about being "able to do it" had actually found that she was "able to do it." "I've done much better than I thought I would" was a common refrain.

Facing Reality

For some, being "able to do it" brought realities that they weren't initially anticipating. For example, reaching their individual academic expectations meant spending more time than they had anticipated studying; completing more homework than they had expected to be assigned; or arranging to get the extra help they hadn't anticipated needing, for example, working with tutors.

Forty-seven-year-old Louise was one who was somewhat surprised by the time commitment needed to be a successful student. She had admitted to being "a nervous wreck" because she "hadn't been to school in 30 years." In addition, she hadn't known what to expect attending college to be like; what she found was that "It's been a lot of hard work, and I just have to study all the time."

Rachel's experience was similar to Louise's, "The homework level for me was higher than I expected. I had to put a lot more time into my study because it took me longer to remember." Stephanie found that to be true as well. She found that homework was one of the things that she really hadn't budgeted for when she started school. She said, "You look at the hours in class,

and you think, 'Oh, yeah, I can do that.' But you don't think about, well, there's homework to go on top of that."

Wanda compared the actual experience of being a student to having a full-time job. She said her initial expectation in relation to the time involved was actually "nothing like it was. I thought it would be about like a job, but it was a lot more consuming because I couldn't never forget about it like I did a job." Louise felt equally challenged by the time commitment: "It's worse than having a full-time job. I mean, I put more time into my school work than I would have if I had a 40-hour-a-week job."

Jeanne described the time commitment she chose to make to her school work in relation to rethinking the way she spent her time and organized her priorities:

> Well, my free time is not free time anymore. You know, if I get any free time at all, it's working on some class. I just gave up a lot of things that I enjoyed doing. You know, I had favorite programs on TV. I had the little ritual, you know, what I watched on Monday night and what I watched on Tuesday night. And at first I tried doing homework while I was watching TV, and I realized that the homework was suffering, and I still didn't know what was going on in my programs so I just had to make the choice, was it free time or was it homework time?

Rethinking Goals and Academic Expectations

The reality of being a college student caused some participants to rethink their initial goals and academic expectations and the gauge by which they planned to measure success based on achieving specific grades. For example, Cynthia recalled

When I first decided to come to school, what I wanted was
to have great grades. I wanted to be able to finish and get
my associate degree and to get a better job. What I've
learned with the first semester, second semester almost
over, grades, they don't have to be all A's. What I'm
getting for myself is I feel better about myself. I think
success is the way that my confidence has gone since
classes have started. I feel like I can get through
anything, that I am determined to get a better job, but
success for me is just the feelings I'm getting, the
feelings of I'm doing this. I'm accomplishing this. This is
the best thing for me, and it's just, it's just, for me,
it's just the feeling of self-confidence.

Like Cynthia, Betty began to rethink her initial

expectations when her experience as a student enabled her to see

that "You can't do everything perfect; you can only do your

best." She was proud to say that she had "learned what she came

for" and that she "learned more every day."

Furthermore, in relation to initial goals, no one mentioned

a desire to continue her education beyond the associate of

applied science degree that she was entering Northeast State to

complete. However, the actual experience of being a college

student brought many of the participants, including Wanda and

Stephanie, to set new goals; that is, they've recognized a

desire to continue to learn. Stephanie said,

I didn't think I'd want to continue learning. Now I find
myself wanting to learn more. I'd like to come back and
take more classes, and I didn't expect that. I thought I'd
just want to get in and get out and find a job. Now I'm
finding I would like to learn more; there's more that I
would like to learn.

As described earlier, Wanda had been afraid of "actually

starting." To Wanda success initially meant making it through

the first day. Soon Wanda was successfully making it through day

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after day. She was pleased, yet more than pleased, she was
surprised to be able to say

> I've enjoyed learning again. I have had a hard time in some
> classes, but basically I've discovered that I'm becoming a
> perpetual student, and I enjoy learning new things. I
> actually got in honor societies, which I had made good
> grades in high school, but I felt like that through the
> years I had lost everything. But after I enjoyed it so
> much, I did much better than I thought I would. I'm going
> to work towards my B.S. and maybe even more one day.

Prior to entering college, Terry hadn't set any specific
goals. She said that it was hard to set goals at her age; she's
51. Like Wanda and Stephanie, Terry's "goal-setting" ways have
changed now that she has experienced being a college student.
She found that the best part of her experience was

> …just the experience of meeting new people that's got
> different ideas than what I've carried along all these
> years. That's had a big impact on me because I've met
> people that I never thought I'd meet in my life, you know.
> Like I said, they know more, they know more about things
> that I never even heard of, and that's had a big impact.

It has, in fact, had such a big impact on Terry that she now
says, "I want to do all I can; I want to learn more, like I want
to come back to school. I want to get more education."

Finding Success

When asked whether she would consider her educational
experience a success, each of the participants responded with an
emphatic, "Yes." Each was asked to explain to whom or to what
she attributed the success that she had experienced. The
participants attributed their success to one or both of the
following: their support system, including family, friends,

church, peers, teachers, and other institutional support personnel, and/or their own personal determination to succeed.

Having Support Systems. As documented by the literature, adult female students need more support to help ensure their success than do traditional female and male students and adult male students. In addition, Rodriguez (1996) found that institutions often lacked support services designed to help women be successful in furthering their education. However, the participants in this study attributed their success more to the support and services provided by Northeast State Technical Community College's faculty and staff than to any other factor, including the support of their families.

The most frequently given response when asked to what factor(s) the participants attributed their success was, "The teachers." In fact, 14 of the 23 participants described the help and support they received from their teachers as contributing more to their success than any other factor associated with the support and services provided by the college, including counseling, advising, and tutoring services. The teachers were repeatedly described as "helpful," "wonderful," "understanding," and "sincere."

Johnson et al. (1995) found that fear of nonacceptance by faculty created a cause for concern on the part of typical female adult students. Fifty-five-year-old Juanita expressed that fear as one of her concerns, when she commented that she had initially been apprehensive about the relationships she

might have with her teachers. Fortunately, Juanita found her

student-teacher relationships to be particularly beneficial:

> I think that the greatest benefit to me was the attention teachers provided to their students' needs—it has been phenomenal. I saw that teachers were not just there to cover their curriculum, cover the material, but they actually take the initiative and care to be sure one understands what's being taught. They draw you out to help you. They are willing to always make themselves available, either during class or after class, using their own time. They always make themselves available. This has been beneficial for me, as I have had to meet many times with my professors to go over material I didn't understand during class.

Patsy, like Juanita, described how it made her feel simply

to be acknowledged in the hallway and to experience teachers who

> …seemed to take a personal interest in you, and they help you in every way they can. Like, I guess when I came in down there to do, I don't know if it was summer registration or what, you looked at me and smiled…another student that was with me, came with me, she goes, "They are so friendly over here." She said, "They act like they know you." And I guess that, that I wasn't just a number for them to walk past me in the hallway and not even know who I am, you know, I guess that meant a lot to me.

Forty-seven-year-old Louise entered college feeling that

she was too old—at 47—and to ill-prepared to succeed. She was

just finishing her second semester when we met. Louise said that

she was finding school to be much more difficult than she had

initially anticipated. In fact, she had recently completed the

most difficult challenge she had faced since entering: writing

her first research paper in 30 years, her first-ever college-

level research paper. Louise recognized that she needed to

improve her writing skills. As a matter of fact, Hanner (1995)

found that adult female learners typically expressed a strong

desire to improve their writing skills. Consequently, Louise attributed her success in completing the project to her teacher's being "helpful" and "understanding":

> …my composition teacher is…real helpful and understanding. And if you make a mistake or put the wrong word in or leave a verb or something out, you know, she doesn't jump all over you. She's right there to explain to you what you did wrong and how to do it right. I just love it.

Louise's choice of words, "jump all over you," and her seemingly being surprised not to have been "jumped all over" reinforced the fear of nonacceptance by teachers as a prevailing fear among female adult learners.

Furthermore, Annette said that she had been successful because it was a teacher who kept telling her that she could do it, when she (Annette) thought that she couldn't! Other participants' comments echoed Annette's sentiments. In addition, the respondents' remarks consistently reflected the extent to which they appreciated their teachers' support and encouragement. Fifty-year-old Jennifer said that it was the support from her teachers that meant the most to her, how her teachers "took into account" that she was an older student and that she was "coming from a difficult situation." According to Jennifer, through her teachers' actions, they said,

> …you need help, I'm here for you. I'll do it, do what I can for you, and any time you need help, we're here. And not only the words they have said but the back-up behind it has helped, too.

Cynthia was another student who credited the teachers with her having had a "good experience." Cynthia told a very personal story about one teacher's impact on her self-confidence:

> The first test I had in one of my classes, I was really upset about it and went out of there crying. The teacher came and got me, made me go back in and sat down and helped me, to where I felt better when I left the second time.

I got the impression from Cynthia's tone and body language that if not for that teacher's intervention, she might not have returned to class—ever.

Rachel's remarks best reflected overall the appreciation expressed by the participants for their teachers' help, support, encouragement, and friendship:

> I don't think I came in contact with any teachers that weren't supportive. I know I asked more questions than the younger students did, but they were always willing to answer those questions and work with me if I needed help, and I appreciated that. And bonded a lot of friendships.

The participants also noted that the benefits they received through counseling, advisement, and tutoring services contributed to their success. Terry noted that "…any time you asked anything, you could find out what you wanted. They didn't make you feel like you were being stupid just asking the question." Miranda agreed, "Whenever I need help, help is always here at school…Just everybody has been very helpful."

In relationship to the factors to which the participants attributed their success, support from family was secondary to the support provided by the college's faculty and staff. As documented by the literature, female adult students' success is dependent on behavioral and emotional support from family members (Kaplan & Saltiel, 1997; Rodriguez, 1996). Furthermore, 2 of the 13 married participants in this study indicated that their husbands were neither supportive nor helpful. Danielle's

husband, for example, told her that she could not go to school. Danielle, however, chose otherwise; she did go to school and she did graduate with honors, all without any emotional or behavioral support whatsoever from her husband.

In addition, while Wanda noted that her husband wasn't supportive, she was able to report,

> My family helped me a lot. My kids have been proud of me because they could say their momma was going to college. And my parents were real supportive.

The 11 other married participants attributed at least some of their success to having supportive husbands. I found Juanita's description of the factors driving her success to be quite moving:

> Having a supportive husband at home who encouraged me, seeing his proud and happy face when he talked about my schooling made me all the more want to do better. If not for me, then to not prove him a liar. I know he would have loved to go on to higher learning but times were not easy for him when he was young. So I was going to school in essence, for us both. What I learned, I shared with him.

Juanita also shared that her husband is a prostate cancer survivor whose medical needs required them to visit a medical facility in Nashville, Tennessee, every three to four months during the time that she was enrolled.

Rachel described her husband's having "to take on new roles." Rachel, like many others, outlined the sacrifices that her husband or other family members made and the roles they assumed to help her make the transition to full-time college student:

> My husband had to do a lot of the cleaning. Some days he had to cook because I was sitting in the chair studying,

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> and sometimes that bothered me. Just seeing him doing
> something I felt like I should be doing. It bothered me,
> but I was very fortunate to have that support.

Rachel and others experienced two primary problems that most adult female learners face in coordinating family responsibilities and functioning in multiple roles—managing time and feeling guilty (Kegan, 1994; Rodriguez, 1996; St. Pierre, 1989).

Jennifer counted herself fortunate when support came from an unexpected source. According to Jennifer, she and her daughter-in-law had had a "hesitant" relationship, not what she would necessarily call a "bad" relationship, just difficult at times. However, when Jennifer's car "tore up, that little girl, she turned her life upside down for two weeks solid to see that" Jennifer got to school.

Cynthia had perhaps the most uniquely designed family support system. Related to her supporters, she called her mom "the biggest one—she goes to school with me!" When 33-year-old Cynthia decided to go to college, her mother decided to go with her. They chose the same major and scheduled as many of their classes together as possible. In addition to her mother, Cynthia could boast both a supportive husband and children. She said that whenever she was having trouble with math, her 13-year-old son sat down and said, "Okay, Mom, let me show you how to do it," and then did!

Louise also got help from a son, or stepson, that is, when she needed it most. One of Louise's initial fears had to do with her being behind "technologically." Louise saw just how far

behind she was technologically during her first week of class. However, what could have been a very negative and daunting experience for Louise, ended with success because of her stepson's support and eagerness to see her succeed. Louise's story was funny when she recounted it in the interview, but it wasn't so funny at the time:

> My first day in school here in Document Processing, I knew absolutely nothing about a computer, and he came home and I was sitting there in the chair at the computer, just sitting there looking at it, and he said, "What's wrong with you?" Because I was really upset. I said, "I don't know what I'm doing." I said, "I don't even know what a mouse is." And he sat down and worked with me for about two hours to show me everything.

Jeanne, a single mother of a college freshman and a high school senior, didn't know what to expect when she first approached her girls to tell them of her plans and to discuss the impact her decision was likely to have on their lives. She was very pleased by their response:

> …whenever I decided to come back to school, it was going to affect my kids, and so I told them, you know, that we may not have as much money as what we had and stuff, but it was something that I really wanted to do. And, you know, they really supported me and said, "Well, do whatever you want to do, and we'll adjust to it."

In addition to the support she received from her family, the sense of belonging, or the connectedness (Wlodkowski, 1999), that each woman felt for others in her peer group and the awareness that she was cared for by others significantly contributed to her having a successful college experience. Spratt (1984) found that "immediate rapport" took place among adult students in the classroom. Immediate rapport did, in fact,

take place among these displaced workers whenever they encountered each other in the classroom or elsewhere on campus. For example, Juanita commented that she had

> …developed some excellent relationships with peers. In every one of my classes, I have developed a good rapport with quite a few that we meet before, after class, and chat on the Internet, or call each other if we have questions. Plus we've become friends on a personal level as well.

Furthermore, most of the participants described relationships that they developed that existed both inside and outside the classroom, in essence forming a "sisterhood" that grew from providing support and encouragement on campus to sustaining each other off campus as individual discouragements, personal problems, and in one instance, personal tragedy, threatened their educational pursuits.

> Jill, whose initial fear was of not fitting in, found that

> It helped a lot, you know, having somebody you, that you can work with and talk to and—that helped a lot. You're not coming in here feeling like you're going to be a stranger, you know, not fitting in.

Miranda emphasized the concept of sisterhood, the we-are-in-this-together attitude that was mentioned by so many of the participants:

> …other students that are in the same, walking in the same shoes as I have, we tend to stick together. We have a big way of leaning on each other, encouraging each other. I tend to, I have some particular colleagues that I have gotten very close to that are dislocated workers just like I am, who tend to get discouraged very easily, and I try to—it lifts me up, too—I try to encourage them that we can do this, that we are doing this together, and that we're going to do this. We're going to make it, and I tend to—the relationships that I've made with, with those colleagues of mine that are in the same shoes as me, we tend to, we do stick together and encourage each other.

The women formed study groups that met on-campus, on-line, or on the telephone. As Sandra noted, she and the members of her peer group would study together so that "…if we're having problems, we can ask each other and, you know, guide each other on how to figure something out." Furthermore, Rachel said it helped her that she entered college at a time when so many other displaced workers were attending

> Because we were all starting over, and we all studied together, and I think if I would have started back by myself, I wouldn't have bonded quickly with another generation of students, and these were women and men my own age starting back to school, and I think it made it easier.

Mary described the importance of attending school with friends who can lift you up and encourage you, who tell "you can" on the days you think "you can't." She described how she and her peers helped each other:

> We were all going through these certain days, you know, like maybe we didn't do well on a test or we were having trouble with the homework or, you know, some days we all would say, "I'm just going to quit" or "I just can't handle this anymore." They'd always be there to pat you on the back…

Susan attributed the support of her friends to her staying in school when personal tragedy struck. When Susan lost her job and subsequently entered Northeast State, she was caring for her disabled husband. Halfway through her program, Susan's husband unexpectedly passed away; she was in class at the time. Susan had been motivated to attend college by her husband's staunch support: "My husband was real encouraging, and he helped me, you know, to keep on going and not get discouraged or depressed."

When he died, she initially felt too disheartened to continue; however, because of the support she received from her "campus family," she was able to continue. Susan said that what most contributed to her success was the fact that her "…friends and all the teachers just rallied around me and helped me to keep going and not give up…when my husband passed away." The support and encouragement that Susan received was such that not only did she make a 4.0 the semester of his death, she graduated with a 3.98 a little over a year later.

In addition to the support and encouragement found both on campus and off, some noted the comfort they found in their faith. I was both moved and amused by the comment Stephanie added during the member check process:

> I felt badly after the interview because I had not given God any of the credit for my success, but I did see His hand in so much of it. Algebra really can improve your prayer life!

Having the Right Attitude.   While the majority of the respondents credited the help and encouragement that they received from their support systems as being the primary factor(s) that contributed to their success, some recognized the impact that their own overall attitudes had on their achieving success. Sandra and Betty were the most succinct. When asked to what factors she attributed her success, Sandra simply replied, "My determination." Betty said, "Myself. I think I really pushed myself to achieve what I wanted to achieve." Furthermore, Abigail, who attempted college over 30 years ago after graduating from high school and then reentered after being

displaced from her job of 30 years, simply said, "I was more determined to finish this time."

Juanita said her success came from "…continually keeping in focus my priority was school, and everything else was second." Louise's determination was equally strong, and she was willing to do whatever it took to reach her goals. She said,

> I've always had a determination that when I do something, I'm going to see it through. I try not to start something and not finish it. And as far as school goes, I don't want a B or a C; I want an A, and I strive to get that A. So if it means putting in five or six extra hours, then I'm going to put five or six extra hours into it.

Jeanne noted that life experience had prepared her to be successful in college:

> …I've always had to work for what I wanted, and that's what college is. It's a lot of hard work. It's a lot of studying. It's being responsible, doing things in a timely manner, and I think that life in general has prepared me for that…

Even though only a few of the participants actually credited themselves, or their own personal drive and determination, as being the primary factor responsible for their success, data analysis revealed a consistent theme of thought related to the participants' overall attitude about entering college, an overall attitude that couldn't help but contribute to the individual successes the participants enjoyed. That overall attitude was one of appreciation for having been given the opportunity to continue her education. Most of the participants in this study had been displaced because of their jobs being moved outside the country, yet not one participant reflected a negative attitude toward her employer, the

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government, nor her current status. Instead, each reflected a positive, albeit fearful, attitude toward attending college and a thankfulness for having the opportunity to do so. Not one participant, regardless of her number of years in the workforce, demonstrated a "somebody owes me" attitude. When I asked Mary why she thought those in her peer group had done so well and had had such positive experiences, she replied, "We took this more as an opportunity to come back to school than a disappointment."

Even Juanita, the oldest participant at 55, who was at an age when many are looking toward retirement and who was being discouraged by family members, was eager to "accept the challenge":

> My mother couldn't understand why at my age I wanted to go back to school, what did I think I was going to accomplish, and in her own way tried to "belittle" me for going to college. After trying unsuccessfully at many occasions to have her see my feelings on the matter and trying to reinforce her to listen to my needs and desires, I felt it better to just let it go and accept the challenge of my opportunity. And let nothing stop me.

Encountering Barriers

Juanita wasn't the only one who had to deal with dispiriting family members or friends. As Kaplan and Saltiel (1997) found, negative behavioral and emotional support from family members is a source of discouragement for adult learners. Like Juanita, 47-year old Louise had to contend with family members' remarks about her being too old to go to college. Nadine, on the other hand, experienced disparaging remarks from friends. The peer pressure 42-year-old Nadine faced was evident

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through her description of her friends' discouraging remarks. Her friends said things like, "…girl, you ain't gonna make it…you ain't gonna stay in school long enough to do nothing," to which she said she'd responded, "Well, I'm doing my best. I'm staying, ain't I?"

Disparaging or discouraging remarks were simply one of many of the different types of barriers that these 23 displaced workers encountered as they worked toward having a successful educational experience. As documented in the literature, the adult's experience as a college student is often marred by barriers that may be institutional, situational, dispositional, personal, or informational (Chickering & Obstfeld, 1982; Cross, 1981; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Data analysis revealed that the 23 participants in this study encountered a variety of barriers, including dispositional, situational, and institutional.

Dispositional Barriers. According to Cross (1981), "Dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner" (p. 98). Furthermore, Cross found that dispositional barriers are oftentimes related to feeling too old to learn, lacking self-confidence in one's ability to learn, not having enough energy and stamina to learn, or not enjoying studying or being in the classroom (Cross). In addition to experiencing these four dispositional barriers, an analysis of the respondents' experiences as reflected in the interview transcripts revealed that the participants' attitudes

and self-perceptions also included feeling too ill-prepared or lacking in background knowledge, too hesitant to ask for help, and too overwhelmed and stressed by the volume and difficulty of the material. In addition, several expressed a dislike for, as well as a disappointment in, having to take developmental or preparatory courses, specifically math and English.

In relationship to their initial fears, the respondents feared they would not "fit in"; that is, they feared they would not "fit in," because they expected the college population to be "young people" or "kids." In addition to fearing that their age would keep them from "fitting in," they also expressed feeling too old to learn. Consequently, their self-perception or attitude reflected that they had doubts about their ability to learn simply because of their age. Miranda compared her ability to learn to what she observed in her younger counterparts:

> …as far as being any stumbling block, I do feel that my age is a, where I am in life now and my age in respect that it takes me a whole lot longer than my younger classmates. My younger colleagues seem to dive right in, and oftentimes I hear them say they've studied an hour where I've studied for four days, and it totally amazes me. Like how can they do that?

Susan, 40 when she entered Northeast State, felt that her ability to learn might be impaired because of her age, and that she "…just wouldn't be able to keep up." Betty, just 30 when she entered, expressed that same fear and added, "I was also afraid that I wouldn't be able to make the grades that I wanted to." Patsy, 43 when she began, "…wasn't sure I couldn't even do that at my age, and I just really didn't think I could do it." Furthermore, Patsy, now 46, discovered early in her college

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career that she sometimes had to work harder, a fact that she specifically attributed to being older. She gave an example of a recent experience:

> I set yesterday from three o'clock until almost eight working on some of my work. I have to work harder than, or going over it more because I'm older, and I just don't grasp it as much as the younger people do.

The respondents consistently expressed an initial lack of self-confidence, most often by simply saying, "I didn't think I could do it," or "I was afraid I couldn't do it," or "I was afraid I would fail." More often than not, their concern about not being able to "do it" was directly related to their feeling "too old." Their concern about their age was also reflected in comments about the length of time it took or the extra effort and energy that went into completing assignments. Juanita described her experience in a course she found particularly difficult because of the stamina needed to learn the material:

> Once I began the program in medical terminology, there were times I didn't think I would be able to comprehend and remember all those terms. It was like learning a new language. But I took actions to overcome my insecure feelings by making "flashcards" with all the words from each chapter and having my husband quiz me until it became easier and easier. That method really helped me tremendously.

Nadine had initially expected to enter college and to take only courses that were directly related to her major, for example, records management and word processing. Consequently, she was both disappointed and frustrated to learn that she was required to take some college preparatory courses because of low entrance examination scores, specifically math and English. Nadine was one of five whose experience with developmental

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courses resulted in negative feelings related to enjoying studying and the classroom. As an example, Abigail's dislike of math represented a significant barrier:

> I hated math. I had to take the developmental classes, and I didn't have algebra in high school, and so I almost quit when I was involved in that because I hated the math classes.

Abigail wasn't the only respondent with a class experience that almost resulted in her "calling it quits." Patsy's keyboarding experience negatively impacted her self-perception to the point that, in her own words, "I could not get over it." Furthermore, she said that the experience was the "biggest barrier" she faced:

> …making that F in Keyboarding. I just, I had never typed, even on a typewriter until I started, and I just kept going along and then like two weeks before the end of the semester they said, "If you don't get your speed up, you're going to get an F." And when she said that, that was it. I just, that was the end of my typing. I could not get over it.

Situational Barriers. As documented by the literature, primary situational barriers include costs associated with attending college, including tuition, books, and child care; lack of time, home and family responsibilities; job responsibilities; lack of child care; lack of transportation; no place to study; and lack of support from family and friends (Chickering & Obstfeld, 1982; Cross, 1981). None of the study participants were faced with paying tuition or books; the total cost for tuition and books was federally funded because of the participants' dislocated worker status. In addition, the

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participants collected unemployment insurance for varying lengths of time. However, the benefits they received were not, of course, equal to the pay and benefits they were making prior to being displaced. Home and Hinds (2000) found "low income to be the most problematic" for multiple-role female adult learners. Sandra, a single mother of two, couldn't have agreed more. For Sandra, "money struggles" represented the biggest threat to her successfully completing her education. She said, "It's been hard as far as budget-wise." However, the way she looked at it, "…in the long run, it will pay off."

"Money difficulties," in addition to marital problems, were two of the barriers Wanda, a mother of two, faced as a multiple-role adult learner. Juanita, too, felt that the decrease in income represented a "great barrier":

> Another great barrier was money. I no longer had the money coming in as before. My income was completely void. It became a very tight matter of budgeting and living within my husband's income. There were many months when we wondered if we would make it.

Miranda was readying herself to face financial difficulty with the loss of her unemployment insurance looming:

> I am receiving unemployment right now which will be running out in about five weeks from now. About May 10 will be the last of my unemployment. So that will be the first period of time that my husband and I will be without my unemployment check, which brings in approximately $191 a week to be exact. So we will be without that income, and I do see that a difference in our lifestyle, soon to happen, and for the next year because my husband and I made the decision that for me not to work.

Many of the respondents commented that being a full-time college student took a greater time commitment than what they

had initially anticipated. In order for them to be eligible for the benefits they received, the women had to be enrolled in programs that could be completed within 104 calendar weeks, essentially six semesters. Many of the women tested into developmental courses, resulting in their having to take an increased credit-hour load each semester. Data analysis revealed that the participants' credit-hour course loads ranged from 12 to 20 credit hours per semester. In addition, the time they reported spending outside of class on work related to their classes ranged from 5 to 40 hours per week! Eight of the participants reported working for pay at some time during the time they were enrolled as full-time students, ranging from 10 to 30 hours per week. Jennifer found her struggle to meet her own personal, her instructors', and her employers' expectations to be quite exasperating at times:

> Getting the work to understand that I cannot work 30 hours a week and do homework. Since I went to work, my grades have just gone, just horrible, and they have a responsibility to their customers. They expect me to help meet that responsibility. I went in there telling them that I can only do this, at this time, so many hours. And it's like pulling teeth to get them to understand that.

Jill, a single mother, worked two part-time jobs, sometimes up to 35 hours a week, at the same time she was enrolled as a full-time student, averaging 16 hours a semester. Her work schedule involved her working "20 hours—every other weekend I work the weekend and that averages 15 hours a weekend—and then 20 hours a week."

Related to home and family responsibilities, four of the participants were single, reportedly responsible only for

themselves; four of the participants were married without children at home; five of the participants were single parents with one or two children at home; and 10 of the participants were married with one or two children at home. In relationship to those participants who were parents, none reported a lack of child care as a barrier. In fact, members of their support system, including husbands and parents, had helped out as needed, for example, caring for sick children or taking children to doctor or dentist appointments as needed. What the parents did report as barriers were their conflicted feelings over the sacrifices their families were having to make and the adjustments they themselves were having to make to simultaneously be a successful student and an involved parent.

Cynthia, a married mother of two children ages 10 and 13, was concerned about the time being a full-time student would take from the time she had to spend with her children: "I didn't know if I'd have the time, if it would take too much away from the kids. I mean, I'm real active when it comes to my kids." Danielle, whose children were five and nine when she first entered college, found it difficult at times to get her homework done, particularly because she couldn't count on support from her husband:

> I am a mother of two, and everybody played ball. And you come home from school; you have all this homework to do; you got supper; you got to go and run to the ballgames; and you still have that homework to do.

Jeanne, a single mother of two, shared Cynthia's and Danielle's concerns. Even though her children weren't as young

as Cynthia's, she, too, was actively involved as a parent and didn't want that to change. Jeanne described how she had incorporated studying and supporting her child's extracurricular activities:

> There's been times my daughter was in band in high school, and there was a lot of times that I would go to football games to watch her perform that I would, you know, be working on homework in the stands. But, you know, or whenever she was at practice, I'd be doing homework or reading, you know, a chapter or something so there's always ways to work around the things that you have to do.

Mary, a married parent of two, said she didn't want to miss "anything" her daughter's senior year in high school:

> So I thought, now, I cannot, just because I'm in school, I cannot miss out on this. And especially like her senior year. I didn't want to miss anything, you know, her senior year because this is it; it's not going to be anymore, and I'm not going to miss anything, so I didn't. And that was, that was hard. That put a lot on me, too, because we would go to ballgames, and then I'd stay up to two or three o'clock studying.

While Cynthia, Jeanne, and Mary struggled simultaneously to parent and succeed as adult learners, others were caring for their aging or sick parents. For example, 55-year-old Juanita struggled to take care of her aging parents and support her husband through prostate cancer, all while she was enrolled as a full-time student even taking up to 19 credit hours a semester. To borrow Juanita's word, her home life was "intense":

> My home life is intense. I have two aging parents. My father had to be placed into a nursing home two years ago due to Alzheimer's, and it still greatly pains me that he can't be with us anymore, and it hurts to watch his mind slowly wither away. I visit my father as often as possible to make sure that he is getting the treatment that he so deserves, and I'm always on top of the staff there to make

sure that they take better care of him. Since he has
reversed back to his native language, German, 90% of the
time, the nursing home staff is not always able to
understand his desires or his discomforts.

Although my mother is still quite capable of managing her
home and most of her affairs, I supervise her paying her
bills, making sure she keeps her doctor appointments and
going with her per her doctor's request as she has a
tendency to forget what he tells her.

I also have a loving and loyal husband that has survived
prostate cancer for two years now and has medical needs
that requires him to return to Vanderbilt Hospital in
Nashville routinely, about every three or four months.

The biggest situational barrier that Terry faced came in
the form of her own ill health during the fourth semester that
she was enrolled. Her determination to succeed helped her stay
in school:

In the second summer, I had a lot of medical problems. I
was, I had to come to class on a cane. I was under a lot of
medication, and I, that was a big, that was, I was almost
to the point of having to stop, but I kept going so I
didn't have to, but that was the biggest obstacle that I
faced.

In addition, while most were, in fact, supported and
encouraged by their family and friends, others were challenged
by the lack of encouragement and support from their family and
peers—Juanita faced "belittling" from her mother; Nadine coped
with friends who told her she couldn't make it. Wanda, Danielle,
and Melody held on even as their husbands told them they
couldn't succeed and attempted to sabotage their efforts. Melody
found that her and her husband's conflicting goals presented a
significant obstacle:

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Well, it put a lot of pressure on my husband and I. We're separated now because of it, but we're trying to work it out. He had his goals where he wanted to set up a business, and he felt like me going back to school wasn't helping him get his business started. And now that I'm going to school, he has asked me, "Well, what have you learned at school? I mean, is there anything that you could put forth in helping me getting my business started?" And it was all like it was evolved around him and that my goals didn't matter.

Danielle's husband was blatantly opposed to her entering school, so much so that he not only told her she would not be going, he also refused to help her with the children or take on any other responsibilities to support Danielle when she ignored him and chose to go to college. Not having any support at home and being responsible for meeting all of the children's needs made it particularly difficult for Danielle to study at home. Because she had no support at home, Danielle said for her the most difficult part of being a student was

Studying at home. Coming down here and doing the classes and all, that was not that bad; but having to go home and do all the work and stuff and trying to level out your time, it was hard.

Furthermore, the comments Patsy added during the member check process, epitomizing the extent to which some adult female students faced situational barriers, left me humbled and in awe of her dedication, determination, strength of will, and faith:

The barriers in my home life is something that you have to put in the back of your mind and not let it get you down. These things happened to me from 2000-2003:

My dad had a wreck and complications from the wreck caused him to have to have brain surgery. They did surgery on him, and he started doing better. Then two months later they had to go back and drain the fluid from his brain again.

My husband's father had a heart attack and had to have open-heart surgery. This happened during finals, and I had to leave my husband at the hospital during the surgery and take a test and go back to the hospital.

Our son had kidney stones several times and finally had to have surgery two times. Our daughter was in the hospital for two or three days; they finally did an appendectomy, and she got okay.

My husband quit his job—he had worked for 17.5 years—with no prospects of another job.

We found out our son was on "hard" street drugs. That almost got me down, but I knew that I had to go on. He went through two failed drug treatment programs. He is off street drugs now and in an opiate dependence program.

I was sitting in the construction zone, and a guy hit me in the rear and totaled my car that I had only had for six months.

I was supposed to graduate in 2002, but I still had some courses to take so TAA would not pay for another semester, and I was turned down for a PELL Grant. Financial Aid finally did a special request for a PELL Grant, and it came through, and I was able to finish up with it.

With a lot of praying and hard work, I have managed to keep my grades up and am ready to graduate.

Institutional Barriers. The least often mentioned type of barriers was institutional barriers. According to Cross (1981), "Institutional barriers…exclude or discourage" adult learners (p. 98). As revealed by the data analysis, the institutional barriers most often encountered by the study participants included the work level required by particular classes or courses of study, requirements imposed by the institution or the State of Tennessee, and the 104-week completion time mandated in the funding guidelines. As described earlier, the participants

reported spending anywhere from 5 to 40 hours each week outside of class on work specifically related to their credit-hour loads. Most estimated that they spent between 20 and 30 hours per week on homework, reading, lab work, or other activities associated with their course work.

Patsy commented that she probably spent from five to eight hours each weekday working on homework. In explaining why she had to spend so much time, she said, "because I'm older and I just don't grasp it…" Patsy was in the majority; 15 of the women reported spending 15 to 30 hours per week on homework; one reported averaging 40 hours per week! Jennifer, who reported spending only five hours outside of class, said she wanted to spend more time on her homework, however, working 30 hours per week prevented her from being able to do that.

Related to the requirements imposed by the institution or the State of Tennessee, the participants were most unhappy with having to satisfy math and English requirements, particularly developmental math and English. Abigail, who "hated the math," considered dropping out of school because of the difficulty she was having with algebra, a course she thought had no relevance to her major. Abigail was one of five who found the math and English requirements to be particularly burdensome. In addition, the 104-week completion deadline presented a concern for many simply because it resulted in their having to take such heavy course loads. Furthermore, participants commented on the difficulty they had at times trying to get the classes they needed in a specific semester or in a particular format. Louise,

for example, was equally frustrated and challenged by her Summer 2003 schedule:

> I've got a 18-hour course load for summer, and five weeks of it, of course, is office stuff; and I've got to start math, and I've never had math. I've never had algebra. I've got to do it over the Internet; it's the only time it's offered to where it won't interfere with my other classes. I don't like that. I feel like that I should have a teacher, where if I have a question, they can answer that question, but I don't have any other choice but to do it on the Internet right now and that's, I do not like that.

As reflected by the data analysis, each of the 23 participants in this study began a life-altering journey when she "took advantage of the opportunity" to attend college after being displaced from her job. Each woman began with initial fears, expectations, and hopes for success. As she actually lived the experience of being an adult learner in a community college, in addition to functioning in the additional roles she may have had as a mother, daughter, wife, friend, or caregiver, she experienced tremendous growth, both personally and academically.

As they described the factors that helped make their educational experiences a success as well as the barriers that impeded their progress, the women told stories of triumph over adversity, describing how sheer strength of will and determination kept them in school. There were, at times, a few who wanted to quit; but they didn't. The majority described instances where they were equally challenged, rewarded, motivated, frustrated, devastated, and afraid—but they never

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wanted to quit. As Wanda said, "It never entered my mind to quit."

Furthermore, as revealed by the data analysis, Louise's comments, added during the member check process, seemed to accurately represent the group's perspective:

> It is a sad situation that our government is allowing American industry to be sent to China, Canada, and Mexico. I was given the opportunity to return to school, and I am thankful that Northeast State is here to attend.

The analysis of the data as presented in Chapter 4 illustrates the many themes of thought that were found in the perceptions expressed by the study participants in the interview process. Furthermore, the information provided through the data analysis was used in Chapter 5 to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Findings and recommendations for future practice developed from the data analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE, CONCLUSIONS, AND

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

<u>Introduction</u>

The actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners, were investigated through this phenomenological study. Equipped with an interview guide and a tape recorder, I interviewed 23 female displaced workers age 25 or older who had entered Northeast State Technical Community College after losing or leaving their jobs.

<u>Pertinent Findings from the Interviews</u>

This chapter contains the findings that emerged from the interview process. The findings, based on the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, are offered relative to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Recommendations for future practice, conclusions, and implications for further research are also included.

<u>Research Question One</u>

How do female adult learners who are displaced workers enrolled in an associate of applied science degree program in a community college define success in terms of their initial expectations?

Each of the participants was asked to define success relative to any goals or standards that she had set for herself prior to entering the classroom. As revealed by the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, the most often given response relative to the individual's definition of success was grade based. For example, 11 of the 23 participants interviewed said that they would define, or measure, their success by the grades they made. Four of the nine were very specific about their definitions of success: success meant A's, or at the very least, A's and B's. Five who planned to define, or measure, their success by the grades they made simply said "good grades," not having set a specific letter grade standard. Two said that success meant being "able to pass."

The second most often given definition, or measure, of success was "get the degree." Rather than have established a short-term success measure, seven of the study participants were looking further into the future, defining success as having the "piece of paper." Four other participants were also looking ahead when they defined success; that is, four defined success as being able to get a job when they completed their retraining. For one of the four, success meant having a job that would enable her to regain her status prior to displacement relative to salary and benefits. Furthermore, two of the four, two who had been displaced from jobs they had held for 30 years, specified that they wanted jobs that they could "enjoy." The fourth simply wanted to be able to "get a job."

One of the participants who had been particularly apprehensive about returning to the classroom defined success as being able to "get through the first day." While these represent the predominant definitions the participants provided when asked to define success relative to any goals or standards that they had set individually prior to entering the classroom, secondary comments reflected additional measures of success based on being "able to do the work" and "meeting expectations," including the expectations each set for herself and the expectations of others, particularly family members and teachers.

Research Question Two

What factors do adult female displaced workers identify as being essential for their educational experience to be a success?

Each of the participants was asked whether she considered her educational experience as an adult learner a success. Each quickly answered affirmatively. In addition, each was asked to describe the factors to which she attributed her success. As revealed by the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, the participants primarily identified one or more of the following as being essential to their success: the encouragement and support provided by the College's faculty and other support services, their families, and their peers; their faith in and help from God; and their own personal dedication and determination.

When asked to what or to whom they attributed their success, the most often given response was related to the help and encouragement given by teachers. Sixteen of the 23 participants described instances wherein the action or actions of one or more of their teachers had been responsible for their succeeding, including simply succeeding at a given point in time on a specific assignment to actually staying in school as opposed to quitting. Overall, the participants' remarks demonstrated their appreciation for their teachers' help and encouragement. In fact, unlike what was reflected in some of the literature, teachers were cited most frequently by the participants as being primarily responsible for their success.

As described by the participants, teachers' actions that proved essential to their having a successful educational experience included the teachers' making themselves readily available, taking "extra" time, paying attention to students' needs, taking the initiative to show they cared, taking a personal interest in the students' accomplishments, taking the time to encourage them, or just "going above and beyond" to help them succeed.

Additional factors to which the participants attributed their success included the support family members, peers, and the College's counselors and tutors provided. Participants' family members provided both emotional and behavioral support, taking on additional roles and responsibilities as needed to enable the participants to devote the time needed to their course work. The participants described sacrifices their family

members made to support their educational endeavors, including living on severely limited incomes and assuming additional responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning house, caring for children, and, in some instances, even helping with their homework.

In addition, participants observed that the support of their peers was essential to their having successful experiences as adult learners. The participants benefited from the "immediate rapport" that took place among those in the same circumstances, the sense of "connectedness" that resulted from finding someone just to talk to or to study and problem solve with as needed. Within their peer groups, they found encouragement, solace, support, and, sometimes, the answers to the questions!

In addition to emphasizing the important roles that their support systems played in their achieving success, many participants recognized that their potential for success lay in their own dedication and determination. As Jill commented, "You have to study at it; you have to be dedicated to it."

Research Question Three

What factors do female displaced workers identify as barriers to a successful educational experience?

A variety of terms and questions was used during the interview process in an attempt to discover the barriers that these female adult learners had encountered. For example, each of the participants was asked to do one or more of the

following: to describe any "barriers" she may have encountered, to describe any "difficulties" she may have experienced, or to outline any "frustrations" she may have faced. In addition, she was asked whether she had encountered a lack of support or open discouragement from anyone in her family, peer group, or elsewhere. Questions specific to the support and services provided by the College were also asked in an attempt to discover institutional barriers.

As revealed by the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, many of the participants encountered one or more types of barriers, including dispositional, situational, and/or institutional barriers. In addition, data analysis further revealed that the 23 adult learners in this study most often experienced dispositional barriers, including feeling too old to learn or "fit in"; lacking self-confidence in their ability to "do it," to be able to learn; feeling too ill-prepared or lacking in the background knowledge needed to succeed; being hesitant to ask for help; feeling overwhelmed and stressed by the volume of work and the level of difficulty of the material; and disliking studying or being in the classroom, specifically in relationship to developmental math and English courses.

In addition to the dispositional barriers they faced, most were coping with various situational barriers, including the financial difficulties that arose from their loss of income and the demands on their time because of the multiple roles they filled: mother, wife, parental caregiver, full-time student, employee, et cetera. In addition, in order to complete their

degrees within 104 weeks as required by the funding guidelines, the women were faced with heavy credit-hour course loads and the out-of-class time needed to complete course-related work and study. Additional situational barriers included coping with their own or a family member's ill health, finding a lack of either or both emotional and behavioral support from family members and peers, struggling with marital problems, and caring for aging parents.

As revealed by the data analysis, the participants in this study encountered fewer institutional barriers than they did dispositional or situational barriers. The institutional barriers the participants described related to the work level required by particular classes or courses or study; the requirements imposed by the institution or the State of Tennessee, specifically those related to math and English; and the 104-week completion time mandated in the funding guidelines. The 104-week completion time requirement resulted in the participants' having extremely high credit-hour course loads at times. The limited timeframe for completion also brought class scheduling difficulties for many, including their being unable to get their courses during certain semesters, at certain times, or in particular formats. For example, those who normally would have taken a traditional lecture class, which they would have preferred to do, may have been forced to take an Internet or televideo course.

Research Question Four

What do female displaced workers experience in the college, as compared with their initial expectations?

Each of the participants was asked to describe her initial thoughts, feelings, and expectations about becoming a college student prior to entering the classroom for the first time. She was also asked, at some point during her interview, to compare her actual experience to her initial expectations. As revealed by the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, the participants found their actual experiences to be much different from what they initially expected. They were, in fact, very pleasantly surprised with what they found.

Every one of the 23 participants had expressed a fear or fears of returning to the classroom. While there was a 22-year age span between the youngest participant and the oldest, the number and level of fears they expressed were equal. Those fears were primarily based on their fear of not "fitting in" and their fear of failing, of not being able to "do it," to learn. Both of their primary fears were related to age. Being unfamiliar with the community college campus, or any college campus for that matter, the women, ages 33 to 55, expected the campus to be populated by "young people" or "kids right out of high school." Therefore, they felt they would be too old to "fit in." In addition, because they had been out of the classroom for so long, they were concerned about their ability to learn. They imagined themselves not being able to keep up with the "young people."

However, what the participants actually experienced relative to these initial fears was that there was no basis for their fears, either of "fitting in" or of being able to "do it." Without exception, each of the participants found that she did fit in. They, in fact, found that age wasn't an issue. There was a diverse range of ages in each classroom they entered. They found that regardless of the range within each classroom, they quickly "blended in."

In addition, while many found that a greater time commitment than they had initially expected was needed to successfully complete course-related assignments and study for tests, they again found, without exception, that they could indeed "do it." In addition to their initial concerns of not being able to "fit in" or to learn because of their ages, the women had also expressed initial doubts about finding their way around, being able to relate to other students, and/or being able to work successfully with faculty. They found, however, through actual experience that their initial concerns were without merit.

They quickly became acclimated to the campus, getting to class on time and taking advantage of the many services available to them, including counseling and tutoring services. In addition, they formed supportive relationships with both peers and faculty members. Through the relationships they formed with their peers, they found friendship, encouragement, support, study assistance, and relationships to "last a lifetime." Through the relationships they formed with their teachers, they

found friendships, mentors, support, and encouragement. In fact, they credited their teachers' support and encouragement as being primarily responsible for their success.

While many entered initially expecting to measure their success by the grades they made or the degree they earned, actual experience provided a new perspective, as epitomized in Juanita's reflection:

> Before I started school, I think success to me was just going to college, getting that degree, and saying, "Here, I've a diploma." That's basically what I thought; but now that I have almost gotten that degree and am at the end, I define success as how I'm applying what I have learned into my life and not just in school—but in every facet of life. It's caused me to become more motivated, be more outgoing, to become a little bit more assertive than I used to be. I've learned to prioritize myself a lot more than I have in the past. I've learned to take more initiative where I see that I could excel in something and go forward and try to be the best I can. Success is attaining that for which one strives. I strove for getting a college degree. I've succeeded in that challenge I took on. But I realize there will always be more challenges and more achievements to be reached for. Success is achieved when whatever you are reaching for, you attain it and feel satisfied and content.

Overall, these 23 women entered the community college environment afraid they were too old to "fit in," and too old to learn, teeming with self-doubt and lacking in self-confidence. Determined to "make it through the first day" or make a certain grade, they entered with individual expectations as well as individual concerns related to the things they didn't "have a clue" about, such as what being a college student was in reality going to be like for them. While they found that perhaps they had underestimated the amount of homework required, the level of difficulty of the coursework, or the time commitment needed,

they also found that they had underestimated themselves and their ability to learn and to "fit in."

They found that they enjoyed meeting new people of all ages. They found that they could learn. They found, in fact, that the more they learned, the more they wanted to learn. They found an "instant rapport" with their classmates and their teachers. They found that they enjoyed the respect and self-confidence that came with success in the classroom. They found their actual experience to be better in every way than they had initially expected it to be.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Representing the actual experiences of female displaced workers entering community college, as compared with their initial expectations as adult learners, the findings, as outlined under Significance of the Study in Chapter 1, should enable community college administrators to revise policies, plans, and procedures to better meet the needs of female dislocated workers entering community college as adult learners. Furthermore, the findings should also enable community college faculty members, advisors, and counselors to interact more effectively with adult female learners. Therefore, based on the findings that resulted from the data analysis, I recommend that Northeast State Technical Community College implement the following to support its adult female student population by addressing the initial fears and institutional barriers

they described as well as by contributing to the factors related to the college and its personnel that they named as being essential to their success:

1. Annual orientation sessions for faculty to explore the characteristics of the adult female learner and to outline strategies to promote her success in the classroom.

2. Semester review of course offerings and instructional delivery formats to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the adult female learner.

3. The following suggested series of ten, one-hour workshops, provided at the beginning of each semester, to help alleviate the fears that were consistently expressed throughout the interview process, revealed through data analysis, and demonstrated in the literature:

"Welcome to College—You Can Do It!"

The first session would orient students to the campus and the workshop series. An open forum for students' questions and concerns would be included and campus tours would be given. Faculty and administrators would be invited to participate.

"Taking Stock"

This session would address personal assessment as a key factor leading to educational and career satisfaction. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator would be administered. The results would be provided and discussed at the next session.

"Taking Stock" (continued)

Myers-Briggs results would be distributed and their application to school and career success discussed.

"You CAN Do It!"

This session would address self-confidence and self-esteem building tools, including positive self-talk and visualization.

"Learn How You Learn!"

This session would provide tools for exploring individual learning styles and providing strategies for dealing with individual strengths and weaknesses related to learning style.

"Passive No More—Becoming an Aggressive Reader"

Strategies for becoming an aggressive reader by improving concentration and comprehension would be discussed.

"The No Fear Approach to Test Taking"

Designed to reduce text anxiety, this workshop would examine test-taking strategies.

"Make the Most of Your Memory"

Improving memory through the use of mnemonics and visualization would be just a couple of the success strategies explored in this session.

"It's Not Just About Time!"

The key to developing good time management skills is learning to manage oneself.

"You've Got a Friend!"

Personnel representing campus resources and student support services would outline the services available through their respective offices.

Conclusions

While there were many similarities among their perceptions, the experience of returning to the classroom after being displaced from her job appeared to be unique for each of the participants in this study. Each of the participants voluntarily chose to enter community college following her displacement, primarily because she recognized the need to retrain for today's job market and because funding was made available for her to attend.

Each of the participants entered the classroom with individual fears and expectations, many of which they shared with the other study participants. During their educational experience, they found their fears to be unfounded. In addition, they developed strategies for coping with the multiple responsibilities they faced both on campus and off. As they matured as college students, their initial feelings and expectations evolved and changed, enabling their self-doubts to diminish and their self-confidence to grow, resulting in a self-described successful educational experience.

Implications for Further Research

Further qualitative research to determine the perspectives of adult female students in general compared to those of female displaced workers who enter community college would be useful to expand the knowledge of higher education administrators, faculty members, and counselors about working effectively with these multiple-role students. In addition, because of the emphasis

placed by the participants on teachers' support and encouragement as being primary to their success, research to ascertain the perspectives of the faculty who work with female adult learners could yield additional implications for practice.

In addition, a quantitative study comparing the attitudes and opinions of or the similarities and differences between adult female and adult male dislocated workers who entered community college would yield even more insight into working with the increasingly adult community college population.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION LETTER

January 20, 2003

Dr. William Locke, President
Northeast State Technical Community College
2425 Highway 75
Blountville, TN 37617

Dear Dr. Locke:

I will appreciate your signing below to indicate that you have
approved my conducting my dissertation research on Northeast
State's campus. The purpose of my study is to investigate the
actual experiences of female displaced workers entering
community college as compared with their educational
expectations as adult learners by answering the following
research questions:

   1. How do female adult learners who are displaced workers
enrolled in an associate of applied science degree program in a
community college define success in terms of their educational
expectations?

   2. What do adult female displaced workers identify as being
essential for their educational experience to be a success?

   3. What do female displaced workers identify as barriers to
a successful educational experience?

   4. What do female displaced workers experience in the
college, as compared with their expectations?

Completing this study will involve my working with Wendell Lowe
to identify at least 20 currently enrolled or formerly enrolled
nontraditional female students who chose to enter Northeast
State when they were involuntarily separated from their jobs and
who would be willing to be interviewed for my study. While

Northeast State will be identified in the study as the location of the study, the participants will remain anonymous.

The significance of the study is that the findings should enable community college administrators to revise policies, plans, and procedures to better meet the needs of these unique students. The findings should also enable community college faculty members, advisors, and counselors to interact more effectively with adult female learners.

I sincerely appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Pashia Hogan

Approved by _____ on _____.
                    (Signature)   (date)

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTER

106 Log Cabin Road
Gray, TN 37615
March 1, 2003

Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP

Dear Ms. _____:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my dissertation
research on the subject of the perceptions of female displaced
workers in a community college regarding their educational
expectations and barriers to their advancement. As a community
college faculty member who works primarily with female adult
learners, it pleases me that you are willing to play a role in
improving the delivery of educational services to others who may
face the same circumstances that you have.

As I mentioned to you earlier, every participant in the study
will be assigned a pseudonym, and every response will be
maintained in strict confidence. While the true name of the
college will be listed in my dissertation, none of the
participants' names will be used.

I look forward to meeting with you at Northeast State on day,
date, and time in Room F207.

Sincerely,

Pashia Hogan, Associate Professor
Northeast State Technical Community College

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO TAPE

Date

_____
(Respondent's Name)

I will appreciate your signing below to indicate that you give
me permission to audio tape this interview and transcribe the
tape verbatim. Furthermore, your signing below indicates that
you fully understand the purpose of this study, that all of your
questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and that you
understand that your identity will be kept confidential.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate.
The information you provide will be invaluable.

_____   _____
        (Signature)   (Date)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Tell me about your experiences at Northeast State.

- What is your current situation?

- What prompted you to enter college upon displacement, particularly Northeast State?

- What feelings/thoughts did you have prior to the first day of class?

- What expectations did you have prior to attending class or completing any coursework?

- What aspects of your educational experience have had the greatest impacts?

- What problems have you experienced in your program?

- What do your consider your best academic achievements to date?

- How do you feel/think now in comparison to the way you felt/thought before attending class/beginning college?

- What do you think of the program? the support services? the college?

- How do you compare your initial expectations with your actual experiences?

APPENDIX E

AUDITOR'S REPORT

June 19, 2003

Ms. Pashia Hogan, Doctoral Candidate
East Tennessee State University
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
501 Warf-Pickel Hall
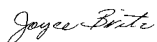Johnson City, TN 37614

Dear Pashia:

DISSERTATION AUDIT REPORT

It is my pleasure to submit this auditor's letter of attestation for inclusion in your doctoral dissertation. Auditing procedures were based on the criteria set forth on pages 316-322 of Lincoln and Guba's Naturalistic Inquiry (1985). Consequently, I have reviewed the raw data you provided in the form of audio tapes and verbatim transcripts. Furthermore, I have reviewed the following as they were generated and provided:

1. Data reduction and analysis products, specifically "work in progress notes," including working hypotheses and concepts

2. Data reconstruction and synthesis products, including category structures, comparisons to existing literature, preliminary analysis and interpretations, final analysis and interpretations, findings and conclusions, and recommendations for future practice and research

3. Process notes, specifically related to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3

4. Materials relating to intentions and dispositions, including your preliminary proposal and approved prospectus

5. Instrument development information, including the preliminary and final interview guides

As a result, the data were found to be complete and comprehensive. The data were useful and the linkages were recognizable, confirming auditability. Findings were successfully traced to the raw data; the findings are data based. The findings are thereby confirmed. Sampling procedures, establishment and modification of working hypotheses, and flow of methodological decisions were identifiable, purposeful, and relevant. The procedures that were followed were sufficiently appropriate to establish the dependability of the study. In addition, given the strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness; for example, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and member check, the credibility of the study is confirmed.

Sincerely,

Joyce Britz

Joyce Britz, Assistant Professor

VITA

PASHIA H. HOGAN

Education: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee;
                Secondary Education, B.S., 1978
             East Tennessee State University, Johnson City,
                Tennessee; Curriculum and Instruction, M.Ed.,
                1988
             East Tennessee State University, Johnson City,
                Tennessee; Educational Leadership and Policy
                Analysis, Ed.D., 2003

Professional
Experience: Instructor, Knoxville State Area Vocational
                Technical School, Knoxville, Tennessee,
                1979-1984
             Branch Administrator, Lanier Business Products,
                Blountville, Tennessee, 1983-1987
             Adjunct Faculty, Northeast State Technical
                Community College, Blountville, Tennessee,
                1984-1987
             Associate Professor, Northeast State Technical
                Community College, Blountville, Tennessee,
                1987-Present
             Department Chair, Office Administration
                Technology Department, Northeast State
                Technical Community College, Blountville,
                Tennessee, 1996-Present
Honors and
Awards: Outstanding Faculty Award Recipient, 1995-96