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Adult male students in higher education : perceived need for and sources of support.

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ADULT MALE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

PERCEIVED NEED FOR AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

A Dissertation Presented

By

Gordon Stephen Matheson

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

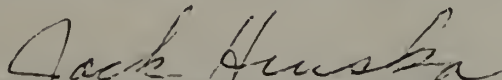September, 1983

Education

ADULT MALE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

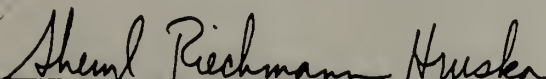PERCEIVED NEED FOR AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

A Dissertation Presented

By

Gordon Stephen Matheson

Approved as to style and content by:

Dr. Jack Hruska, Chairperson

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ABSTRACT

Adult Male Students in Higher Education:

Perceived Need for and Sources of Support

September, 1983

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Although much research has been done on female
reentry college students over 25, little is known about
male adult students. In this study, 36 male adult
undergraduates were given a questionnaire and interview
to assess perceived need for and sources of support.

Among the findings were: most Ss acknowledged a need
for support from others, few Ss had experienced negative
reactions to their return to school, and married students
relied on their wives for primary support, while single
Ss chose parents or lovers. Ss differentiated general
support and support related to college progress, relying
more on school sources (especially faculty) for college
support. Most favored formation of peer support groups.

Demographic characteristics and interview results
were similar to data on women students, except that

most Ss in this study had returned to school for career
reasons, and most claimed they would have returned
even without support.

Ss' willingness to admit support needs and express
a desire for additional support apparently deviates
from masculine stereotypes. It was suggested that this
may reflect changing roles.

Implications of this study for institutional
services, adult developmental models, and social sex
roles were discussed, and suggestions were made for
further research.

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CHAPTER I
BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

The increasing population of adult students
(generally defined as persons over 25 years of age) in
higher education has been a noticeable phenomenon for
over a decade. Adult learners increased 21% from 1969
to 1972 and 8% from 1972 to 1975, while the number of
adults in the population as a whole increased only 7%
and 5% during those respective periods. Today, over
half of all college students are adults (Aslanian and
Brickell, 1980).

The increase in the number of adults who have been
away from formal education but are now pressing to
return, and the increase in demand for part-time
continuing education and nontraditional programs, comes
at a time when traditional enrollments are declining
(Ansello, 1980; Cross, 1979b; Munger, 1979; Robertson,
1980; Bishop and Van Dyk, 1977; Hodgkinson, 1976). The
institutions did not initiate the growth in adult post-
secondary education, but they must respond in an
effective and timely manner to this phenomenon if they
are to survive, as has been noted by many recent
researchers (Burkett, 1977; Momeni, 1980; Ansello, 1980;
Churchman and Hellweg, 1979; Moon, 1978; Massey, 1979;

Flaherty, 1978; Munger and Priest, 1979; Leagans, 1978; Judge, 1977; Jensen, 1978; Crosson, 1979; Kayla and Hoey, 1979; Marchese, 1975; Cross, 1977, 1979b, 1980, 1981; Robinson, 1980; Charland, 1976; Robertson, 1980; Charner, 1980; Otto, 1979; Gould, 1980).

Of the returning adult students, women form the numerically most impressive group (Beausang, 1976). During the last 20 years the estimated number of women over 25 attending college has increased over ten times (Esperson, 1975), and several studies done in the 1970's indicated that the number of women students over 30 had doubled in the previous decade, with no sign that this trend might reverse itself (Brians and Quann, 1977; Tittle and Denker, 1977; Westervelt, 1973). Thus, while the adult learner comprises the "new majority" (Munger and Priest, 1979), the male adult learner is in the minority. This imbalance is also reflected in the literature and research, which is heavily dominated by studies concerning the problems and needs of the returning adult woman.

One particularly important area which has received wide attention concerns the importance of support systems to the adult woman student, and extensive research has been done on the need for, sources of, and degree of such support (Hooper, 1979; Berkove, 1976;

Brandenburg, 1974; Geisler and Thrush, 1975; Lewis, 1969; Mulligan, 1973; Roach, 1976; Matheson, 1982; Ballmer and Cozby, 1975; Katz, 1976; Smallwood, 1980; Ryan, 1979; Adickes and Worthman, 1976; Von der Embse and Childs, 1979; Levinson, 1978). Generally, the research has indicated that a woman student both needs and receives the support of significant others, and lack of such support is reflected in lower achievement and higher attrition levels.

A study by Katz (1976) of returning women students and their husbands showed that: 1) husbands were strongly supportive, but showed some ambivalence, 2) both spouses reported improvements in their marriage, and 3) the women reported increased self-esteem and greater personal happiness. Despite the overall positive findings, there is evidence of resistance, ambivalence and resentment on the part of the husband in several studies (Smallwood, 1980; Ryan, 1979; Matheson, 1982; Adickes and Worthman, 1976; Hooper, 1979).

While very little research has been done on the returning male student in any area, there has been no research done concerning the emotional support which he perceives himself as needing and/or receiving. There are several factors which indicate differences

may exist in the needs of returning male students compared to female students. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that men return more often for career related reasons, while women return more often for reasons related to the family. We might expect the male student to receive consistent family support, since career progress and career education would be part of the traditional male role. The wife, whose traditional place has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate (Gilligan, 1982; O'Neil, 1981a; Morgan, 1981), may feel obligated to support the husband's endeavors and view temporary sacrifices as an investment in future success for the whole family. Levinson (1976) maintains that this orientation is quite common in early adulthood.

It is also possible that the wife might feel resentful concerning the new burdens she must assume, either through having to go to work or through dealing with problems similar to those of husbands with wives in school: less time to share, increased household responsibility, less family money, no vacation, and so on. The male student, like the female student, may feel intropunitive guilt about the time and money being invested.

Differences in social and psychological roles of

males and females may have functional directionality to them. The majority of studies concerned with the psychosocial development of the adult have been done by males (e.g. Freud, Erikson, Levinson, Vaillant, Kohlberg, Knox) and based on interactions with males. Thus, there is a male developmental model with females superimposed or "fitted into" that structure, more on the basis of the writers' speculations than on any kind of research. The women's movement, with its commitment to proving equality between the sexes, may also have discouraged studies toward a model of female development.

However, increasing attention is being paid to the psychosocial development of women and the ways that they may develop roles distinctly different from men, especially in terms of relationships (Gilligan, 1982). Vaillant (1977) and Levinson (1978) both viewed male friendships and close emotional relationships as being rarely experienced and playing a subordinate role in adult development. Pollack and Gilligan (1982) interviewed Harvard undergraduate students and found that men viewed intimacy and situations of affiliation as dangerous, whereas women viewed isolation as dangerous.

Since support has been found to be a critical factor for returning adult adult females, and since sex differences such as the aforementioned findings on

relationships exist, it appears important to try to discern what role support plays in the male adult's adjustment to school. If the male has different support needs, then different services should be made available to male students. This knowledge would, therefore, not only contribute to an increased understanding of male relationships, particularly in the realm of support, but, by increasing our understanding of the needs and problems of male adult students, would have direct implications for the development of academic programming and appropriate recruitment, counseling and advising services.

This study involves interviewing a sample of male adult undergraduate students at a state college in order to determine their perceptions concerning: 1) their need or desire for emotional support, 2) their major sources of support, and 3) the adequacy of their support systems. The results are compared to information available on female adult undergraduates to see if there are indications that support needs are different for the two groups. Implications for theories of adulthood and for the design of appropriate institutional services are discussed.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Adults in Higher Education

"Adults today constitute more than half of all full-time and part-time college students and will make up well over half of the total in the years to come" (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980, p. xii). Over the past fifteen years there has been an actual, as well as proportional, increase in the number of adults (generally classified as persons over 25 years of age) in higher education, and a related increase in the demand for part-time continuing education, non-traditional programs, and special services for those students who have been away from formal education for some time and now wish to return (Cross, 1979b; Charner, 1980; Ansello, 1980; Bishop and Van Dyk, 1977; Hodgkinson, 1976; Robertson, 1980; Munger, 1979). We can expect a growing demand for educational programming for adults in the future, both because traditional enrollments are declining (Ansello, 1980) and because a growing adult population is increasingly turning to higher education to fill leisure time, to increase

personal growth, and to aid individuals faced with technological obsolescence and mid-career change (Kasworm, 1980). Despite the obvious importance of this field, as recently as 1977 Cross pointed out that there are many areas which have not been effectively studied, particularly in terms of the needs and interests of adult learners. Today the research picture is still erratic, with extensive work, and even duplication, in some areas (e.g. needs of returning women students), while other areas have been virtually ignored (e.g. needs of returning men students).

One of the first questions which arises is the motivation for adults to engage in continuing education. On the basis of interviews with adult learners, Cyril Houle (1961) identified three motivational categories. The goal oriented learner became involved in education because of clear cut goal objectives related to a need or interest which had appeared in the person's life. The activity oriented learner used education as a means to establish social contacts and relationships. Finally, the learning oriented individual would strive for knowledge for its own sake and for the personal growth involved in learning. Needs or interests precipitated by external events were important motivational factors in each case, but a more important

factor, according to Houle, was the internal process at the time of the event which made it crucial in changing the patterns of the person's life.

This study and others on adult learners (e.g. Morstain and Smart, 1977) suggest that their motivational patterns involve complex interactions of needs and goals, of internal development and external environment. A major study of over 1,500 adults, reported by Aslanian and Brickell (1980), attempted to analyze these patterns in a new way, utilizing the concepts of "transitions" and "triggers". Of the adults in this study who were engaged in learning experiences, only 17% reported learning for the sake of learning; the remaining 83% were learning in order to cope with life changes. For the latter group, motivations to learn were classified in terms of transitions and trigger events. Transitions were defined as movements from one status to another, with learning being necessary for competence in the new status. Triggers were specific life events, such as getting fired or having a baby, which precipitated the desire to change from one status to another. They found that the topic of learning was always related to the transition, but not always to the trigger. For example, a health related event, such as a heart attack,

might lead to a career transition which requires new career skills.

Of that group who gave life changes as their reason for learning, 56% were learning in order to make career transitions, 16% for family transitions, 13% for transitions in leisure areas, and the remainder were scattered among transitions related to health, religion, art, and citizenship. The prominent trigger events also tended to occur in the areas related to career (56%) and family life (36%). There were some interesting sex differences. Career transitions were dominant for both men (71%) and women (42%), but obviously were more likely to play a role for men. Career events also provided most of the triggers for men (73%), but trigger events for women were more likely to be family related (52%, compared to 39% with career related triggers).

The relationship between career factors and adults entering higher education has been supported in many studies. Most part-time college students are men who want to update their skills in their occupations or are women entering or reentering the labor force (Gibson, 1977; Otto, 1979; Corman, 1980).

The differentiation of transitions and triggers allows for the consideration of motivation for learning

both in terms of developmental status and personal goals, and in terms of external environmental pressures. The external trigger can precipitate learning, but only within an orientation established by the life transitions faced by the individual. However, it must be further realized that different types of transitions, even within the same general category, will have different psychological and educational implications. Career transitions, for example, could involve advancing in the same job, adapting to a changing job, or moving into a new job (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). An actual change of career is likely to have more impact than changes within a career field, because it involves a greater reorientation in life goals and self-concept. Similarly, mid-life career changes are likely to require more careful evaluation and preparation than changes earlier in the career (Robbins and Harvey, 1977) and to occur in people with a somewhat different orientation than those who do not change. Clapton (1973), for example, found that mid-career shifts were preceded by disenchantment with one's career as a source of self-actualization, discovery of a new career which promised greater satisfaction, or reformulations of goals and meanings in life precipitated by a major life change. Presumably the career transition would not

have occurred without these preparatory experiences. There is still a need for more research on career related motivation.

Motivation is only one aspect of the complex process known as learning. The traditional associationist view of the learner as a passive recipient of information, controlled by environmental stimuli, has been superceded in modern psychology by a more cognitivist orientation. Learning is an internal and individual process controlled by the learner. Each person interprets the environment differently, brings different abilities and attitudes to the situation, and engages in an active problem solving process as he or she learns.

In many ways, this more individualized, problem solving viewpoint is highly appropriate to adult learning, because most students of adult learning have emphasized the self-directed, problem oriented nature of adults in higher education (Knowles, 1969). Carl Rogers (1951) suggested that we can only facilitate the process of learning, rather than directly teaching anyone anything, and that a person learns well only those things that are perceived as involved in maintaining or enhancing the self. Since learning involves a change in the self it may be threatening, and the educational environment must be supportive

so the learner can relax and expand the self structure. The person has a basic tendency to actualize and enhance the self, making the most effective educational situation one which reduces threats to the self and facilitates a differentiated perception of the environment.

Malcolm Knowles (1970) stated that as a person matures the self-concept becomes increasingly self-directing, and the time perspective changes from postponed application to immediate application. The person accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, and readiness to learn is oriented increasingly toward the developmental tasks of his or her social roles. The educative environment for the adult should, therefore, be characterized by respect for the individual, freedom of expression, mutual responsibility for goals and evaluation, and allowing the learner to participate in planning the learning experiences. On the other hand, Cross (1978) pointed out that many adult learners have a poor concept of themselves as learners, lack confidence, and are bored with or negative toward school.

Adult developmental theorists support the idea that the person becomes more self-confident, more committed, and more oriented toward self-selected goals with age

(Bocknek, 1980; Levinson, 1978; McClusky, 1970).
Periods of transition, role change, and self-assessment
occur regularly during adulthood, due to internal
developmental change or significant external life
events, and these are typically the periods which
require and/or facilitate learning experiences
(Gould, 1978; Knox, 1977).

In summary, the adult learner is likely to be
oriented toward specific goals in life and see the
educational experience as part of the progress toward
those goals. The adult has more experience and self-
confidence than younger students, but may have some
doubts about handling the student role. The problem
orientation and capacity for self-direction of the
adult may produce high achievement in situations which
seem immediately applicable to the perceived goal, but
increased reliance on experience and emotional
resistance to ideas which challenge prior commitments
or the person's self-concept may lead to difficulty in
other situations. However, whether consciously
acknowledged by the learner or not, all learning
experiences introduce the opportunity for and pressure
toward growth.

Needs and Problems of Adult Women Students

The development of the individualized, supportive educational environment which is recommended for the adult learner will require an understanding of the person's needs and problems as a student. The majority of the research in this area has been done on women students, probably because women form the majority of adult learners in higher education (Beausang, 1976). During the last 20 years, the estimated number of women over 25 attending college has increased over ten times (Esperson, 1975). This trend is probably due to both economic and sociopsychological factors such as smaller families, changing sex role expectations, the need for two wage earners in a family, and more women coping with the personal and economic dislocations of widowhood and divorce (Rawlins, 1979; Reehling, 1980; Carlsen, 1973; Durchholz and O'Connor, 1975; Astin, 1967a; Folland, Picket and Hoeflin, 1977; Eliason, 1977; Boaz, 1978; Cross, 1978a).

Four main problem areas have been studied: economic, sociological, psychological, and physiological. Many researchers have found that financial problems are a very real source of concern for the adult student (Johns, 1979; Association of American Colleges, 1978; Judge, 1977;

Corman, 1980). Ironically, most students are trying to improve their career situation and financial condition, yet the return to school itself worsens that condition. The cost of schooling may mean a decrease in the "family" money, or it may involve the loss of money from a job which is surrendered for educational advancement (Donahue, 1980; Kirk, 1972). Many students must continue to work at least part-time while pursuing their education (Johnson, 1979).

Simultaneous responsibilities to home, family, job, and school mean that time must somehow be rationed (Rawlins, 1979; Cross, 1977; Hutchins, 1975; Lance, Lourie and Mayo, 1979a). In fact, a study of reentering students by Lourie (1977) found that time management was listed as the greatest single problem. Multiple demands on the person contribute directly to physiological as well as psychological stress.

Psychologically the problems of the adult student revolve around fears concerning their ability to study and learn, and around adjustment to the student role. Porter (1970), Caplan (1976), Bicknell (1975) and Krings (1976) reported the following characteristics of the adult student: felt pressured by time, had unrealistic self-expectations, possessed inadequate study skills, was concerned about relating to younger

students, saw some course work as irrelevant, desired
recognition of life experience, underwent continual
role transformations, and sensed general isolation.

The less formal education the person has had
(Rawlins, 1979; Smallwood, 1980) or the longer the
interruption in education (Ryan, 1978; Lance et al,
1979a), the greater the concern over academic
difficulties. Fear of failing or being unable to learn
may also reflect the internalization of the general
societal myth that one becomes less intelligent with
age. Students who have successfully completed a few
courses may lose those concerns (Matheson, 1982).

Unlike the younger student, the adult usually has
a well established identity and a sense of personal
competence based on a variety of experiences handling
responsibilities for work, family, and community
(Kasworm, 1980; Von der Embse and Childs, 1979).
However, the return to school is likely to be involved
with larger life transitions, involving major
reassessments of self-image, values, and goals (Aslanian
and Brickell, 1980). Lourie (1977) found that the major
reason for returning to school, for both men and women,
was personal growth. Even if the person has a practical
motivation, such as job advancement, the importance of
self-realization and personal growth often plays an

important role (Matheson, 1982). Reehling (1980) found
that the adult women students with high motivation for
self-improvement and intellectual stimulation were
the least likely to drop out.

Role of Support Systems

When a person is under stress, due to external
demands and/or internal change, the need for effective
support systems tends to rise. However, due to the
difference in age between themselves and traditional
students, adult learners are often concerned about
conspicuousness and rejection by other students
(Rawlins, 1979). They fear, and sometimes receive,
negative reactions from friends, teachers and
classmates, and express a need for group support from
peers (Matheson, 1982).

There is extensive evidence that a returning woman
student needs to be supported by her family (Hooper,
1979; Berkove, 1976; Brandenburg, 1974; Geisler and
Thrush, 1975; Lewis, 1969; Mulligan, 1973; Roach, 1976).
In general, the data indicate the average married
student receives such support (Smallwood, 1980). A
survey of adult women students and their husbands by
Ballmer and Cozby (1975) found that the husbands admired
their wives more since they began college and the women

saw their husbands as better providers and husbands. Katz (1976), in a similar study, found that the husbands were strongly supportive, despite some ambivalence, and that both spouses reported improvements in their marriage. He also found that the women reported increased self-esteem and personal happiness since returning to school.

On the other hand, many studies report finding resistance, ambivalence and negativity in the areas of financial and/or emotional support on the part of the husbands (Ryan, 1979; Matheson, 1982; Adickes and Worthman, 1976). They may be resentful or jealous, or feel threatened by their wives getting more education, or may find her new friends "inappropriate" (Hooper, 1979; Letchworth, 1970; McGraw, 1982). They may also resent carrying more household responsibilities, and Parelman (1974) found that families were likely to be more supportive in marriages which were already somewhat nontraditional in role assignments.

The adult student may also feel guilty about the time and attention being taken away from the spouse and children, guilty about the financial expenditure, or resentful at the demands the family continues to impose or at a perceived lack of practical and emotional support. The mother who is venturing out of the

homemaking role for the first time may express more guilt
and more need to meet family demands (Parelman, 1974).
In general, however, Von der Embse and Childs (1979)
found that married women performed better than single
women, suggesting that the family is more likely to be
a source of support than a source of stress.

The educational institution can also provide for
support, particularly through counseling services and/
or peer groups. Many of the proposals for helping the
adult student adjust have included an emphasis on a
strongly supportive environment, as well as more
academically oriented ideas such as individualized
programs which emphasize personal interests and learning
styles, or flexible scheduling, or credit for life
experiences (Clark, 1975; Beausang, 1976; Smallwood,
1980; Berman, 1976; Spille, 1980; Reehling, 1980).
Problems which could be alleviated, at least in part,
through counseling include: lack of self-confidence,
unrealistic expectations, fixed values and attitudes
which lead to social conflict, impatience with abstract
or general learning tasks, failure to seek help before
problems get out of hand, and lack of efficient study
habits (Fisher, 1977). However, several studies
(Smallwood, 1980; Lance, et al, 1979a; Dillhunt, 1979;
Plotsky, 1976; Berman, 1976; Ryan, 1978; Matheson,

1982; O'Brien and Johnson, 1976) have indicated that the counseling and guidance available to adult students is insufficient to meet their needs.

Counseling services, appropriately employed, can also interface with the family and peer support systems, allowing the former to function more effectively and assisting in the development of the latter. Counseling can directly involve the family, helping both student and family to become more aware of the demands of student life and probable impact on all the members, as well as suggesting possible strategies for coping (Hooper and Rice, 1979; Adickes and Worthman, 1976; Plotsky, 1976). Whether counseling is preadmission, postadmission, or both, it should involve a discussion of programs and careers (Chitayet and Rael, 1975), an orientation to the school, explanation of support services available and encouragement to use them, and assimilation into the school (Kasworm, 1980; Dillhunt, 1979).

The assimilation process is enhanced by encouraging the development of support groups among the adult students which serve as temporary sources of advice, fellowship, and emotional support (Carter, 1978; Charland, 1978; Ryan, 1979; Lance, et al, 1979a). Adult learners seem to respond particularly well to the

use of small groups, whether in guidance sessions
(Rappole, 1981), workshops on various kinds of coping
skills (Lance, Lourie and Mayo, 1979b), or programs
for improving study habits and learning experiences
(Knowles, 1970).

Adult Men in Higher Education

As noted earlier, the vast majority of the research
on the characteristics of adults in higher education,
especially in the areas of emotional needs and problems,
has been done on women. Similarly, most of the programs
for adult learners have been developed for women
students. This reflects the fact that women outnumber
men among adult learners (Munger and Priest, 1979) and
that women have formed the most rapidly increasing and,
therefore, most obvious group of nontraditional students
(Esperson, 1975; Brians and Quann, 1977; Tittle and
Denker, 1977; Westervelt, 1973). It probably also
reflects the high level of social and professional
interest in the changing roles of women over the last
20 years.

Undoubtedly much of the information on adult female
students is also applicable to males. Increased
educational opportunity and a changing job market, with
the need for new training to adapt to technological

innovation, are factors which influence men as well as women. The return to school is frequently part of a major reorganization of life roles and goals for both sexes. Lourie (1977), in a study of men and women reentering college, found that both groups listed personal growth as the major reason for returning and both groups found time management to be their greatest problem.

However, caution must always be exercised in applying findings from one group to another, and there are data which suggest that sex differences exist in the characteristics and needs of adult learners. According to Johnson (1979), the average male adult student is younger, less educated, less financially secure, less likely to have children, and more likely to be employed than the average female student. This suggests that, as a group, their problems of adjusting to student life might be different.

Men, in most cases, come to college for career reasons; they wish to maintain or advance in their present jobs or to change careers (Bielby, 1980). Furthermore, it is usually a career related life event which precipitates their return to school (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). This fits well with the available models of adult development (most of which

have been done by men and based on work with men) which
tend to emphasize achievement and career goals more
than relationships, at least until middle adulthood
(Levinson, 1978; Bocknek, 1980).

Since career progress, and, therefore, career
education, are a part of the male role in our society,
we might expect that men would encounter less family
stress over the return to school than women.   In a
family with traditional roles, the wife's primary role
as nurturer and helpmate could obligate her to support
her husband's efforts, especially if they promised
future progress for her husband and family (Gilligan,
1982; O'Neil, 1981a; Morgan, 1981).   This would, of
course, not eliminate the possibility of either husband
or wife experiencing negative emotional reactions such
as guilt, resentment, or jealousy.

It is also possible that, although support is a
crucial factor for adult women students (Hooper, 1979),
it would not be perceived as important by men.   While
married women perform better than single women as
students, marital status seems to have no effect on men
(Von der Embse and Childs, 1979).   On a broader level,
both Vaillant (1977) and Levinson (1978) view male
friendships and close relationships as being rarely
experienced and playing a subordinate role in adult

development. Gilligan (1982) suggests that, as we collect comparable data on the psychosocial development of men and women, distinct differences are appearing in the area of relationships, with women seeking intimacy and men deemphasizing or avoiding it.

However, social role changes are not limited to women. Levine (1979) suggests that, while research in the 1960's focused on youth and in the 1970's on women, the 1980's will see a concern with the changing sex roles of men. Men's liberation in general, and the Men's Movement in particular, began in the 1970's (Lewis, 1981). The continued existence and growing momentum of this movement have been well documented by a number of recent researchers (Pleck, 1981; O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b; Grady, Brannon and Pleck, 1979; Pleck and Sawyer, 1974; O'Neil and Muenchow, 1981). The inherent values of the Men's Movement are concerned with the raising of men's consciousness about attitudes and responsibilities toward women as social equals and about men's attitudes toward themselves as persons who do not always have to strive to be competitive, controlling, and unemotional. The development of all of a man's potentialities, which involves developing his entire spectrum of opportunities (i.e. having more more choices and more options, to be the male-person

one wants to be) is seen as central to men's
liberation (Lewis, 1981).

Because of the changing social norms and traditional
institutions, many men are in transition, facing
difficult times, and are encountering new family roles
and social demands. Research has begun on a number of
areas of change including vocation, intimacy, family
life, community roles, and inner life (Bocknek, 1976;
Brim, 1976; Schlossberg, 1976; Gutman, 1980). One
important dimension, which is gradually receiving more
attention, relates to the male dilemma concerning
support systems. Society has traditionally trained
men to hide their thoughts and feelings. If they
reveal themselves to others they may be considered
vulnerable, weak, and unmanly (Scher, 1981). An
integral part of the masculine mystique is the idea
that autonomy is the highest good. Interpersonal
communication which emphasizes human emotions, feelings,
needs, intuitions, or physical contact is, therefore,
considered feminine and to be avoided (Canavan and
Haskell, 1977; Dubbert, 1979; Farrell, 1974; Mayer,
1978; O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b; Steinem, 1974; Bucher, 1976;
David and Brannon, 1976). However, forbidding expression
of these needs does not eliminate them. Men perceive
intimacy as dangerous (Gilligan and Pollack, 1982),

perhaps because intimacy encourages the expression of inner feelings.

This inner dilemma is accentuated by the external social changes. Increasingly the work achievement role is being stressed for women and the personal affiliation role for men (Skovholt and Morgan, 1981). While the Men's Movement would view this as a hopeful, positive change in orientation, it also presents conflicts for many men caught between traditional and equalitarian expectations. Collison (1981) stresses that research is needed on the ways that persons, both male and female, can best provide support for those men who choose life styles which depart from the traditional definitions of masculinity.

These changing patterns of roles and relationships may have a variety of implications for male students in higher education. If women are socialized to place more emphasis on relationships and men to deemphasize or even fear them, we might expect to find parallel differences in perceived needs for support as students. While women seek support from family, peer groups, and counseling services, men might find the presence or absence of support less important, or even irrelevant. It is also possible that services oriented toward providing emotional support would be perceived

as threatening by some men. For those men who might
see a return to school as a deviation from the
traditional pattern of family breadwinner, different
patterns of support needs may be found.

However, all of this is speculative until actual
research is done on adult male students, particularly in
the areas of perceived need for support and sources of
support.

METHOD

Design

The study consisted of 36 individual interviews
with male adult undergraduate students. These
interviews focused on the subject of interpersonal
support relationships. The interview was selected,
because it is widely regarded as the best and most basic
technique for assessment. MacKinnon and Michels
(1971, p. vii) state that the "...interview is the most
important technical instrument of all those professions
concerned with man and his social functioning." The
interviewer can go beyond any formal instrument, follow
leads in the conversations as they arise, and make
better use of his/her experience and training to
interpret the data, having gathered the full nuances
in the field. Bingham and Moore's classic book,
How to Interview (1924), which is still widely cited in
the current literature (e.g. Cottle and Downie, 1960;
Sundberg and Tyler, 1962; Benjamin, 1969; Korchin, 1976;
Sundberg, 1977; Phares, 1979; Sundberg, Taplin and Tyler,
1983), describes the interview as a "conversation with
a purpose". This description conveys both the informal

flexibility and the underlying structure inherent in this assessment technique.

In a topic such as support systems, it was possible that some of the subjects would have a limited understanding of the concepts, or even feel threatened by the connotations of need for support. Also, research has shown that men in general are less self-disclosing than women (Jourard, 1971), although they seem more willing to self-disclose to strangers and acquaintances than to intimates (Stokes, Fuehrer and Childs, 1980). The interview's flexibility and adaptability allowed the researcher to deal with these problems by establishing an accepting atmosphere in which the individual may have felt less guarded in discussing sensitive subjects. Furthermore, if the subject seemed confused or uncomfortable, the interviewer had the opportunity to teach, clarify concepts, reassure, and support the subject, proceeding at a pace appropriate to the individual. The nonthreatening attitude also encouraged expression of related feelings and facts which, although not a subject of direct questioning, may have had direct relevance to understanding the person. Thus, this dyadic system provided an "inner view" of the interviewee and his personal memories, self-concept, goals, motives, and areas of support and concern.

Ultimately, the information gathered about the person's life situation and meaningful relationships, especially as it relates to the school experience, can emerge in terms of its personal meaning to the individual--his phenomenal field (Korchin, 1976).

Subjects

Thirty-six male undergraduate students at Worcester State College were interviewed during the spring semester of 1983. All subjects were 25 years of age or older and had experienced interruptions in their schooling which resulted in beginning or returning to college at an age older than the "traditional student", who begins college immediately after high school and graduates at about 22 years of age.

Subjects were obtained through a variety of sources. Early in the fall semester of 1982, the Director of Computer Services was asked to provide a list of undergraduate male students in the designated age range. He complied with this request, but apologized for the shortness of the list, which was due to the fact that many students do not put their ages on the computerized data sheets. Several subjects were obtained from this list, while others could not be located or had graduated before data gathering began the following semester.

Professors and academic advisors from several departments were then requested to ask for volunteers from their classes and advisees. The Director of the Campus Center was contacted and cooperated in locating several subjects. Finally, the subjects themselves referred friends and classmates to the experimenter.

Once a potential subject was identified, the researcher personally contacted him at school or by telephone, explained the study, and asked if he would be willing to participate. If so, a mutually convenient time was scheduled for the interview, which took between an hour and a half and two hours. All interviews were conducted privately at the college.

Instruments

Two instruments were used: a written questionnaire consisting of closed questions and rating scales (see Appendix A), and a structured interview consisting of both open and closed questions (see Appendix B). The interview gave the subject an opportunity to expand orally upon the responses made on the questionnaire. The interview responses, therefore, increased the validity of the questionnaire by giving the interviewer an indication of the subject's understanding of the questionnaire. The questionnaire also provided clues to

areas in need of further exploration which could be examined in detail in the interview. This allowed additional interpretation in these areas.

Both instruments were pretested on three adult male students (see Appendix C for the form used). The results of the pretest led to several modifications: the questionnaire was shortened by about half its length; certain demographic data questions were added (e.g. inclusion of the category "living with someone" in the marital status questions); a section dealing with sources of concern, which was not directly related to the study's focus, was dropped; questions not directly related to the study were dropped (e.g. "What two things could make your life easier or happier for you?"); and questions in the interview related to the questionnaire were made more specific.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section had 11 questions pertaining to demographic data: age, age when returned to college, years out of school before returning, marital status, number of children, number of children living with the subject, employment, hours employed per week, present level in school, major, and whether the subject was in a degree program. The information requested in these items was

consistent with the demographic data collected in other studies of adult students, including Rawlins (1979), Hooper (1979), Smallwood (1980), and Aslanian and Brickell (1980).

The second section was a numerical rating scale comprised of nine sources of possible support: wife or lover, children, co-workers, friends in school, other friends, parents, other family members, faculty and others. The four most important sources of support were to be selected and ranked in order, with the most important person ranked number one. The list of individuals was drawn from a number of studies of adult women students. Smallwood's study (1980) noted eight of them. Ballmer and Cozby (1975), Ryan (1979), Matheson (1982), Adickes and Worthman (1976), Hooper (1979), and Parelman (1974) all dealt with the attitudes of the husband. Rawlins (1979) considered other students, Matheson (1982) included friends, teachers and classmates, and Hooper (1979) dealt with family attitudes.

The third section of the questionnaire was an attitude checklist. The subject was asked to rate the attitude toward his return to school held by each of the four persons selected in the previous section. The five-point rating scale contained the following

categories: strongly positive, positive, neutral, negative, and strongly negative. These alternatives reflected the different reactions found in the studies mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The use of a written questionnaire as the initial procedure had several positive points. It allowed for more rapid gathering of demographic information, it channeled the subject's thoughts in the direction of the study, and it presented a variety of alternatives more comprehensibly than could be done orally. Benjamin (1969) suggests that people submit to answering questions as an inevitability of life. A form can, therefore, provide a reassuring sense of structure and control. If the interviewee can perceive that he can state his reservations, i.e. question the questions, a good initial relationship can continue to be developed, creating the proper atmosphere for the subsequent interview to flow smoothly.

Interview

The interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions, which gave the interviewer the freedom to repeat the question if the reply was not to the point, to use discretionary nondirective probes, and to give examples when necessary to facilitate responses (Rawlins, 1979;

Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook, 1959). Eight questions were probes concerning answers given on the questionnaire. The responses helped establish the validity of the original answers and provided for greater depth of interpretation of the quantitative data. The other two questions asked the reasons for the subject's return to school and presented an opportunity to discuss any additional thoughts which the subject might have. These responses provided an expanded context for interpretation of the information obtained.

The first question served as a general introduction to the interview. If something connected with relationships was mentioned as a factor in the return to school, this was followed up in later questions.

The second and third questions both were derived from the responses to the second part of the questionnaire. They probed the person's awareness of and perception of the attitudes of people around him, as well as providing a self-evaluation of the significance of others' attitudes to his own decision making. Research indicates that support from significant others, particularly the family, is important to women's decisions to return to and remain in school. However, equivalent data are not available on men.

The fourth and fifth questions approached

relationships from a slightly different viewpoint. On these questions the focus was on perceived changes in relationships connected with the return to school.

The sixth and seventh questions dealt with perceived need for and sources of emotional support. These are subjective judgments which provided information about the person's self-concept and his concern with emotional relationships.

The eighth and ninth questions specifically focused on emotional support in the context of the college experience. Programs to help adult female students have frequently emphasized providing more support through counselors and peer support groups. Answers to these questions indicated how appropriate such programs would be for male adult students, as well as further clarifying the question of perceived need for support.

The tenth question allowed the subject to add any information he felt was relevant. This had emotional value to the subject by providing for closure and also provided an opportunity to add to previous answers in case other ideas had occurred to him during the interview.

The information obtained from these questions was somewhat overlapping. By using alternative approaches and following up on perceived lines of thought or emotional issues, the interviewer, in many cases, was

able to form a picture of the person's support system in
the context of the person's own perceived need for support
and concern with the attitudes of significant others.
This gave a more inclusive Gestalt than could be obtained
with a questionnaire alone. Since the information gained
from the interview was linked to the questionnaire,
allowing reflection on and verification of (or correction
of) responses presented in the questionnaire, there should
have been no significant problem of interviewer reli-
ability. The information gained in the interview is
primarily to be used in the discussion of possible
problem areas, implications of the findings, and identi-
fication of issues which might fruitfully be explored
in later studies.

Procedure

Each subject was interviewed in private on campus at a
mutually convenient time. After introductions and a few
minutes to establish rapport, the study was introduced as
follows:

> "I am a graduate student at the University of
> Massachusetts doing research for my doctorate. The
> subject of my research study is the male adult under-
> graduate student. I chose this area, because
> I have found that there are many studies done on

adult women students, but very few concerned with men. I would like to understand more about the needs of adult male students with the hope that this could lead to helping students in the areas that are important to them. All of this material is strictly confidential. First, there is a short form I'd like you to complete. Some of these questions are about support systems. Do you know what a support system is? (Pause for response)

We all need emotional support from others; people who make us feel secure, warm, loved, respected, accepted, hopeful. We need people who understand us, even if they don't always agree with us; people we can turn to for help and encouragement, or people who make us feel more self-confident and happy. As children our major support system is usually our parents. As we grow up we add other people: friends, teachers, co-workers, and so on. Some people have very large support systems, while others depend mainly on one or two people, and some have no support at all. Is that clear? Do you have any questions?" (Pause, and if the subject did not understand, reiterate points, stressing acceptance, encouragement, understanding.)

The subject was then given the questionnaire and

allowed as much time as necessary to complete it. After it was completed, the interviewer took it back and continued with the questions in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

The data were treated in several ways, depending on the form of the information and the value and appropriateness of particular methods of analysis. The majority of the statistical techniques applied were nonparametric tests. These were chosen for two main reasons: most data were in nominal or ordinal form, rather than the numerical values appropriate to parametric techniques, and nonparametric tests do not require assumptions about the distribution of the population (Sigel, 1956).

No cases were found in some major categories (e.g. no widowers, and no one strongly negative toward the subject's return to school). These were omitted from further analysis. In other instances, low observed or expected frequencies required the combination of certain classes of data in order to meet the restrictions of the statistical tests (Freund, 1952). Analysis of the data proceeded from the broadest comparisons to more specific investigations, on the principle stated by Sigel (1956, p. 160) that "it is only when an overall test...

allows us to reject the null hypothesis that we are
justified in employing a procedure for testing for
significant differences between any two of the $\underline{k}$
samples."

In accordance with generally accepted procedures,
the minimum acceptable level of significance for the
results of the statistical tests was set at .05.

Demographic data

Responses to the demographic items were recorded
and placed in interval groupings when appropriate.
For each item, frequencies and percentages for each
answer were calculated. If the answers were in a
continuous numerical form (e.g. age), mean, median,
mode, and standard deviation were found for the item.
However, if the answers were categorical (e.g. marital
status) only mode was determined.

Possible associations between the items were tested
by the application of a chi-square test for
independent samples.

Support sources, rankings and attitudes

Frequencies were recorded for each category of
support source: by rank, by perceived attitude toward
the subject's return to school, by various demographic
classifications, and in total. Summary frequencies

of ranks and attitudes were also recorded.

The chi-square test was used to test for associations between support sources and ranks, between support sources and attitudes, and between ranks and attitudes. The same test was then applied in more limited one-way and two-way comparisons among specific support sources, ranks, attitudes, and demographic items.

Interview data

Frequencies were recorded for the various categories of responses to each interview item. In some instances these responses were further classified by demographic factors or additional inquiries.

The interview asked separate questions concerning sources of support in general and concerning sources of college related support. The answers to each question were grouped to allow for equivalent comparisons and ranked by frequency of mention. Spearman rank correlation coefficients were then calculated to determine whether a relationship existed between the rankings of support choices in response to the two questions. Another Spearman rank correlation coefficient was calculated for the ranked sources of general support on the interview, compared to the ranked

sources of support on the questionnaire.

Association between expressed need for general support and expressed need for college related support could not be tested with the usual chi-square test, because the two sets of answers could not be assumed to be independent. Therefore, the McNemar test, which is designed for related sets of data, was used. Possible associations between expressed need for support and various demographic variables were tested with the chi-square test.

C H A P T E R   I V
RESULTS

Demographic Results

A demographic profile of the subjects is presented
in Tables 1 through 11. As the tables show, the
"typical" or modal subject was in his late 20's, had
spent five years out of school before returning, was
married, with no children, and was employed full-time.

While the sample included two men in their 60's,
31 of the 36 subjects (86.1%) were between 25 and 39.
A total of 27 subjects (75%) had spent less than 10
years out of school, and 14 (38.9%) had spent less than
five years out of school. In answer to the question
about age at the time of returning to school, 28 (77.8%)
said they had returned in their 20's.

At the time of the study, almost half of the
subjects (47.2%, or 17 subjects) were seniors, and 77.8%
(28 subjects) were upperclassmen. As might be expected
from their advanced standing, the majority (28 subjects)
were officially matriculated in a degree program. A
major field of study had been chosen by 30 subjects,
while 6 were still undeclared. A total of 10 different
major fields were represented, but 20 subjects (55.5%)

Table 1

Ages of Subjects (N=36)

Age range	Frequency	%
25-29	16	44.4
30-34	9	25.0
35-39	6	16.7
40-44	2	5.6
45-49	1	2.8
50-54	0	
55-59	0	
60-64	1	2.8
65-69	1	2.8
Total	36	100.1

Mean = 33.11

Median = 30-34

Mode = 25-29

S.D. = 9.35

Table 2

Years out of School before Return (N=36)

Years out of school	Frequency	%
1	2	5.6
2	6	16.7
3	3	8.3
4	3	8.3
5	7	19.4
6	1	2.8
7	3	8.3
8	2	5.6
9		
10–14	3	8.3
15–19	2	5.6
20–24	2	5.6
25–29	1	2.8

40–44	1	2.8
Total	36	100.1

Mean = 7.91

Median = 5

Mode = 5

S.D. = 8.35

Table 3

Age when Returned to School (N=36)

Age at return	Frequency	%
20-24	11	27.8
25-29	14	38.9
30-34	4	11.1
35-39	2	5.6
40-44	2	5.6
45-49	1	2.8
50-54	0	
55-59	1	2.8
60-64	0	
65-69	1	2.8
Total	36	100.2

Mean = 29.97

Median = 25-29

Mode = 25-29

S.D. = 10.00

Table 4

Subject's Marital Status (N=36)

Marital status	Frequency	%
Single	10	27.8
Married	15	41.7
Divorced/separated	8	22.2
Widowed	0	
Living with someone	3	8.3
Total	36	99.9

Table 5

Number of Children (N=36)

Number	Frequency	%
0	15	41.7
1	10	27.8
2	4	11.1
3	3	8.3
4+	4	11.1
Total	36	100.0

Mode = 0

Table 6

Number of Children Living with Subject (N=36)

Number	Frequency	%
0	23	63.9
1	9	25.0
2	3	8.3
3	0	
4+	1	2.8
Total	36	100.0

Mode = 0

Table 7

Employment Status of Subject (N=36)

Employed	Frequency	%
Yes	27	75.0
No	9	25.0
Total	36	100.0

Table 8

Hours Worked per Week by Employed Subjects (N=27)

Number of hours	Frequency	%
1-4	0	
5-9	0	
10-14	1	3.7
15-19	3	11.1
20-24	0	
25-29	2	7.4
30-34	0	
35-39	3	11.1
40+	18	66.7
Total	27	100.0

Mean = 32.18

Median = 40

Mode = 40

S.D. = 12.43

Table 9

Subjects Enrolled in a Degree Program (N=36)

Degree program	Frequency	%
Yes	28	77.8
No	8	22.2
Total	36	100.0

Table 10

Subject's Major Field of Study (N=36)

Major	Frequency	%
Psychology	15	41.7
Business Management	5	13.8
Sociology	2	5.6
Mathematics	2	5.6
History	1	2.8
Health Education	1	2.8
Biology	1	2.8
French	1	2.8
Natural Science	1	2.8
Economics	1	2.8
Undeclared	6	16.7
Total	36	100.2

Table 11

Subject's Level in School (N=36)

Level	Frequency	%
Freshman	4	11.1
Sophomore	4	11.1
Junior	11	30.6
Senior	17	47.2
Total	36	100.0

were either in Psychology or Business Management. These are also the two largest majors at the college, with Business Management slightly larger than Psychology (personal communication from L. Gould, Director of Institutional Research, April, 1983).

The results showed that 23 subjects (63.9%) were currently, or had previously been, married, with 15 (41.7%) listing themselves as married and 8 (22.2%) as divorced or separated. Another 10 subjects were single, and 3 were living with someone, but there were no widowed subjects. Only 13 subjects (36.1%) had children living with them, but 21 (58.3%) had children, with 10 of these having only one child.

It is noteworthy that 27 subjects (75%) were employed. Furthermore, two-thirds of these (18 subjects, or 50% of the sample) were working 40 or more hours per week.

The chi-square analyses of possible associations among demographic variables almost uniformly failed to produce any significant differences. For example, age variables were not significantly associated with hours employed, marital status or level in school; marital status was not significantly associated with hours employed or level in school; and hours employed were not significantly associated with school variables.

The one exception to this general inability to reject null hypotheses was an association between level in school and being in a degree program, which was significant beyond the $p < .001$ level (chi-square equals 16.27 with 1 degree of freedom).

Sources of Support

Subjects were asked to identify their four major sources of emotional support and rank them according to importance. All 36 were able to designate at least two sources, 35 ranked three, while 29 also indicated a fourth. A chi-square analysis of the nine sources of support against the frequency of selection of each in the four categories of ranked importance (Table 12) indicated a probability of an association existing between the category of support source and the ranking of importance which was beyond the $p < .001$ level of significance.

Each cell was then evaluated for its contribution to the chi-square score by finding the chi-square value of that cell (the square of the difference between the observed frequency and expected frequency, divided by the expected frequency) and dividing it by the total chi-square value to determine the percentage of the total score due to that cell. This allows an

Table 12

Frequency of Selection of support Source, by

Ranked Importance

Support source	Ranked importance									
	First		Second		Third		Fourth		Totals	
	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
Wife/lover	21	6.88	2	6.88	3	6.69	0	5.54	26	25.99
Children	0	2.65	7	2.65	1	2.57	2	2.13	10	10.00
Co-workers	1	2.91	0	2.91	5	2.83	5	2.35	11	11.01
School Friends	0	3.18	4	3.18	5	3.09	3	2.56	12	12.00
Other friends	4	5.56	3	5.56	9	5.40	5	4.48	21	21.00
Parents	6	6.62	8	6.62	5	6.43	6	5.33	25	25.00
Family	2	5.03	8	5.03	3	4.89	6	4.05	19	19.00
Faculty	0	2.12	3	2.12	3	2.06	2	1.71	8	8.01
Other	2	1.06	1	1.06	1	1.03	0	0.85	4	4.00
Total	36	36.01	36	36.01	35	34.99	29	29.00	136	136.01

χ^2 = 78.98, with 24 df

Null hypothesis rejected at $p < .001$ level of signif-

icance

Note: fo = observed frequency; fe = expected frequency

estimation of the degree to which the overall
association reflects the association of two specific
variables. As shown in Table 13, 36.86% of the
chi-square value is due to the tendency to select the
category wife/lover as the first-ranked support.
Other major contributors to the overall score were the
selection of children as second-ranked support (9.08%
of the score) and the avoidance of selecting wife/lover
as a fourth-ranked support (7.05% of the score).

A one-way chi-square analysis was done on the
overall frequency of mentions of each category of
support source (Table 14). The resulting score shows
a difference significant beyond the $p < .001$ level.
Three categories each accounted for over 20% of the
total chi-square value: wife/lover (selected more often
than expected by chance), parents (selected more often),
and "other" (selected less often).

Effect of Marital Status

All but one of the 15 married subjects ranked their
wives as their most important source of support, and,
on the next question, perceived their wives as having
positive or strongly positive attitudes concerning their
return to school. The one exception ranked his wife
third as a source of support and perceived her attitude

Table 13

Data from Table 12: Chi-square Value and Percentage of Total

Chi-square for Each Cell

Ranked importance

Support source	First		Second		Third		Fourth		Totals	
	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%
Wife/lover	28.68	36.86	3.46	4.40	2.04	2.59	5.54	7.05	40.02	50.90
Children	2.65	3.37	7.91	9.08	0.96	1.22	0.01	0.01	10.76	13.68
Co-workers	1.25	1.59	2.91	3.70	1.66	2.11	2.99	3.80	8.81	11.20
School friends	3.18	4.04	0.27	0.34	1.18	1.50	0.08	0.10	4.71	5.98
Other friends	0.03	0.04	1.18	1.50	2.40	3.05	0.06	0.08	3.67	4.67
Parents	0.06	0.08	0.29	0.51	0.32	0.41	0.08	0.10	0.75	0.96
Other family	1.83	2.33	1.75	2.23	0.73	0.95	0.94	1.20	5.25	6.69
Faculty	2.12	2.70	0.37	0.47	0.43	0.55	0.05	0.06	2.97	3.78
Other	0.83	1.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.85	1.10	1.68	2.16
Total	40.93	52.07	17.37	22.09	9.72	12.36	10.60	13.50	78.62	100.02

Table 14

Selection of Support Sources on Questionnaire

Support Source	Frequency		Contribution to x^2	
	fo	fe	x^2	%
Wife/lover	25	15.2	6.32	21.93
Children	10	15.2	1.78	6.18
Co-workers	11	15.2	1.16	4.02
School friends	12	15.2	0.67	2.32
Other friends	21	15.2	2.25	7.80
Parents	25	15.2	6.32	21.93
Family	19	15.2	0.95	3.39
Faculty	9	15.2	2.53	8.78
Other	5	15.2	6.84	23.73
Total	137	136.8	28.82	99.99

x^2 = 28.78, with 8 df

Null hypothesis rejected at p < .001 level of significance

Note: fo = observed frequency; fe = expected frequency

as negative.

In ranking the number one source of support, 4 of the 10 single individuals chose lover and 4 chose parents. The remaining 2 subjects chose other friends in one case and friends in school in the other. Of the 8 divorced or separated men, 3 ranked lover as number one, 2 chose parents, 2 chose other friends, and 1 ranked co-workers first. Of the 3 men living with someone, 2 cited other family and 1 cited "other" (a hypnotist) as their primary sources of support. In all categories of marital status except "living with someone", the spouse or lover was most often mentioned as the number one source of support. There were no widowed subjects. These data are presented in Table 15.

A chi-square analysis was done on marital status against the choice of the first-ranked support source. The dependent variable, sources of support, was collapsed into two categories--wife/lover and all others--to allow for analysis. As may be seen in Table 16, the association was found to be significant at the $p < .002$ level. Over half of the chi-square value was due to the tendency of married subjects to choose wife/lover as their first-ranked support and to avoid choosing other categories. Single and divorced subjects contributed little to the association. This is

Table 15

Subjects Classified by Marital Status and by Choice of

First-ranked Support Source

| | Marital status | | | |
| First-ranked | | | Divorced/ | Living with |
support source	Single	Married	Separated	someone
Wife/lover	4	14	3	0
Children	0	0	0	0
Co-workers	0	0	1	0
School friends	0	0	0	0
Other friends	2	0	2	0
Parents	4	0	2	0
Other family	0	0	0	2
Faculty	0	0	0	0
Other	0	1	0	1

Note: there were no subjects in the widowed category.

Table 16

Choice of Wife/lover as First-ranked Support Source

vs. Marital Status

| Marital status | First-ranked support source | | | | | |
| | Wife/lover | | Other | | Totals | |
	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
Single	4	5.83	6	4.17	10	10.00
Married	4	8.75	1	6.25	15	15.00
Divorced/separated	3	4.67	5	3.33	8	8.00
Living with someone	0	1.75	3	1.25	3	3.00
Total	21	21.00	15	15.00	36	36.00

x^2 = 14.57, with 3 df

Null hypothesis rejected at $p < .002$ level of signif-
icance

Note: fo = observed frequency; fe = expected frequency

illustrated in Table 17.

Attitude toward Subject's Return to School

The subjects indicated the attitude of each person identified as a source of support toward their return to school, on a scale from strongly positive to strongly negative. It is worth noting that no subject categorized anyone as strongly negative, and only 3 categorized someone as negative. The possible association between the nine sources of support and the attitude toward the subject's return to school was analyzed, using a chi-square test (Table 18). The neutral and negative categories were combined for analysis, because the frequencies were so low in each category. It was assumed that the crucial factor was whether the person was positive toward the subject's return. Also, if there are any inaccuracies in reporting, they are more likely to be in the direction of rating a negative person in the less judgmental category of "neutral" than rating a positive person lower than he or she actually is. The association was found to be significant at the $p < .012$ level.

As Table 19 indicates, over half of the chi-square value is accounted for by five cells: wife/lover strongly positive more often than expected, children

Table 17

Data from Table 16: Chi-square Values and Percentage
of Total Chi-square for Each Cell

Marital status	First-ranked support source					
	Wife/lover		Other		Totals	
	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%
Single	0.57	3.91	0.80	5.59	1.37	9.40
Married	3.15	21.62	4.41	30.27	7.56	51.89
Divorced/ separated	0.60	4.11	0.84	5.86	1.44	9.97
Living with someone	1.75	12.01	2.45	16.82	4.20	28.83
Total	6.07	41.62	8.50	58.45	14.57	100.07

Table 18

Attitudes of Support Sources toward Subjects' Return to

School

	Attitude							
	Strongly				Neutral/			
Support source	positive		Positive		negative		Totals	
	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
Wife/lover	20	13.09	5	9.82	2	4.09	27	27.00
Children	1	4.85	5	3.64	4	1.52	10	10.01
Co-workers	5	5.33	5	4.00	1	1.67	11	11.00
School friends	2	4.85	4	3.64	4	1.52	10	10.01
Other friends	9	11.15	11	8.36	3	3.48	23	22.99
Parents	15	10.67	7	8.00	0	3.33	22	22.00
Family	9	8.73	5	6.55	4	2.73	18	18.01
Faculty	2	4.36	5	3.27	1	1.36	9	8.99
Other	1	1.00	1	0.73	0	0.30	2	2.03
Total	64	64.03	48	48.01	20	20.00	132	132.04

$x^2 = 31.43$, with 16 df

Null hypothesis rejected at $p < .05$ level of signif-

icance

Note: fo = observed frequency; fe = expected frequency

Table 19

Data from Table 18: Chi-square Values and Percentage of Total

Chi-square for Each Cell

Attitude

Support source	Strongly positive		Positive		Neutral/ negative		Totals	
	χ^2	%	χ^2	%	χ^2	%	χ^2	%
Wife/lover	3.65	11.66	2.37	7.57	1.07	3.42	7.09	22.65
Children	3.06	9.77	0.51	1.63	4.05	12.94	7.62	24.34
Co-workers	0.02	0.06	0.25	0.80	0.27	0.86	0.54	1.72
School friends	1.67	5.33	0.04	0.13	4.04	12.90	5.75	18.36
Other friends	0.41	1.31	0.83	2.65	0.07	0.22	1.31	4.18
Parents	1.76	5.62	0.13	0.42	3.33	10.64	5.22	16.68
Other family	0.01	0.03	0.37	1.18	0.59	1.88	0.97	3.09
Faculty	1.28	4.09	0.92	2.94	0.30	0.96	2.50	7.99
Other	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.96	0.31	0.99
Total	11.86	37.88	5.43	17.34	14.02	44.78	31.31	100.00

strongly positive less often and neutral/negative more often than expected, school friends neutral/negative more often, and parents neutral/negative less often than expected.

The association between the ranked importance of the support source and the attitude of the support source toward the subject's return to school was also subjected to a chi-square test (Table 20), and the association was found to be significant at the $p < .001$ level. The tendency for the first-ranked support to be strongly positive contributed over 21% of the chi-square value, and the tendency for the fourth-ranked support to be neutral or negative contributed almost 25%. Other major factors were the lack of first-ranked support sources in the neutral/negative category and lack of fourth-ranked supports in the strongly positive category (Table 21).

Interview Results

Some of the items on the questionnaire were not covered on the interview, and vice-versa. However, in all cases where similar questions were asked on both, the material obtained through the interview was consistent with the information presented on the questionnaire, revealing good comprehension of the

Table 20

Attitudes of Ranked Support Sources toward Subject's

Return to School

Attitude

Rank of support	Strongly positive		Positive		Neutral/ negative		Totals	
	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
First	29	18.00	7	12.71	0	5.29	36	36.00
Second	19	18.00	13	12.71	4	5.29	36	36.00
Third	15	17.50	14	12.35	6	5.15	35	35.00
Fourth	5	14.50	14	10.24	10	4.26	29	29.00
Total	68	68.00	48	48.01	20	19.99	136	136.00

$\chi^2 = 31.01$, with 6 df

Null hypothesis rejected at $p < .001$ level of significance

Note: fo = observed frequencies; fe = expected frequencies

Table 21

Data from Table 20: Chi-square Value and Percentage of

Total Chi-square for each Cell

Rank	Attitude							
	Strongly positive		Positive		Neutral/ negative		Totals	
	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%	x^2	%
First	6.72	22.07	2.68	9.00	5.26	17.00	14.87	48.07
Second	0.57	0.17	0.00	0.02	0.31	1.01	0.36	1.20
Third	0.36	1.15	0.22	0.71	0.14	0.45	0.72	2.31
Fourth	6.22	20.07	1.38	4.45	7.73	24.94	15.33	49.46
Total	13.35	43.07	4.17	13.45	13.47	43.46	30.99	99.98

questions and consistency of responses.

The first item asked the reason(s) for the individual's return to school. Job advancement was given as the primary reason by 16 subjects, with 5 of these including self-enrichment as an ancillary reason. Six returned in hopes of finding a new career, due to disabilities, feelings of stagnation, a desire to change careers, or unemployment. Financial factors, such as lower tuition than other colleges they had previously attended, V.A. benefits, or the Commonwealth's Project Concern (free tuition for the unemployed whose benefits have expired), were cited by 4 subjects. Intrinsic self-enrichment was the reason given by the remaining 3 subjects.

The second question, regarding negative or ambivalent feelings expressed by others, elicited responses from 12 subjects who said they had been exposed to such feelings. The remaining 24 men said they had received only positive feedback from others. Four of the 12 who had experienced negative or ambivalent reactions said that envy had played a major role. Two indicated this was especially true in regard to co-workers, who resented their acquiring an education and possibly rising to a level above their own, while the others emphasized envy in the family in one case

and among others in general in the other case. The remaining 8 subjects reported ambivalent or negative feelings expressed by: classmates (attributed to the age differential), sisters, older brother, wife, friends, college administrators, and, in one case, the subject himself expressed ambivalence.

Question three, concerning individuals supportive of the subject's return to school, elicited multiple answers from many subjects. The summary frequencies were: 15 respondents who mentioned family (mother, father, and/or siblings); 13 who mentioned wife; 10 who mentioned friends; 6, faculty; 3, an ex-wife; 2, co-workers; and 2 who mentioned self. These categories do not exactly match the categories obtained on the questionnaire, because this question was open, while the questionnaire provided specific alternatives from which to choose. However, for the purposes of comparisons, the interview data could be organized into the questionnaire categories.

Marital change since the return to school, which was question four, did not apply to the 13 subjects who were either single or living with someone. Eight men were separated or divorced, and, of these: 4 reported no change; 2 were ambiguous in their responses, with 1 adding that the return was not the real cause of the

divorce; 1 man mentioned the financial strain the return imposed on the marriage; and 1 subject, who is going to remarry his former wife, reported very positive feelings about his return. Of the married subjects, 6 reported no change in the relationship, while 4 mentioned a decrease in the time available to spend with the wife and children, and 2 men admitted there was more stress and financial strain. Finally 2 married subjects said their marriages had improved in general, and the remaining man stated that his family was better off financially.

No changes in other personal relationships since the return to school (question five) were reported by 20 subjects. However, 1 subject added that he did not have much time for his friends, and 1 mentioned that he had gained new friends at school. Negative changes were reported by 6 subjects, with the loss of friends due to time restrictions and feelings of envy among the friends cited as the primary problems. Positive changes were perceived by the remaining 10 subjects, but the nature of these changes varied: they outgrew their old friends, but found new ones at school; had a better relationship with mother or daughter; or made new friends in general. In each case the change was seen as for the better.

Question six, on perceived need for emotional
support and the importance of that support, resulted in
26 subjects indicating a definite need for support, with
2 of these additionally stating that self-support was
of major importance. Of this group, 18 subjects saw
support as being very important, with the remaining
8 reporting it as fairly important. Of the others,
8 said that they felt no need for support, and that it
was unimportant to them. Two other answers were given;
1 man saw support as being desired "no more than normal"
and the other said it was "appreciated, although not
needed."

Question seven asked each subject to elaborate on
his sources of support and to explain how important this
support was to him. Many of the subjects gave multiple
answers concerning sources of support: 12 responses
related to wives; 10 to parents; 6 to friends; 3 each to
lovers and to self; 2 each to faculty, relatives, and
"everyone in general"; and 1 to an ex-wife. Concerning
the degree to which their needs were being met, 29
subjects said they were being met, while 4 said they
were not, and 3 were undecided.

The inquiry specifically addressing support sources
in regard to their college progress also elicited
multiple responses. Faculty members, mentioned by 11

subjects, and wives, mentioned by 8, were most often perceived as primary sources of support concerning college. Responses also included: friends, cited by 5; self, by 4; family, by 2; girlfriend, by 2; and relatives, by 1 subject. Finally, 5 subjects stated that no one had been particularly supportive concerning college progress. The second part of this question dealt with perceived need for additional support. In response, 17 subjects stated that they needed support and would welcome it, while 19 indicated no need for additional support.

Table 22 contrasts the frequencies of responses to questions seven and eight, concerning sources of support. An analysis of the ranking of support sources in general, compared to the choices of support sources in regard to college progress, produced a nonsignificant correlation coefficient (Table 23).

Comparisons were also made between the expressed need for additional support in general and need for support in regard to college (Table 24). A McNemar test for related samples was done on expressed needs in these two areas (Table 25). The conditions were shown to be different at a $p < .003$ level of significance, with a proportionately larger number of people expressing a need for support in general and no

Table 22

Interview Data: Sources of Support in General and

Regarding College Progress

	Frequency of mentions	
Support Source	General support	College support
Spouse	12	8
Parents	10	4
Friends	6	5
Lover	3	2
Self	3	4
Faculty	2	11
Relatives	2	1
Everyone	2	0
Ex-wife	1	0
No one	0	5
Family	0	2

Table 23

Sources of General and College Support Ranked by

Frequency of Mention in Interview

| | Rank | |
Support Source	General Support	College Support
Spouse	1	2
Parents	2	5.5
Friends	3	3
Lover	5	8
Self	5	5.5
Other	5	4
Relatives	7	7
Faculty	7	1

Spearman rank correlation coefficient r_s = .51

Null hypothesis cannot be rejected

Table 24

Subjects Classified by Expressed Need for General

and College Support

Support area	Need for additional support		
	Need	No need	Undecided
General	5	28	3
College	17	19	0

Table 25

Relationship between Expressed Need for General and

for College Support

	General Support	
College Support	Need	No need
Need	13	3
No need	14	6

χ^2 = 9.09, with 1 df (McNemar test)

Null hypothesis rejected at p < .003 level of significance

need for college support, than expressed a need for
college support and no need for support in general.

In response to question nine, regarding the
potential helpfulness of a peer support group and
willingness to join such a group, 21 said that they
believed such a group would be very helpful to them.
Of these subjects, all except 2 indicated they would
join such a group. One subject was so enthusiastic
that he has initiated organization of a group through
student government. The ones who said they would be
unable to join cited time restrictions (job, family,
etc.) as the reason. Five subjects expressed ambivalent
attitudes, saying "maybe" or "maybe later on", and 8
definitely stated that they did not think it was a good
idea and that they would not join such a group. The
remaining 5 students were undecided about such a
program.

The answers to question ten, "Do you have anything
to add?", were multiple and diversified. Of the 36
subjects, 11 had nothing to add, and 8 reported
generally positive feelings, such as loving the school
or being glad to be back. Negative reactions from
faculty members were reported by 5 subjects. These
men referred to the faculty, in general, as being
nonsupportive of adult students, prejudiced against

older students, or unaware of the male adult student's needs. Time management and scheduling were concerns mentioned by 4 subjects, and 3 others said that the college was geared to 18-year-olds and not to the mature adult male. Poor guidance and advising were also mentioned by 3 individuals. The importance of self-support was stressed by 2 subjects. Finally, 1 subject reported that the faculty was very supportive.

Comparisons of Interview and Questionnaire Data

In general, the data from the interview and the questionnaire were quite consistent. This may be seen in regard to the sources of general support mentioned in the interview and the first-ranked sources of support on the questionnaire, from the data in Table 26. A Spearman rank correlation between the rankings of support sources on the two instruments reached the $p < .01$ level of significance ($r_s = .986$).

A similar comparison of support sources in the interview and a summary of all identified sources of support on the questionnaire produced a nonsignificant correlation coefficient of $r_s = .271$ (Table 27). Fewer choices of support sources were made on the interview, because the subject was allowed to answer freely, rather than being specifically asked for four people as on the

Table 26

Comparison of Support Sources in Interview and First-
ranked Support Sources on Questionnaire, by Frequency
and Ranking of Frequency

Support source	Interview: general support		Questionnaire: 1st-ranked support	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Spouse/lover	15	1	20	1
Parents	10	2	7	2
Friends	6	3	4	3
Other	5	4	3	4
Relatives/family	2	5.5	2	5
Faculty	2	5.5	0	6

Spearman rank correlation coeficient r_s = .9862

Null hypothesis rejected at the $p < .01$ level of sig-
nificance

Table 27

Comparison of Support Sources in Interview and All

Support Sources on Questionnaire, by Frequency and

Ranking of Frequency

Support source	Interview: general support		Questionnaire: 1st-ranked support	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Spouse/lover	15	1	26	3
Parents	10	2	25	4
Friends	6	3	33	1
Other	5	4	23	5
Relatives/family	2	5.5	29	2
Faculty	2	5.5	9	6

Spearman rank correlation coefficient r_s = .2714

Null hypothesis cannot be rejected

questionnaire. Since the interview data correlate highly with the choices of first-ranked support sources on the questionnaire, but correlate little with the summary of all choices on the questionnaire, for the purpose of further analysis the interview choices should probably be regarded as equivalent to the first-ranked choices on the questionnaire, rather than to all indicated choices.

The only significant relationship between the demographic variables and the interview data on support needs and sources was between employment status and expressed need for general support. As Table 28 shows, those subjects employed less than 20 hours a week were more likely to express a need for support than those who worked more than 20 hours. This association was significant at the $p < .005$ level. The percentage interpretation of the data (Table 29) shows that 44.29% of the chi-square value was due to the fact that only 1 out of 12 subjects working less than 20 hours reported no need for additional support.

Table 28

Employment Status and Expressed Need for General

Support

Need for general support

Hours employed

per week	Need		No need		Total	
	fo	fe	fo	fe	fo	fe
Less than 20	12	9.03	1	3.97	13	13.00
20 or more	13	15.97	10	7.02	23	22.99
Total	25	25.00	11	10.99	36	35.99

x^2 = 5.01 with 1 df

Null hypothesis rejected at $p < .005$ level of sig-

nifance

Note: fo= observed frequency; fe= expected frequency

Table 29

Data from Table 28: Chi-square Values and Percentage

of Total Chi-square for each Cell

Need for general support

Hrs employed per week	Need		No need		Total	
	χ^2	%	χ^2	%	χ^2	%
Under 20	0.98	19.47	2.22	44.29	3.20	63.76
20 or more	0.55	11.01	1.27	25.22	1.82	36.23
Total	1.53	30.48	3.49	69.51	5.02	99.99

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Subjects

The demographic profile of the subjects appears to
be quite similar to other studies of returning adult
students. In this study the age range was from 25 to
the middle 60's, with the typical subject being in his
late 20's. Smallwood's study (1980) of women over 25
found the largest group in the 26-30 range, and in
Reehling's study (1980) the women were 25 or older, with
the typical subject being in her 30's. Similarly, the
Aslanian and Brickell research (1980) on men and women
25 and older, found the majority in the 25-29 group.
Reehling (1980), Smallwood (1980), Kasworm (1980),
Rawlins (1979), and Aslanian and Brickell (1980) all
found that a majority of their subjects were married.
In this study a majority were, or had been, married, but
somewhat less than half were currently married. The
average number of children was also a little lower in
this study than was reported by Reehling (1980).

Reehling (1980) also found that almost half of her
subjects were employed, with most working over 30 hours
a week. The higher level of employment in this study

may be due to the fact that male subjects were used, because Johnson (1979) found that men were more likely to work as students than women, or it may simply reflect the particular student body, because a majority of students at this college are employed (according to a student profile prepared by the Office of Student Services in 1981).

The Kasworm study (1980) was similar to this study in reporting that the majority of the participants had upper division standing. This finding is logical, since many adult students have previous college experience.

Demographic similarities such as these indicate that findings from other studies, including those on women students, may be used in the interpretation of this study. They also support the idea that this sample, although small, is not seriously biased.

The majority of the subjects cited job advancement or career reasons as the major factor in their return to school. This is consistent with the research of Bielby (1980), who found most men returning to college did so in order to advance in their jobs or change careers, and of Aslanian and Brickell (1980) who reported 71% of men (and 42% of women) who engaged in learning experiences as adults did so as part of a career transition. This finding is also consistent

with the models of male adult development which maintain that men tend to emphasize achievement and career goals, rather than relationships, at least until middle adulthood (Levinson, 1978; Bocknek, 1980). Self-enrichment was mentioned by 8 students, indicating that it was important, but was not the primary reason for returning to school, as Lourie (1977) found it to be.

It is quite likely that males view job advancement as a major manifestation of personal growth. Several writers have emphasized the importance of the job to the male identity. Skovholt and Morgan (1981, p. 232) state, "For men, work and role identity are welded together." Brenton (1973) cites many studies showing loss of a job to be more devastating to men than to women, even if the economic loss is the same. He explains it on the basis that the breadwinning role occupies the central position in a man's life and masculine identity. Similarly, O'Neil (1981b, p. 205) proposes that one of the tenets of the masculine mystique is "Men's work and career success are measures of their masculinity." A less rigid version of this idea is offered in the statement by Skovholt and Morgan (1981, p. 231): "Career development themes lie at the core of the self-image and at the core of the evaluation others make of men."

Support Systems and the Return to School

On the questionnaire, only 3 subjects reported
having experienced any negative attitudes toward their
return to school from those people they considered to be
important sources of support. No one had experienced
any strongly negative reactions. Furthermore, the
importance of a person as a support was related to that
person's attitude toward the subject's schooling, with
first-ranked supports tending to be strongly positive
and fourth-ranked supports neutral. Thus, it appears
that those who are considered most important sources of
emotional support are also those most likely to
encourage the individual and express positive attitudes
about his goals and activities.

In the interview, 12 subjects, or one-third of the
sample, indicated they had experienced some ambivalence
or negative reactions from other people concerning their
return to school. Therefore, although a majority found
no opposition to their return, negative reactions are
common enough not to be considered exceptional or
unusual. One negative aspect mentioned in this regard
was the envy expressed by co-workers, family, or others.
While only 4 subjects mentioned envy on question two of
the interview, it acquired greater significance in light
of its consistent recurrence in later responses.

The individuals most commonly cited as supportive
of the subjects' return to school were those closest to
them, i.e. family (15), wife (13) and friends (10). All
but two subjects were able to mention at least one other
person as supportive; the remaining two cited themselves.
This suggests that a support relationship is perceived as
existing in the vast majority of cases, regardless of
whether the individual feels that it is needed and
desired or that it is inconsequential.

Parents, as well as the spouse, were frequently
mentioned as major supports, throughout the questionnaire
and interview. Naturally the parents play a major role
in one's life, due to their influence in childhood.
However, the growing influence of the peers in
adolescence, coupled with pressure to individuate from
the parents emotionally, may obscure their continuing
importance as primary model figures. This study shows
that adults are still, in most cases, attached
emotionally and cognitively to their parents, and
support from their parents is important to them.

Thirty-three of the subjects stated that they would
have returned to school, even without the encouragement
of others. This is in sharp contrast to the studies
done on adult female students, which emphasize the
importance of family support to reentry and attrition

(Hooper, 1979; Berkove, 1976; Brandenburg, 1974; Geisler and Thrush, 1975; Lewis, 1969; Mulligan, 1973; Roach, 1976). A possible explanation for the independence of support from the decision to return may be seen in the fact that career progress and career-related education are a part of the traditional male role, and that psychologically men, in our culture, are somewhat more likely to have an internal locus of control and to be less dependent on the support and approval of others (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). Another possible explanation is that since many of the subjects reported having strong support, they may have been unintentionally biased in their expectations of return without such support. Past situations often appear differently when one is presently in a positive frame of reference than when one is in a negative situation.

Over all, most of the married, divorced or separated subjects did not report that their marriages were affected negatively by their return to school. Ten married students said that no change had taken place, and one stated that his marriage had actually improved. As shown in Tables 16 and 17, the wife is a crucially important source of support to the married student in this study. Furthermore, the wife is usually perceived as strongly supportive toward the husband's return to

school. While all of the subjects who were contacted agreed to participate, thus reducing the possibility that only students whose wives were supportive would volunteer for such a study, there remains the possibility that men whose wives were not supportive may never have returned to school. If his college experience is part of a shared goal, as several writers suggest (Gilligan, 1982; O'Neil, 1981a; Morgan, 1981), it is to be expected that the marriage would remain stable or improve, as this study found. Marital improvement was also reported in the studies done on adult women by Katz (1976) and Ballmer and Cozby (1975).

Seven subjects who were divorced or separated maintained that the ex-wife had played no role in their return to school. The remaining subject in this category reported that his ex-wife had a positive role. It might be interesting to further explore divorces which occur before the return to school, compared to those which occur afterward, with regard to possible causal relationships (both predisposing and precipitating). With women, divorce, or the disintegration of a marriage prior to divorce, often seems to be the cause of the return to school. College is a means to become self-supporting, to form new friendships, to bolster self-esteem. For men, college might be a way to take the

mind off problems, to begin dating again, etc. It seems unlikely that the return to school would be a real cause of divorce in a healthy marriage. The subjects in this study apparently agree.

Problem Areas for Reentry Students

Seven men did indicate that changes occurred in the realm of financial strain and in restrictions on time available to spend with the wife and family. Certainly college imposes a financial drain on students, regardless of age or marital status. However, when one takes into consideration the student's adult status (and, therefore, the probability that the parents are not financing the schooling) and the financial responsibilities involved in being married, divorced or separated, it is obvious that these pressures are likely to intensify and become a real concern for these subjects. There may be a decrease in "family" money, the loss of money from a job given up for educational advancement, or other factors which contribute to the dilemmas of the adult male or female student.

That financial problems are a very real issue to adult students has been documented by Johns (1979) and many others (Association of American College, 1978; Judge, 1977; Corman, 1980; Donahue, 1982; Kirk, 1972).

As noted earlier, Johnson (1979) pointed out that many adult students, and men moreso than women, must work while pursuing their education, and Reehling (1980) found that almost half of her female subjects were employed, most of them over thirty hours per week. This is confirmed by the demographic data in this study which indicates that 75% of the subjects are employed and 66.7% of these (50% of the entire sample) are working full-time. While employment may relieve some of the financial pressure, it, in turn, produces other strains by its demands on time and energy.

The financial strain may also exert tremendous pressure psychologically on the student. This is particularly true if the man adheres to the so-called masculine mystique. This term refers to a complex set of values and beliefs which defines our society's traditional view of optimal masculinity. One of its basic premises maintains that men are superior to women and, therefore have the right to devalue and restrict women's values, roles and life styles. One aspect of the masculine mystique which O'Neil calls "Rule 9", specifically addresses a man's financial responsibilities; "Men are vastly different and superior to women in career abilities; therefore, men's primary role is that of breadwinner or economic provider, women's primary role

is that of caretaker of home and children" (O'Neil, 1981b, p. 205). Consider the additional psychological strain for the traditionally oriented man if his wife becomes the primary source of financial support as a result of his going back to school.

A corollary problem exists for returning adult females, with several studies reporting resistance, ambivalence and negativity in terms of financial and/or emotional support on the part of their husbands (Ryan, 1979; Matheson, 1982; Adickes and Worthman, 1976). The husbands reported feeling that the wives were wasting the family money, had less time for the family, or in some cases, that they were jealous of her attainments or felt threatened by her degree.

While time rationing is occasionally mentioned as a problem by married students (4 subjects), its importance can best be discerned by the pattern of responses which refer to time and scheduling as a difficulty encountered by the subjects. Time allocation problems were mentioned by 13 subjects at some point (4 in response to question four, 6 to question five, 4 to question nine, and 4 to question ten). Three of these subjects mentioned it on more than one question. In some cases time factors were primary concerns, and, in others, they were ancillary issues. In either case, the fact that

individuals chose to mention it in so many cases shows that this is an area of concern.

The fact that 36.1% of the subjects in this study found that time was a problem worth noting correlates well with a study by Lance et al (1979b), in which 39.3% of the adult males expressed interest in services to help with time management. Time rationing was also found to be important in several studies of adult female students (Rawlins, 1979; Cross, 1977; Hutchins, 1975). However, this study did not find the concern as pronounced as did Lourie (1977), who found it was listed as the single greatest problem. Again, to utilize the concept of male gender stereotypes, the male may feel that time is more his to do with as he sees fit, while the female may feel more responsibility to her husband, family, and homemaking roles. She may feel that her obligation is to be nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, regardless of her other commitments (Gilligan, 1982; O'Neil, 1981a; Morgan, 1981).

Twenty of the subjects reported no changes and 10 more reported positive changes in their other personal relationships as a result of their return to school. As with the married students' reliance on their wives, single students tended to rely on their girlfriends or parents, both of whom were generally perceived as

positive toward the person's return to school. However,
the 6 reports of negative changes in personal
relationships again indicated problems with time
allocation or with envy.

It may also be worth noting that, although married and
single subjects tended to rely on their wives or lovers
for support, none of the subjects who classified them-
selves as "living with someone" chose their lovers as
primary sources of support. This is a somewhat
perplexing finding. The result could simply have been
due to chance, since only three subjects were involved.
However, the fact that not one of these people living
with someone mentioned that someone as a source of support
on either the questionnaire or interview suggests a
legitimate need for further investigation exists. It
could be that "living with someone" connotes a
relationship which does not include being "in love"
or, at least, does not include being seriously
committed. In some cases the relationship may actually
provide only sexual gratification, with the ego support
limited to those areas and not entering other important
emotional areas. They may be ashamed of the
connotations and unwilling to admit to others, or, perhaps,
even themselves, that their lover means more to them.
They may be uncertain about the meaning and importance

of the relationship, due to denial, repression, or other emotional defenses, even though an observer might perceive a deep mutual commitment, or they may be uncertain of their partner's commitment and so be unwilling to risk asking for support which might be refused. It could be that they have successfully compartmentalized their thinking about support around parents or other "acceptable" support sources. It could even be that these men chose to live with someone, rather than marry, because they were unwilling or afraid to enter a mutually supportive relationship. In other words, the motives for these findings may be as varied as the motives for living with someone, and those motives might include: loneliness, fear of loneliness, sharing the rent, acting out against parents or former wives or girlfriends, housekeeping help, a homosexual relationship or reaction formation against homosexuality, or a long list of other psychological, sociological or practical factors. Additional variables are provided by the influence of age, intelligence, upbringing, and personality. The whole area of the emotional meaning of "living together" relationships needs further research.

Support Needs and Support Sources

The subjects showed a clear understanding of the concept of support systems and willingness to discuss their own needs for support. The responses in the interview and on the questionnaire were quite consistent. During the interview subjects were asked to discuss whether they felt a need for additional support in general, whether their support needs were being met, and whether they needed additional support in regard to their college progress.

A significant relationship was found between the designated sources of support and ranking of importance assigned to those support sources on the questionnaire, indicating a consistent selectivity on the part of the subjects. Wives, lovers, and parents were the most likely to be mentioned as primary sources of support, and they were also among the most mentioned sources on the various questions which elicited responses about support in general. Friends, who were also frequently mentioned, seem more likely to play a back-up role in the support system, rather than being chosen as the primary support. Children, who were less often mentioned, also played a secondary role. Co-workers, if they were mentioned, usually were assigned lower

rankings of importance.

Despite the consistency of choices between the first-ranked support sources on the questionnaire and the main sources of general support in the interview, the responses changed significantly when the subjects were asked about support in regard to college progress. In that situation, while spouse and friends remained important, faculty joined them as a major support source (24 of the responses involved those three, with faculty mentioned most frequently), and parents were relegated to only 4 mentions. Also, all students mentioned someone as support in general, but 5 were unable to nominate anyone for college related support.

Twenty-six subjects reported a need for additional support in general, however, 20 reported no need for additional support in regard to college progress. This suggests either that less emotional need is felt in the college setting or that those needs are being well met. The frequent mention of faculty as college support, in addition to those family members and friends who form the general support system, favors the latter interpretation. However, the five individuals unable to specify a source of support for college may indicate that the situation varies greatly among individuals.

These data suggest that the subjects distinguished

among the types of support given to them by different individuals and that they sought and/or received specific kinds of support from different sources. School sources, especially faculty, became the major providers of support in dealing with college. This is not surprising, since the faculty are presumably aware of the problems faced by students and experienced in helping them. Parents, spouses, and other general sources of emotional support may not fully understand or appreciate the particular pressures of student life (e.g. registration, term papers, prerequisites), or, even if they sympathize, they may be unable to provide the instrumental, practical assistance that teachers or fellow students can.

Those who did not report any sources of college related support may have actually not needed or desired support in regard to college, preferring, or at least able, to rely on their inner resources. One man stated that it was intrinsic; that he was his own support in college. Other possibilities lie in the realm of limited access to college support. If people tend to seek college support from campus sources, the person who may work full-time, or who may have a family and other responsibilities which restrict his time, and only comes to the college for classes doesn't have the chance to

get to know anyone and develop a support network. Similarly, a person may be shy or a "loner" and not solicit support outside the family.

The data also suggest that people clearly differentiate their support needs from one situation to another. About half of the people who reported no need for additional support in general still felt the need for support in college. Conversely, the majority of people who said they had no need for additional support in the college setting still reported a need for general support. Thus, as shown in Table 25, college support is perceived as a different condition than general support. This differentiation is also shown in the fact that that spouse/lover and parent were cited by the majority as sources of general support, but faculty and spouse/lover were the most mentioned sources of college support, as is discussed above.

All of the subjects who reported they had no need for support also said their needs were being met. However, 25% of these men still reported that they thought a peer support group would be helpful. One of these subjects stated, "Sure, I can use all the help I can get," and perhaps this statement was indicative of the feelings of the others. Most individuals have back-up support systems and this could be a request for another. All of those

reporting that their needs were not being met said that a peer support group was a good idea. Also, 50% of those who reported no need for additional support in regard to college progress favored the peer support group idea. Over all, the concept of a peer support group seems to attract not only those with perceived inadequate support, but also individuals whose needs for support were reported as being met: those who apparently feel no need for support, those who perceive their needs as being met, and those who do not report a need for support in regard to college progress. This suggests a high perceived need for and importance of peer support groups. It also may indicate that such groups are desired not only as back-up support systems, but also because they may serve a variety of other functions, e.g. sounding board, social group, an opportunity to meet people, or a chance to rap.

Need for support was not associated with any of the demographic factors except hours employed. Subjects who worked twenty or more hours per week (most of whom were employed full-time) reported significantly less need for support than those working less than twenty hours. One possible explanation would be that the former group are receiving additional support from their co-workers and others at work, which lessens their perceived need for support from other sources. Another possibility involves

intrinsic support. Skovholt and Morgan (1981) state,
"For men, occupational success equals high self-esteem"
(p.232), and later define high self-esteem as meaning
"...that a person has a positive attitude toward oneself.
high respect for oneself, low feelings of personal failure
and uselessness, and a belief that he or she is a person
of worth" (p236). It is possible that this high sense of
self-esteem would be found in a student who realizes he
is doing approximately twice as much work as the average
student, is paying for his own education, and is surviving.
One subject who disliked his job reported internal
support from the thought that he was going to quit it
after graduation in hopes of finding a better job. Another,
who liked his job, reported inner support from the fact
that he was eligible for promotion with the degree.
Another possibility is that the person who is "breaking
his back" to get through college will often get more sup-
port, solicited or not, from others than will the person
who is "just" going to school. The employment factor did
not influence need for college-related support to a
significant degree.

In response to the final general inquiry, "Anything
to add?", most subjects responded with nothing or with
general statements about positive aspects of the college.
However, 13 subjects presented complaints involving

faculty, guidance or advising. Four others brought up
problems with time allocation or envy from others. These
same concerns have also been found in several studies of
adult women students: faculty (Reehling, 1980), time
allocation (Rawlins, 1979; Lourie,1977; Lance et al,
1979a), guidance and advising (Ryan, 1978, 1979; Kirk,
1972; Redmond, 1977; Clark, 1975).

Appropriate Institutional Services

Before, during and after the formal questionnaire
and interview, many students expressed, directly or in-
directly, an attitude of appreciation that someone was
finally taking notice of their lot. This was especially
true when the researcher explained about the previous
research on females and resulting services which had been
developed, contrasted to the paucity of research done on
males. While the subjects generally had a positive
orientation toward school, they did have some problems
and complaints and were very interested in the possibility
of developing additional services for their needs. College
services and institutional adaptations to male adult
students were not the central focus of this study. However,
the results do support many of the recommendations for
institutional services made in earlier studies of adult

students, even though most of those studies were done on women.

Half of the subjects reported they were employed full-time, and time factors were a frequently mentioned area of concern. This suggests that the frequent recommendations for more flexible class scheduling and registration procedures, both in regard to time and location (Rawlins, 1979; Clark, 1975; Ryan, 1979), should be followed. For example, scheduling registration during lunch hours or evenings and in different off-campus locations might ease some of the pressures faced by students.

This study also reiterated the financial problems of adult students, both indirectly, through the number of subjects who found it necessary to work forty or more hours a week, and directly, through the comments of several students. Other researchers have emphasized providing financial aid information (Plotsky, 1976) or even using different criteria in awarding financial aid to returning adults (Rawlins, 1979). Certainly, any means to provide better access to financial aid for these students should be explored.

This study indicated that students tend to seek college-related support from college sources, with eleven subjects mentioning faculty as a major source of support. No other category of support source was mentioned as

often in this context. This suggests that anything which might facilitate access to college support sources would be valuable. One possibility would be improved orientation programs for adult students, including the opportunity to meet faculty and counselors and to learn about advising and counseling services. Another method which could be used to acquaint students with these people and services is a student handbook (Rawlins, 1979; Chitayet and Rael, 1975).

Thirteen students raised criticisms concerning faculty attitudes or advising and counseling services, and five of them specifically related these criticisms to a perceived failure by the college or by the particular faculty member to adjust to the adult male student. Some of these complaints may be unjustified. However, since the subjects were being tested by a faculty member at the college, it seems likely that complaints would be under-reported rather than over-reported. Also, most subjects, including most of those who mentioned complaints, were strongly positive about the college experience in general. Assuming, then, that the complaints are accurate, the information suggests that the college personnel need to be better informed about the needs of adult students and that counseling and advising services need improvement (perhaps for the traditional student as well as the returning adult).

The exact nature of such improvements would probably best be determined by students and college personnel working together. Rawlins (1979) has, in fact, suggested that each institution establish an ongoing task force to study the needs and problems facing these students and to make both long-term and short-term recommendations.

One of these recommendations might be greater involvement of the adult student's family. Two married students pointed out that their wives felt ostracized from the campus. The wives could not attend campus functions unless they were the guests of a student. Since the husbands were working much of the time, they were denied admittance to student functions. While the college's need to control access to student events is legitimate, the wives of older students are usually mature adults and could be allowed their own identification to attend functions, use the library, and so on. In recognition of the support they provide, it seems only appropriate to make them feel part of the college community. Also, the more experience they get with the college, the better able they may be to understand the problems of their student spouses and provide support. Finally, their involvement might provide an impetus for their own return to school.

Another recommendation, based on the results of this

study, would certainly be the formation of a peer support group for adult students. Twenty-one of the subjects said they thought such a group would be a good idea, and nineteen, over half the sample, said that they would join such a group. In addition to emotional support, a peer group can provide socialization and information and even serve as a voice for adult students in college affairs. Other studies, such as Lance et al (1979b), have also reported that adult students, both male and female, want contact with other older students, and several researchers have reported positively on peer groups run by re-entry students (Carter, 1978; Charland, 1978; Ryan, 1979). Although Clark (1975) expressed concern that such peer groups not interfere with assimilation into the college and the usual extracurricular activities, any possible drawbacks would seem to be outweighed by the potential value of the groups and the very real interest demonstrated by the men in this study. For that matter, the groups themselves may be a route to assimilation, and many of the usual extracurricular activities are not suited to the needs and interests of adult students. As a sidelight, it might be noted that one subject in this study, who had previously helped develop a successful peer support group at a community college, is now in the process of setting up such a group at Worcester State

College and has asked the researcher to serve as the faculty advisor.

Male and Female Differences

One of the main concerns of this research project was the exploration of differences between male and female students. The results appear equivocal. Many of the findings have previously been mentioned in this chapter, but it is worthwhile to summarize them for further consideration.

Previous research found that adult women students experienced time and financial pressures and worried about academic failure and social isolation (Johns, 1979; Rawlins, 1979; Caplan, 1976). They needed emotional support from their families and usually received it, with the husband serving as the major support for married women (Hooper, 1979; Smallwood, 1980). Despite some strains on the relationship, college was often associated with an improvement in the marriage (Ryan, 1979; Katz, 1976). There was a need for better counseling to improve self-confidence and goal setting, as well as to develop study habits and career planning (Fisher, 1977; Smallwood, 1980; Dillhunt, 1979; Hooper and Rice, 1979). Peer support groups were effective sources of support and advice, as well as

aiding assimilation into the college (Carter, 1978; Ryan, 1979; Lance et al, 1979a).

Studies of men suggested that they would enter college as part of a career decision and would experience less family stress, because this would be role-appropriate in our culture (Bielby, 1980; Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). Support was not expected to play as large a role for men, because most writers suggest that intimacy is de-emphasized among men (Gilligan, 1982; Levinson, 1978). Other studies indicated that men would avoid expressing such needs even if they did perceive them (David and Brannon, 1976; O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b). However, changing social norms might be creating new social and emotional patterns among men as well as producing new dilemmas for those caught between the old "macho" standards of masculinity and the new values of the Men's Movement (Lewis, 1981; O'Neil, 1981a; Collison, 1981; Scher, 1979; Doyle, 1983).

In a study of 583 reentering adult males and females, which focused on their needs for college services, Lance et al (1979b) suggested that the sex differences found in the data reflected the traditional stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, with men being less willing to acknowledge their emotional needs. However, the authors found that many men did express needs for

services, especially in academic, career and social
areas, indicating that the stereotypes may be changing
(Tavris, 1977) and/or that these areas of need may be
less threatening than personal/emotional areas.

It is important to note that the results of the
current study suggest that returning male students are
more like returning female students than they are unlike
them. The results support the idea that roles are
changing and that even personal/emotional areas may
no longer be so threatening.

Just as reported in the Aslanian and Brickell study
(1980), most of the men in this study returned to school
for career reasons. While in school, most of the
subjects continued to work, often full-time, while others
received various forms of financial aid. This means that
few had completely abandoned the "breadwinner" role in
order to return to college. Therefore, if that role is
important to a man's self-esteem and inner security,
returning to school would not have involved a loss in
those areas for most subjects. Some support for this
idea may be found in the fact that subjects working over
twenty hours a week expressed less need for support.
Like the women in other studies, the men in this one
did report financial and time pressure as problems.

Although acknowledging a need for support may not

fit the traditional male stereotype, the majority of men in this study said that support was important to them; half of the subjects said it was very important. Furthermore, most said that they could use more support in general, and almost half said they could use additional support in their college endeavors. This is quite different from what might be expected from the work of writers such as Jourard (1964) who have noted that disclosure of feelings and emotional needs is difficult for men, or from Gilligan's study (1982) which found that women seek close relationships, but men de-emphasize or avoid them. It appears that the "restrictive emotionality" of males (O'Neil, 1981) may be becoming less restrictive.

Most of the men in this study could list and rank four sources of support, differentiate between sources of general support and college support, and identify the attitudes of their support sources toward their return to college. This indicates an awareness concerning support and a willingness to talk about attitudes and emotions which conflict with the frequent suggestion that men avoid emotions, interpersonal communication, and intimacy (Scher, 1981; Canavan and Haskell, 1977; Gilligan, 1982).

Primary choices for support tended to be wives, lovers,

or parents. Traditional approaches would suggest that
these are the only intimate relationships permitted
within the restrictions of the male role and that this
intimacy, which Rubenstein and Shaver (1982, p. 26)
define as "a close personal relationship" characterized
by features such as openness, honesty, caring, helping,
and being mutually attentive and mutually committed,
allows the men to accept support from these people.
These same authors further found that when men were
asked, "...how they handled problems, worries or periods
of unhappiness, married men spoke most often about their
wives' support" (Rubenstein and Shaver, 1982, p. 26).
On the other hand, women students also tend to choose
their husbands as their primary source of support.
Regardless of role expectations, it seems natural that
people would turn to those with whom they are emotionally
closest, and with whom, incidentally, they spend the
greatest amount of time, for their major emotional
support. Also, the concept of role-permissible
relationships would not explain why the subjects turned
more to faculty for support in the college setting.
The other main finding about relationships was that,
like women in other studies, the men in this one
reported either no changes or some improvements in their
marriages as a consequence of their return to school.

The interest in forming peer support groups was high among the subjects of this study, as it was in previously mentioned studies of women. Lance et al (1979b) had also found that men were as interested as women in peer groups, especially for social purposes.

There were also some areas in which the men in this study differed from the women in other studies of adult students. Almost all the subjects in this study said they would have returned to school even without support, although research suggests that women are unlikely to return or remain without support. Since the men reported primarily positive reactions to their return to school, especially from their major sources of emotional support, it is impossible to determine whether these statements would have held true in the actual absence of support. However, the attitude expressed does fit with a more traditional masculine pattern which emphasizes self-reliance and independence.

An interest in better counseling and guidance services appeared in several interviews, but, in general, the men seemed more confident than the women portrayed in the literature. In many of the studies of adult women students (Porter, 1970; Caplan, 1976; Bicknell, 1975; Krings, 1976; Matheson, 1982) concerns were evident regarding lack of confidence, worries about

relating to younger students and initial fear of failure. This study elicited no such reports. That could indicate that the particular aspect of the masculine mystique which mainains that vulnerabilities are not to be acknowledged, or, at least, not to be communicated (O'Neil, 1981b; Morgan, 1981; Heppner, 1981; Lewis, 1981) was operating in this study. On the other hand, it could be indicative that the support received by the men in this study was an adequate elixir against such feelings. It could also indicate that the men, whether due to role training or other experiences, simply were more confident of their ability to handle the demands of college successfully.

In general, this study seems to support the findings of individuals such as Murray Scher (1981) and others (Doyle, 1983; Lance et al, 1979b; O'Neil, 1981b; Collison, 1981; Lewis, 1981) that recent changes in society have engendered possibilities for men to achieve a greater openness to new potentials. As a social movement (i.e. a series of social acts and events moving toward some definite goal), men's liberation has certainly made progress since its beginnings in the middle 1970's (Lewis, 1981). The rigid masculine mystique is crumbling, and eventually Scher (1981) suggests that the late 1970's

and early 1980's may be seen as the time when men broke from their gender role restrictions. This would fit with the way the subjects in this study seemed able to clearly address their need for support in an honest, straight-foreward manner, and to distinguish between primary and secondary support.

It is, of course, possible that the sample was some-how biased toward unusually open men or that the subjects gave answers they thought would be "correct" or would meet the researcher's expectations. However, the researcher does not believe this was the case. Subjects were contacted in a variety of ways and every subject contacted agreed to participate, reducing the likelihood of sample bias. Their willing involvement, often at some sacrifice to other commitments, was also an indication of the subjects' motivation and sincerity, as well as their need to discuss their problems (which was specifically articulated by several). They seemed to express positive attitudes and negative ones with equal ease, apparently treating the study as a means for them to communicate their happiness or frustration with other teachers, other students or the administration. Many also indicated a hope that the research would lead to eventual concrete changes. The subjects dealt with questions about their own needs and personal relationships

with the same apparent ease and openness displayed in their discussion of the college. Men who were graduating seniors or much older than the researcher answered in much the same way as underclass students or younger men who might have felt more intimidated or been concerned with the researcher's reaction; these demographic items did not show a significant association with any answer. Finally, the variation in answers relative to masculine role expectations suggests honesty. While on most items the subjects did not follow the stereotypic patterns, on others they did. This is the pattern one would expect if men are truly choosing psychological growth over the emotional restrictions assigned to males in the past.

C H A P T E R   V I

CONCLUSIONS

Research Design

In this study, 36 male undergraduate students at a
state college, all of whom were 25 years of age or older,
were individually interviewed concerning their perceived
need for and sources of support. Demographic data was
collected with a questionnaire, which also included items
asking the subjects to designate and rank their four main
sources of support and to indicate the attitude of each
toward the subject's return to school. A structured
interview then expanded on the latter two items and
collected additional information including: the subject's
perceived need for support in general and in the college
setting; his major sources of support, both in general
and in regard to college; his evaluation of whether his
support needs were being met; the influence of his
return to school on his marriage and/or other personal
relationships; his reaction to the idea of peer support
groups; and the reasons for his return to college.
Results were analyzed for associations among items and
discussed in the context of available data on adult
women students and in relation to material on changing

masculine roles in our society.

Conclusions

A majority of the men in this study agreed that they
needed emotional support in their lives and had a
clearly developed understanding of the support sources
available to them. They demonstrated selectivity in
their choices of support sources and the ability to rank
them in order of importance. Wives were overwhelmingly
chosen as the first-ranked support source by married men,
while lovers and parents were chosen by single men.
While the majority of the subjects were able to choose
and rank four categories of support sources from the
list provided on the questionnaire, most gave fewer
responses to the similar open question on the interview,
usually mentioning only those ranked first or second
on the questionnaire. This may indicate a
differentiation between primary and secondary support
sources. The primary general support source also tended
to be a person in an emotionally intimate relationship
with the subject; spouse, lover, or family member,
rather than a friend or co-worker. The continued
importance of parents as a support for these adult males
was interesting.

Most subjects reported desiring additional support,

but they tended to differentiate their general support
needs from their need for support in regard to college
progress. This was shown in several ways: more subjects
reported a need for general support than for college
support, a significant number reported needing only one
or the other, and faculty were selected as a support
source for college much more often than they were in
general. A person's support system may actually consist
of a number of overlapping systems, with many of the
support sources seen as relevant to one's needs only
in specific situations. Perhaps only the person's most
intimate relationships (e.g. in this study, the wife or
lover) are likely to provide multisituational support.

Questions arise as to how the person forms these
support systems and the degree to which adequate support
in one situation might compensate for inadequate support
in another. There is also the suggestion that support
systems are, at least for many, open-ended, because even
subjects who reported their needs were met sometimes
expressed the desire for additional support.

Although most students claimed they would have come
back to school even without support from those around
them, most did perceive their major support sources
(especially wives and parents) as positive toward their
return. Rarely did they perceive anyone as negative

toward their college endeavors, and, when they did, the
other person's attitude was often interpreted as envy.
Perhaps our society really is that positive toward an
adult's return to school. However, studies of women
indicate that support is important to their returning to
and staying in school, so perhaps those men who
experience strong negative reactions actually do not
return and so would not appear in a study of current
students.

It was interesting that the person tended to
perceive his highest ranked support sources as more
positive toward his return than his lower ranked support
sources, even though only four categories of support
were being considered, and it would have been
conceivable that the person would see all of these as
equally positive. This may be because the highest
ranked support source was most often the subject's wife
or lover, and, as part of their intimate relationship
with the subject, they are more likely to have a shared
commitment to goals than would be the case with friends
or other secondary supports. On the other hand, it is
possible that the subject projected his own wishes more
onto his closest supports, or that he had never even
considered how his secondary supports felt about his
return to college and so could not rate their attitudes

so strongly.

Most of the subjects in this study were employed, and half of them were working full-time. This is an even larger percentage than has been found in other studies of adult students, although most studies agree adult students are more likely to be employed than younger ones are. This commitment not only implies a degree of financial strain, but helps explain why a number of subjects reported time pressure as a problem (a frequent area of concern in the data on adult students).

Employment did seem to have some emotional benefits, with those subjects who worked over twenty hours a week reporting less need for additional emotional support than those who worked fewer hours. This effect may be due to the additional support system provided by the job, or working may build self-esteem and inner security through the financial rewards and the opportunities for success and recognition.

The majority of subjects had returned to college for career reasons and felt positively about the school and their programs. However, the majority did see a peer support group as being desirable, even in cases where the person felt his support needs were being met. As one student said, "You can never get enough." Such

peer groups can also serve other purposes such as information and socialization. The high interest among these students parallels the findings of other studies on both male and female adult students.

Most of the subjects were young adults (under 35), married or divorced, and involved in some kind of career transition. This is similar to the profile of adult women students formed by extensive research over the last twenty years and suggests that the learning characteristics and personal/social needs of the male adult undergraduate may also be similar. Additional evidence of these similarities has been noted elsewhere. These findings also imply that, despite the growing population of adult students, our colleges are still primarily for the young. People in middle or late adulthood, who are adjusting to widowhood, retirement, or disability, or who are looking for learning unrelated to careers, or who are starting new careers after achieving their goals in a previous one, may have different needs. If the concept of life-long learning becomes more popular and larger numbers of these people are attracted to the colleges, we will need to make more adjustments in our college programs than we have made for the present adult population.

Implications of this study for current institutional

services lie mainly in the area of facilitating access to support on campus. As noted earlier, the subjects differentiated their college support needs from their general needs, tended to turn to campus sources (primarily faculty) for that support, and were very interested in the possibility of a peer support group. A sizable number of subjects also complained about negative reactions to adult students from faculty or administrators and a failure on the part of the college to adapt to their needs.

Informing and sensitizing college personnel concerning this population and increasing opportunities for the students to interact with faculty, counselors, and other adult students (through orientation and advising programs, specialized workshops, social groups, etc.) seem appropriate priorities, especially since the adult student population is expected to grow. The primary importance of career factors as the motivation for the return to school also suggests that increased career related services would be desirable for these students. Such services might include career development programs, workshops in job hunting and related skills, and internship opportunities.

Some of the results of this study fit the pattern which would be expected on the basis of traditional male

role: men returned to school for career reasons; they
continued to work while in school; they claimed they
would have returned to school even without support; and
married men depended on their wives for their major
support. However, most of the results suggest that male
adult students are very similar to female adult students,
and that men (or, at least, the men in this study) are
moving away from the restrictions of the traditional
gender roles. The subjects not only understood the
concept of support, but they freely described their own
needs for support. They were aware of their support
sources, often displaying a great deal of insight into
the organization of their support systems and the ways
these fit their needs. The men were willing, and often
eager, to discuss both school and personal problems and
did not seem to be threatened by an acknowledgement of
weakness or emotional need.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. The sample was
relatively small (N = 36) due to the restrictions
mentioned in Chapter Three. The subjects were drawn
exclusively from a state college in central New England.
However, the sample does represent a sizable number when
one considers the relatively small (although growing)

number of male adults returning to school.

To the extent that comparisons could be made, the characteristics of the sample fit the characteristics of male adult subjects in studies in other parts of the country. All of the subjects were volunteers, but no one contacted by the researcher refused to participate, which may reduce any biasing factor inherent in the use of volunteers. Although this form of research is dependent on the subject's willingness to discuss topics honestly, the subjects showed no hesitations or refusals and were quite consistent in their responses, both within each interview and between subjects. More research is certainly needed on larger populations, not only on the nature of men's support systems, but also on some questions arising from this study.

Implications for Future Research

There is a definite need for further research on both male and female returning students, although, at the present time, the need appears even greater for research on males. The results of this study indicate that the situational differentiation of support needs and support systems deserves further investigation on both theoretical and research levels. Such exploration would, of course, not have to be limited to student

populations, although support needs in the college
setting would provide a large field of study by itself.
Among the topics which need further research are:
perceived need for support and self-reliance; perceived
need for support at the time of reentry and at later
periods; differences between perceptions of support by
traditional age students and by adult students;
differences in perceived need for support among students
at community colleges and private schools; perceived
needs and sources of support for widowed individuals;
and the support role played by the partner when "living
with someone".

The extensive deviation of the subjects in this
study away from the stereotypic masculine patterns
(e.g. their willingness to admit support needs, their
desire for peer support) suggests a need for ongoing
research on the changing role of men in our society and
the implications this has for self-concept and personal
relationships. Again, this field is not limited to
student populations. It would also be interesting to
further explore the finding that full-time employed
students tended to report less need for support than
others did; both to try to find the explanation of the
result, and to determine whether the same results
would occur with a female population. Sex role

perceptions and the relationship of one's own sex role expectations to perceived need for support and the ability to meet these needs could also be explored.

Finally, if an adult peer support group were established, and if the college implemented the suggestions presented in this paper, certainly research into the effect upon the students would be in order.

While a single study of 36 male adult students cannot compensate for the paucity of research in this field (a lack which is particularly striking in view of the great amount of work done on adult women students), hopefully it will provide the impetus for further exploration. Even the finding that men are so similar to women in their needs for support is worthy of further study, because of the implicit suggestion of the radical ways male sex role expectations have changed. This dissertation is only a first look into a rapidly enlarging field.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Age_____

Age when you returned to college____ Years out of school

before return_____

Marital status: Single___; Married___; Divorced/separated

___; Widowed___; Living with someone___;

Number of children____   Number of children living with

you___

Employed: Yes___ No___   If yes, hours employed per week___

Are you in a degree program? Yes___ No___ Major_____

Present level in school: Freshman___; Sophomore___;

Junior___ ; Senior___;

Pick the four people from the following list who are most

important to you as sources of emotional support. Rank the

most important person as number one, the second number two

and so on. If fewer than four categories of people form

your support system, rank only as many as appropriate.

___wife or lover   ___parents

___children   ___other family members

___co-workers   ___faculty

___friends in school   ___other (specify)

___other friends

For the four categories of people chosen above, rate the attitude of each toward your return to school.

	strongly positive	positive	neutral	negative	strongly negative
wife or lover					
children					
co-workers					
school friends					
other friends					
parents					
other family					
faculty					
other (specify)					

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you return to college?

2. (REFER TO QUESTIONNAIRE PART II)

   Have you experienced negative or ambivalent attitudes toward your return to school from other people? From whom?

   OR

   I notice some people were negative or ambivalent about your return to school. How did this affect you?

   > PROBE: Would strong opposition from your family or friends have kept you from returning, or lead you to quit school?

3. (REFER TO QUESTIONNAIRE PART II)

   Has anyone been strongly encouraging about your return to school? Who?

   OR

   I notice some people strongly favored your return. How did this influence you?

   > PROBE: Would you have returned without this support?

4. (IF MARRIED)

   Has your marriage changed since your return to school? If so, how?

5. Have any of your (other) personal relationships

changed since your return to school? If so, how?

    PROBE: Friends, work.

6. In general, do you feel much need for emotional support or encouragement from people around you? How important is this kind of support to you?

7. You list _____(SEE QUESTIONNAIRE PART II) as your major sources of support. Would you like to explain a little more as to why you selected those names?

    a. In general, how well do you feel your needs for emotional support are being met?

8. Specifically, in regard to your college progress and problems, who are your major sources of support, help and encouragement?

    a. Do you feel the need for additional support?

9. Would support groups of other adult students have been helpful to you in making the adjustment to college?

    a. Would you have joined such a group?

    b. Would a group like this be helpful to you now?

10. Is there anything that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C

ORIGINAL FORM OF INSTRUMENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE PART I

Name_____ Age_____

Age when you returned to college_____

Years out of school prior to returning_____

Marital status: Single___; Married___; Divorced/separated

___; Widowed___; Living with someone___

Number of children___

Employed Yes___ No___

   If yes: Hours per week____

             Same job held before return to school? _____

             Similar job planned after graduation?_____

Are you in a degree program?_____

Present level in school_____

Major field of study_____

Average course load per semester (credit hours)_____

Rate each of the following areas as a source of concern to you, using the following scale: 1 – a major source of concern; 2 – an area of average concern; 3 – a minor source of concern; 4 – an area of no concern; NA – not applicable to you.

	1	2	3	4	NA
1. coordinating job with studies					
2. how to study efficiently					
3. what courses to take					
4. ability to succeed in college					
5. getting a job after graduation					
6. time management					
7. relationship with wife/lover					
8. needing to be more assertive					
9. relationship with children					
10. coordinating child care with studies					
11. equal treatment by faculty					
12. relationships with male friends					
13. relationships with female friends					
14. relationships with parents					
15. relationships with co-workers					
16. feeling uncomfortable with younger students					
17. finances					
18. other (specify)					

QUESTIONNAIRE PART II

Check each of the following who you would consider a major source of support in your life:

_____ wife or lover

_____ children

_____ co-workers

_____ friends in school

_____ other friends

_____ parents

_____ other family members

_____ faculty

_____ other (specify)

Rank the people checked above according to their importance to you as sources of support; rate the most important as number one.

What was the attitude of each of the following toward to your return to school?

	strongly positive	positive	ambivalent	negative	strongly negative
wife or lover					
children					
co-workers					
school friends					
other friends					
parents					
other family					
parents					
other family					
faculty					
other (as above)					

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you return to college?

2. In regard to the sources of concern which you listed; would you care to elaborate or expand on any of them?

3. (REFER TO QUESTIONNAIRE PART II)

   Have you experienced negative or ambivalent attitudes toward your return to school from other people? From whom?

   <u>OR</u>

   I notice some people were negative or ambivalent about your return to school. How did this affect you?

   > PROBE: Would strong opposition from your family or friends have kept you from returning, or lead you to quit school?

4. (REFER TO QUESTIONNAIRE PART II)

   Has anyone been strongly encouraging about your return to school? Who?

   <u>OR</u>

   I noticed some people strongly favored your return. How did this influence you?

   > PROBE: Would you have returned without this support?

5. (IF MARRIED)

Has your marriage changed since your return to
school? If so, how?

6. Have any of your (other) personal relationships chang-
ed since your return to school? If so, how? PROBE:
friends, work.

7. In general, do you feel much need for emotional
support or encouragement from people around you? How
important is this kind of support to you?

8. You list _____(SEE QUESTIONNAIRE PART II) as
your major sources of support. Would you like to
explain a little more about why you selected those
people?

   a. In general, how well do you feel your needs for
      emotional support are being met?

9. Specifically, in regard to your college progress and
problems, who are your major sources of support, help
and encouragement?

   a. Do you feel the need for additional support?

10. Would support groups of other adult students have been
helpful to you in making the adjustment to college?

   a. Would you have joined such a group?

   b. Would a group like this be helpful to you now?

11. Would you care to evaluate the questionnaire and the
interview questions. I would appreciate your thoughts

on this matter.

    a. Were the items clear and understandable?

    b. Were there any questions or areas which I might have added or deleted?

    c. Are there any other suggestions or changes which could be made to improve either the questionnaire or the interview?