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THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION COHORT- AND STUDY-GROUP PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department

of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the

Doctorate of Education

---

by

Janyce Raye Westerman

August 1998

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Graduate Committee of

JANYCE RAYE WESTERMAN

met on the

13th day of July, 1998.

The committee read and examined her dissertation, supervised her defense of it in an oral examination, and decided to recommend that her study be submitted to the Graduate Council, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

Chair, Graduate Committee

Signed on behalf of
the Graduate Council

Dean, School of Graduate
Studies

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ABSTRACT

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION COHORT- AND STUDY-GROUP PROGRAMS

by

Janyce Raye Westerman

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four, small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia.

The objective of the study was to examine how cohorts and study groups were implemented at four colleges. In addition, the study explored ways that cohorts and study groups contributed to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills.

Three hundred forty-five informants and respondents participated in this study. The subjects included 286 students enrolled in organizational management and business administration programs at four small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges (referred to as A, B, C, and D) that were located in southeastern United States. Using a qualitative research design, the researcher also gathered information by interviewing one pilot focus group, consisting of 5 participants, and four official focus groups, consisting of 25 participants. Through the use of content analysis, information was codified into a questionnaire used to explore students' perceptions of cohorts and study groups. Student questionnaires were hand delivered; thus, 286 students responded, and an 88% return rate resulted. Additionally, information about the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups and structural design and variables of cohorts and study groups was collected through four individual student interviews. In addition, 25 surveys were sent to instructors, and 17 (68%) responded. Four program directors and four employers of students responded to questionnaires, for a return rate of 100%. Based on students' responses, this study reveals that cohorts and study groups increase satisfaction, raise academic performance levels, strengthen interpersonal relations, and enhance leadership skills. Data collected from program directors, instructors, and employers supported the results of the student self-reports.

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Recommendations were made for a refinement of the instrument, which would request additional quantitative data, and replication of the study at other colleges nationwide. Further recommendations included a more thorough study of employers' attitudes, a comparison of mandatory and voluntary study groups, an investigation of cohort-student dropouts, the benefits of mentoring, the effectiveness of class representatives, use of personality tests to determine study-group membership, and attitudes of college administrators and their support offices and boards toward nontraditional programs.

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

This is to certify that the following study has been filed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University.

Title of the Grant or Project The Learning Experiences of Nontraditional Students Enrolled in Organizational Management and Business Administration Cohort- and Study-Group Programs

Principal Investigator Janyce Raye Westerman

Department Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Date Submitted January 9, 1998

Institutional Review Board, Chairman David N. Wallace PhD

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved children, Niki, Whitney, and Dax. Thank you for the love and encouragement you have always shown me and for the special nurturing you have provided these past four years. You have shown extraordinary patience and understanding. Niki, your willingness to listen to my tales of woe and to share your statistical ability saved my sanity and gained you a cat to replace your dear Buns. Whitney, your "no nonsense" approach to accomplishing tasks and expert computer assistance kept me from giving up when I grew weary. Dax, your zany sense of humor, warm hugs, and ready responses to my 1:00 a.m. wake-up calls, when I lost computer data, gave me the heart to say, "I think I can." You, my children, are my reason for being.

To Ted Winter, my loving father, teacher, principal, and coach, I say thank you for serving as an exemplary role model. You taught me the importance of faith in God, integrity, humility, determination, compassion, and courage. You believed in me, encouraged me to explore my talents, and urged me to do my best.

To the memory of Gladys Hawke Winter, my mother, I also dedicate this dissertation. You were my best friend and confidant, a guide who gave me freedom to learn about my world. You showered me with love, taught me to respect others, and helped me to build the foundation of my beliefs. I have felt your presence, seen your smiles, and heard your words of encouragement. You are missed.

To other members of my dear family, including Lucile Hawk, who rescued me so many times, I thank you for believing in me. To my extended family--co-workers and students at Virginia Intermont College, and cohort members, especially classmate Al

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Hamlin--I treasure your friendships and the memories we have shared. Thank you for enriching my life.

To my longtime friend Judy Morgan, who prodded me, quite literally, into enrolling in the program, and to my special friends, Gloria Tate and David and Doris Parr, I say thank you for always being there when I needed you most.

Finally, I dedicate this study to my mentor Dr. Terrence Tollefson. Your gentle smile, kind words, and wise counsel helped to make the dream of this dissertation become a reality.

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I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the schools, administrators, faculty, students, co-workers, classmates, and other respondents who participated in this research. Without their assistance, I could never have completed this project.

Also, I wish to thank members of my committee, Dr. Terrence Tollefson, Dr. Anne LeCroy, Dr. Louise MacKay, and Dr. Elizabeth Ralston, for their helpful suggestions and support. Likewise, I extend a special thanks to Sharon Barnett, Dr. Ronald Lindahl, and Dr. Russell West, whose friendly words of encouragement helped me to complete the task I had begun.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

More and more nontraditional students are returning to college each year. Powers, Hoskins, and Kelly (1998) define the nontraditional student as an adult learner "who has been out of high school for at least five years and is at least 23 years old" (p. 7). A more detailed description of nontraditional students is provided by the administrators of Mount Saint Mary College (1998-99) who describe them as people who enroll in college to "prepare for a second career, keep up with advances in [their] . . . field, revise [their] . . . career goals or realize a deferred dream" . . . . In addition, nontraditional students have accepted the "responsibilities of adulthood," are financially "independent from parents," and possess a high degree of maturity and motivation (p. 2).

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) characterized adult learners as people who search for self-confidence, who desire to learn new skills or to enhance old ones, and who seek to adapt to changing lifestyles. Other reasons that adults return to college are to raise their socioeconomic status, to adjust to job losses, divorce, or the death of a loved one, or to serve as role models for their children.

Adult learners face numerous emotional and physical barriers when entering college. Therefore, college administrators would be wise to develop flexible, non-threatening programs that meet the needs of the adult population. Brookfield (1993) listed insecurity and low self-esteem as major stumbling blocks faced by older students. He explained that

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adults often fear that they are too old to learn or think critically. They sometimes fear humiliation, loss of a comfortable culture, and lack of support by family, co-workers, and friends. Apps (1981) described psychological barriers such as unpleasant past educational experiences and feelings of guilt (especially for students with children) and discussed physical declines in hearing and vision.

Because nontraditional students need academic, physical, and emotional support, they often require unique approaches in program deliveries. For example, they may perform more effectively when placed in small groups that share common interests and concerns (Murphy, 1992; Yerkes, 1995). Sometimes known as cohorts or study groups, these student-centered teams work together, creating a warm and inviting culture that Cunningham and Gresso (1993) say is necessary to ensure the safety and security that promotes excellence in learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four small, private, church-related arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. An objective specific to the study is to examine how cohorts and study groups are implemented at these four colleges and to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of specific variations of cohorts and study groups. In addition, the study explores ways that cohorts and study groups contribute to

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students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills.

Statement of the Problem

Low retention rates, financial difficulties, and changing demographics have encouraged many small colleges to develop adult programs that are uniquely designed to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Because these students face numerous barriers when returning to college, many adult education programs establish cohorts and study groups in an effort to help students become more successful. While the concept of cohorts and study groups is not new to the world of academia, debate about the effectiveness of these groups has arisen. Supporters of cohort- and study-group programs report an improvement in educational opportunities and academic performance, an increase in student satisfaction and retention, and a growth in interpersonal relations and leadership skills. This study investigates the learning experiences of cohort- and study-group participants and focuses upon successful ways to meet the special needs of adult learners.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered in the study:

1. How are cohorts and study groups implemented at the four colleges involved in the study?
2. Do cohorts and study groups enhance interpersonal relations?
3. Do cohorts and study groups influence students to enroll in college?
4. Do cohorts and study groups influence students to complete programs?

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5. Are cohort- and study-group methods of program delivery more effective than traditional methods, as perceived by students, program directors, and instructors?

6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

7. Do cohorts and study groups contribute to students' personal satisfaction and increase professional and academic performance?

8. Do cohorts and study groups promote collaboration and leadership skills in areas outside the classroom?

9. What societal or competitive factors contribute to the successful functioning of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

10. What are the perceptions of employers, instructors, and program directors concerning the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups?

11. How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

Significance of the Problem

The study examines how, or if, cohorts and study groups contribute to the learning process and to students' satisfaction, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills. The results of this study are expected to provide insights that will be useful in designing new programs or improving existing programs for adult learners. A growing need exists to develop nontraditional programs that not only serve the adult population but also help to maintain or increase college enrollment. As a result, institutions of higher education should

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benefit from studies that explore more effective ways of providing quality education in flexible formats.

Apps (1981) explained that some colleges recruit adults into traditional programs to survive the decline in traditional student numbers. He suggested that rather than promoting the social good of these adult learners, such institutions pull such students away from self-directed programs and place them in traditional settings that do not meet their needs. Thus, colleges may use information from this study to implement innovative programs, to motivate students to continue studies, and to recruit students into programs that satisfy their needs. High schools and elementary schools (both public and private) may also benefit from the results of this study. Likewise, the business community may gain important information concerning ways that educational institutions and industry can work together to promote effective learning.

Approach

Because of the nature of the problem and the dynamics of cohorts and study groups, the study consists primarily of qualitative methods of investigation. After a description of the study (Appendix 1) was sent to the Institutional Review Board and approval was granted, extensive narrative data were collected from 345 participants over a period of five months from February 1998 through June 1998.

A pilot focus group met in February, followed by four official focus groups sessions during the same month. Participants were selected based upon convenience, using a "snowball sampling" method, whereby cohort- and study-group students from one of the

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colleges were asked to attend focus group sessions and to invite another classmate to join them (Krueger,1988). These groups were interviewed to gather data concerning students' reactions to or perceptions of cohorts and study groups. Ten questions were asked of each participant or group (Appendix 2). The questions were subject to change based upon advice of a panel of experts and cohort- and study-group professionals and were expanded from focus group to focus group. Qualitative information was gathered and codified into a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to assess the satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills of students enrolled in the four colleges (referred to as Colleges 1, 2, 3, and 4) studied.

Structural designs, variables of study groups, retention rates, college revenue, and demographics were also investigated through use of interviews, surveys, and an exploration of the four colleges' marketing materials. Students, program directors, instructors, and students' employers were also asked to asked to respond to questionnaires.

The strategy of triangulation (multiple methods of data collection strategies and data sources) was used to serve as a cross-check to ensure accurate data collection. Reliability and validity were established by audio recording and transcripting of information. Documents were collected, and voluminous field notes and verbal and nonverbal responses were also compiled from information gained from focus groups and other participants who were interviewed or observed. Additionally, the researcher kept reflective journals to record subjective interpretation. Cohort- and study-group professionals, such as program directors, coordinators, recruiters, and instructors, were asked to review

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tentative questionnaires to determine if essential elements had been discussed and included. External checks were also conducted through the use of a panel of experts to determine if questions were worded in such a way that participants in the study could easily respond. The focus groups themselves contributed to construction and validation of the questionnaire (Gay, 1996). These groups were used to design survey questions and helped to determine the type of scaling approach to be used. Likewise, the focus groups, which were representative of a larger population, provided "useful exploratory research where rather little [was] known about the phenomenon [cohorts and study groups] of interest" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 15.)

Limitations

Two hundred eighty-six students from four colleges responded to the questionnaire. Of these, 73.78% percent of the students were female, and 26.22% were male. The ages of students ranged from below 25 to over 50, with a majority (41.96%) of the students falling within the 36-45 range. Students had been enrolled in programs for various lengths of time, ranging from less than one semester to three semesters, with a majority (47.55%) having been enrolled for one to two semesters. In addition, most students (according to interviews held with program directors) had management or business backgrounds, 76.22% had participated in team approaches at their workplace, and 47.20% had prior experiences with cohorts and study groups. Thus, participants may have been favorably influenced by their perceptions of collaborative learning before responding to the questionnaire or the interview.

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Also, problems may have occurred with the self-report or opinion inventories. Since subjects sometimes provide expected reactions rather than honest ones, a distortion of appraisals might have occurred. Likewise, when attempting to measure attitudes, the researcher may have inadvertently helped to create attitudes that previously did not exist. Another significant limitation was the length of time allowed for conducting the study. In addition, the researcher had 13 years of experience with development and delivery of nontraditional adult cohort- and study-group programs. Although attempts were made to guard against personal bias, the researcher may not have been totally objective. Finally, observer bias and observer effect may also have created limitations (Gay, 1996).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of the research:

1. Organizational Management Program (OM) - A degree-completion program designed to meet the needs of working adults who are seeking careers in supervision and management (Virginia Intermont College, 1994).

2. Cohort - A group of 15 to 20 students who share a common set of courses and experiences and remain together throughout the duration of the program (Virginia Intermont College, 1994).

3. Closed or Pure Cohort - A group of students who "take all of their course work together in a prearranged sequence" (Yerkes, 1995, p. 4).

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4. Study Group - Members of a cohort who form smaller groups of 2 to 5 students and who remain together throughout the duration of the program, meeting weekly to assist each other with assignments (Virginia Intermont College, 1994).

5. Norms - Expectations or beliefs that are shared by members of a group regarding what constitutes appropriate behavior (Borich & Tombari, 1995).

Overview of the Study

This study is organized and presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 of this paper introduced the problem and provided background information. The problem is stated, the importance of the study is explained, the limitations are defined, and an overview of the study is given.

Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methods and procedures of investigation which were used in the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the research and an analysis of the study.

Chapter 5 offers a summary, findings, implications, and conclusions of the study and makes recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of nontraditional programs and to investigate the learning experiences of adult students enrolled in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four private, church-related, arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. Another purpose of the study is to ascertain if these groups contributed to students' satisfaction, affected academic performance, strengthened interpersonal relations, and enhanced leadership skills.

The objective of this chapter is to review existing literature to determine perceptions of the effectiveness of specific variations of cohorts and study groups. Presented in this chapter is a discussion of the history of group learning, group interaction and leadership in industry, and cohesion development through quality circles. This chapter also includes a discussion of cooperative learning in women's groups, inquiry teams, total quality education, and site-based management in schools. Finally, this chapter explores techniques in team building, characteristics and purposes of group learning, advantages and disadvantages of group learning, and results of recent cohort studies.

History of Group Learning

In 1727 Benjamin Franklin and 12 of his friends formed the Junto--a group that met each week to seek self-improvement through the discussion of essays. Franklin's

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discussion group has "become the vivid symbol for adult education at it truest and most informal" (Bailyn, 1962, p. 14). The American Philosophical Society, which was formed in 1766, was another group-oriented organization. In 1826, the National American Lyceum movement (a forerunner of today's study-group concept) was founded by Josiah Holbrook. This movement resulted in the formation of groups that engaged in discussion and decision-making (Bode, 1956). The Lyceum consisted of public lectures and advocated setting up learning centers for adults in all towns to encourage mutual self-education, to spread useful knowledge, and to promote self-improvement. Later, the Chautauqua, which began as a Sunday school assembly, brought education to frontier Protestants. The Chautauqua also used study groups and promoted correspondence study (Bailyn, 1962; Bryson, 1936).

Brookfield (1983) discussed group-oriented services provided by settlement centers that were established during the latter part of the 1800s. These institutions, which arose in London, New York, and Chicago, were situated in poor neighborhoods so that adult education classes could be offered to the indigent. Volunteer workers studied the needs of the poor, identified their deficiencies in knowledge and skill related to earning a living and living healthier lives. Afterward, these volunteers provided group-oriented training that taught people how to work together in teams to accomplish tasks and improve their lives.

During the early 1900s, educators began to consider the importance of adult education and to recognize the need for continuous learning. According to Lindeman (1926),

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> Education is life--not a mere preparation for an unknown kind of future living . . . . The whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no ending. This new venture is called "adult education"--not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity defines its limits. (p. 6)

To Lindeman, adult education was a method of learning that permitted adults to grow socially and to gain knowledge that would enable them to cope with situations in life. He suggested that democratic ideas, strength, and relevancy resulted from collaboration and encouraged the social action of group work. The Meaning of Adult Education, which he wrote in 1926, helped to lay the "philosophical foundation for the field of adult education" (p. 136).

According to Merriam and Cunningham (1989), Malcolm Knowles' adult learning theory, andragogy, became popularized in the 1970s. Andragogy, "the art and science of facilitating adult learning," has become one of the most highly recognized and respected adult learning theories (p. 183). Knowles's andragogical model of instruction encouraged learner-centered, small-group instruction that allowed teachers and students to become mutual partners (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

In 1928, radio audiences in Great Britain were introduced to the British Broadcasting Corporation Wireless Discussion Groups, which provided education, information, and entertainment for listeners. The Antigonish Movement also arose in the 1920s, originating in Nova Scotia, both to help members of the community become better educated and to improve the economy. Founders of this movement organized study groups and discussion groups, held conferences, and offered training courses in an effort to incorporate life

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experiences with textbook knowledge. Their objective was to educate ordinary people and to give them knowledge with practical application (Brookfield, 1983).

In the 1930s and 1940s, radio listening groups (sometimes called study-groups) were formed in America to learn more effective agricultural practices and to discover ways to improve living conditions. These farm forums served as early models for mass education of adults. Later, in 1945, the University of Chicago introduced the Great Books Program through public libraries. This program, which employed the study-group concept, promoted reading and encouraged people to share ideas. In the 1950s and 1960s, educators in Great Britain introduced Living Room Learning, a method of home-based study. Participants joined discussion groups and explored topics that exposed them to fine arts and humanities, developed communication skills, promoted creative thinking, and encouraged tolerance of others' ideas. In Evanston, Illinois, in 1971, educators initiated learning exchanges, organizations that matched people with partners who were interested in similar subjects or activities (Brookfield, 1983).

The cohort method of program delivery is not new in the field of higher education. For instance, law schools and medical schools have traditionally encouraged beginning students to form cohorts and study groups to enhance learning experiences. Also, during the past few years, colleges of education have increasingly begun to use learning cohorts, especially in master's and doctoral programs (Barnett & Caffarella, 1992; Hebert & Reynolds, 1992).

Oliver (1995) discussed the study circle concept that originated in Sweden and became popular in the United States in the mid-1970s and again in the 1990s. Study

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circles promote the idea that "we're in it together, let's make it work," which appeals to people who understand the value of teamwork (p. 15). The purpose of a study circle is to allow everyone to have equal voice, to engage in active participation, to share experiences, to increase interest in learning, and to feel that opinions are valued. Oliver concluded that study circle members learned tolerance, gained understanding of each others' differences, and searched for commonalities and collective responses to problem solving. According to Oliver, members of study circles gained self-confidence and democratic values that led to more decentralized forms of leadership. He reported that, in turning away from authority-centered leadership, people felt free to express new ideas, to recognize the importance of networking, and to become more committed to performing collectively. These principles of study circle interaction can be, and have been, successfully used to promote teamwork and leadership not only in education but also in industry.

Group Interaction and Leadership in Industry

When managers began to look at the big picture, they recognized the importance of thinking, doing, evaluating, and reflecting. Equally important, they became more realistic and recognized that responses to today's problems did not guarantee future solutions to problems. As a result, they saw the need to form teams and to become more united in purpose with employees. Members of teams learn together and experience a unique feeling of responsibility to function as a whole. As they are energized, they generally become more accepting of others' ideas and may not require charismatic leaders to determine direction and to set goals. Instead, they need leaders who possess strong values and an

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appreciation for others' opinions and who are willing learners and sincere listeners. Leaders of learning teams are not born overnight. When they develop slowly, they gain traits that enable them to present ideas clearly and persuasively (Senge, 1990).

Important steps in leadership design involve establishing shared "vision, values, and purpose or mission" (Senge, p. 343) and helping people learn to face and overcome critical situations. Design leaders assist in creating policies and strategies that not only look good on paper but also function effectively in the workplace. They comprehend how the various parts of the organization relate to the whole. Senge paraphrased Lao-Tzu when he explained that the "bad leader" was despised, the "good leader" was praised, and the "great leader" permitted people to say, "We did it ourselves" (Senge, p. 341).

Senge observed that leaders who serve as stewards are endowed with a strong sense of purpose and show by example. While they are advocates of change, they do not readily cast aside important values of the past. More concerned about "we" than "I," they are humble. Vision-led, they take risks, recognize the natural desire to learn, promote loyalty and commitment, and discourage selfishness and greed. Stewards are responsible without being possessive. Moreover, they are good listeners who share their own visions and embrace the visions of others.

According to Senge, leaders as teachers or facilitators help to define the reality of pressures, crises, and limitations. They establish environments where everyone learns and understand. In addition, they teach people to explore a creative process that promotes vision, develops a common understanding, and reveals ways to comprehend that interaction of roles can help to achieve an end. Teachers show others how to share in an

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organization, to strive for a common purpose, and to control their own destinies. Furthermore, teachers are committed to honesty because they know that lies destroy everyone's visions. They also welcome challenges instead of fearing them, because they realize that by overcoming obstacles, they will improve themselves.

Team learning requires dialogue, discussion, and mature attitudes. Through dialogue teams can creatively explore issues and learn to listen carefully to each other's ideas. Moreover, discussion permits team members to present and defend various viewpoints and to search for answers. Mature attitudes help members deal effectively with conflicts. Teams should brainstorm, experiment, and test before presenting final ideas, continually practicing techniques and learning how to develop joint creations. Like a basketball team, they must perform processes over and over again to become winners (Senge, 1990).

According to Senge, "The discipline of team learning starts with 'dialogue,' which permits team members to learn to think together as a whole. Dialogue helps to uncover defensiveness and to eliminate it" (p. 10). Dialogue also eliminates individual importance and cultivates a common pool of understanding, which permits team members to become colleagues who can go in never-imagined directions. The purpose of dialogue is not to win but to give voice to incoherent thoughts and to gain insight concerning ways to examine thoughts collectively. Dialogue permits practice to occur. When teams become skilled in dialogue, facilitators play less vital roles. Senge noted that "[dialogue] emerges from the 'leaderless' group once the team members have developed their skill and understanding" (p. 247).

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Discussion involves presenting various voices and defending them, which helps members to analyze situations, make decisions, and plan actions. When people stop talking "at" each other, they help to create a climate where communication can occur and learning can result. Discussion may also allow people to feel safe about speaking openly and permit them to challenge their own ideas as well as the ideas of others. Senge (1990) noted that conflict emerging from dialogue can be productive, because it may promote creative thinking and encourage elimination of rigid stances. Teams can transform conflict and defensive acts into learning through dialogue, reflection, and inquiry.

On the other hand, according to Senge, some management teams that functioned effectively while engaged in routine tasks failed miserably when issues became complex and pressures were great. Also, some managers who were uncertain about answers were threatened by collective inquiry. They did not want to lose face by revealing that they could not provide accurate responses to all questions. As a result, some teams were "full of people who [were] incredibly proficient at keeping themselves from learning" (p. 24).

Gibson, Ivancevich, and Connelly (1991) described how effective leaders in industry walked not "around" but "away" to allow others to become involved and to learn responsibility. The authors claimed that leaders who served as sponsors and mentors boosted morale and built trust. Good leaders, according to Rachman, Mescon, Courtland, and Thill (1990), try to promote group interaction, encourage active communication, and build interpersonal networks by practicing a democratic style of guidance. In addition, they attempt to improve communication by speaking and writing clearly and encouraging

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others to follow their example. When leaders delegate authority and involve everyone in decision making, little supervision may be needed.

Employee-centered leaders build a supportive work environment. They help workers fulfill needs by allowing them to experience "personal advancement, growth and achievement, [which assists] group formation and development." By practicing consideration, employee-centered leaders promote "friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth, and rapport" among workers (Gibson et al., 1991, p. 375). When people are encouraged to speak truthfully, to practice flexibility, and to share ideas and feelings, they inspire each other. As communication increases, they learn to diagnose problems more effectively and to respond to situations in a more timely and responsible manner.

Successful group leaders are usually excellent facilitators and effective conflict negotiators. Instead of seeking personal power, they are more concerned about enabling others to achieve goals and to satisfy needs. Because they embody or represent the values and hopes of the group, they encourage personal growth and support and develop new cohesiveness. Members of closeknit groups are attracted to each other. As a result, they tend to hold the same attitudes and to behave and perform in a similar manner. Small group membership allows people to express their opinions openly and to gain immediate feedback. In addition, obstacles and barriers are more easily overcome. Finally, group formation increases loyalty and removes competition, conflict, and external threat (Gibson et al., 1991).

According to Gibson et al., a leaderless team can lack direction and discipline, which may impede progress. On the other hand, the authors argued that most leaderless teams

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work successfully as a unit when performing jobs because the absence of hierarchy encourages more group participation.

During World War II, W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran, fathers of the modern quality movement, urged American companies to promote total quality management (TQM) through employee involvement in decision-making. Ironically, after the war, Japan, desiring to produce quality products and to rebuild its country, responded more quickly to the concept of TQM than did the United States (Cummings & Worley, 1993). Finally, in the 1970s and early 1980s, American companies recognized the importance of shared leadership; and industry developed the concept of learning organizations. After American companies experienced economic pressure from excessive sale of Japanese imports and an unfavorable balance of trade, improvement processes were introduced in the workplace; and efforts were made to involve everyone in the learning process. Gibson et al. (1991) said,

> [o]ne of the paradoxes of leadership in learning organizations is that it is both collective and highly individual . . . only through choice does an individual come to be the steward of a larger vision . . . [and] come to practice the learning disciplines. (p. 360)

Pritz (1994) commended U.S. business leaders for their emphasis on the team approach to problem solving and for their efforts to consider employees' ideas. He stated that teams "grow, develop, evolve, and become meaningful through cooperative involvement" (p. 29). Pritz also said that people who worked in teams assisted each other by meeting both individual and group needs.

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Cohesion Development Through Quality Circles

Quality circles became popular in Japan in the mid-1950s and are associated with Japanese methods of participative management. Quality circles are made up of employees who are trained to solve problems and to discover better methods of working. These groups are used to promote team building and to encourage cohesiveness. This type of team building supports the philosophy that problems are solved more effectively and the quality of work life is improved when people work together to reach decisions (Werther & Davis, 1989). Gibson et al. (1991) explained that teams appear to be more highly motivated and seem to perform at higher levels than individuals. Gibson also argued that teams often produce higher quality work more quickly and complete more tasks than individuals. Teamwork in business, like teamwork in sports, results more frequently in winning situations. When people are allowed to exchange roles and to set their own pace, they gain more experience, attain greater satisfaction, and enjoy a sense of increased pride in their work. Furthermore, they can more readily identify the outcome of tasks.

Gibson discussed the argument against teams by saying that too much togetherness could destroy individual initiative. In addition, when people are forced to share both benefits and failures, conflicts can arise. Opponents of teams claim that all members are not on the same achievement level; therefore, those with more ability are sometimes required to put forth more effort to ensure that tasks are completed.

Buchen (1995) described industry's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) as a customer-centered movement, one that is committed to worker involvement, continuous improvement, and collaborative learning. According to Buchen, "[t]he notion of synergy--

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of one plus one equals three--is a goal" of both industry and adult education (p. 11). This trend toward teamwork has carried over to many different areas of education and has been used effectively in special programs designed for women.

Cooperative Learning in Women's Groups

Bonnett and Newsom (1995) discussed the importance of developing the self-esteem of female General Educational Development (GED) students. The authors described how the GED instructors at one study center placed students in cohorts of three to five members, allowing them to move to other groups if they so desired. Once they joined a permanent group, they were expected to assist each other and to accept one another as equals. Students who studied together took the GED test earlier than those who prepared for the examination individually. Additionally, group members accompanied each other when going for testing. A "we" attitude prevailed among study group members, which provided stability, positive attitudes, and high feelings of self-esteem.

Yet another women's group was described by Nixon-Ponder (1995). These authors explained how a women's adult literacy program reinforced problem-posing and analytical thinking through discussion. By comparing ideas, students learned to recognize how their experiences were alike and different and discovered ways they could learn from each other. People who fully understood the idea of cooperative learning became the initial leaders. Soon they began to encourage others to become leaders. Gradually, the instructor empowered students and permitted them to take ownership of the classroom. These students achieved success because they recognized the importance of strengthening team

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building skills. Other strategies to encourage collaborative learning in education include the use of inquiry teams, total quality education, and site-based management.

In the spring of 1997, 14 low-income women attended a free three-week session on the Berea College campus in Berea, Kentucky. The purpose of this program was to allow women in transition to work together as a team, to explore new technology, and to enhance career and leadership skills. These women were administered tests and given both group and individual counseling. In addition, they participated in field trips designed to expand both educational and cultural opportunities. Seminars emphasized the importance of improving self-esteem and self-awareness. Participants were required to live in Kentucky or the Appalachian region, to possess a high school diploma or GED certificate, to be 30 to 55 years of age, and to demonstrate an eagerness to learn (New Opportunity, 1997).

The Office of Women's Studies at Berea College also holds a series of regular luncheon lectures on issues of gender and culture. The purpose of these female support groups is to discuss personal issues, to explore barriers that confront women, and to find ways to become successful individuals (Peanut Butter, 1997).

Inquiry Teams, Total Quality Education, and Site-based Management in Schools

Joseph M. Juran (1974), a worldwide quality-improvement leader, urged management in industry to use strategic planning to promote quality improvement and maintenance. He encouraged managers to study symptoms of problems, to identify exact problems, and to work with employees to find solutions to problems. Likewise, W. Edwards Deming

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(1986), another quality-improvement expert, said that product quality could be achieved through continually improving product designs and manufacturing processes. Thus, he advised management and workers to strive to eliminate all defects within the production process.

Galbraith (1991) promoted the use of inquiry teams in education and described how they delegated tasks, divided responsibilities, planned activities, considered alternatives, and provided support. Because of their strong commitment to each other, members of inquiry teams willingly prepared homework assignments and strove to make valuable contributions during group studies so that everyone would benefit. Recognizing that collaborative team efforts are more rewarding than individual efforts, members of inquiry teams usually do not compete among themselves. By directing and controlling their own learning, they become more responsible for achieving objectives. In addition, team members develop lasting friendships and share "personal and professional concerns, hopes, and dreams" (p. 121).

Fields (1993) speculated that the Total Quality Management theories of Juran and Deming could easily be adapted to improve schools. He pointed to Deming's Japanese success in industry and argued that administrative constraints might be relieved if superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students solved problems together. Both Total Quality Management and Total Quality Education philosophies promote belief in human potential (especially through group efforts), encourage analytical thinking and long-term planning, and stimulate the drive to improve. Site-based management (SBM) in

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schools gives teachers, parents, and staff ownership of schools and direct input into decision making (Toch and Wagner, 1993).

Site-based management allows individual schools to make decisions that were once the responsibility of school boards, superintendents, and central offices. The purpose of this radical reform is to give teachers and principals independence and to make them more responsible for the results of their school's operation. Site-based management requires commitment to long-term decentralization by the school staff and community (Hill and Bonan, 1991). Primary decision-making authority is formally delegated to local school councils made up of parents, teachers, and administrators. This group identifies needs, sets local school policies, establishes goals, determines implementation practices, and evaluates achievement of goals (Gregg, 1993-94).

According to Gregg, the benefits of site-based management far outweighed the disadvantages. For instance, council members became self-assured, committed, and unified. As a result, good will and mutual satisfaction occurred throughout the entire school system. Conflict became a positive force when problems were solved through cooperation, and quality education was more likely to result. Moreover, parents and community leaders developed a greater respect for schools and their employees. Developing the cooperation that was necessary to implement site-based management, however, was not an easy task and required training in team building.

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Techniques in Team Building

Rachman et al. (1990) described the three stages of group process. First, members learn to know each other personally. Next, they start to make decisions as a group. Finally, they begin to perform at peak efficiency and to develop a group identity. Teams can help to control their destiny by promoting mutual trust and respect and by making efforts to ensure that everyone feels important. When problems are confronted through collaboration, concerns that once appeared to be insurmountable can often be overcome.

Gibson et al. (1991) said that teams became strong when they learned to set goals and priorities and developed action plans. As team members discussed and investigated communication and problem solving skills and examined interpersonal relationships, they could determine the strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of each person. By confronting problems openly and honestly, teams eliminated tension and analyzed the group's effectiveness. Gibson et al. encouraged groups to meet frequently, especially at first, to work on problems and to set up time tables to determine various roles of members. He urged each person to understand the importance of his or her contributions and to be aware of the rewards that would result from satisfactory performance. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) observed that both groups and organizations flourished when individual and collective development occurred. If the long-term focus of a group leans toward facilitating and empowering, ownership increases, collaboration results, conflicts lessen, and improvement continues.

Donaldson (1993) emphasized that team building is not an easy task and cautioned that people must be taught to accept criticism, to "work smarter" together, to change old

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habits, to become more productive in less time, and to look for positive results. Additionally, he speculated that through careful goal setting and sharing of good will and optimism, people can become more effective members of a team--an organization that, according to Mish (1991) subordinates "personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole" (p. 1210).

Characteristics and Purposes of Group Learning

Apps (1981) pointed out the value of working on projects in a group and explained how past experiences of members can enhance learning and give direction. He emphasized the need to hold group meetings at convenient times and locations. According to Apps (1982), study-group meetings could be used for counseling purposes, for practicing presentations, for critiquing each others' papers, and for using classmates as resources. While these groups needed some instructor guidance, they performed well on their own. Apps also discussed the need to assign specific tasks to individual members to promote the learning process and said planned agendas help groups to determine the questions and issues to be discussed at each meeting. Prior planning also permitted more effective examination reviews. Yerkes (1995) agreed that a productive cohort or group study requires much planning and constant attention.

Brookfield (1983) found that adults set up learning networks because they learned better when working in groups than when they were in isolation. According to Brookfield (1983), intimate discussion groups created energy and enhanced learning. By forming clubs, societies, and other types of organizations, participants were encouraged to

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exchange ideas spontaneously and to promote effective problem solving. Brookfield's concept of skill exchanges and peer matching services is somewhat similar to the cohort idea. These networking groups of peers enjoy sharing ideas and having ready assistance at all times. He explained the "each one-teach one" motto used by a library service and discussed how this method of group studies promoted learning (p. 165).

Brookfield observed how cohort members identified with each other and shared many of the same needs, problems, goals, and interests. Also, they often possess the same "norms, moral codes, beliefs, and attitudes" (p. 62). Adults like to discuss what they have learned and ask for advice from knowledgeable people.

Murphy (1992) described the formation of study groups and said that no more than six people should be in a group. When groups were small, everyone participated, and cliques were not as likely to form. He stated that study groups could meet anytime and anyplace, as long as everyone found the arrangement convenient. In addition, he stressed the importance of meeting at regularly scheduled times. Homes, restaurants, libraries, and conference rooms of businesses were popular locations for group meetings. Murphy found that group members learned how to evaluate each other fairly and constructively as they solidified. He suggested using self-report logs to chart team progress and growth. Sanacore (1993) commented that study group members developed equitable relationships. He said that people learned to share ideas and addressed problems and concerns together when they discussed topics that were important to each person. Likewise, when members learned to respect others' differences, they began to build upon each others' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, a relaxed climate resulted in empowerment and encouraged an

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atmosphere of trust. As teams learned to assess their success as a group, they grew not only as a group but also as individuals.

Results of a study conducted at East Tennessee State University revealed that cohort graduates were more likely to become administrators and to continue their education than non-cohort graduates. Cohort students listed networking and cooperative learning as positive aspects of their program and said they had gained strong people skills. In addition, they listed "motivating others" and "interpersonal sensitivity" as two of the five top ranked skills developed while enrolled in the program (MacKay, Hill, & Wang, 1994, p. 9). Neither of these skills appeared on the top five list of non-cohort members.

Hill (1994; 1995) wrote that cohorts promoted cohesiveness and encouraged people to collaborate and network, to complete programs, and to achieve high academic performance. According to Hill, cohort members continued to have positive memories about learning experiences long after their group had disbanded. Increased time in cohorts served as a catalyst that promoted teaming and enabled students to become unified like soldiers working together to overcome obstacles. For example, stronger students helped those with weaker skills by sharing notes and forming study groups. Hill asserted that group learning resulted in numerous advantages for students.

Advantages of Group Learning

Both Read (1995) and Knowles (1978) said students who formed small study groups increased interaction and developed a better sense of belonging. Read described the advantages of small study groups that meet for informal sessions after class to continue

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discussions and to expand upon learning experiences. Read said that groups of two to five students can try out new ideas without fear of being ridiculed and can freely express thoughts that might be challenged by the instructor or other classmates. In addition, students who stay together throughout their program of study develop a sense of ownership and freely discuss "personal insights, frustrations, and aspirations" (p. 5). Bonding is also enhanced through pre-program seminars, off-campus team-building activities, and appointment of mentors.

Adult students require flexible environments if they are to learn effectively. These value-oriented learners seek knowledge both inside and outside the classroom through use of formal and independent studies and self-instruction. By reading, discussing, and becoming effective listeners, they gain valuable insight that helps them to learn more easily. Much learning takes place informally as adults form personal networks and exchanges with peers. When they collaborate with and support each other, they develop strong bonds that motivate learning and increase the likelihood that they will complete their education. These cohorts or learning groups desire creative activities and perform more effectively when they have been allowed to direct their own learning experiences. Ownership results when students help to design courses, to set criteria to evaluate themselves and their peers, and to bring about needed curriculum reform. People who are united by similar learning goals develop a spirit of comradeship, a strong sense of commitment, and enhanced interest in learning (Brookfield, 1983; Yerkes, 1995; Kraus, 1996).

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Knowles (1978) and Apps (1981) discussed the wide variety of problems faced by returning adult students and explained why they function more effectively in group settings. According to Apps, nontraditional adult students often set unrealistic goals, have fragile self-concepts, suffer from unpleasant memories of past educational experiences, face numerous social-familial problems, and are overly concerned about practical orientation. Serious and highly motivated, they seek a direct relationship between their studies and their careers and desire programs that permit self-direction, flexibility, and quick answers that will help them progress rapidly. Likewise, they seek competencies that allow them to deal more effectively with their lives. Additionally, women with children and married men with excessive workloads frequently experience strong feelings of guilt when they return to school.

Brookfield (1983) explained that peers served as excellent mentors and described the strong social relationships that form among study group members. According to Brookfield, these relationships promoted student-centered learning and provided "powerful cement which [bound] the members together and [provided] a major gratification from participation" (p. 99). Learning groups experienced a sense of community, becoming symbiotic as they worked, played, took risks, and met challenges together. Once they learned to recognize group members' behavior patterns, people experienced less ambiguity and gained feelings of solidarity. Also, when they understood, appreciated, and trusted their classmates, group members tended to give and take both praise and criticism more effectively, to reexamine personal beliefs, and to engage in accelerated learning. By looking at different perspectives, they expanded their thinking and

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became more tolerant of the world around them. Because students in cohorts spent so much time together, they learned to deal more effectively with issues of diversity. By sharing personal experiences and viewpoints about gender, ethnicity, and social class, they were given opportunities to gain valuable insight concerning others' opinions and ways of life. Also, group members were less fearful of making mistakes because they did not expect reprisal (Magolda, 1992; Norris & Barnett, 1994; Kraus, 1996).

Nolan (1994) observed that organized group discussion stimulates students because it permits critical evaluation of instructors' ideas and discovery of practical application. Crew (1995) and Norris and Barnett (1994) agreed that students become more reflective learners by sharing life experiences and appreciating each other's differences. These authors described cohorts as intimate groups that engage in actions that promote self-understanding and self-revelation. They went further to say that mutual expectations grew when people formed learning networks. Likewise, safe harbors allowed students to empathize with each other.

Mansoor (1994) stated that partnerships created healthy climates, promoted effective interaction and communication, and encouraged people to become responsible for assuming particular roles and fulfilling them with a clear vision. He encouraged collaborative leadership and suggested that people who grow together are more likely to achieve success. McVey (1994) also promoted partnering and revealed that adult education encouraged use of techniques that brought the skills of several people together to achieve ends beyond the scope of one person.

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Adult students appear to enjoy the diversity and emotional dimensions of cooperative group learning and benefit from challenging and transformational learning. Likewise, democratic discussions help them create positive learning climates and explore complex and ambiguous aspects of a subject, which leads to critical thinking and higher academic achievement. Areas such as conceptual learning, problem solving, and metacognitive learning are greatly enhanced by cohesiveness of groups (Galbraith, 1991; Borich & Rombari, 1995; Kraus, 1996).

Borich and Rombari (1995) discussed the four stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, and performing. According to these authors, these stages enable groups to come together and to establish good working relationships. "Forming" consists of testing reactions, finding a comfortable fit, overcoming concerns about belonging, and accepting responsibilities. During the "storming" stage, group members test their commitment levels and resolve conflicts or concerns about sharing influence. When groups reach the "norming" stage, members begin to share individual expectations concerning their personal feelings and start to discuss behaviors. Likewise, during this time, people resolve difficulties involving accomplishment of tasks. "Performing," the final stage, serves as a transition stage. At this time, groups begin showing their independence and settling problems that relate to freedom, control, and self-regulation.

Borich and Rombari also discussed norms, which arise during the forming stage and are finalized during the norming stage. Norms assist with identification and cohesiveness. These authors emphasized the importance of positive norms, which enable group members to develop effective relationships and to achieve success. These norms not only help

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people to establish appropriate social interactions but also permit them to anticipate behaviors of peers. Additionally, norms allow group members to identify with each other and develop cohesive relationships.

Konicek (1996) speculated that students are uplifted by group interaction. Thus, he urged collaborative and cooperative learning, which allows students to experience positive feelings. He referred to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and revealed the adult student's great desire to be safe, to be loved, and to experience a sense of belonging. Read (1995) explained the unwritten rules of cohorts--codes that encourage mutual responsibility and close relationships. According to Read, cohorts "act as a foil absorbing or defusing tension and providing sanctuary" (p. 5).

Applebee (1994) defined a "coalition" as "individuals working together for joint action for a common purpose to make more efficient and effective use of resources" (p. 17). He discussed ways to build successful coalitions and listed the following factors that leadership specialists deem as necessary to make coalitions work: effective communication, openness, consensus agreement, common goals, and identification of outcomes. Applebee also urged all coalition members to contribute equally, to share leadership roles, and to strive to attain action-oriented leadership.

Because some teachers fail to explain concepts effectively, students often turn to each other for clarification (Magolda, 1992). Thus, Magolda encouraged the use of study groups, pointing out that students may feel freer requesting detailed responses from each other, than from intimidating instructors.

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Apps (1981) explained that members of discussion groups seemed to retain information longer because they engaged in active learning processes that permitted them to relate experiences to topics being explored. Additionally, these students not only became motivated to extend learning but were more willing to provide feedback to instructors. West (1992) and Kraus (1996) said cohort programs created environments that encouraged students and instructors to work together and helped instructors to become more effective facilitators. Borich and Rombari (1995) described how the team approach created a positive classroom climate and explained how group support enabled students to reach higher levels of scholarship, learning, and psychological well-being. When group members form healthy, cohesive relationships, they set common goals and establish clear focal structures. Instructors who channel a group's need for affiliation, power, and achievement in the right direction can increase students' motivation, satisfaction, and a group's success.

MacKay et al. (1994) described East Tennessee State University's master's degree program in Educational Leadership, which employs the cohort concept. Students in this program enroll as a group and stay together throughout the structured curriculum. The authors agreed that cohorts share the same vision, bond closely, and recognize the value of group learning. Barnett (1992); Hill (1994); and Kraus (1996) discussed the strong sense of camaraderie experienced by cohort members and explained how these programs fulfill the affiliation needs of adult learners who seek connection with peers. Cohort advantages include forming study groups, car pooling, engaging in social activities, helping each other through adversities, and developing nurturing relationships. Other

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advantages occur when members serve as networking resources, assist with job searching, and continue contact after graduation. Cohort members who learn to recognize and praise individual worth often carry these skills into their workplace, thereby becoming more effective employees.

Reynolds and Herbert (1995) discussed how cohorts benefit working adults who return to college and wish to become truly involved in the learning experience. According to these authors, cohorts benefitted female students more than males because women were more apprehensive than men about alienation and sought more interaction and cohesiveness with classmates. Borich and Rombari (1995) explained that lack of acceptance by peers and inability to make contributions could frustrate students and create emotional conflicts and feelings of hopelessness and indifference.

Wesson (1996) explained how the cohort structure helped students complete doctoral dissertations and discussed the perceptions of these students concerning their learning experiences. The author pointed out the positive benefits of cohorts, explaining that the cohort method facilitated mental processing and encouraged creative methods of building strong knowledge bases. Wesson also described how group dynamics changed throughout the program of study and discussed ways that cohorts developed their own unique personalities. According to Wesson, cohorts that ate together and engaged in other similar social interactions became extremely cohesive. Likewise, participation in group projects helped to eliminate individual competition. Wesson pointed out, however, that conflict resulted when group cohesiveness was absent.

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Potential Disadvantages of Group Learning

Apps (1982) discussed "bitch" or "bull" sessions among groups and called them stumbling blocks to the accomplishment of assignments (p. 145). Additionally, he warned that too much socializing with classmates could impede learning.

Conflict in study groups can result when members lack experience in working with groups or have had bad group experiences before joining a new team. Too, when people withdraw from activities, refuse to follow rules or to accept group norms, or engage in distancing and centering actions, problems are inevitable. Study group members with different backgrounds and varying needs, expectations, and interests may also have difficulty in agreeing upon work plans. Groups that are unable to formulate specific goals will probably never achieve success as a team (Brookfield, 1983; Borich & Rombari, 1995).

Kasten (1992) explained how difficulties with personal relationships could result in problems for cohorts. For example, when students try to dominate discussions, encourage "gang-like" activities, or create embarrassing situations by ridiculing classmates, they intimidate and promote feelings of inadequacy. Likewise, when students make decisions that are not best for all concerned, problems arise. Other conflicts may occur when biases and particular points of view are constantly repeated or some group members are unable to keep up the expected pace.

Sanacore (1993) urged group members to avoid using authoritarian methods to get their way. He also cautioned that rivalry among members caused tasks to go unfinished, promoted frustration, and destroyed openness. According to Sanacore, failure to treat

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people as equals hindered their freedom to explore, experiment, and take risks without fear of reprisal. Sanacore also encouraged team members to carry their load so that they could avoid becoming a "do-nothing" group.

McVey (1994) said that individual egos can complicate the partnering process. He explained that partnering requires hard work and commitment and recommended that partners consider each other as resources instead of rivals. Likewise, he pointed out the need to develop an understanding of human interaction and a willingness to arrange schedules that meet others' needs. Herbert and Reynolds (1992) and Kraus (1996) warned that jealousy over professional positions, special connections to powerful people, and differences in life experiences could become disadvantages in a cohort situation.

Kraus (1996) agreed that cohorts can increase competition among students, causing them to become overly eager to excel and to outdo their classmates. Simpson (1995) also suggested that adult cooperative learning groups sometimes exhibit unhealthy competition. When individual members are overly concerned about achieving personal success (such as earning high grades), they often give classmates low evaluation scores and provide little support for them. Some group members resent carrying the load for a weaker classmate, while others dislike giving up their time to meet with group members. Simpson (1995) explained that instructors can assist non-functioning groups by helping them to define desired outcomes and to create a mutually cooperative climate that promotes shared leadership and group learning. When tension, conflict, and shut-down occur, group members need to discuss reasons for breakdowns and strive to practice team skills. People

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from the corporate world appear to be more aware of the importance of becoming group-task oriented than are educators and and seem to possess a better understanding of the need for collective thought. Perhaps they have learned that cooperative learning is an ongoing process that requires constant reflection and monitoring.

Wesson (1996) said that students who cannot deal with conflict are not successful group members. They often respond to difficulties by refusing to help with group projects or take part in other group interactions. Thus, they fail to add to learning experiences. Additionally, students who avoid conflict do not demand accountability from slackers who refuse to share workloads.

Stereotyping of cohorts can create problems. For example, if an unfavorable reputation precedes a cohort, an instructor may feel intimidated and resent the group before giving it a chance to redeem itself (Kasten, 1992; Hill, 1994; Kraus, 1996). Hill (1995) described the difficulty in adjusting to cohort. She also lamented the fact that instructors may incorrectly label the entire cohort because of one student's performance. Likewise, she explained that first cohorts experience pressure and frustration because of real or imagined expectations to achieve success and to set a good example for future cohorts. In addition, Hill said that non-cohort students may become resentful because they perceive cohorts as being treated more favorably than other students and as receiving more attention or getting preferential treatment.

Read (1995) and Kraus (1996) claimed that cohorts suffer when faculty lack the necessary energy or experience to work with cohorts. Instructors who suffer stress or who are unwilling to take risks and to interact effectively with students impede the progress of

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cohorts. Also, instructors who refuse to mediate classroom conflict allow problem to increase. When faculty support is low, the cohort experience may fail.

Galbraith (1991) noted that people truly want to make valuable contributions and explained their feelings of terror at being left out of group activities. Agreeing with Galbraith, Hill (1994) described another potential conflict that arises when outsiders are allowed to phase into a cohort that has already bonded or formed a clique. Often, non-cohort members are not accepted and feel alienated.

Read (1995), too, described students' fear of "shaking the boat" and pointed out that cohort members should avoid the development of common mind-sets that cause them to sing from the "same sheet of music" (p. 9). According to Read, a closeknit approach can intimidate outsiders and prevent them from adding new dimensions of thought to problem solving. Also, direction of the group by one or more students can negatively influence the cohort. Herbert and Reynolds (1992) suggested that too much cohesiveness causes distractions in group interaction and results in goal reduction. Similarly, Kraus (1996) lamented the limited perspectives of some groups and described how lack of diversity could result in narrow mindedness. Increased interest in cohort effectiveness has encouraged educators to research ways that group study influences learning.

Results of Recent Cohort Studies

A study of cohorts was conducted by Morgan, Wolford, Crawford, and Westerman (1995) for the Organization Development course at East Tennessee State University. The study compared and contrasted members of two cohorts in the Organizational

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Management Program at Virginia Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia, and "explored interpersonal conflicts, retention rates, academic success, and student satisfaction" (p. 2). Results of the study showed that most students preferred the cohort- and study-group method, were pleased with the program, and had experienced few problems. School records revealed that a 100% retention rate existed for both groups and showed that students had achieved high academic performances. Students from both cohorts suggested that lack of preparation and cohesiveness could cause problems and failure to accept responsibility created difficulties. Also, they listed troublesome work schedules and absence of family support as potential obstacles. Finally, cohort members stated that conflicts could be avoided if team members accepted individual differences, made strong commitments, supported classmates, and cooperated willingly.

A disbanded-group (a body of people who are no longer functioning together as a unit) study completed for the Small Group Leadership course at East Tennessee State University examined members of a cohort who had graduated from the Organizational Management Program at Virginia Intermont College. Information for the study was gathered through phone calls, personal interviews, and a questionnaire. This cohort disbanded in December 1993. The purpose of the study was to follow up on the disbanded members of a cohort, to examine the importance of group membership, and to discover changes in students' personal lives. According to the survey results, the majority of the disbanded group members enjoyed their group experiences, developed lasting relationships, missed seeing each other, and had become better team players and more effective leaders at home, at work, and in the community. Most respondents continued to

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see or call each other on a regular basis, and all of them expressed a desire to attend a cohort reunion (Westerman, Disbanded, 1995).

Results of a study entitled The Nature of Cohorts and Study Groups were submitted by Westerman (1995) as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Adult Learner course at East Tennessee State University. Forty-eight questionnaires were sent to all members of four cohorts. Forty of the questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 83%. Ninety-five percent of the respondents said they preferred the cohort method above traditional methods, and 100% stated they enjoyed their cohort experiences. Ninety-two percent had developed close relationships with cohort members, and 100% felt they now work more effectively as team members. Ninety-seven percent agreed they would recommend the cohort method to others. Written responses on the questionnaire revealed cooperation, diversity, collaboration, support, and bonding were some of the major advantages offered by cohorts. Other factors that contributed to smooth functioning of cohorts were flexibility, complementary skills, commitment, friendships, trust, and mutual respect. Disadvantages noted were lack of lecture time and a preference for independent study.

Yerkes (1995) explored the cohort phenomenon and explained how these learning communities help develop the individual talents of group members and encourage them to engage actively in problem solving activities. Likewise, he revealed that cohorts help students develop leadership artistry, which prepares them for management roles. In fact, according to Yerkes, using the cohort method has become the current trend in leadership preparation programs, especially those designed to create transformational leaders. Cohort

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learning experiences can lead to an increase in trust, more consideration for others, and more effective methods of collaboration and cooperation. Yerkes observed that these traits can be transferred to leadership roles.

Wesson (1996) described the family atmosphere found in cohorts and discussed the feeling of equality and sharing of leadership responsibilities that exist among group members. Wesson explained that various leaders evolve in cohorts as special needs arise. According to Wesson, when all members are given turns to lead, deeper thought processes and more profound expressions of ideas occur. As a result, both the group as a whole and individual members experience intellectual growth and develop leadership techniques that permit everyone to have a voice in decision making.

Summary

As indicated in the review of literature, the team approach to learning appears to improve satisfaction and performance levels, to promote interpersonal relations, and to develop leadership skills. When people seek the same or similar goals, they are more likely to share workloads as well as leadership responsibilities and to bond and network more effectively. Also, the diversity of group members improves understanding of people in general. While too much cohesiveness may create conflicts, the advantages of group learning seem to outweigh the disadvantages. Thus, the cohort- and study-group method may supply students with "the vehicle [needed] for [the] reflection, clarification, validation, and response" (Hill, 1994, p. 4) necessary to become successful learners and leaders.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Preface

Chapter 3 describes the researcher's point of view concerning the effectiveness of cohort- and study-group learning experiences and explains the method of selecting the informants and respondents of this study. Included is a discussion of the qualitative method used to obtain information about ways that cohorts and study groups contributed to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills. In addition, the rationale for using this particular research method is explained. Finally, this chapter discusses the design of the instrument and explains procedures for data collection and analysis.

Point of View

This study was conducted with researcher biases that resulted from 13 years of teaching nontraditional students and serving as an administrator of cohort- and study-group programs at two colleges. During those years, I became aware of the barriers faced by nontraditional students when they entered college. As a result, I began to develop methods of program delivery that helped adult learners achieve academic goals. Cohorts and study groups provided two of the most successful coping strategies. I attempted to minimize the effects of my personal bias by conscientiously recording my responses to observations and by being as unobtrusive as possible during focus group sessions and

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other interviews. While I did not eliminate all bias, every effort was made to minimize its effect by using triangulation as a safeguard (Gay, 1996). Through this research, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the learning experiences of nontraditional students and to gain knowledge about factors that contributed to their success.

My rationale for choosing the method of qualitative inquiry was based upon the knowledge that "behavior is significantly influenced by the environment" (Gay, 1996, p. 209). A qualitative approach was chosen because it provided the meaning necessary to comprehend the unique needs of the adult learner. By utilizing the induction method of discovery, a holistic and process-oriented approach, and by studying several variables intensely over a four-month period, I was able to learn about the "why" of cohorts and study groups. A study of these groups in their natural settings without intervention or control permitted greater understanding of the phenomena. The qualitative data that were gathered enhanced dimensions to my research, giving it depth and meaning and providing much impact to findings. As the researcher, I served as the de facto instrument, collecting all of the data myself. Because I injected my personal reactions to observations and comments, the validity and reliability of the study were highly correlated with my degree of competence as an interviewer and observer, my years and depth of experience as an educator and administrator, and my dedication as a researcher (Gay, 1996). Respondents were selected based upon locations and size of colleges, similarities of programs, and time constraints, hoping to gain as in-depth an understanding of cohorts and study groups as possible.

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Interviews with focus groups, individual students, instructors, program directors, and students' employers provided "a very rich body of data expressed in the respondents' own words and context" (Steward, 1990, p. 12) and helped to lay theoretical foundations for the research. Interview comments revealed how much difference existed in the lives of respondents and made the research come alive (Gay, 1996). Surveys and Likert-type questionnaires, containing some open-ended questions and requests for comments, were issued to the informants and respondents. These responses also provided invaluable information.

The Informants and Respondents

The informants in this study were the population of nontraditional students, instructors, program directors, and employers who were directly or indirectly involved in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four private colleges located in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. In addition to interviewing and gathering data through questionnaires from 286 students, I also personally interviewed 4 students and surveyed 4 nontraditional program directors, 17 instructors, and 4 employers of students enrolled in adult programs. Again, these respondents were chosen based on convenience (proximity to my home and workplace). Because of their close affiliation with the informants, these respondents provided important sources of supportive information and clarification. By employing triangulation and multiple data sources, I increased the validity and reliability of the study.

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Student informants who responded to questionnaires included 286 people who are enrolled in nontraditional programs at these four colleges during the time the study was conducted, from February 1998 to June 1998. The colleges were chosen for geographical and demographical reasons. After obtaining approval of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University (Appendix 3), I obtained permission from these four colleges to conduct research at their institutions (Appendix 4).

Four focus groups, consisting of a total of 25 people, were made up of students who were participating in cohort- and study-group programs, or who had participated in them in the past. These people were also chosen based on convenience. The purpose of these focus groups, which met during the month of February, was to help develop questionnaires. Through the assistance of three cohort- and study-group authorities, 10 predetermined, general interview questions were designed to encourage free expression of ideas among focus group members (Appendix 2). To ensure validity, appropriate questions were formulated to measure responses of nontraditional adult students enrolled in organizational management or business administration cohort- and study-group programs. These questions were expanded with each group.

Focus group meetings were unstructured, open-ended, and informal. Both factual questions and questions that dealt with values, feelings, and opinions were asked. Good listening skills were practiced, and openings were observed to probe for deeper meanings (Gay, 1996). Focus groups were informed of the purpose and mechanics of the study, and participants were given pseudonyms. They were promised that their true identity would not appear in the study. Additionally, members of focus groups were encouraged to talk

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openly about cohort- and study-group experiences. During these sessions, I recorded the discussion on two audio cassettes, using one as backup. Copious field notes were also taken and a reflective journal was kept. Afterward, the information from tapes was transcribed; and later tapes, transcripts, and questionnaires were given to three cohort- and study-group authorities (program directors, program representatives, and instructors) for review to ensure validity and reliability (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Gay, 1996). To further ensure validity, the responses of data gathered from each focus group were analyzed and results were compared (Krippendorf, 1980). Letters of appreciation were sent to focus group participants (Appendix 5).

Questionnaires were hand delivered to the informants who were present in class on the night that had been chosen to administer the survey at each of the four colleges. Instructors who administered the survey were asked to read aloud a letter of instruction that explained the purpose of the study, promised complete anonymity, and thanked participants for their assistance. After questionnaires were returned in self-addressed envelopes, I sent letters of appreciation to program directors and agreed to share the results and findings (Appendix 6). In addition, questionnaires were mailed to the directors of four of the programs being studied and interviews were conducted with them by phone. All of the directors responded. Also, questionnaires were distributed to students' instructors and employers. These participants were selected based upon convenience. Twenty-one of the 25 people who were contacted responded: 17 of the 21 instructors returned questionnaires, and all four of the employers responded. Finally, I conducted and taped personal interviews with four students.

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Pilot Interviews

I conducted a pilot focus group session to test interview questions, to identify potential problems, to prepare for actual focus group meetings, and to develop skills needed to probe for responses and to clarify meaning. I selected students from one of the colleges participating in the study. These students were chosen based on convenience.

Data Analysis

To identify common elements in informants' and respondents' responses, I used comparative data analysis. The information gathered from interviews was scrutinized, separated into concepts, and categorized through the use of files. I looked for categories, patterns, and themes that allowed me to code and coherently synthesize the numerous pieces of data (Gay, 1996). Three college coordinators of cohort- and study-group programs reviewed students' comments and helped to identify key responses. The analysis of interviews focused on the following elements: (1) student satisfaction, (2) academic performance, (3) interpersonal relations, and (4) leadership skills. The data obtained from questionnaires and surveys were tallied, and written comments were recorded.

Summary

I chose the method of qualitative research to gather information from informants and respondents. To increase the validity and reliability of the study, I worked closely with focus groups, conducted in-depth interviews, and used questionnaires and surveys. By listening carefully to students, program directors, instructors, and employers and by studying their oral and written responses, I increased my understanding of how cohorts

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and study groups were implemented at four different colleges. Likewise, knowledge was gained about ways that cohort- and study-group learning experiences can contribute to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills. As informants and respondents expressed their feelings, their words were recorded and nonverbal responses were noted. My own opinions about their responses were formed through use of a reflective journal. By using comparative data analysis, I identified both common and different elements in the responses of informants and respondents. Data collection was stopped when I was satisfied that theoretical saturation had been achieved.

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CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS

Introduction of Colleges, Informants, and Respondents

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present results of the data collection. The data techniques used in this chapter are those presented in Chapter 3. These techniques were designed to answer the 11 research questions discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. This chapter also includes brief descriptions of the four colleges and the 345 informants and respondents that participated in this study and discusses the results of the study.

The purpose of the study was to explore the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. An objective specific to the study was to examine how cohorts and study groups were implemented at these four colleges and to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of specific variations of cohorts and study groups. In addition, the study explored ways that cohorts and study groups contributed to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills.

Additionally, the study examined student retention rates and methods of improving educational opportunities and meeting adult learners' special needs. Variables of study groups and program designs were explored, and obstacles to adult learning were investigated.

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The Colleges

College A

College A is located within the western corridor of Tennessee. The college was established in 1842 and is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. Accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, this institution awards the baccalaureate and master's degree. Liberal arts, general programs, and teacher preparatory programs are offered. In 1998, 350 of the 723 students who were enrolled were nontraditional adult students.

College B

College B is located in the eastern coastal region of Georgia. The college was established in 1904 and is affiliated with the Baptist Church. Accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, this institution awards the baccalaureate degree. Liberal arts and general programs are offered. In 1998, 68 of the 1,614 students who were enrolled were nontraditional adult students.

College C

College C is located in Southeast Virginia. The college was established in 1888 and is affiliated with the Protestant Episcopal Church. Accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, this institution grants baccalaureate degrees. Liberal arts and general programs and teacher preparatory programs are offered. In 1998, 107 of the 750 students who were enrolled were nontraditional adult students.

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College D

College D is located in Southwest Virginia. The college was established in 1884 and is affiliated with the Baptist Church. Accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, this institution grants baccalaureate degrees. Liberal arts, general programs, and teacher preparatory programs are offered. In 1998, 352 of the 750 students who were enrolled were nontraditional adult students.

Informants and Respondents

This section provides a narrative introduction to informants and respondents who engaged in the research. Informants participated in the study voluntarily and identified respondents who could substantiate information provided by informants.

Focus Groups - Group Session Responses

Five volunteers participated in a pilot focus group session in February, prior to the scheduling of actual focus group meetings. A total of twenty-five people participated in four focus group sessions that were held during the latter part of February 1998. These participants engaged in approximately one hour discussions--exchanging ideas, sharing fellowship, and openly expressing their opinions of cohorts and study groups. Attendants appeared to enjoy the sessions, as revealed by their eager participation, thought-provoking responses, and signs of positive body language. They laughed frequently, spoke intimately of relationships with fellow students, and expressed ideas clearly and openly. All focus groups were recorded on two audio cassettes, using compact cassette recorders.

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Informants and respondents agreed to allow their conversations to be recorded and transcribed.

Questionnaires - Student Responses

A total of 286 organizational management or business administration students responded to questionnaires that were sent to their respective colleges. I mailed 325 questionnaires to program directors to be handed out in class by instructors. Two hundred eighty-six students responded to the questionnaires for a high return rate of 88%. Student responses to the open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire provided useful information (Appendix 8).

Interviews - Student Responses

Interviews were used to collect additional data from four students who were, or had been, actively engaged in the cohort- study-group process. I asked all students similar questions, using focus group questions as a guide (Appendix 2). I took notes during the interviews and recorded sessions on audio cassettes--using a compact cassette recorder. Participants agreed to allow their conversations to be recorded, transcribed, and quoted (Appendix 9). I assured students of anonymity and encouraged them to discuss experiences freely without fear of reprisal.

Questionnaires - Instructor Responses

I distributed a total of 25 questionnaires to instructors who were teaching in organizational management or business administration programs at the colleges

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participating in the study (Appendix 10). Seventeen instructors responded for a high return rate of 81%. Responses to open-ended questions provided much insight into instructors' perceptions of the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups (Appendix 11).

Questionnaires and Interviews - Program Director Responses

I sent a total of four questionnaires to program directors of colleges involved in the study (Appendix 12). One hundred percent of the informants responded to the questionnaire. Again, responses to the questionnaire provided useful information that added much depth to the study (Appendix 13). In addition, I interviewed program directors either by phone or in person to determine their views of cohorts and study groups. These interviews allowed me to develop a good rapport with participants, which resulted in a greater willingness to share information about their respective colleges' methods of program delivery and their experiences with cohorts and study-groups.

Questionnaires - Employer Responses

I sent a total of four questionnaires to students' employers (Appendix 14). One hundred percent of the respondents returned the questionnaires. Information gleaned from employers' responses provided an "outsider's" perspective, produced insight into marketing strategies, and provided other helpful data that contributed to the overall effectiveness of the study (Appendix 15).

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Analysis and Interpretation

Through use of a qualitative method of inquiry, I, as the researcher, was permitted much latitude in collecting data. The study was strengthened through the use of in-depth inquiries that were made and lengthy discussions that were held with participants who possessed much understanding of cohorts and study groups. A total of 345 participants engaged in the study, participating in focus group discussions, engaging in personal interviews, and responding to questionnaires. Participant responses helped to describe attitudes, experiences, and perceptions concerning the use of cohorts and study groups. Participants were students who have been or are presently enrolled in nontraditional organizational management or business administration programs, instructors and program directors involved in program delivery, and employers of students enrolled in these programs.

Initially, I telephoned administrators at the four colleges that I had chosen to participate in the study to determine their interest and to request permission to conduct research at their institutions. The response was positive, and all four administrators agreed to participate in the study. Later, I mailed these people a follow-up letter to thank them for their willingness to assist me and to confirm that permission to conduct the study had been granted (Appendix 4).

After conducting focus group sessions and developing questionnaires based primarily upon participants' responses, I sent letters of appreciation to people who had taken part in the discussions (Appendix 5). Three hundred twenty-five student questionnaires were mailed to program directors or hand delivered to instructors at the four participating

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colleges. These people were asked to distribute questionnaires to students during the month of February 1998. A total of 286 students responded to the questionnaires, which were returned personally or mailed back to me in self-addressed, stamped envelopes. After I received the questionnaires, I telephoned distributors of the questionnaires to thank them for their assistance.

Section one of the questionnaire requested demographic information to determine a study profile. The data in this inquiry indicated information on fourteen items: gender, age, marital status, number of children residing in the home, employment status and management role, cohort- and study-group and team approach experiences, reimbursement status, grade point average, length of time enrolled in programs of study, reasons for obtaining a degree, and promotions earned.

Demographic Information

Two hundred eighty-six students responded to questionnaires. Demographic information revealed that 73.78% of the students who are enrolled in nontraditional programs at the four colleges being studied are female and 26.22% are male.

Only 1.39% of the students are under 25 years of age; 37.06% are between the ages of 25-35; 41.96% are between the ages of 36-45; 14.69% are between the ages of 46-50; and 4.90% are over 50. Thus, a majority of the students are between the ages of 36-45.

The question concerning marital status revealed that 69.23% of the students are married; 15.73% are single; 12.59% are divorced; 2.10% are separated; and .35% are widowed.

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Responses concerning the number of dependent children residing at home revealed that 32.17% of the students have no children living at home; 32.52% have one child living at home; 33.57% have two or three children living in their homes; and 1.74% have over three children living with them.

When asked if they were presently employed, 98.25% of the students answered "yes," and 1.75% said "no." The majority of respondents, 95.45%, are working full-time, and 4.55% are working part-time. Of those who are employed, 60.84% hold leadership roles in management; 34.27% do not hold leadership positions; and 4.89% responded "not applicable."

A majority of the students, 52.80%, have not been involved in previous cohorts or study groups, while 47.20% have been involved in cohorts or study groups. However, a majority of the students, 76.22%, have participated in a team approach at their workplace, while 23.78% have not engaged in team approaches at their workplace.

A majority of the students, 55.24%, are being reimbursed, either totally or partially, by employers, while 44.76% are not receiving funds from employers.

No students had less than a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) on a 3.0 scale when entering their programs of study. Prior to enrolling in college, students' grade point averages were as follows: A GPA of 2.0-2.5 was held by 23.07% of the students; 27.27% held a 2.6-3.0 GPA; 26.93% held a 3.1-3.5 GPA; and 22.73% held a 3.6-4.0 GPA.

When questioned about the number of semesters enrolled in programs, students revealed the following: 18.18% had been enrolled for less than one semester; 47.55% had

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been enrolled one to two semesters; and 34.27% had been enrolled three or more semesters.

When students were asked to identify one or more reasons why they were seeking college degrees, 49.30% said they wanted to become eligible for pay increases; 48.25% sought to become eligible for promotion; 58.04% wanted to advance in their present workplace; 53.85% wished to prepare for a career change; 73.08% sought personal satisfaction; and 59.44% hoped to become better informed people.

When students were asked if they had received promotions or had been given greater leadership responsibilities since enrolling in college programs, 31.12% said "yes," and 68.88% said "no."

Section two of the questionnaire contained 30 Likert-type scaled questions concerning attitudes toward the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups. The final three questions called for written responses concerning the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups, ways to improve group relations, and transference of collaborative learning to areas outside the classroom.

Research Questions Findings

The following eleven research questions were the focus of this investigation:

Research Question # 1

How are cohorts and study groups implemented at the four colleges involved in the study?

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I posed this question to investigate the colleges participating in the study and to gain a better understanding of their methods of program delivery. To evaluate Research Question #1, I reviewed the marketing materials of four colleges, discussed methods of program delivery with program directors, and studied questionnaire and interview responses. Results of the investigation are as follows:

College A offers an adult degree completion program that is designed for working adults with life experiences. The closed or pure cohort program consists of approximately 15 students per cohort and leads to a bachelor of science degree in organizational management, meets evenings or weekends in weekly 4-hour sessions for 16 months, awards up to 30 credit hours for life and professional experiences, and prepares students for career advancement. Students are required to complete 13 modules, which are offered consecutively, on management topics. A seminar approach is used in the classroom, and students are urged to engage in active discussion and to form study groups. Students entering the program must be 25 years of age or older and have at least a C average, 60 semester hours of credit from a regionally accredited college, and proof of work experience.

College B offers an adult degree completion cohort program that is designed for working adults. The closed or pure cohort program consists of 21 courses and leads to a bachelor of science degree in business administration. Classes meet twice a week from 6:00-10:00 pm (10 class meetings of 4 hours each are conducted over a 5 week period per course), and courses are offered one at a time. Enrollment is restricted to 20 students, who meet full contact hours but often form study groups to complete assignments.

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Instructors must not only meet SACS requirements but also have industrial and commercial experience in their fields. Students entering the program are required to be at least 21 years of age and must have completed at least 50 quarter hours of transferable core subjects. In addition, applicants should have an over-all GPA of C.

College C offers a degree completion program designed for working adults with 60 or more semester hours of college credit from a regionally accredited college or university. The closed or pure cohort program consists of approximately 15 students per cohort and requires 15 months of direct academic study that leads to a bachelor of science degree in organizational management. The major includes 36 semester hours, 30 of which are earned in instructional modules (courses) that are offered sequentially. Students can earn up to 30 hours of credit for prior learning. Classes are held one evening each week, and students are encouraged to form small study groups. Students entering the program must have 60 or more accredited semester hours of course work with a minimum of 6 semester hours in college mathematics and 6 semester hours in English composition. In addition, they must document full-time professional work experience and possess a GPA of 2.0 or better.

College D offers a flexible, accelerated, practical program that is uniquely designed for the working adult. The closed or pure 15 month cohort program consists of approximately 15 students per group and requires completion of 14 courses that lead to a bachelor of science or a bachelor of arts in organizational management. Classes meet one night a week from 6:00-10:00 pm and four hours a week in mandatory study groups. Courses are offered in a lockstep sequence, one course at a time, with each course

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building upon the next. Students may earn a total of 29 semester hours of credit for prior learning experience. Applicants must be 25 years of age, have a 2.0 GPA, 56 hours of transferable credit from accredited institutions, and 5 years of work experience. A seminar approach is used to conduct classes, and highly credentialed instructors with workplace experience serve as facilitators rather than lecturers.

Research Question # 2

Do cohorts and study groups enhance interpersonal relations?

I asked this question to determine how interpersonal relationships were affected by cohorts and study groups and to consider whether or not students perceived this method of group study to create a positive impact upon their lives.

The first four Likert-scale questions in Section I of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire, as well as questions 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 26, and 27 were used to evaluate Research Question #2. Statement 1 stated, "My Cohort (entire class) works well together." Statement 1 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagree, 1.05% disagree, 2.80% are not sure, 42.30% agree, and 53.50% strongly agree. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the strongly agree category.

Statement 2 stated, "My study group works well together." Statement 2 responses revealed that .70% strongly disagree, 1.05% disagree, 11.53% are not sure, 44.06% agree, and 42.66% strongly agree. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

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Statement 3 stated, "Members of my cohort care about me." Statement 3 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 1.39% disagreed, 10.49% were not sure, 53.50% agreed, and 34.27% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 4 stated, " My study group cares about me." Statement 5 responses revealed that .69% strongly disagree, 0% disagree, 12.60% were not sure, 51.05% agree, and 35.66% strongly agree. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 6 stated, "I have become more accepting of other people." Statement 6 responses revealed that .69% strongly disagree, 4.56% disagree, 15.38% were not sure, 59.79% agreed, and 19.58% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 9 stated, "I feel close to all of my classmates." Statement 9 responses revealed that 1.05% strongly disagreed, 7.69% disagreed, 12.94% were not sure, 59.44% agreed, and 18.88% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 10 stated, "My classmates feel like family members." Statement 10 responses revealed that .70% strongly disagreed, 10.84 disagreed, 18.18% were not sure, 46.15% agreed, and 24.13% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 12 stated, "I feel that the entire group trusts and supports me." Statement 12 responses revealed that .70% strongly disagreed, 1.75% disagreed, 23.78% were not

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sure, 56.99% agreed, and 16.78% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 13 stated, "My study group members trust and support me." Statement 13 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 2.45% disagreed, 17.83% were not sure, 58.74% agreed, and 20.98% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 14 stated, "I am more secure both at school and at work." Statement 14 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 6.64% disagreed, 12.94% were not sure, 62.94% agreed, and 17.13% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 15 stated, "I value the time spent with my cohort." Statement 15 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 3.15% disagreed, 13.29% were not sure, 63.99% agreed, and 19.57% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 16 stated, "I value the time spent with my study group." Statement 16 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 3.15% disagreed, 15.38% were not sure, 59.79% agreed, and 21.68% strongly agree. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 17 stated, "My study group and I share common interests and concerns." Statement 17 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 4.90% disagreed, 17.13% were not sure, 54.55% agreed, and 23.42% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

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Statement 20 stated, "My interpersonal and leadership skill have improved." Statement 20 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 4.90% disagreed, 12.24% were not sure, 59.09% agreed, and 23.42% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 26 stated, "I will network with my study group after graduation." Statement 26 responses revealed that .70% strongly disagreed, 7.34% disagreed, 36.36% were not sure, 41.61% agreed, and 13.99% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Statement 27 stated, "I feel genuine affection for study group members." Statement 27 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 1.40% disagreed, 17.83% were not sure, 56.64% agreed, and 23.78% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority were in the agree category.

Research Question # 3

Do cohorts and study groups influence students to enroll in college?

I asked this question to determine if students enroll in cohort- and study-group programs to seek the support needed to overcome both physical and emotional barriers faced by adult learners.

Questions 8 and 9 in Section 1 and Likert-scale question 21 in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire were used to evaluate Research Question #3.

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Question 8 asked, "Have you had previous cohort- and study-group college experiences?" Question 8 responses revealed that 47.20% had been involved in cohort- and study-group experiences and 52.80% had not been involved. Question 9 asked, "Have you participated in a team approach at your workplace?" Questions 9 responses revealed that 76.22% had been involved in team approaches at their workplace and 23.78% had not. The data shows that the majority had been involved in some types of team approach experiences. Statement 21 stated, "The cohort- and study-group concept influenced me to enroll." Statement 21 responses revealed that 8.04% strongly disagreed, 25.17% disagreed, 23.78% were not sure, 32.87% agreed, and 10.14% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the students were influenced to enroll because of the cohort- and study-group concept.

Research Question #4

Do cohorts and study groups influence students to complete programs?

I asked this question to learn if group cohesiveness is a motivating factor that increases retention and program completion rates of students.

Question 22 in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire was used to evaluate Research Question #4. Statement 22 stated, "Group experiences have encouraged me to graduate." Statement 22 responses revealed that 2.45% strongly disagree, 11.19% disagree, 16.78% are not sure, 52.10% agree, and 17.48% strongly agree.

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Research Question #5

Are cohort and study-group methods of program delivery more effective than traditional methods, as perceived by students, program directors, and instructors?

I asked this question to compare the similarities and differences between traditional and cohort- and study-group methods of program delivery and to learn which methods are preferred by adult students, program directors, and instructors.

Interview responses from students, part "a" of question 8 of the program director questionnaire, and part "a" of question 5 of the instructor questionnaire were used to evaluate Research Question #5.

Students were asked if cohort- and study-group programs were more effective than traditional programs. Representative comments are as follows, while the remaining statements are included in Appendix 9:

> I have experienced only advantages of cohort and study groups. We have formed a very close bond. Our study groups assist one another when needed. With the many years of combined experience, the group is a valuable asset. I would never go back to a traditional college setting.
>
> When I started in the program, I preferred traditional methods and didn't think I need a study group. I could do the work on my own without any help. I was pleased when my group and I bonded quickly and began to practice teamwork. Now I could not function without a study group. I am in the working world and have many other responsibilities, such as family and community activities. We all have different talents and levels of ability. I once thought I knew everything. Now I admit that I need help.
>
> One person in my cohort thought traditional courses were best and was apprehensive about the group concept and was unwilling to share knowledge at first. Finally, she became more comfortable and began to give and ask for assistance. My cohort and study group members try to do their part. When someone goes on travel, classmates cover for them, just as a family would do. We take care of each other. These people are like my brothers and sisters. If someone panics, we calm them down and say, "We can do this together."

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> Because of my traditional background, I first saw the study group as a drawback and didn't want any part of it. Now, I realize that the team concept is the only way to go, at school or at work. Becoming a part of a team was new for me. It was difficult for me to trust others, especially where my grade was concerned. Over the past year, trust and respect has grown among us enormously. Couldn't do without my friends.

Part "a" of Question 8 of the program director questionnaire asked, "How do cohort and/or study-group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?" Some of the representative responses are as follows, while the remaining statements are included in Appendix 12:

> This depends on the amount of advance planning put into either cohort or traditional methods. Each approach has its own merits. Each approach has its own market appeal. A cohort program is more for the mature student who feels that a good education is worth more than "just a college degree."

> There are more exchanges of ideas among cohorts and members within study-groups than under traditional methods.

Part "a" of Question 5 of the instructor questionnaire asked, "How do cohort- and study-group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?" Some of the representative responses are as follows, while the remaining statements are included in Appendix 11:

> The teacher becomes facilitator instead of lecturer. Groups complement each other instead of competing against each other. Traditional methods are passive, while study- groups are active and don't allow some to fall asleep "on the job."

> No comparison--study groups serve as support for the entire group. The old saying that two heads are better than one holds true. Just think how much more productive four heads are.

> For adults it [cohort- and study-group method] is a much more productive method because they draw on their experience base.

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Research Question #6

What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

I asked this question to determine if the advantages of cohorts and study-groups outweighed the disadvantages and to discover factors that created conflict.

Statements 23, 24, 25, and 28 in Section 2 and responses to open-ended Question number 1 in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire (Appendix 8), student responses to personal interview questions (Appendix 9), and questionnaire responses from instructors, Question 5, parts a and e, (Appendix 11) and program directors, Question 8, parts b and e, (Appendix 13) were used to evaluate Research Question #6.

Statement 23 stated, "Advantages of cohorts and study groups outweigh problems." Statement 23 responses revealed that .70% strongly disagreed. 3.85% disagreed, 18.18% were not sure, 55.59% agreed, and 21.68% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 24 stated, "Scheduling results in study-group problems." Statement 24 responses revealed that 7.34% strongly disagreed, 23.43% disagreed, 33.22% were not sure, 29.37% agreed, and 6.64% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of responses were in the not sure category.

Statement 25 stated, "Irresponsibility causes resentment in study groups." Statement 25 responses revealed that 6.64% strongly disagreed, 16.78% disagreed, 35.31% were not

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sure, 29.37% agreed, and 11.90% strongly agreed. The data show that the majority of the responses were in the not sure category.

Statement 28 stated, "Study groups become too cohesive." Statement 28 responses revealed that 7.34% strongly disagreed, 43.36% disagreed, 39.16% were not sure, 9.09% agreed, and 1.05% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the disagreed category.

Question 1 of Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire asked, "What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups?" Representative responses to this open-ended question are as follows, while the remaining statements are included in Appendix 8:

> Advantages to cohorts and study-groups are that responsibility is shared among study group members and friendships are developed and experiences are shared. Disadvantages are that sometime we unintentionally let other members of the study-group carry an unnecessary amount of the work load, and grades given on group participation can be made or broken by one group member.
>
> I love my study-group. We have become good friends and better co-workers. They are the brothers I never had. Advantages are getting to know a limited group--people you can count on. Everyone has a strength and weakness, and you learn to offset each other. A disadvantage is that you can become too close.
>
> Advantages are consistency and stability of the cohort, which make goals easier to obtain. Support given by people you have come know and care about is helpful. The cohort is a good concept and provides support. Study groups help each other. I don't know of any real disadvantages, except for scheduling problems and the stress that results when members procrastinate.
>
> I am very fortunate to belong to a cohort and study group that works so well together. I am sure there are some disadvantages; however, my experience has been so positive that I could not comment on them.
>
> The cohort atmosphere is a great way to learn and study. I have made many new friends, and I am learning a whole new style of studying and interacting with people.

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> The advantages are that you get ideas from the others, learn about each other, make new friends, and get support and encouragement to go on. The disadvantages are that it can slow you down if you are faster at solving a problem than the others. It can also cause some resentment if the others don't listen and allow one person to always be the leader.
>
> A study-group helps reaffirm a person's thoughts and ideas about an academic concept. When you "think" you have something understood, it helps to have others who have grasped and interpreted an idea the same way you have.
>
> Cohorts, by their very nature, generate unity and focus. I have yet to determine a negative aspect of cohorts and study-groups.

During personal interviews, students were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of study-groups. Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 9:

> Cohorts and study-groups are positive things. Because the people in these groups come from different jobs and backgrounds and hold different beliefs, they bring a lot to the table. When different views are given, better perspectives evolve. Sometimes my group members have to take their blinders off, but this is not a bad thing. Disagreements can be positive.
>
> My cohort is made up of very bright people. I feel good about all of our accomplishments. My study-group has pushed me, but I have made contributions, too. I have begun to love the challenge of school.
>
> One person in my study-group drove me crazy. Thank goodness, she quit! Getting in the right group is tricky. My group gets along well because we are all concerned about learning. We've only known each other for a few months, but we feel like it's been a lifetime. We can go to each other with our concerns. However, if one member doesn't want to pull a fair share of the load, problems occur.
>
> Unresolved issues from the past can cause problems within groups. Personality can cause difficulties as well. Some people simply can't work in a group situation. It's interesting to note that cohorts and study-groups form their own distinct personalities. A good class representative can lead the group into a hole in the wall. On the other hand, a bad one "throws fuel on the fire" and "creates havoc." If students aren't in class for the right reasons, problems will result. Sometimes students may shift from study-group to study-group before finding the right fit. Group members should confront slackers and refuse to carry them. Instructors and school

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administrators must reinforce the importance of the group process over and over again. Some students may need more training than others. The same holds true for instructors. Assignments must be designed to encourage students to meet, not to do assignments over the phone. Assignments should be group focused. What is too much work? If groups work well together, no one will be overworked. This team concept does not end in the classroom but carries over into the workplace.

Older students tend to be more serious about their studies. Also, they have more life experiences, which makes them more tolerant of each other. This creates a cohesive cohort or study-group. Immaturity hampers teamwork. Team orientation in the workplace helps cohorts and study-groups to function more effectively--a two-way street. Disruptions occur in my workplace all the time, and I learn from them and gain ideas about ways to determine direction and to survive. I bring these ideas to the classroom and explain that we must know what we are doing, set patterns for operations, and work together to achieve goals.

A late arrival to a cohort can feel left out, because the bonding has already begun. Being spread out geographically can also cause problems. However, convenience doesn't always work. I didn't know anyone in my cohort when I began the program. Luckily, everything worked out well, and we function great together. Even when I moved to a different town, I stayed with my study-group because I liked them and felt good about progress we had made. We are cohesive. Working together effectively is a growing process that takes time and effort. The team spirit definitely carries over to the workplace.

My group and I keep on making suggestions until we finally say, "That's it!" Our experiences have all been positive ones. We decided from the first meeting to head in the same direction and to be open and honest with each other--to ask for change if problems developed. All of us have become facilitators. We give and we get--a "win-win situation." positive reinforcement is a common happening, which really helps. Our whole cohort has bonded, and we stay focused. We cut each other down good naturedly--not in a mean way.

I work on an assembly line, which requires that I help others catch up when they fall behind. The same idea exists in a cohort or study-group. You help others who need your assistance. I've been involved with several cohorts and study-groups and have found everyone to be very cooperative. I've always been able to bond with classmates and to have fun even when working hard. The study-group reinforcement helps people achieve success. My classmates and I challenge each other and try to match wits with each other.

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Part "b" of Question 8 of the program director questionnaire asked, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of cohorts and/or study-groups?" Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 13:

> Strengths - They provide a planned academic agenda, reduce the stress of having to deal with multiple subjects at the same time, and provide a comfortable environment in which to learn. Weakness - Limited interaction with students in other modules.
>
> Over bonding - Groups can bond to such an extent that they become unproductive because they can't objectively critique each other's work for fear of hurt feelings. Also, the group may become like a "clique" where work time converts to a "social hour" to catch up on personal details. (This happened to me in a group. My instructor referred to the problem as "group think.")
>
> There is more input from cohorts and members of study-groups, which leads to a broader knowledge base. Students are more receptive to experiences from cohorts and group members since students understand that the achievement of stated goals depends on each other's contributions. Leaders and followers emerge naturally. No weaknesses.

Part "b" of Question 5 of the instructor questionnaire asked, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of cohorts and study-groups?" Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 11:

> Strengths - Students learn from classmates as well as from their facilitators. Weaknesses - May move too fast for some, and some slackers in the group may pull down the group.
>
> Strengths - learn to work together (interdependently), so that it's easier to make a transition to the workplace, which emphasizes teams. Weaknesses - some students don't work as hard as others; some personality problems develop.
>
> Strengths - More cooperative and sociable and more mature in outlook. Weaknesses - Less interested in theoretical approach and more concerned about the practical aspect.
>
> Strengths - Peer pressure results in positive competition, and group members provide additional counseling for peers who are going through tough times. Also, thought process and deductive reasoning is challenged and more productive. Weaknesses -

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Sometimes personality conflicts arise, morals and values do not mesh, and personal schedules conflict.

Strengths - Provide a realistic method for students to attend and complete college in a reasonable time while working and provide students with quick feedback.
Weaknesses - Difficult for students and instructors to maintain interest and attention for 4 hours.

Research Question #7

Do cohorts and study groups contribute to students' personal satisfaction and increase academic and professional performance?

I asked this question to determine how or if cohorts and study groups helped students gain personal satisfaction and to learn whether or not group learning enhanced professional growth and increased workplace skills.

Statements 5, 7, 8, 11, 18, and 19 and responses to Statement 3 in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire were used to evaluate Research Question #7.

Statement 5 stated, "I have become a greater risk taker." Statement 5 responses revealed that 2.80% strongly disagreed, 10.14% disagreed, 24.48% were not sure, 47.20% agreed, and 15.38% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 7 stated, "I am more visionary and can integrate ideas effectively." Statement 7 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 2.80% disagreed, 15.73% were not sure, 63.29% agreed, and 18.18% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

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Statement 8 stated, "Respect from classmates has increased my self-esteem." Statement 8 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 7.00% disagreed, 19.23% were not sure, 53.85% agreed, and 19.92% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 11 stated, "I am a better problem solver and decision maker." Statement 11 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 4.20% disagreed, 18.53% were not sure, 57.34% agreed, and 19.93% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 18 stated, "Study groups provide academic and professional support." Statement 18 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 1.75% disagreed, 13.29% were not sure, 60.49% agreed, and 24.12% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 19 stated, "I am better able to assess personal values now." Statement 19 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 7.69% disagreed, 18.18% were not sure, 54.20% agreed, and 19.93% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 3 in Section 2 asked students to explain how collaborative learning techniques are transferred to other areas such as the workplace. Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 8:

> I do not feel that cohort learning groups have had much effect on my workplace. However, the advantages of cohort learning group have helped to somewhat build my confidence in other situations.
>
> Study-groups have influenced me to be more active in a team environment at work.

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Times are changing, especially at the workplace. Once people could work alone, but walls have begun to crumble, and people have to work together. A company or a cohort is only as strong as its weakest link. This program is good because the team concept carries over to work, where teams are the "name of the game." Everyone benefits from collaboration. While we can do things on our own, it's much easier and better when we solve problems together.

Successfully achieving in a group setting through the cohort program makes you realize what can be accomplished by that method.

I believe study groups help with workplace learning. With the rules and structures of our work group, we walk away with a greater understanding of each other.

I have not noticed that I have transferred the concepts to work, but maybe I have subconsciously.

Research Question #8

Do cohorts and study groups promote collaboration and leadership skills in areas outside the classroom?

I asked this question to determine if the sharing nature of cohorts and study groups strengthened teamwork and leadership skills in the home, community, and workplace.

Statement 14 in Section 1 and Statement 20 in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire and responses to the open-ended request no. 3 in Section 2 and no. 2 of part c under 5 and part g of the Instructor Questionnaire Responses were used to evaluate Research Question #8.

Statement 14 stated, "I have received a promotion or been given greater leadership responsibilities since enrolling in the program." Statement 14 responses revealed that 31.12% had received promotions and 68.88% had not. The data shows that the majority of the respondents had not received promotions.

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Statement 20 stated, "My interpersonal and leadership skills have improved." Statement 20 responses revealed that .35% strongly disagreed, 4.90% disagreed, 12.24% were not sure, 59.09% agreed, and 24.42% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the respondents were in the agree category.

Statement 3 of Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire requested: "Explain how collaborative learning techniques can be transferred to other areas of your life such as the home and workplace." Only 133 (47%) of the participants responded to Statement 3. Of those respondents, 124 (93.23%) said collaborative learning techniques did transfer from the classroom to other areas of their lives; 7 (5.26%) said no transference occurred; and 2 (1.51%) respondents were unsure. Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 8:

> This program does help me to be more tolerant of other people, and this is a positive asset in the business environment and at home.
>
> Once you realize how much this kind of cooperation makes things easier, you will apply the process to other aspects of your life and become a stronger leader.
>
> Sharing experiences can only benefit everyone in all situations (both leaders and followers), using both positive and negative aspects of learning.
>
> What is learned among the groups and discussions among the groups at times becomes very beneficial at home and in the workplace--making people more aware of the importance of good teamwork practices and strong leadership skills.
>
> Cohorts teach you to work with others to improve techniques and overcome difficulties in the home and workplace. They help you to listen and to communicate better with others and to recognize that leadership roles should be shared.
>
> Adult learners are not just studying to be leaders. In most cases, they are practicing leaders in their field and/or community.

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Work teams are normal today. Any skills learned in the classroom that work will be duplicated elsewhere, especially at work and at home. (Home is a place we often don't consider for teamwork, but is should be considered!)

Teamwork transfers to all areas of their life, even the church.

Case studies and class projects are directly related to workplace, community, and/or home.

Several students have commented that they have applied new skills and knowledge directly to both their jobs and non-work activities.

With adult students, practically their whole life revolves around the workplace, the community, and the home. Therefore, their learning experiences need to collaborate with all three in order for the learning to be meaningful.

Research Question 9

What societal or competitive factors contribute to the successful functioning of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

I asked this question to explore various factors that might enhance working relationships and improve goal setting techniques of cohort- and study-group members.

Statement 3 of the program director questionnaire and Statement 4 of the instructor questionnaire were used to evaluate the Research Question 9. In addition, Statements 29 and 30 and responses to open-ended questions and statements in Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire and responses to student interviews and open-ended questions included in program director and instructor questionnaires were used to gather information.

Statement 3 of the program director questionnaire stated, "Cohort students engage in friendly competition." One hundred percent of the respondents replied "yes."

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Statement 4 of the instructor questionnaire stated, "Students engaged in friendly competition." One hundred percent of the respondents replied "yes."

Statement 29 stated, "Social gatherings improve group cohesion." Statement 29 responses revealed that 0% strongly disagreed, 6.64% disagreed, 27.97 were not sure, 53.50% agreed, and 11.89% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Statement 30 stated, "Friendly competition exists among group members." Statement 30 revealed that .70% strongly disagreed, 8.04% disagreed, 17.83% were not sure, 62.94% agreed, and 10.49% strongly agreed. The data shows that the majority of the responses were in the agree category.

Representative responses to student interview questions, open-ended questions and statements on the student questionnaire, and questionnaire responses from program directors and instructors are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendices 8, 9, 11, and 13:

> Students should spend more time together socially to increase bonds of trust and respect.
>
> Competition between groups creates a "team spirit." The longer a group stays together, the more cohesive it usually becomes. This is a problem that traditional classes have--they don't stay together in groups long enough to benefit from the true synergy that develops as a normal process over time.
>
> Our study group gets along well. A friendly sense of competition exists among members--good natured competition. Competition can cause people to turn against each other if it is fierce. Instructors can handle this by carefully structuring the reward system so that all students benefit. Negative competition causes all kinds of problems within the cohort or study group. If a group member costs the entire study group points because he or she has not pulled a fair share or weight, resentment occurs.

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Peer evaluation forms can help to alert instructors about problems--if students fill them out truthfully.

Food promotes fellowship and helps to create a bonding effect for my group. I get distracted when I'm hungry. I enjoy a good meal. My group takes month about bringing food to class, bringing unique foods and trying to outdo each other. One month we stopped but son began again at everyone's insistence. Most teachers join us when we eat. People who eat together learn to know each other better and work together better as a team. Sometimes spouses come to the sessions, bring food, and join the discussions.

Students should attend social functions at the college together--theatrical productions, religious and sports events, Christmas dinners, and picnics. Playing together makes for better relationships in the classroom. Students should also attend classmates' graduations.

Sometimes my study group meets with other cohort members. Even though we are competitive, we admire and respect each other and value our friendships. We realize that a lot of knowledge exists within our entire cohort, and we are not too proud to ask for assistance. I am more than glad to request help (and give help) and to meet extra sessions that are not required. I want to learn! I could not make it without my cohort and study group. It relieves stress when you can be yourself and say exactly what you feel. Students can often get the idea across better than an instructor, who may assume that students understand. My group has great rapport--no conflicts at all.

When study groups meet at each other's houses, they learn to know classmates' family members and gain better perspectives about one another. Including spouses and children in activities also increases support and reinforces bonds of friendship.

Going out to dinner or to a movie with classmates is a good idea. Socializing permits people to see other sides of one another and to become more insightful about behaviors.

Research Question #10

What are the perceptions of employers, instructors, and program directors concerning the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups?

I asked this question to learn if students were being trained to meet employers' needs. Also, I wanted to gain more insight concerning ways to improve marketing strategies. In

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addition, I sought to discover if employers, instructors, and program directors understood and were supportive of the cohort- and study-group concept.

Responses to Question 10 and Statement 14 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire and responses to Statements 2 and 3 of instructor questionnaires and Statements 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 of program director questionnaires were used to evaluate the Research Question #10. Instructor, program director, and employer responses to open-ended questions on questionnaires were also used for evaluation purposes.

Question 3 of the employer questionnaire asked if employers would recommend the program to other companies, and 100% of the respondents said "yes." Question 5 asked if employee received a promotion since enrolling or completing the program, and 3 (75%) said "yes" and 1 (25%) said "no."

Question 6 asked if employees had received a salary increase since enrolling or completing the program, and 4 (100%) said "yes." When asked if employees had improved in the areas of leadership, professional responsibility, vision, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, decision making, and oral communication skills, 4 (100%) of the respondents said "yes." Twenty-five percent of the respondents was "undecided" about improvements in collaboration methods, written communication skills, ethical practices, and computation skills, while 3 (75%) said employees had improved in all of these areas.

Question 10 asked, "Are you being reimbursed (either totally or partially) by your employer?" "Yes" was the response of 55.24% of the respondents, and "No" was the response of 44.76% of the respondents. The data shows that a majority of the respondents receive company reimbursement.

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Statement 14 stated, "I have received a promotion or been given greater leadership responsibilities since enrolling in the program." "Yes" was the response of 31.12% of the respondents and "no" was the response of 68.88% of the respondents. The data shows that a majority of the respondents have not received a promotion since enrolling in their programs.

Statement 2 of the instructor questionnaire referred to positive or negative experiences with cohorts. Seventeen (100%) of the respondents said experiences had been positive. Statement 3 of the instructor questionnaire referred to positive or negative experiences with study groups. Sixteen (94.1%) of the respondents said experiences had been positive, while 1 (5.9%) responded "not applicable."

Statement 2 and 3 of the program director questionnaire referred to positive or negative experiences with cohorts and study groups. All four respondents (100%) said experiences had been positive. Statement 5 said that students enrolled in cohort programs achieve high rates of academic success and asked for a "yes" or "no" response. One hundred percent of the respondents said "yes." Statement 6 said that students enrolled in cohort programs are highly motivated and asked for a "yes" or "no" response. One hundred percent of the respondents said "yes." Statement 7 said that students enrolled in cohort programs appear to gain great satisfaction from learning experiences and asked for a "yes" or "no" response. One hundred percent of the respondents said "yes."

Representative employer, instructor, and program director responses to open-ended questions are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendices 11, 13, and 14:

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I have observed a big difference in leadership and confidence in dealing with problems. Techniques such as better teamwork and improved communication have been implemented in the past few months.

Brainstorming automatically occurs. By practicing group problem solving in class, students are enabled to become more proficient in this area in the workplace. They develop resources for later use.

Peer pressure goes a long way in this arena. Students are challenged to do better.

A healthy cohort and study group becomes like a family. The degree of support and trust is much higher with adult learners.

Often, those that fear risks are gently encouraged to take more risks. Those that take too many risks are taught the need to use care when making a decision.

Students learn to be accountable. Since they aren't only responsible for themselves, students must share the load if they wish to remain a valued group member. The group concept most likely leads to close bonding and loyalty among group members. This further stresses the importance of responsibility to the students because they hopefully won't let down the people to whom they are loyal.

A student's self-esteem can be positively or negatively affected by group members. A student can enter the group with low self-esteem, but with consistent positive reinforcement, he or she begins to feel like a valued group member. Conversely, if a group member is constantly faced with criticism that is not constructive and with insults, it can have a powerful negative correlation on self-esteem.

Research Question #11

How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

I asked this question to gather suggestions about ways to improve the program delivery and to enrich cohort- and study-group experiences.

Question 2 of Section 2 of the student cohort- and study-group questionnaire, part "e" of Question 8 of the program director questionnaire, and part "e" of Question 5 of the

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instructor questionnaire were used to evaluate Research Question #11. Student interview responses also suggested ways to make improvements.

Question 2 asked, "How can cohorts and study groups be improved?" Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendices 8, 9, 11, and 13:

> Actively making people participate. This allows everyone to learn from the others' experiences.
>
> Teach time management and ways of becoming more structured.
>
> They should be encouraged by instructors to allow everyone to take equal roles in discussions.
>
> They can be improved by listening to the other members, everyone participating as a leader, and giving constructive criticism.
>
> They can be improved if more teachers encouraged the use of study groups.
>
> Guidelines for effective study groups could be given out.
>
> Develop a clearer understanding of group concepts earlier in the program.
>
> My cohort and study-group works so well I really do not know how we can improve at this point. I'm sure there are improvements, but I'm very satisfied.
>
> Don't make the assumption that study groups will automatically reach a level of success. The cohort system works well. It may be a good idea to lay out an initial structure for the study-group.
>
> Cohorts and study-groups can be improved by attempting to have people of like interests joined together. In our study-group, the members are very supportive of each other and understand the others' needs and requirements.
>
> Conduct personality testing to match up the right people.
>
> There could be more outside and social involvement.

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Part "e" of Question 8 and part "e" of Question 5 asked, "How can cohorts and study groups be improved?" Representative responses are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendices 11 and 13:

> Through trial and error. My personal technique is to look at the students as customers of the program, to listen to their comments, and to make adjustments where possible.
>
> Keep the members to no more than four (4) people. Groups of five (5) or more are too big and have an unfair advantage over smaller study groups!
>
> I think the class representative is the key to a good cohort. Great care should be taken in choosing a class representative.
>
> By effectively explaining their importance from the onset and by faculty reinforcement during the progress of a course.
>
> By having an "authority" on group dynamics observe the cohort or study group and offer advice on how to improve the process.
>
> When interviewed personally, some of the students responded as follows:
>
> Study-groups can be improved by getting the right mixture of people together. If one is not willing to assume responsibility, animosity results. I try to tell my classmates that we must openly discuss problems and monitor each other closely. If we had known each other before joining the cohort, we would have bonded more quickly. If at all possible, the cohort should work together for awhile before breaking off into study groups. Going to a retreat and learning about the nature of cohorts and study groups would be a good idea. People should be taught the importance of making contributions and working to achieve the same goal.
>
> I've had both good and bad group experiences. When people share the same basic values, they bond well and work together well. Therefore, people should be matched up carefully--not just by geographic locations. I've seen some groups that have members that are at each other's throats all the time because their beliefs, goals, and objectives differ. It really makes a difference. Grades suffer when people don't get along or when two or three people have to carry the entire load. Personality tests help people understand how others see them--arrogant, mouthy, or pushy.
>
> Study-group members should choose each other carefully if possible. I was once in a bad group that made an impact on my entire life. I thought I was in another world. These people were totally different from me. I finally left the group. While I liked the

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> people as individuals, I could not work with them as a group. They were too dependent upon me and wore me down.

Additional Findings

Additional findings revealed that the four program directors who were polled had served as directors for 12 years in traditional programs and 18 years as directors of nontraditional programs, totaling 30 years of directorship.

Also, the 17 instructor respondents had taught 95 years in traditional programs and 44 years in nontraditional programs, totaling 139 years of teaching experiences.

Statement 4 of the program director questionnaire stated, "Retention rate is higher in nontraditional cohort programs than in traditional programs." Seventy-five percent of the respondents answered "yes," and 25% answered "no."

Part "d" of Question 8 asked, "Has working with cohorts helped you to become a more innovative program director? If so, explain." One hundred percent of the directors responded "yes." A representative response follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 13:

> I am old enough to know that I do not have all the answers. Satisfied students will tell other potential students. Therefore, things that make coming to my school more enjoyable, while maintaining a quality program, should be considered.

Part "d" of Question 5 of the instructor questionnaire asked, "Have you become a better facilitator since working with cohorts and study groups?" Eighty-eight percent of the instructors answered "yes," and 12% said "no." Representative responses of the instructors are as follows, while remaining statements are included in Appendix 11:

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I have seen success in groups and learned ways of encouraging this interaction.

It makes you understand and appreciate why we are in education. The primary goal is for students to learn, and these folks are like a sponge.

I understand the various interplays of student personalities to a deeper depth.

The nature of being in the process of group dynamics forces one to become a better facilitator.

A vast majority of the students, instructors, program directors, and employers were supportive of the cohort- and study-group concept. They agreed that this method of program delivery contributes greatly to student satisfaction and academic performance, improves interpersonal relations, and enhances leadership skills.

Interviews with program directors revealed that a significant amount of revenue is generated by their nontraditional programs. In addition, College A has maintained a 93% retention rate over a one-year period; College B has maintained a 75% retention over a three-year period; College C has maintained a 90% retention rate over an eight-year period; and College D has maintained a 91% retention rate over an eight-year period. The average retention rate of the four schools is 87%.

Summary

In this chapter, findings from 286 student questionnaires and four student interviews, four program director questionnaires, four director interviews, and four employer questionnaires were presented to determine the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups. Thirty students also participated in focus group sessions. A high percent return rate resulted from questionnaire distribution, and interviews produced rich details that

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contributed greatly to research findings. In addition, marketing materials and reports from the four participating colleges provided descriptions of institutions and their programs and revealed revenue, retention, and enrollment information. Students' employers also provided data that strengthened results of the study. Additionally, demographic information, which was gathered, helped to determine a study profile. A number of tentative conclusions were drawn from the 11 research questions that were asked.

Chapter 5 is a presentation of findings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Chapter 5 contains the summary of the study, findings, and implications of the research, conclusions based on the analysis of the data, and recommendations based on the results of the study.

Introduction

The primary purpose of the study, as stated in Chapter 1, was to examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in organizational management and business administration cohort- and study-group programs at four, small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia.

The objective of the study was to examine how cohorts and study groups were implemented at four colleges. In addition, the study explored ways that cohorts and study groups contributed to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills.

The strategy to improve adult education is to develop sound, flexible programs that meet the unique needs of adult learners. This qualitative study was designed to explore the effectiveness of cohort- and study-group programs. The study also investigated the impact that cohorts and study groups have on students' lives outside the classroom.

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The literature review showed that the team approach to learning improves satisfaction and performance levels of students and helps to promote interpersonal relations and the development of effective leadership skills. Likewise, the literature review revealed that the advantages of working in a group setting appear to outweigh the disadvantages. For example, students enrolled in cohorts and study groups seem to network effectively, to develop strong bonds of friendship, to seek the same or similar goals, to share workloads and leadership responsibilities, and to develop successful collaborative learning techniques. In addition, they appear to grow in self-confidence, to take more risks, to become more flexible, and visionary, and to develop strong feelings of trust and respect for each other.

Several issues emerged from this research that are worthy of further discussion. For example, cohorts and study groups seem to provide the safety and security that adult nontraditional learners need to achieve educational goals. The success of these groups was revealed through reactions of focus groups and respondents' answers to questionnaires and interview questions. The majority of participants favored cohort- and study-group methods and found them to be beneficial in the classroom, at home, in the community, and in the workplace. This study suggests that cohorts and study groups enable adult students to overcome obstacles that impede success. Some of the compelling strengths of cohorts and study groups are shared experiences, development of democratic values, friendly competition, creative approaches to problem solving, and decentralized forms of leadership.

Among the common characteristics exhibited by members of cohorts and study groups are high motivation and achievement levels, a willingness to collaborate and to

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accept responsibility, a desire for group identity, effective communication skills, and a high degree of self-awareness.

Cohort- and study-group program deliveries permit courses to be offered in lock-step, accelerated, flexible formats. When courses build upon one another, strong knowledge bases are formed. Likewise, students enrolled in cohorts and study groups tend to develop strong bonds, to value each others' opinions, and to become better listeners.

Program directors and instructors reported that cohort- and study-group programs encourage students and instructors to work together and also help instructors to become better facilitators. This finding agrees with the studies of West (1992) and Kraus (1996).

Employers expressed their support of cohort- and study-group programs by providing free use of classroom facilities, by offering tuition reimbursement, by promoting employees to leadership positions and increasing their salaries, and by recommending programs to other companies. The employers who participated in the study agreed that employees' decision making skills had improved and were pleased by improvements in leadership and oral communication skills.

The four colleges that participated in the research were eager to engage in the study and look forward to sharing results of findings. Some administrators have already begun their own investigations based upon questionnaire inquiries.

Summary

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in organizational management and business administration

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cohort- and study-group programs at four small, private, church-related colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. An objective specific to the study was to examine how cohorts and study groups are implemented at these four colleges and to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of specific variations of cohorts and study groups. In addition, the study explored how, or if, cohorts and study groups contribute to students' satisfaction, an increase in academic performance levels, stronger interpersonal relations, and enhanced leadership skills.

The literature review revealed that a team approach can provide people with security and motivate them to collaborate, to accept responsibility, to share leadership roles, and to seek mutual goals that lead to success. When people share workloads, they seem to bond more quickly, to network more effectively, and to be more willing to provide emotional support for others. Additionally, teams tend to develop complex thought processes and to solve problems creatively.

The qualitative research design permitted the researcher to gather rich data from focus groups, from student, instructor, program director, and employer questionnaires, and from student and program director interviews. Responses from 345 participants, the literature review, and an investigation of program marketing materials provided the understanding needed to address the 11 research questions.

Findings

Question # 1: How are cohorts and study groups implemented at the four colleges involved in the study?

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I asked the first research question to gain more knowledge about methods of cohort- and study-group program deliveries. An investigation of marketing materials and responses to questionnaires and interview questions revealed that the four programs were very similar.

Question # 2: Do cohorts and study groups enhance interpersonal relations?

I asked this question to determine how interpersonal relationships were affected by cohorts and study groups and to study the impact of these groups on students' lives. Student responses revealed that students' experiences were positive.

Question # 3: Do cohorts and study groups influence students to enroll in college?

I asked this question to determine if students enroll in cohort- and study-group programs to seek support and to overcome obstacles that prevent learning. A majority of the students had experienced team approaches to learning and problem-solving; however, only 43.01% were influenced to join the program because of the cohort- and study-group approach.

Question # 4: Do cohorts and study groups influence students to complete programs?

I asked this question to learn if group cohesiveness is a motivating factor that increases retention and program completion rates of students. A majority (69.58%) agreed that cohort and study groups influenced them to strive to complete degrees.

Question # 5: Are cohort- and study-group methods of program delivery more effective than traditional methods, as perceived by students, program directors, and instructors?

I asked this question to discover major differences among traditional and cohort- and study-group programs and to determine which method was preferred by adults. Students,

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program directors, and instructors pointed out numerous differences. A majority of respondents suggested that cohorts and study groups met the needs of adult learners more effectively than traditional methods.

Question # 6: What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

I asked this question to determine if the advantages of cohorts and study groups outweighed disadvantages and to learn more about conflicts experienced by group members. An overwhelming majority of respondents said advantages outweighed disadvantages. Conflicts resulted primarily from scheduling difficulties, personality problems, and students who ignored responsibilities.

Question # 7: Do cohorts and study groups contribute to students' satisfaction and increase academic and professional performance?

I asked this question to determine how or if cohorts and study groups promote personal satisfaction and enhance professional growth and skills in the workplace. A majority of the respondents agreed that they had gained personal satisfaction and had grown professionally and increased workplace skills since enrolling in their respective programs.

Question # 8: Do cohorts and study groups promote collaboration and leadership skills in areas outside the classroom?

I asked this question to determine if the sharing nature of cohorts and study groups strengthened teamwork and leadership skills in the home, community, and workplace. A

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majority of the respondents agreed that collaboration and leadership skills were transferred from the classroom to other areas of students' lives.

Question # 9: What societal or competitive factors contribute to the successful functioning of cohorts and study groups, as perceived by their members?

I asked this question to explore factors that might enhance working relationships and improve goal setting techniques of cohort- and study-group members. Responses to this question said that engaging in friendly competition, sharing meals, attending social functions together, and including family members in activities helped to ensure the successful functioning of cohorts and study groups.

Question # 10: What are the perceptions of employers, instructors, and program directors concerning the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups?

I asked this question to learn how to market programs more effectively and to determine if employers, instructors, and program directors understood and supported cohort- and study-group programs. All participants appeared to have a good understanding of the method of program delivery and supported both students and colleges. As a result of the positive responses and valuable suggestions, I gained helpful ideas concerning marketing strategies to increase enrollment and retention rates.

Question # 11: How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

I asked this question to learn how to improve program delivery, to overcome conflicts among students, and to enrich cohort and study-group experiences. Respondents suggested the use of personality tests to match study-group members and urged administrators to select effective instructors and to choose class representatives to serve as

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links with colleges. While most respondents were pleased with their cohorts and study groups, several of them said that improvements could be made to enhance learning experiences.

Implications

I am indebted to the informants and respondents who provided the rich details for this study. Because these people were willing to share experiences, opinions, and information, I have gained increased understanding of the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups. This enhancement of knowledge has helped my growth as an administrator of adult programs and has provided significant information that can be used by all grade levels of educational institutions and by industry as well.

In addition, I have learned the importance of conducting special orientation and training programs for cohort students and their families and instructors. These sessions will promote understanding and support, will emphasize the importance of time management, and will increase the likelihood of cohort- and study-group bonding. Likewise, I have recognized that program developers need to provide adequate opportunities for social interaction among students and families. Also, I have learned that college administrators need to be cognizant of the requirements of adult learners so that they can develop the sensitivity and understanding necessary to address students' concerns. Finally, I have discovered the necessity for faculty and staff in-service programs that will enable program deliverers to identify problems and determine solutions that will effectively promote retention and graduation rates.

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Conclusions

I have revealed, through this study, the attitudes of 345 participants concerning the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups. Four small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges located in southeastern United States provided information for this study. This research focused attention on the experiences, attitudes, and feelings of students enrolled in organizational management or business administration cohort- and study-group programs. Likewise, opinions of instructors, program directors, and students' employers were included in the study.

I found that students were highly motivated and that a majority of them had returned to college to seek personal satisfaction. A vast majority of the respondents agreed that cohort and study groups provided the support needed to overcome barriers, enriched learning experiences, and helped to ensure successful completion of programs. In a like manner, respondents agreed that cohorts and study groups increased satisfaction, raised academic performance levels, strengthened interpersonal relations, and enhanced leadership skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of the outcomes of the study and existing literature, I suggest the following recommendations:

1. Since this qualitative study was conducted at four colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia, I recommend that additional research be conducted at other colleges nationwide to determine if findings generalize to other regions.

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2. I recommend that additional quantitative data be gathered and statistical tests be run to further validate the results of the study.

3. I recommend an investigation that compares the effectiveness of mandatory, monitored study groups to voluntary, unmonitored study groups.

4. I recommend that the study be replicated to include the opinions of students who dropped out of cohort programs. Their perceptions and opinions will help to increase the validation of the study.

5. I recommend that the process of mentoring be investigated to determine how, or if, adult learners could benefit from the assistance of experienced cohort- and study-group members.

6. I recommend that the use of class representatives be investigated to determine how, or if, they contribute to the success of cohorts and study groups.

7. I recommend a study of different types of personality tests that could be used to form more effective study groups.

8. I recommend a study of the attitudes and opinions of high-level college administrators and their support offices and boards. This investigation will help to determine the depth of these respondents' understanding of adult learners and will suggest the extent to which respondents endorse nontraditional methods of program delivery.

In summary, perhaps such actions, considerations, and recommendations can contribute to a better and more accurate understanding of the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups and other nontraditional methods of program delivery. Additionally, these suggestions may provide insight into methods for improving the functioning of cohorts

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and study groups, for enhancing students' experiences and meeting special needs, and for encouraging students to complete degrees in a timely manner. Finally, recommendations may enable colleges to increase enrollment and revenue and to provide accelerated, flexible programs for the growing population of adult students.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1

Narrative

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Project Title

The title of this dissertation is Learning Experiences of Nontraditional Students Enrolled in Organizational Management and Business Administration Cohort- and Study-Group Programs.

Place To Be Conducted

This study will be conducted at four private college located in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Objectives

The objectives of this project are to examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational Management and Business Administration cohort- and study-group programs at four, small, private, church-related, arts-based colleges in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia, to examine how cohorts and study groups are implemented at these colleges, and to explore ways that cohorts and study groups contribute to students' satisfaction and academic performance levels, interpersonal relations, and leadership skills.

Summary

The study, which will examine the learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational Management cohort- and study-group programs at four colleges, will include approximately 250 subjects who are enrolled in colleges that are located within a 350 mile radius of each other. Focus groups will be interviewed, and

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qualitative information will be gathered and codified into a questionnaire that will explore students' perceptions of cohorts and study groups. Additionally, information about structural design and variables of cohorts and study groups will be collected through approximately 25 individual, personal interviews and responses to 50 surveys.

A qualitative method will be used to obtain information because it will provide the meaning necessary to comprehend the unique needs of the adult learner. The induction method of discovery will permit a holistic and process-oriented approach to be employed--one that will help to discover the "why" of cohorts and study groups. Triangulation will be used to safeguard against bias. As the researcher, I will serve as the de facto instrument, collecting all of the data myself. Interviews with focus groups, individual students, instructors, and students' employers will provide rich data that will be expressed in the respondents' own language. In addition, surveys and Likert-type questionnaires with open-ended questions and requests for comments will provide invaluable information. Reliability and validity will be of primary concern. Conversations will be videotaped, and audio cassette recordings will be made. Likewise, copious field notes and a reflective journal will be kept, and a panel of experts will be asked to review procedures. Questionnaires will be hand delivered to the informants at each of the four colleges. (A pilot interview will be conducted to identify potential problems, to prepare for actual interviews, and to develop skills needed to probe for responses and to clarify meaning.) By using comparative data analysis, I hope to identify both common and different elements in the responses of informants and respondents. I will stop collecting data when I am satisfied that I have achieved theoretical saturation. (Surveys and questionnaires cannot be

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developed until focus groups meet. Since these groups cannot meet until after the IRB form has been approved, surveys and questionnaires are not included.)

Specific Role Of Human Subjects

Respondents will be asked to participate in focus groups and to engage in interviews. Additionally, subjects will be asked to respond to questionnaires and surveys that have been carefully constructed to gather data concerning the effectiveness of cohort- and study-group learning.

Specific Risks To Subjects

Subjects will not be exposed to risks, especially since no identification of colleges or subjects will be used in the study. Colleges will be referred to as A, B, C, and D, and names of subjects will be withheld.

Benefits To Subjects

Results of the study may improve educational opportunities and academic performance of subjects. Also, results may increase student satisfaction and college retention rates and strengthen interpersonal relations and leadership skills. Finally, results of the research are expected to contribute to the ever-increasing knowledge of non-traditional, adult learners and to reveal the importance of cohorts and study groups to the learning process. If information from this study helps to improve program designs, motivates students to continue studies, and enables colleges to recruit more students, then

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the investigation will have been worthwhile. It is also to be hoped that high schools and elementary schools and the business community will benefit from findings.

Inducement

Subjects will be persuaded to participate in the study because of the benefits that they may reap when results of the study are shared with them and with their institutions of higher learning or businesses. Knowing that they face numerous emotional and physical barriers when entering college, adult learners appreciate non-threatening methods of program delivery.

Subject Confidentiality

Subjects' rights to privacy will be maintained since names of colleges and respondents will not be revealed. Questionnaires will not be coded or signed.

Informed Consent

Permission will be requested from various colleges and businesses before interviews are conducted and questionnaires are distributed. A letter will be sent to subjects explaining the purpose of the study and promising anonymity.

Adverse Reaction Reporting

Adverse reaction reporting will not apply to this study.

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Pertinent Literature

The works of leading authorities in adult education, such as J. W. Apps, S. Brookfield, G. H. Applebee, M. W. Galbraith, M. Knowles, S. B. Merriam, and P. M. Cunningham, will be explored. In addition, literature from various colleges, adult education magazines, and recent newspaper articles will be investigated.

Location of Records

Since information is not confidential, storage of records will not present a problem.

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APPENDIX 2

Focus Group Questions

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Let's talk about cohorts and study groups. What are your impressions of this method of program delivery?

2. How do cohort- and study-group designs compare to other educational means of delivering programs?

3. What can schools do to improve the effectiveness of cohorts and study groups?

4. Think back to the past. Did you have or are you having good or bad cohort- and study-group experiences? Describe experiences that have left lasting impressions.

5. What are your most favorite and least favorite aspects of the cohort and study group--strengths and weaknesses?

6. If you could change one thing about cohorts and study groups, what would it be?

7. How does the cohort- and study-group method compare to other educational methods?

8. How do cohorts and study groups help with problem solving, development of leadership traits, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility?

9. What changes have you observed in yourself as the result of your cohort- and study-group experiences?

10. Do you have any final thoughts about cohorts and study groups? Have we missed anything in our discussion?

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APPENDIX 3

Approval Letter From IRB

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ETSU

East Tennessee State University
Institutional Review Board • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-0565 • (423) 439-6134

January 22, 1998

Janyce R. Westerman
Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
Box 70550

RE: A Study of the Learning Experiences of Nontraditional Students Enrolled in Organizational Management Cohort- and Study- Group Programs at Four Private Colleges in the Southeastern United States.
IRB No. 97-072e

Dear Ms. Westerman:

I have reviewed the above-referenced study and find that it qualifies as exempt from coverage under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45--Part 46.101.

If you feel it is necessary to call further IRB attention to any aspects of this project, please refer to the above-titled project and IRB number.

I appreciate your bringing this project before the IRB for its concurrence of exempt status.

Respectfully submitted,

David N. Walters, M.D., Chair of the IRB
Chief--Surgical Services, V. A. Medical Center

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APPENDIX 4

Permission Letter To Program Directors

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March 8, 1998

Dear _____:

In a recent phone conversation, I explained that I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University, and you granted me permission to conduct a study at your institution. Thank you for assisting me in my dissertation research regarding the use of cohorts and study groups in adult educational programs. It is my hope that findings of this study will help to improve the delivery of educational services. In addition, I anticipate that results of the research will identify strategies to increase students' satisfaction and academic performance levels and will suggest ways to promote teamwork, to increase retention rates, and to enhance leadership skills.

I am enclosing a copy of the questionnaire that will be sent to students. As you can see, neither the participant's name nor the institution's name is required on the survey; therefore, complete anonymity is assured. Responses will be maintained with strict confidentiality.

Again, I express my appreciation for your cooperation and agree to share results of my study when it has been completed.

Sincerely yours,

Janyce Westerman
Director of Adult Degree Studies

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APPENDIX 5

Appreciation Letter To Focus Group Members

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April 14, 1998

Dear _____:

Thank you for assisting me with my dissertation by participating in the focus group activity. I gathered excellent feedback from the discussion and have incorporated much of the information into my project. If all goes according to plan, I will defend my dissertation in may or June and receive my diploma in August. Without your valuable input, completion of my work would not have been possible.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to share cohort- and study-group experiences and to provide me with knowledge that helped me to develop questionnaires. I hope to see you again in the future and to share the results of my research with you.

Yours truly,

Janyce Westerman
Director, Adult Degree Studies

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APPENDIX 6

Appreciation Letter To Program Directors

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April 14, 1998

Dear _____:

Thank you again for assisting me with my dissertation. I received the questionnaires that you returned and have tallied responses. I plan to give my advisor Chapters 1-3 by the end of April and have begun a rough draft of the last two chapters. If all goes according to plan, I will defend my dissertation in May or June and receive my diploma in August. Without your valuable input, early completion of my project would not be possible.

I am enclosing a questionnaire for you as Program Director and three questionnaires for instructors. Information gained from these surveys should provide additional data that will strengthen findings. Responses may be returned in the postage-paid envelopes.

I hope that all goes well at your institution and that your adult program is continuing to grow. The need for offerings such as ours is great, and the services that we provide make a significant difference in people's lives.

Yours truly,

Janyce Westerman
Director, Adult Degree Studies

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APPENDIX 7

Student Questionnaire

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The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the effectiveness of learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational Management or Business Administration Cohort- and Study-Group Programs. Neither your name nor your institution's name is required on the survey; therefore, complete anonymity is assured. Questionnaire findings will be included in a doctoral dissertation that will be presented to the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department at East Tennessee State University. Thank you for your valuable assistance.

SECTION 1

Please check the appropriate categories:

1. Sex: Female ___ Male ___
2. Age Range: Less than 25 ___ 25-35 ___ 36-45 ___ 46-50 ___ Over 50
3. Marital Status: Married ___ Single ___ Divorced ___ Separated ___ Widowed ___
4. How many dependent children reside in your home? 0 ___ 1 ___ 2-3 ___ Over 3 ___
5. Are you presently employed? Yes ___ No ___
6. If employed, are you working full time? Yes ___ No ___
7. If employed, are you in a management or leadership position? Yes ___ No ___
8. Have you had previous cohort- and study-group college experiences? Yes ___ No ___
9 Have you participated in a team approach at your workplace? Yes ___ No ___
10. Are you being reimbursed (either totally or partially) by your employer? Yes ___ No ___
11. GPA when entering program: Less that 2.0 ___ 2.0 - 2.5 ___ 2.6 - 3.0 ___ 3.1 - 3.5 ___ 3.6 - 4.0 ___
12. Number of semesters enrolled in management or business program: Less than 1___ 1-2 ___ 3 or more ___
13. Primary reason for obtaining a degree (Check all that apply.): To become eligible for a pay increase ___. To become eligible for a promotion ___. To advance in my present workplace ___. To prepare for a career change ___. For my own personal satisfaction ___. To become a better informed person ___.
14. I have received a promotion or been given greater leadership responsibilities since enrolling in the program. Yes ___ No ___

SECTION 2

On the scaled questions, please circle the rating number that best corresponds to your feeling about that question. If a question does not apply to you or you are unable to answer it, circle "Not Sure." Please comment where indicated.

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KEY
1=Strongly Disagree
2=Disagree
3=Not Sure
4=Agree
5=Strongly Agree

For all the scaled questions, the lower end of the scale (1) is the strongest expression of disagreement with the statement, and the higher end of the scale (5) is the strongest agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My cohort works well together.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My study group works well together.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Members of my cohort care about me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My study group cares about me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have become a greater risk taker.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have become more accepting of other people.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am more visionary and can integrate ideas effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Respect from classmates has increased my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel close to all of my classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Study group members feel like family.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am a better problem solver and decision maker.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel that the entire cohort trusts and supports me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My study group members trust and support me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am more secure both at school and at work.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I value the time spent with the cohort.	1	2	3	4	5

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16. I value the time spent with my study group.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My study group and I share interests and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Study groups provide academic and professional support.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am better able to assess personal values now.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My interpersonal and leadership skills have improved.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The cohort/study group concept influenced me to enroll.	1	2	3	4	5
22 Group experiences have encourage me to graduate.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Advantages of cohort/study groups outweigh problems.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Scheduling results in study-group problems.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Irresponsibility causes resentment in study groups.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I will network with my study group after graduation.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I feel a genuine affection for study group members.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Study groups become too cohesive.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Social gatherings improve cohort cohesion.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Friendly competition exists among cohort members.	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THE FORM TO RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups?
2. How can cohorts and study groups be improved?
3. Explain how collaborative learning techniques can be transferred to other areas of your life, such as the home and workplace.

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APPENDIX 8

Student Questionnaire Responses

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1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohorts and study groups?

The advantages are that you are not alone, and the disadvantages are that you are forced to interact even when you may not want to.

The advantage is that an accelerated structure can be used and ideas can be exchanged.

A disadvantage is that too much is crammed in at one time.

They help support and encourage members to finish the program. Also, they help people to overcome problems and difficulties when they arise.

Teaches one how to work within the group context to achieve common goals--can stifle individualism and if no leader emerges, staying focused on tasks can be a problem.

Advantages - support in schoolwork
Disadvantages - time spent away from home

They care about all of me--not just the school me. I can talk to them about anything.

Study groups work great to combine each members' strong points.

The advantages of cohorts do outweigh the disadvantages. The support received from the study group and cohort members is invaluable.

Advantages are sharing of talents, knowledge, and gaining insights into situations and problems. Sharing and integration of ideas and skills.
Support mentally.

I feel that the group concept has made this program much better than if we were changing groups. The program has been very enjoyable since I have developed new friendships and business contacts.

Better overall view.

Can help each other in problem areas. The group moves at the same pace. Really need study group support to complete assignments and need and depend on them for moral support.

A disadvantage is that it only takes one member of a study group to disrupt the entire group.

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The advantages of a study group include gaining different perspectives and learning to work as a team.

An advantage is making good friends. No disadvantages.

They are good.

Advantage - Can result in one or more people bonding with common goals and concerns--helps stress. Disadvantage - Some members do not have motivation and do not participate or carry their load.

The bonding of personal relationships is a great eye opener.

If they work well, they are very helpful. If not, they can be detrimental to all concerned. The advantages of cohorts and study groups are many, the most important of which is support of each other.

Disadvantage - You can become too close.

My study group gives me the support and encouragement I need to finish school since becoming separated.

Security - succeeding vs failing! Our study group encourages other members by using positive attitudes. We are very close in our relationships, more so since school began.

Advantages - Teamwork emphasized.
Disadvantage - Scheduling time to get together.

Each individual brings his/her own ideas to the group.

One advantage of study groups is the encouragement given to continue the program. One disadvantage is that too many members create scheduling difficulties.

Advantage is diversity and disadvantage is scheduling study groups.

Scheduling is difficult at times, especially when all members work different hours.

Sharing ideas, thought, views, and experiences are invaluable.

Advantages - two or more minds are better than one.

If something is not clear to you, you can clarify it with your study group.

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Being a member of a great study group and cohort has helped me stay motivated and has made class assignments more enjoyable.

Advantage - learning to work together.
Disadvantage - Time spent away from family.
Disadvantage - Not enough time.

More options provide advantages.

They help me with a different view and observation.

Information sharing and generation of ideas.

Helps to clarify things that we may not understand. Brain storming on ideas for projects.

Advantage - Provides classes that are accessible for me - better approach.
Disadvantage - My schedule is very complex; it is still complicated for me to make class and find work time.

Support.

Advantage - We encourage each other to keep working.
Disadvantage - When one of the group drops out, we all feel betrayed.

Learning from each other.

Working together builds self-esteem. It also helps us realize that even if we work in different fields, we have a lot in common.

Open discussion.

Advantage - Smaller groups are more informal.
Disadvantages - None as structured.

You get to see other people's views and ideas.

Disadvantage - With tight schedules, study groups can be next to impossible.

Discussion among ourselves.

The building of strong relationships.

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The advantage of the cohort is the positive reinforcement for each other.

An advantage is that the group changes because of personal differences.

The advantages of cohort learning groups: support, networking, close relationships and new experiences.

Cohorts and study groups increase a person's learning abilities and make them more responsible because others are depending on them.

I can't think of any disadvantages. Our group consists of a wide variety of personalities, jobs, etc. We're more like family.

The advantage is that you can accomplish more and build self-esteem. The disadvantages are that there are members who choose not to work together.

Advantage - Work can be divided among different people with different skills.

Working with groups has advantages. You have more support and help when you work with the same group week after week. You are able to lean on each other and help each other with problems. I haven't seen any disadvantages.

The relationships established in our study groups have been an encouragement as well as a support. I feel that the advantages have far outweighed any disadvantages. Really, I can't think of any disadvantages. Maybe scheduling our time as a study group outside of class is our only problem. It is hard to find a time that is agreeable with all our schedules.

An advantage is having support and comparing ideas with face-to-face contact as opposed to classroom arrangements.

They help you to complete the program and to move forward; however, cliques may surface.

We learn from each other.

We share knowledge and vent. Groups help us to gain better understanding. Good reinforcement. Sharing and clarifying new ideas--a good method of learning.

The advantages are the feedback that is given and the respect that occurs. The disadvantage is the time spent.

Learning from other perspectives and using life experiences to problem solve.

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Advantage - able to better solve problems

To gain insight and knowledge from each other.

Advantage - help each other to better understand a course or topic and to work better as a group than alone. No disadvantages.

An advantage is that you can draw from other people's life experiences and usually there is someone locally to study with. The only disadvantage is not being able to study together as much as you want or need to because everyone is so busy.

Advantage - To get help with homework.
Disadvantage - Too many personal thoughts and feelings displayed.

More than one idea can be expressed and new friends can be made. Very personal approach--can be a help or a hindrance.

You don't feel like the only one faced with all the demands.

A larger variety of ideas are presented, and we get to know one another, give help and encouragement.

A disadvantage is the amount of time required and the fact that people sometimes get off the subject.

Increased levels of understanding and application, peer review of cases and more participation--more understanding, especially if the instructor isn't getting through.

Disadvantage - Some people may not do assignments and depend upon others in the group to get answers.

The main advantage to me is the support and assistance with classwork and outside assistance with problems.

The greatest advantage is the knowledge you gain from the experiences of peers and the satisfaction of helping others learn from your own experiences. I can think of no disadvantages.

The advantage is that we share our experiences with others and learn from them.

Advantage - You hear different opinions. Disadvantage - It's hard to catch up when you miss a class.

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The team concept and brain storming produce better decisions. A disadvantage is that people who have no or low self-esteem don't participate.

Working together improves understanding and helps us to get along better--creating a togetherness and feelings of comradeship. Cohort groups make learning relaxing and easier, providing openness--also provide a better vehicle for completing my education.

Cohorts and study groups allow more personalized instruction. I'm not sure of any disadvantages.

It's nice to see the same faces for every class.

Advantages - You get to know your peers and can work with them to study or catch up on missed assignments.
Disadvantages - No chance to meet others if you don't mesh with the group.

Advantages - Having classes scheduled all the way through graduation, knowing which class is offered at a particular date and time, being able to pick up at a specific point if you have to drop a class at a particular time, knowing graduation day is at a particular date if you just stay with it!
Disadvantages - Having to start with a group you are unfamiliar with if you miss a class.

Disadvantage - Too large of an age difference in my group.
Advantage - Really helps when you need support.

No advantages or disadvantages.

More comfortable to go to school with students you are familiar with.

Advantages - Different opinions.
Disadvantages - Might not like what you hear.

Advantages - some people to go "through" it with you.
Disadvantages - People have knowledge of your scope.

It's an advantage for full-time workers. The disadvantage is not being able to choose your own subject.

Advantage - We work together to solve problems.
Disadvantage - Too much busy work.

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Advantage - Groups become cliques, but they develop strong friendships. Working with others in the group helps to better understand the material.

Advantages - Develop friendships and trust, study groups, networking. Disadvantages - Limits contact with others.

You get a little too close sometimes, but the mutual support is good.

Allows you to really get to know your classmates, but you are limited to just your group.

Advantages - Efficient--everything is planned in advance. Disadvantage - Less flexible, do not get to meet as many people.

Advantages - Same classmates throughout our studies, no choosing routes to follow, each class falls easily after the last. Disadvantages - Core curriculum make-up classes aren't offered conveniently.

A module group is very useful when you are working. You find that you can rely on people to help you, and you are able to return the favor.

Advantages - friendship, study partners, and problem-solving by discussion about work and home. Disadvantages - competitiveness, one person trying to do all the talking.

Advantages - More likely to open up and speak your mind in class. Disadvantage - Don't meet new people.

Advantages - Learning the actual need to know aspects of business rather than unnecessary information not used in the real world. The short length of time it requires to complete your degree. All classes are directed to working students. No disadvantages.

The program is perfect for people who work.

You have different opinions that you learn from.

Increased input.

Advantage - A closeknit group is more comfortable. Disadvantage - individualism is not encouraged.

A variety of opinions, ideas, and experiences are shared.

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Not sure about advantages and disadvantages.

In groups you can work together to solve problems. If group agrees only to maintain comfort, group will be ineffective.

Advantages - Grow and hear more ideas. Share ideas, problem solve, and encourage others. Disadvantages - Peer pressure and the conflict that can sometimes occur.

Advantages - More group discussion and sharing of ideas and knowledge.

2. How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

Try to group people with totally different backgrounds, lifestyles, and study habits.

Require more small group interaction.

No improvements needed at this time.

Leave the module instructions as they are written and don't let instructors change the grading system. Also, make more time for these groups.

Cohorts can be improved by assuring that facilitators are knowledgeable in the area they are asked to instruct. It would also help to have smaller groups of facilitators to improve cohesion among faculty.

Allowing and devoting more time.

Establishing groups at the very beginning of the program.

Encourage and schedule more interaction time.

I think groups should spend as much time together for studying and working together.

Make them do less writing.

Improvements will come when the college itself becomes more organized and is willing to work better with student on certain situations that may not be the fault of the student. The college program is improved professionally will stem down to the groups that are involved in the program.

Cannot think of anything to improve the situation.

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I like the way it is now.

Basically, I don't think improvements need to be made.

My experience with these approaches to educational procedures are limited. Can't answer effectively.

With more difficult classes, allow more sessions to ensure the comprehension and learning of the subject. Example: Statistics needs more than 5 to 7 sessions. Better dedication and participation.

It is hard for full-time employees to fit 20+ hours into study groups.

More locations to meet in smaller groups.

Maintain smaller groups.

The time spent in study groups needs to be lowered to fifteen hours. Most work can be done within this time frame; however, the actual study group time often exceeds 20 hours. Adults do not have to sit with one another to accomplish study group assignments. Work can and most often needs to be divided up with various members going different directions to research, etc,

No ideas.

No disadvantages.

Not sure.

No suggestions--working well for me!

A fairer grading system needs to be developed, especially on group projects. Flexibility in scheduling is also an issue.

No comments at this time.

Try to make sure they all get along.

Our cohort and study group has been extremely effective.

It all depends on the honesty within individual groups. The syllabus is designed to promote work ethics within each group. Study groups work well if they don't become an inconvenience for travel each night. Our study group has had the

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advantage of meeting everyday instead of once a week, like other groups. I do not see any area of improving. This depends on an individual's perception.

My cohort and study group have been excellent!

Cannot think of any improvements.

I don't know of ways to improve either because of the different personalities all the participants have.

Make sure facilitators are capable.

Have an introductory session.

Not sure.

Extend the length of classes.

Require more outside study.

Offer more core classes.

Give more time off between modules.

Include more activities.

Ages could be grouped closer together.

Unsure.

Alternate days to meet per semester.

Need more time.

Encourage more organization within the group to make people more responsible.

Keep classes small.

Improve library sessions and research project explanations.

This one is perfect.

No improvements needed.

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Don't know.

Get rid of disadvantages listed in question #1.

They can be improved by forming more group study time.

By allowing the groups to occasionally switch.

3. Explain how collaborative learning techniques can be transferred to other areas of your life such as the home and workplace.

Collaborative learning techniques can be transferred by accepting others' strengths and weaknesses and learning to work around them. Also, trying to be more patient when working with others.

This is wonderful technique for training employees, one group at a time, about new products, etc.

Problems can be solved through discussion both at work and at home.

Yes, subject matter is relative to both work and personal development.

Yes, by sharing different ideas.

Teamwork, organization, ownership--all transfer to my total life.

Learn to organize groups and use others as resources to complete tasks.

Learning to work under extreme pressure with people of varying backgrounds and opinions.

Within workplace, working together gets things done. We learn this technique in the cohort setting.

Not sure.

Any interpersonal activities benefit from a sharing of knowledge.

Use more teams at work and set up neighborhood groups.

A better understanding of how to deal with others is learned.

Unsure.

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In my case, I don't use these methods outside of class.

No, cohorts and study group do not encourage the transfer of collaborative learning to the home and workplace.

Again, you know that others are counting on you and you want to do well.

No comment.

Teamwork carries over to other areas.

Working in this manner has helped me understand the dynamics of a group. I am more comfortable working with a group now. My preferred mode of working, however, is individually.

I believe any outside stimulation could always prove effective.

I do not feel the cohort or study group encourages the transfer of collaborative learning to the home or workplace.

I could not make it without my study group. We have all become very close. We know each others' strengths and weaknesses. We try to support each others' weaknesses and promote others' strengths. We are all close friends now and share in both academic and personal lives.

Yes, and it is an exciting discovery.

At work, we do this well. At home, I'm working on it.

Definitely.

Study groups and cohorts become a norm within a person's life. The teamwork concept becomes clear when you take a class by yourself without your study group.

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APPENDIX 9

Student Interview Responses

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Support, trust, and respect are all very important aspects of team work. It is imperative that group members trust each other. My group functions as one, which results in many positives. One person can't do all the work. Everyone must be responsible--each person doing his or her part.

I bring corporate knowledge to my cohort and study group, which has been an asset in some courses. When the members listen to my views and make suggestions, I decide that the "nail can be hit" another way. I now recognize that other ways of doing things exist. Our courses deal with a lot of case studies. It's interesting how study group members approach problem solving in various ways. I know nothing about manufacturing, so I lean on others for this knowledge. When we study sale, I'm the leader and they learn from me.

When I first entered college, I probably wouldn't have made it without a study group. Even when group members changed, I quickly adapted to them, as they did to me--I think. I have taken many of the team approach techniques back to my workplace and home.

The key word is "sharing." One of our members is weak in math related courses, so we help her. She assumes more responsibility in other courses where she has more strength. Group members must be willing to give and take, especially when someone is ill or is experiencing a personal problem. Others should pick up the load for them. I think we'll be friends forever. Study groups give people confidence, especially those who suffer from low self-esteem.

I could never complete projects on my own. I need assistance and feedback. I have grown more tolerant of other people since I have been in the program. I dreaded the study group, but now I look forward to meeting and don't mind when we hold extra sessions. All of my cohort members work well together, and my study group is great. We really like each other and haven't experienced any problems. My group meets in the library--sometimes joining other study groups to compare ideas. At the library, we have all the materials and equipment we need and can turn to the librarian for help. It's quiet, too.

Sometimes groups bond so closely that they want to talk about personal things instead of doing assignments. This can be a problem. Friends don't always act professionally and may not be disciplined enough to buckle down. Meeting in restaurants can cause real problems. Libraries and conference rooms provide a more structured atmosphere, and tables are more comfortable than desks. Food can be a distraction and should be eaten during breaks. I can't eat and study.

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I have found that husband and wife teams work quite well together, learning lots of new things about each other. When they are dedicated to reaching the same goals, they grow together as study partners and as husband and wife.

I love the cohort concept. My classmates and I enjoy each other and assist each other on individual as well as group projects.

If you are with a bad cohort or study group, you will be miserable. Sometimes best friends do not make good study partners. Maturity helps groups to be successful. When students are too young, they have few experiences to share. On the other hand, younger people are less resistant to change and may influence older people to look at different points of view. This can be a good combination--the best of both worlds. My group is not the most brilliant one in the cohort, but we are honest and open about our opinions. We don't live in a black and white world. I know that I am a better team player now, especially in the workplace. I'm a better manager, too, because I've learned to be less rigid and have learned to share.

I have been in several different cohorts. The biggest difference I saw was that people who have careers and really want to be in college seem to function better than those who don't work or have part-time jobs. It's much easier to jell with people who have causes.

When the chemistry is wrong in a cohort or study group, a profound effect is made upon everyone, even the teacher. Students must be able to depend upon each other. It's important to be flexible. It would really help if students knew each other before forming study groups. I've heard some horror stories about study groups--backstabbing, talking about each other. I don't understand these situations because my group members and I love each other and work great together. Nitpicking and personality problems can be fixed if people care enough to make the effort. Dysfunctional study groups can cause problems, but my group is different. Nothing can stop us or hold us back. We are determined to make it. Although we come from different backgrounds, we make that work for us. We also have a strong class representative who looks out for us, takes care of us, and finds answers to questions. We have so many good leaders in our group that almost anyone could serve as class representative.

When we schedule meeting, everyone is expected to be there. We set a schedule and follow it. All of us agree on times. If an emergency arises, we work it out. "It's cut and dried." We've been lucky so far because all of us get along so well.

Times are changing, especially at the workplace. Once people could work alone, but walls have begun to crumble, and people have to work together. A company or a cohort is only as strong as its weakest link. This program is good because the team

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concept carries over to work, where teams are the "name of the game." Everyone benefits from collaboration. While we can do things on our own, it's much easier and better when we solve problems together.

My group and I keep on making suggestions until we finally say, "That's it!" Our experiences have all been positive ones. We decided from the first meeting to head in the same direction and to be open and honest with each other--to ask for change if problems developed. All of us have become facilitators. We give and we get--a "win-win situation." Positive reinforcement is a common happening, which really helps. Our whole cohort has bonded, and we stay focused. We cut each other down good naturedly--not in a mean way.

My group and I have been together for a long time. We have fun, learn from each other, and build upon our strengths and weaknesses by turning to each other. We pull together, because that's what friends do. We truly care about each other and constantly provide the encouragement needed to fulfill goals. Never will we let a group member give up. I work two jobs, which can be rough. When I want to quit the program, my study group offers to help me get through the bad times and tell me that I can return the favor when they need me. They set up a more flexible schedule and work around my hours. Guess we have a partnership.

When I had to move to a new cohort, I was hesitant. I was leaving my comfort zone. I need not have worried because I'm getting along great. I've joined a fun group that acts as if it has always been together. We express ourselves openly, saying what we feel without fear of hurting someone's feelings. Comfort is what we feel. I enjoy my classes and look forward to each new course. We really like each other. It's amazing how well we've learned to know and to accept each other in such a short time. Our minds are open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

When I became ill, my study group members helped me catch up. We check on each other, share notes, and support each other. We are life savers for one another--taking one day at a time and one course at a time. It hasn't been easy, but my cohort and study group members continue to nurture each other, and the instructors go overboard to help us.

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APPENDIX 10

Instructor Questionnaire

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The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the effectiveness of learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational or Business Administration cohort- and study-group programs. Neither your name nor your institution's name is required on the survey; therefore, complete anonymity is assured. Questionnaire findings will be included in a doctoral dissertation that will be presented to the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department at East Tennessee State University. Thank you for your valuable assistance.

1. Number of years of teaching experience: Traditional Programs ___ Nontraditional Programs ___
2. Experiences with cohorts: Positive ___ Negative ___
3. Experiences with study groups: Positive ___ Negative ___
4. Students engaged in friendly competition: Yes ___ No ___
5. Respond briefly to the following:
   a. How do cohort and study-group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?

   b. What are the strengths and weaknesses of cohorts and study groups?

   c. Explain how cohorts and study-groups affect students in the following areas:
      (1) Problem Solving -

      (2) Leadership -

      (3) Sense of Responsibility -

      (4) Sense of Support and Trust -

      (5) Risk Taking -

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(6) Vision -

(7) Self-esteem -

(8) Interpersonal Skills -

d. Have you become a facilitator since working with cohorts and study groups? Yes ___ No ___ Explain.

e. How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

f. How do adults differ from traditional students?

g. Explain how students transfer collaborative learning techniques to their workplace, community, and/or home.

h. What practices encourage cohort cohesiveness and individual development?

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APPENDIX 11

Instructor Questionnaire Responses

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5. Briefly respond to the following:
a. How do cohort and study group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?

Cohorts encourage all student to learn from each others' experiences. The whole is better that the sum of its parts!

Traditional - instructor, 15 weeks, lecture. Non- traditional - facilitator, five to six weeks with four hours per week plus study groups, seminar method.

Cohorts and study groups place more emphasis on teamwork. Students learn to work together since part of each student's grade is dependent on the group. Some students do excessive work and some may take it easy.

It is difficult for the students to remain attentive for 3 ½ to four hours per session. This requires that the instructor use techniques to keep the classroom interesting and challenging.

Non-traditional programs are less formal and less structured that traditional ones.

b. What are the strengths and weaknesses of cohorts and study groups?

Peer pressures lead to new successes. Synergy occurs.

The strength is that, to be able to coach each other, students have to be secure in their own knowledge. Group interaction is also good reinforcement. Studies show that women learn much better at math in discussion groups. The only weakness is a weak member who disrupts or doesn't contribute to the group effort.

Strengths - Teamwork and shared difference of opinions. Weakness - Defining handling weak links.

Strengths - student interaction, comradely. Weakness - individual initiative.

Only weakness it that it is limited with young traditional age students--pre-age 25.

c. Explain how cohorts and study groups affect students in the following areas:

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(1) Problem Solving -

Enhances an individual to gain skills to solve problems as part of a group.

Help each other see solutions to the problem from several points of view. Takes advantage of a vast amount of knowledge and experience.

Have to learn to solve problems as a team.

Positive contribution of a variety of solutions.

No different than traditional.

No effect different from traditional.

More discussion about topic or issues because there are more opinions involved.

They are, again, able to draw from many years of experience in so many areas and fields that it's like having multiple professors.

(2) Leadership -

A leader automatically evolves in any group--mostly out of need for one.

Through group activities and presentations, students lose some of their fear about leadership positions and learn how to become successful leaders and not dictators.

Roles change in response to diverse abilities. Students will draw from background strengths. Due to the diverse range of experience, leadership will change from course to course.

No effect different from traditional.

No different than traditional.

Allows an avenue for potential leaders to emerge.

Some groups alternate roles, some groups have a leader who emerges, and some groups have leadership role conflict.

This style of learning helps students identify their type of leadership style. Roles are quickly defined in a healthy cohort and study group.

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Provides opportunities for leadership roles.

(3) Sense of Responsibility -

Peer pressure causes responsibility and this is even more important in work team situations.

Traditional studies require only responsibility for oneself. Study groups require students to be responsible to and for themselves as well as giving help and feeling responsibility toward group members. They have enrolled and are committed totally to completing assigned tasks and programs. You don't have clock watchers in class and almost everyone comes prepared.

Group members are pushed to pull their load. Usually this increases since they are dependent on each other for grades and assignments.

They are not just responsible to their own goals and needs but to others' aims.

No different than traditional night program. All night programs require effort and commitment by students who work all day and manage homes--in addition to a heavy course load.

Successful group dynamics require a sense of responsibility from all group members.

(4) Sense of Support and Trust -

Groups learn to support and trust each other throughout a long program of study. Since projects require group cooperation, trust and support must be developed early to ensure success for each student. This support should carry over to the workplace.

Successful group dynamics require a sense of support and trust among all members.

That depends on whether the relationship begins with support and trust. Sometimes it can go the opposite way.

Little difference versus traditional night programs.

Cohort students steadily begin to rely on their team members more and more.

Most seem to trust and support each other. There may be some problems if one or more members slack off. With individual problems, other members usually provide support.

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(5) Risk Taking -

You don't feel like the "Lone Ranger," and you know when one fails, all fail in a group situation. Students need to learn to take risks to learn new techniques. By discussing options with group members, risk taking becomes less problematic and more successful.

Calculated but decisive.

Don't know how this is affected.

With the backing of the cohort, team members (the individuals) incline to be more assertive.

Clearly there would be a difference if the "non- instructor" study groups were used. I personally believe that in the interest of maximizing learning in the few hours available to students, an instructor-led class is most effective. The trade- off is the lack of student gain in particular areas.

Can either enhance or discourage risk taking.

(6) Vision -

A group must have a common goal--perhaps graduation should be their vision.

One person's vision becomes expanded--two heads are better than one. A group provides even more opportunities for ideas.

At least one member, usually one leader, needs to have or develop vision.

Increased because of sharing during study group discussions.

Hard to perceive.

Some groups have very clear vision, e.g., all make A's and all finish together.

Being exposed to people of vision and great excitement for learning.

They see clearly what they want and plan to get there.

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(7) Self-esteem -

Self-esteem is raised through continuous support of group members.

By successful group interaction, individuals build self- esteem and feel heightened knowledge because of their effective actions.

Have seen very little lack of and if anyone starts a cohort group lacking in self-esteem, it has been corrected.

Proper care among the group builds self-esteem. Often the peers urge each other on in their effort. When the group wins, they win.

I have seen increases in self-esteem, but do not know if it is due to study groups. It may be due to success in school as an adult.

The cohort format helps the student to gain self- assurance.

Depends on the group dynamics.

(8) Interpersonal Skills -

Constant communication with group members develops people skills and interpersonal abilities through need or common needs to communicate properly and effectively.

Because of diverse personalities in groups, students learn successful interaction skills and ways to deal with different personality styles.

Open interaction in the group increases one's ability to communicate more effectively.

They are "forced" to develop better communication skills.

These seem to increase.

Nine out of 10 times adult learners have excellent skills in this area.

Depending on one's role in the group, these skills may be enhanced or diminished.

d. Have you become a better facilitator since working with cohorts and study groups? Yes___ No___ Explain.

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I use study groups to motivate students. Friendly competition between groups (I give awards to winning groups) brings everyone to a new and higher level in the study of management.

I learn so much from the students.

I don't believe it matters whether dealing with individuals or groups--similar skills are needed.

Different settings dictate the type of facilitator one must be, and instructors may become better facilitators from group to group but not necessarily from group activity to non-group activity.

e. How can cohorts and study groups be improved?

Continued opportunities for presentations and problem solving will give students better skills.

Train facilitators to understand non-traditional education, especially what they are bringing as adults to the classroom.

Need to have minimum size for study groups, best from 4 - 5. Should freely allow for changes after first class. Let people move around some if they aren't happy in a particular group. Set up study groups temporarily at first.

Somehow get more instructor interaction.

More case study work.

f. How do adults differ from traditional students?

Usually they are paying their own way and need the certification a degree brings. There is no time to waste. Traditional students are more concerned about just looking "cool."

Adults come with many skills and experiences. They want more ways to solve work and life problems, as well as increased knowledge. They don't want to be lectured to. They want interactive experiences.

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I have not taught traditional students. However, the adults seem very committed to completing the class and program leading to a degree. Some "coast" through with a "C," which is probably similar to traditional students.

Older, wiser about the need for an education--more motivated and less social due to obligations.

Maturity, more cooperative, greater experience base, more focused, and more serious about education.

They demand more flexible schedules and practical, realistic information.

More serious, more committed, try harder, have life experiences, may have study-skill deficiencies, and may not have adequate backgrounds for success.

Most are highly motivated, have a great deal of experience, and are accepting of others.

Primarily experience, commitment, and vision.

In ways too numerous to include in this small space.

The most significant are as follows: Generally, adult students are more responsible, more motivated, more mature, more goal oriented, more receptive to the needs of their fellow students, more sure of why they are students, more demanding of an instructor, and more receptive to the entire learning process than their traditional counterparts.

g. Explain how students transfer collaborative learning techniques to their workplace, community, and/or home.

Work teams are normal today. Any skills learned in the classroom that work will be duplicated elsewhere, especially at work and at home. (Home is a place we often don't consider for teamwork, but it should be considered!)

By working successfully with other adults to gain a degree, students see how effective these experiences are and don't feel hesitant to work with others instead of expecting to do everything alone or competitively.

The academic concepts help them apply, in most cases, what they already know.

Teamwork transfers to all areas of their life, even the church.

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Don't have any knowledge of this.

They are already on the job; therefore, information they collect in class is mentally being applied on the job. Traditional students find it much more difficult because they do not have the on-the-job experience to draw from.

h. What practices encourage cohort cohesiveness and individual development?

Competition between groups creates a "team spirit." The longer a group stays together, the more cohesive it usually becomes. This is a problem that traditional classes have--they don't stay together in groups long enough to benefit from the true synergy that develops as a normal process over time.

Giving realistic problems and real-life simulations enables students to be successful at group activities.

I am not sure, but I think it varies, depending on the individuals involved in the cohort.

Case studies (both individual and group), projects and papers (both individual and group), active classroom discussion, presentations and discussions that promote leadership, and quizzes and homework.

Personal bonding--shared goals and objectives and trusting that each person will do his or her part to complete assignments.

Case studies and student presentations.

The group projects and shared test and quiz study sessions.

Strong commitment to each other and to achieving success in the program.

Cohort cohesiveness - working through interpersonal issues, working together to get through a tough class, respect for each other, tolerance, and tough love.

Individual development - individual presentations, helping and receiving help.

Being with the same group throughout the program and completing course work together.

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APPENDIX 12

Program Director Questionnaire

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The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the effectiveness of learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational Management or Business Administration cohort- and study-group programs. Neither your name nor your institution's name is required on the survey; therefore, complete anonymity is assured. Questionnaire findings will be included in a doctoral dissertation that will be presented to the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department at East Tennessee State University. Thank you for your valuable assistance.

1. Number of years of experience as a program director: Traditional ___ Nontraditional ___
2. Experiences with cohorts: Positive ___ Negative ___
3. Cohort students engage in friendly competition: Yes ___ No___
4. Retention rate is higher in nontraditional cohort programs than in traditional programs: Yes ___ No ___
5. Students enrolled in cohort programs achieve high rates of academic success: Yes ___ No ___
6. Students enrolled in cohort programs are highly motivated: Yes ___ No ___
7. Students enrolled in cohort programs appear to gain great satisfaction from learning experiences: Yes ___ No ___
8. Respond briefly to the following:
   a. How do cohort and/or study-group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?

   b. What are the strengths and weaknesses of cohorts and/or study groups?

   c. Explain how cohorts and/or study groups affect students in the following areas:
      (1) Problem Solving -

      (2) Leadership -

      (3) Sense of Responsibility -

      (4) Sense of Support and Trust -

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(5) Risk Taking -

(6) Vision -

(7) Self-esteem -

(8) Interpersonal Skills -

d. Has working with cohorts helped you to become a more innovative program director? If so, explain.

e. How can cohorts and/or study groups be improved?

f. How do adults differ from traditional students?

g. Explain how students transfer collaborative learning techniques to their workplace, community, and/or home.

h. What practices encourage cohort cohesiveness and individual development?

9. Additional Comments:

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APPENDIX 13

Program Director Questionnaire Responses

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8. Respond briefly to the following:
a. How do cohort and/or study group methods of program delivery compare to traditional methods?

Cohorts and study groups are much more effective for working adults who need the support provided by the team approach. Traditional methods are not flexible enough to overcome obstacles.

This group method of delivery encourages students to collaborate and to solve problems creatively--which is often lacking in traditional classrooms.

b. What are the strengths and weakness of cohorts and/or study groups?

Strengths - provides a planned academic agenda, reduces the stress of having to deal with multiple subjects at the same time, and provides a comfortable environment in which to learn. Weaknesses - Limited interaction with students in other modules (groups).

Strengths: Complimentary qualities - One person's weakness can be another person's strength. Promotes teamwork skills - Students must learn how to compromise, mesh personalities, divide responsibilities, etc. Academic and personal bonding - provides academic and personal support, as students are "going through" the same things (experiences). Weaknesses: Unfair division of labor - may promote the practice of stronger students taking up the slack off weaker students to ensure group quality. Personal conflicts - Of course, when one has to work with others, there is a possibility for conflict. This can shed a negative light on the group's performance.

c. Explain how cohorts and/or study groups affect students in the following areas:

(1) Problem Solving -

Gives the students an exposure to conflicting methods of resolving both intro and intra differences of opinion.

Teaches students that they must learn to compromise. Instead of assuming there is only one way to solve a problem, students must listen to other ideas and integrate them all to form the best solution. It also encourages students to be more open-minded through the process by allowing them to see there is usually more than one answer to every problem.

Cohorts and members within study groups share ideas readily in an effort to solve problems logically.

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(2) Leadership -

Most of my students learn that you must listen to others in order to learn. Once they learn to "really" listen to what another student is saying and not concentrate on only the spoken words, a greater cohesion within the group occurs.

Teaches students how to take charge if necessary, but to do so tactfully if they wish to maintain rapport and discourage a hostile working environment. It also teaches students the role of listening because leaders are only leaders when they have the support of their followers.

(3) Sense of responsibility -

All members of the group seem to take their responsibility seriously and contribute their fair share towards the achievement of stated goals.

(4) Sense of Support and Trust -

If the group does bond, the students should develop a sense of support and trust with other group members. The support comes partially from simply being "in the same boat." It is easier to discuss a situation with someone who truly know where the other person is coming. An academic support should also evolve, as the group members learn to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. A sense of trust and loyalty should naturally evolve if each member contributes his or her share.

Members of the group tend to support each other because they understand how the outcome will affect them. A sense of trust is a personal trait which, to me, can only be assessed by the individual(s) involved.

(5) Risk Taking -

I think a student becomes much more apt to take risks when in a group, as opposed to individually. If there is trust, support, and loyalty within the group, then the group, as a whole, will be held accountable for its successes and failures. This should encourage risk taking by showing the student he or she will not have to stand alone should the risk result in a failure.

Some cohorts and members of study groups are risk takers and some hold back for various reasons, which may or may not be apparent to the instructor.

(6) Vision -

Allows the students to be exposed to a variety of individuals from all walks of life.

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I think that groups greatly require vision. An individual can develop a personal vision and take the necessary steps to achieve it. However, a group's vision must "buy into it." This requires brainstorming and compromising.

Non-traditional students, for the most part, have broad experiences which provide them with more insight about various matters than those which most traditional students possess.

(7) Self-esteem -

Self-esteem does not seem to be lacking in non-traditional students. it were, cohorts and study groups may be non-existent.

(8) Interpersonal skills -

Already addressed elsewhere.

Students should learn numerous interpersonal skills through the group process. Skills such as listening, compromising, decision making, communicating, etc., should naturally evolve through continual group interaction.

Cohorts and members of study groups demonstrate effective interpersonal skills.

d. Has working with cohorts helped you to become a more innovative program director? If so, explain.

Yes. I am old enough to know that I do not have all the answers. Satisfied students will tell other potential students. Therefore, things that make coming to my school more enjoyable, while maintaining a quality program, should be considered.

e. How can cohorts and/or study groups be improved?

I don't know if they can be improved since most group members come with different backgrounds and experiences and seem to share information for the achievement of a common goal.

f. How do adults differ from traditional students?

Greater experiences and motivation.

Adults seem to have different attitudes about education because of their life experiences and are more willing to sacrifice in order to achieve goals that they have set for themselves.

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g. Explain how students transfer collaborative learning techniques to their workplace, community, and/or home.

Through individual attitudes.

I feel that students demonstrate through group activity and sharing of experiences how well they transfer collaborative learning techniques to their workplace, community, and/or home.

h. What practices encourage cohort cohesiveness and individual development?

This I am still looking for.

Problem-solving and case studies about various issues that affect their lives encourage cohort cohesiveness and individual development.

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APPENDIX 14

Employer Questionnaire

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The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the effectiveness of learning experiences of nontraditional students enrolled in Organizational Management or Business Administration cohort- and study-group programs. Neither your name nor your institution's name is required on the survey; therefore, complete anonymity is assured. Questionnaire findings will be included in a doctoral dissertation that will be presented to the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department at East Tennessee State University. Thank you for your valuable assistance.

1. How many employees are or have been enrolled in cohort- and study-group programs? ___
2. Does your company partially or totally reimburse students for tuition? Yes ___ No ___
3. Would you recommend reimbursement for other employees in the future? Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
4. Would you recommend this program to other companies? Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
5. Have employees received a promotion since enrolling or completing the program? Yes ___ No ___
6. Have employees received a salary increase since enrolling or completing the program? Yes ___ No ___
7. Have employees changed jobs within your company since enrolling or completing the program? Yes ___ No ___
8. Have employees improved in the following areas since enrolling in the program?
   Problem Solving: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Leadership: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Professional Responsibility: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Vision: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Self-esteem: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Interpersonal Relations: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Collaboration: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Ethics: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Decision Making: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Computation Skills: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Written Communication Skills: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___
   Oral Communication Skills: Yes ___ No ___ Undecided ___

9. Have employees transferred collaborative learning techniques to their workplace? If so, explain.

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APPENDIX 15

Employer Questionnaire Responses

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9. Have employees transferred collaborative learning techniques to their workplace? If so, explain.

Yes. By using such techniques as leading group problem solving.

I have observed a big difference in leadership and confidence in dealing with problems. Techniques such as better teamwork and improved communication have been implemented in the past few months.

I have found all employees taking this program work closer with other employees and share a greater appreciation for the thoughts of others.

Group approaches from study groups have been used at our plant.

College administrators and support offices could learn collaboration techniques from these students and should sit in on management classes. I have seen much improvement in my employees and am pleased by their consideration of others' ideas.

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VITA

JANYCE RAYE WESTERMAN

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Education:
Parrottsville High School/Parrottsville, Tennessee/June 1960
East Tennessee State University/Johnson City, Tennessee/English and Physical Education/B.S./1963
East Tennessee State University/Johnson City, Tennessee/English and Special Education/M.A./1965
Towson State University/Towson, Maryland/Counseling/1971
Tusculum College/Greeneville, Tennessee/Education/1991
East Tennessee State University/Johnson City, Tennessee/ Doctorate in Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis/Ed.D./August 1998

Professional Experience:
1963-1964 - Teacher: English/Reading; Cheerleader Coach - Morristown Junior High School - Morristown, Tennessee
1965-1969 - Teacher: English/Speech; Basketball Coach and Theater Director - Havre de Grace High School - Havre de Grace, Maryland
1969-1970 - Teacher: Special Education/English - High Point High School - Prince George's County, Maryland
1979-1984 - Teacher: English/Business Communications - Walters State Community College - Greeneville, Tennessee
1984-1990 - Director of Professional Studies Assessment Center Director, Director of Mater of Arts and Gateway Programs, and Instructor: English, Study Skills, Orientation, Business Communications, English Composition, Literature - Tusculum College - Greeneville, Tennessee
1991-1998 - Director of Adult Degree Studies and Associate Professor: English Composition, Speech, Communications, Orientation, Creative Writing, Literature - Virginia Intermont College - Bristol, Virginia
1998 - Director of Northeast State Technical Community College at Kingsport, Coordinator of NextStep Program, and Assistant Professor: English Composition, Literature, Education - Northeast State Technical Community College - Blountville, Tennessee

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Honors and Awards:	1983 - Greene County Chamber of Commerce Award for Outstanding Service to Students and Community and Church, Walters State Community College
	1989 - Greene County Chamber of Commerce Award for Outstanding Service to Students and Community and Church, Tusculum College
	1989 - Outstanding Faculty Member, Tusculum College
	1996 - Gamma Beta Phi
	1997 - Who's Who in American Teachers
	1998 - Kappa Delta Pi Honorary Society
	1998 - Who's Who in American Teachers
Presentations:	1992 - SACS Review Process - Wesleyan College - Rochester, New York
	1994 - Passing a SACS Review - LeMoyne-Owen College - Memphis, Tennessee
	1995 - Nontraditional Adult Programs - Brewton-Parker College - Mt. Vernon, Georgia
	1997 - Success for Adult Learners - Rotary Club - Greeneville, Tennessee
	1998 - Documenting for SACS Reviews - Bethel College - Mckenzie, Tennessee
	1998 - Experiential Learning Credit - East Tennessee State University - Johnson City, Tennessee
Professional Development:	1990 - Marketing Adult Programs - Washington, D. C.
	1992 - Adult Learning Conference - Rochester, New York
	1993 - Adult Learning Conference - Nashville, Tennessee
	1995 - Adult Learning Conference - San Francisco, California
	1998 - National Conference on the Adult-Learner - Richmond, Virginia

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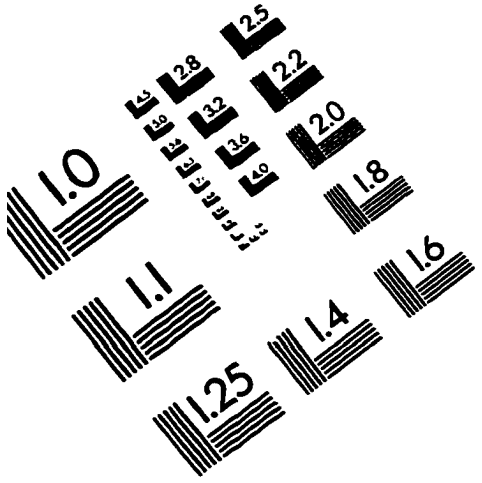
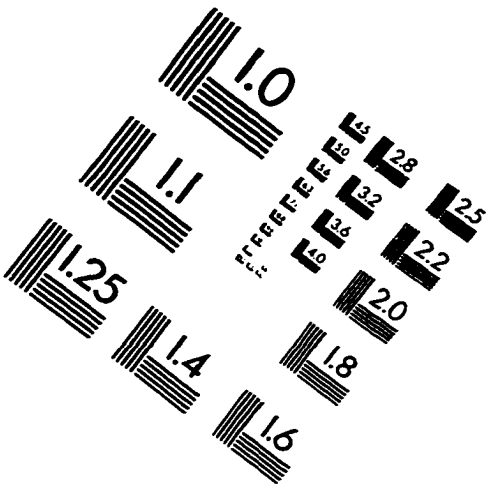
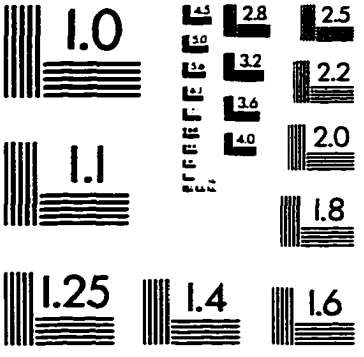
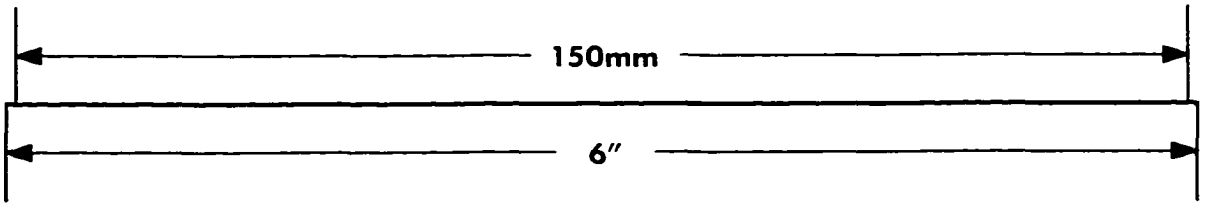
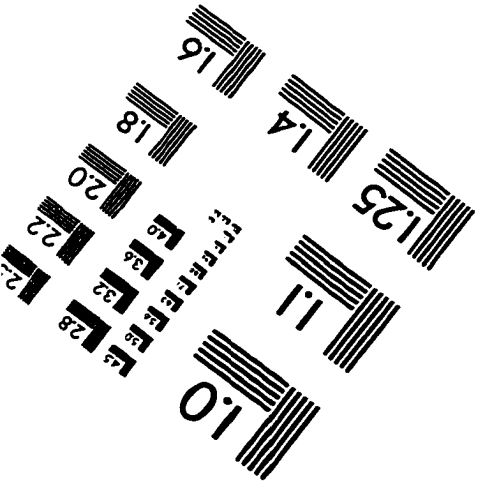
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

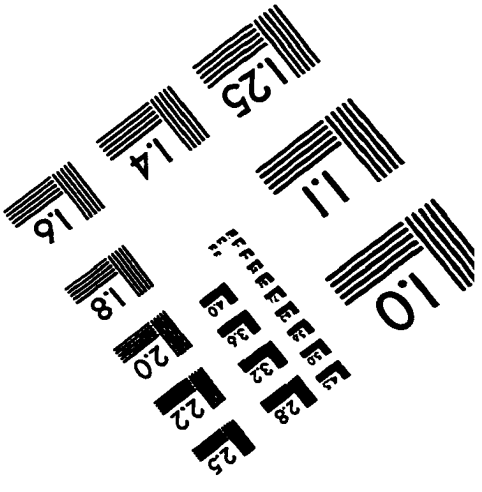












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