


1999

A study of the motives, barriers, and enablers affecting participation in adult distance education classes in an Iowa community college

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University of Northern Iowa

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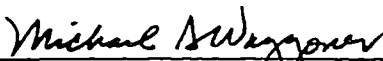
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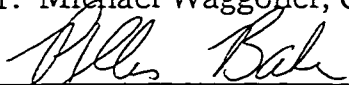
A STUDY OF THE MOTIVES, BARRIERS, AND ENABLERS AFFECTING
PARTICIPATION IN ADULT DISTANCE EDUCATION CLASSES IN
AN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved:



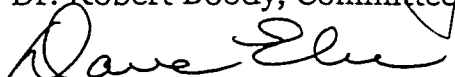
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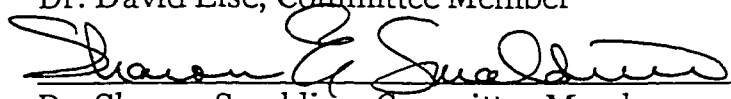
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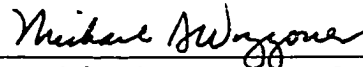
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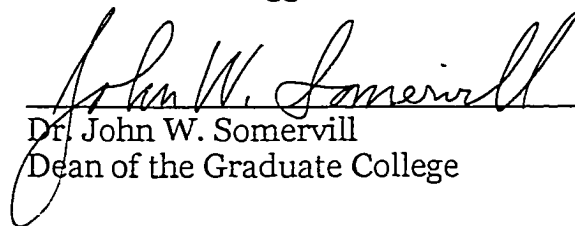
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Approved:



Dr. Michael Waggoner, Committee Chair



Dr. John W. Somervill
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May 1999

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the motives, barriers, and enablers that affect adult students in their decision to enroll in community college distance learning credit classes.

Three methodologies were used in the study: an online focus group of distance learning and adult education experts, enlisted to identify the main issues and questions that would be used in interviews with distance students; a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 210 distance students to determine motives, demographic information, and to act as a screening device for the interviews; in-depth interviews with 23 community college distance learners in northeast Iowa, to probe their motives, barriers, and other factors that might have contributed to their decision to enroll.

Approximately 74% of the distance students were female, and 68% had taken distance courses in at least two different formats.

The interviews showed that many factors contributed to most students' decision to enroll. The overriding motive for most was the opportunity to attain a degree and/or improve their career through a degree, and to accomplish this by minimizing the impact on their work and family life through distance education. For some, their previous working environment was a part of their decision. Some reported trigger experiences.

Reported barriers to their enrollment included lack of money, not enough time, forgot how to study, seemed too difficult, thought they were too old, and

others to a lesser degree. Some barriers were experienced more by younger students, other barriers more by older students. Certain enablers seemed to counter specific barriers.

Financial aid and proximity of a college center were factors that enabled many of these students to enroll. Another factor was support and encouragement from a friend or spouse which sometimes helped them overcome discouragement from another individual. For some, a strong sense of determination or resiliency was evident.

Approximately 74% indicated an interest in taking online courses in the future. Almost half of the students preferred having both time and place independency for distance courses. A theoretical construct of the path to distance education is presented.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother and father, neither of whom had more than an eighth grade education. Yet their years of nurturing and the value they placed on education helped instill in their children a sense of the importance of knowledge. For this, I will always be grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heartfelt appreciation is extended to my committee chair, Dr. Mike Waggoner, who worked diligently with me, offered definitive guidance, and encouraged me throughout the long process. Also my appreciation goes to my committee for their hard work and contributions, critiques and suggestions: Drs. Phyllis Baker, Rob Boody, Dave Else, and Sharon Smaldino.

This project would also have not been possible without the support and cooperation of Dr. Tom Sabotta and Wendell Maakestad at Kirkwood Community College, and the directors of the Kirkwood Learning Centers, who helped arrange all of the interviews. I also appreciate the support during this project from Bob Chittenden for library and microform help.

I am especially grateful for the help and scholarly contributions from the members of the online focus group: Dave Bunting, Dr. Sean Courtney, Jacques Du Bois, Dr. Ellen Kabat, Wayne Prophet, Sylvia Scinta, and finally, Dr. Pam MacBrayne, who not only contributed to the focus group, but whose doctoral research helped create a foundation for this project.

In addition, I am very grateful for financial support from Hawkeye Community College, the John J. Kammerick Fellowship from the University of Northern Iowa, and the Iowa Distance Education Alliance (IDEA) Research grant that I received.

And finally, my gratitude to my wife Karen and my two children, Heath and Jennifer for putting up with me for these long years of study and research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Why do adults choose to learn at a distance? Why do adults choose to learn in the first place? And then, what part in that decision does the distance learning environment play? Are there other factors that also contribute to a person's decision to pursue education at a distance? These questions have been posed in various forums and studies, and a foundation to the answers to these questions has been laid in the area of adult education.

Education for the adult learner is a leisure activity, according to Sean Courtney (1992). That is to say, it is just one of the activities that some adults pursue in their leisure time. An individual chooses to fit the learning experience into their day along with the variety of other activities, such as resting, eating, satisfying personal needs, recreating and so on. In this sense, fulfilling an educational interest competes with other leisure activities, and requires time that is left over after an adult takes care of the other necessary parts of his/her life.

It is a significant choice that an adult must make when deciding to participate in an educational program. It may very well be a life changing experience for the adult learner. It may result in attaining a new job or a new career. It may also be for the sheer enjoyment of learning, or for the pursuit of an intellectual interest. For whatever purpose or end the student is seeking, the courses, culminating for some in a degree, is the result of a conscious and

concerted effort, that may span many months and probably years of work. So, what motivates individuals to seek a degree? And is it really a simple choice that they make or are there other factors involved that act to prevent or at least discourage the individual from their pursuit?

For many, following high school graduation, that decision is easy. Typical high school graduating classes see about 62% of the class attend college right out of high school, but only 28% complete at least two years of college (U.S. Census Bureau, 1994). The potential market of the community colleges and universities in this country are the 72% of the population who do not have at least a two year college degree. But the motives and other factors contributing to their enrollment are complex.

Considerable research exists on the motives expressed and experienced by adult learners concerning their reentry into education at the postsecondary level. Studies dating back to the early part of the twentieth century have attempted to identify who are the adult learners (Courtney, 1992). But more important research in the latter half of the century began to delve not only into who, but why people pursued education as adults. One of the landmark studies, and perhaps the transitional research into this important question, was Cyril Houle's (1961) study of motivational orientations of adult learners. Following in-depth interviews with students, Houle postulated that there were three primary orientations for adult learners: *goal orientation, activity orientation, and learner orientation.*

Numerous follow-up studies during the past four decades in all parts of the world and among a wide range of career areas have mostly confirmed these motivational orientations, and sometimes have expanded on them. Some studies have explored motives of particular groups of individuals, clustered within certain careers, or among those in certain age groups. And some studies have affirmed the premise that many individuals have two or more orientations and that a more complex typology of motives may exist (Boshier & Collins 1985; Clayton & Smith, 1987).

Another complexity of the motives of enrollment includes those factors that result in encouragement to individuals to enroll. Commonly referred to as facilitators or enablers, these factors include such elements as marketing efforts, providing child care, financial aid (including scholarships, loans, work study, etc.), and improved access through distance education (MacBrayne, 1993).

Barriers also enter into the decision. These factors tend to deter enrollment, and are most prominent among individuals in lower socioeconomic groups (Reissman, 1962). But for many adults, as the early working years progress, it becomes more difficult to enter the institutions of higher learning if they have never done so before. Age, lack of self confidence, lack of peer support, travel requirements and lack of time become prominent barriers to adults interested in attending college (Cross, 1981).

Many colleges, both in Iowa and across the United States, have begun offering courses that utilize distance learning technologies, that is, instruction

that is delivered very near and even into the student's home. Distance education usually utilizes a form of technology that brings the instructor and/or the instruction to the student, instead of the student going to the instruction. These efforts attempt to defeat a barrier that exists for many who might be interested in enrolling, but cannot--that of living too far from a college campus or not having the time to travel to a campus.

Usually, this distance education experience is in a non-threatening environment of small size groups, and at a time of the day that is meant to be convenient to the adult student. An instructor teaches the class over a television, teleconferencing, audio bridge, or a satellite system that allows students to participate with microphones just like a regular class. On the other hand, some distance courses include asynchronous instruction where the instructor is not even electronically present when the student is learning. Correspondence courses, telecourses, and web-based instruction are examples of asynchronous courses.

Many community colleges, universities, and even technical schools expanded their distance delivery of instruction during the 1990s to help meet the needs of adult students who could not attend classes on a traditional campus (Public Broadcasting Service, 1998). But little research has existed to help guide these institutions to adequately respond to the needs and motivations of these students, particularly those at the community college level. For example, colleges frequently refer to the "non-traditional" student, persons over age 23, but might

not necessarily market to or treat these students any differently than the 19 and 20 year old students who attend classes on campus. One reason for this is that the young adult who is fresh out of high school has been, for many colleges, the primary attendee of the community college. Also, several studies have shown that over 70% of distance learners are women (Brown, 1986; MacBrayne, 1993; Rasmussen, 1992), and yet, many community colleges do not usually consider this to be a significant fact in their approach to distance teaching. Whether or not it is important will be one area of investigation in this study.

Distance learning and facilitating factors or enablers are meant to encourage the potential college student to enroll and hopefully succeed in their educational endeavor. But the reasons that students do enroll or do not enroll, even when a distance learning opportunity is available, is somewhat of a mystery to many colleges. The research into participation patterns in adult education and especially in distance education are limited. Several dissertations have explored this area of inquiry, but only one took into account barriers and enablers in addition to motives (MacBrayne, 1993). And few studies to date have considered whether technology plays a role in a student's decision to enroll.

This study will attempt to investigate what factors and circumstances influence the adult learner prior to making that decision to enroll in a formal course of study offered through distance learning. In short, the study will explore that which attracts, deters, motivates, and compels a student to enroll in a

community college distance education program, and whether age, gender, and technology are factors in that decision.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be considered is that it is not known what specific motives and other factors lead adult learners at the community college level to enroll in distance education credit courses.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine what motives, what barriers, and what enablers are present when adult learners at the community college level in Iowa enroll in distance education credit courses. It is the further purpose of this study to determine whether these participation factors vary with the type or format of the distance education course.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to investigate two significant areas: that of adult distance education and that of motives and factors affecting participation or enrollment in adult distance education.

Distance education has become an increasingly prominent field of investigation in recent years due to the number of individuals of all ages who are beginning to take courses through existing and emerging distance learning technologies (Public Broadcasting Service, 1998). With the onset of digital communications, there will be even more distance education opportunities in the future through live interactive television systems carried over fiber optics as well

as video conferencing and courses taught over the Internet through a modem in one's home. It is possible that by the year 2000, "only half of the students enrolled in higher education will fit the 'traditional' profile of the 18-22 year old . . . that most postsecondary institutions were designed to serve" (MacBrayne, 1993, p. 119).

What is known at this time establishes distance education as a viable and effective means of learning, and one that provides far greater convenience in terms of attendance to many adult learners than traditional on-campus courses (MacBrayne, 1993; Rasmussen, 1992). Also, for colleges and universities, distance education appears to be a cost effective means of delivering courses to a geographic area beyond their regular campus (Jones, Simonson, Kemis, & Sorensen, 1992).

So, why do students enroll in college in the first place? In adult education research, studies dating back to the 1930s have uncovered evidence that educational experience is a prime factor in adults enrolling in continuing education courses. The more education one has, the more inclined one is to enroll in a course of study (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965). However, such factors as previous education, account for only 10% of the variance in adult education participation (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979).

Students often enroll in college programs based on their interest, needs (both intrinsic and pragmatic), motivational orientations, and certain other factors which tend to encourage or enable the enrollment to take place (Cross,

1981). Coldeway (1991) concluded that “learner motivation was a somewhat fragile thing” (p. 8). For some students, any perceived advantages that distance education might provide them appear to be outweighed by various barriers and circumstances that hinder or prevent them from enrolling.

Despite the fact that adult learning will be one of the most important vehicles for job preparation and retraining in the new global information economy of the immediate future (Heilemann, 1996), relatively little is known about what motives are present in adult learners who enter distance learning environments, and what other factors influence them either to enroll or not to enroll. MacBrayne (1993) writes:

What motivates rural adults to participate . . . in distance education is complex. It was essential to understand their overarching goals in the context of their life circumstances, but to obtain a comprehensive answer, it was also necessary to probe beyond the surface reasons and listen carefully to discover the students’ underlying motivations to enroll, to understand the barriers to previous enrollment and the facilitators that were necessary to overcome those barriers. (p. 111)

The reasons that students enroll or participate in distance learning courses have not been adequately investigated. Research on this topic has been cited as an important need by distance educators (Brock, 1990; MacBrayne, 1993). And because of the significant cost of constructing and maintaining the technology for most distance education programs, community colleges and universities are asking some very important questions. Who are the distance learning students? What moves them to select a distance course over a traditional on-campus course? And, why do adult learners choose a certain type of distance learning approach when other approaches might also be available? In essence, the

questions become who is the audience and why do they or do they not participate? These questions are critical to the instructors' understanding of their students and the effective marketing of college distance learning courses. Answers to these questions can ultimately help colleges reach the right students with the right courses and programs at the right times, through the right delivery mechanism for the benefit of all, and to provide better support to them once they do enroll.

Research Questions

1. What motives for participation are present among college students who enroll in distance education courses?
2. What barriers are perceived to exist for students who enroll in distance education courses?
3. What enablers or encouragement factors are perceived by distance education students to exist?
4. Are motives, perceived barriers and enablers the same for students who participate in various kinds of distance education formats, i.e., interactive television, telecourses, web courses?
5. Is age or gender a factor in participation in distance education?
6. Does previous use of technology or a prior experience in a distance education course change the reported anxiety of participation for a distance learning student?

Limitations

This study is limited to investigating motives and factors affecting participation in credit courses at Iowa community colleges. It does not attempt to explore the element of instructional effectiveness, which has been demonstrated numerous times and will be briefly summarized in the review of the literature.

The study is also limited by the population that was involved in the research. For example, northeast Iowa is considered a rural area. Although the study area includes a city of approximately 150,000 people, many of the communities in which the subjects of this study resided have populations of less than 1,000. In addition, the study population has a small proportion of minority students, approximately 7% (Sabotta, 1998a). Iowa also has a very high literacy rate among its adult population. Because of these demographic factors, the results of this study may not apply to other communities and areas of the country where demographics are considerably different.

There were also only a small number of distance learning students participating in online courses. Therefore a comparison with or application of data to other delivery systems, such as interactive television, or telecourses might not be fruitful.

Assumptions and Biases

Assumptions

At least some of the reasons for participation of associate degree students will be different from reasons for participation of graduate students, and will be different from participation factors of traditional on-campus community college students. Generalizations of the findings to all levels of higher education may not be appropriate.

The findings and procedures of this study could be used as a model of research for further study of motives and factors of participation in distance learning programs.

Biases

In any qualitative study, it is reasonable to anticipate a certain amount of researcher bias. The fact that my background is in distance learning predisposes me to be an advocate of the distance learning environment and its technological systems. It would also be in my self interest to be complimentary of any system or group that could potentially be a partner or collaborator with the telecommunications system with which I work at another community college in northeast Iowa. To counter these potential biases, the community college district that served as host for the study was chosen on the basis of the maturity of its system, i.e., more than 10 years, and the wide range of distance courses that it offers its students. The interviews were not meant so much to evaluate the success of their program nor its effectiveness, as much as to understand student

motives and other factors that led to their enrollment. In this way, tendencies toward researcher bias would be minimized.

Definitions

Adult education: the purposeful pursuit of organized learning by an individual beyond compulsory age; this might include instruction in credit or non credit formal courses, vocational training, or professional development to upgrade job skills.

Asynchronous learning: learning that takes place as a result of the delivery or transmission of the course content in a non-live format, such as a taped presentation (telecourse) or electronic communication (online course) that can be viewed at a different time from when it is sent.

Correspondence study or guided correspondence study: a course of study that primarily uses print material to communicate course content to the student. Most often, materials are mailed back and forth between the student and instructor. Successful completion of the program often culminates in a degree, diploma or certificate being conferred.

Distance education: the transposition of information and the involvement of a learner in the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of an area of study through planned, usually structured, and organized (but also incidental) communication, that also uses supplemental resources and media-assisted two way communication, where the learner and instructor are separated by distance and/or time.

Distance learning: the process of distance education with emphasis on the experiences of the student.

Distance teaching: the process of distance education with emphasis on the experiences of the instructor.

Listserve: a form of electronic communication that normally uses email, and allows individuals to send to and receive messages from everyone who is subscribed to the specific listserve group. Messages sent by an individual to the listserve server over the Internet, are then sent or posted automatically to all members of that listserve.

Non-traditional student: a student who is over the age of 23.

Online course: a course that is taught primarily by using the Internet, World Wide Web, email, and other computer based systems for communication for both course content and participant discussions (live chat or asynchronous comments), as well as general communication between and among the students and the instructor. A modem is normally used by the student to connect to the Internet or World Wide Web to acquire the course content, other resource information, and for communicating with the instructor and other students.

Synchronous learning: learning that takes place as a result of instruction that is provided or delivered by the instructor at the same time that the student is receiving the instruction.

Technology: the sum total of the hardware, cabling, electronics and networking involved in a scientific system constructed and functioning for a specific purpose.

Telecourse: a series of instructional programs in a video format that collectively make up a single course that is made available to students through prerecorded television broadcasts or a series of video taped lessons that can be viewed by students independently of the instructor's or other students' participation.

Teleweb course: a course that primarily uses both video-based as well as web-based material for the instruction.

Video conferencing: a conference or meeting held between two or more individuals that uses electronic components, video camera, and microphone(s) at each site for communication and either the Internet, fiber optics, or direct phone line in order for those involved to view camera and graphic images and sound.

Web course: used synonymously with online course, but indicating that the communication makes use of the World Wide Web.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Context of Participation Research

A study of the motives and factors related to enrollment in college level distance education courses must first build upon the research that has been conducted in adult education in general. Much of this research occurred during the early and middle part of the twentieth century and concerned itself with the question of *who* the adult learner was. Participation research in adult education (PAE) evolved during the latter half of the century into questions concerning the *why* of adult education. But only in recent years has attention been drawn to the emergence of distance education, at the same time that the advancement of new technologies have enhanced and simplified electronic communication and the transfer of data around the world in seconds. As distance learners become more prominent partakers of adult education, particularly with associate degrees and new careers at stake, the importance of motives of participation of distance learners becomes increasingly significant.

This chapter will first review studies that have been conducted in the area of participation research in adult education in general. The next section will deal with the role played by community colleges in adult and distance education. The third section will include a review of information about distance education in general. The final section in this chapter will consider several studies that have explored factors of participation in distance education programs themselves.

Participation Research in Adult Education

There has been a great deal of research in the area of participation in adult education. In this study, *adult education* is defined as the purposeful pursuit of organized learning by an individual beyond compulsory age; this might include instruction in credit or non credit formal courses, vocational training, or professional development to upgrade job skills.

Student Characteristics

Studies that have focused on demographics of individuals pursuing adult education, their characteristics, and compilations of basic information gleaned from questionnaires, exist as far back as the early part of the twentieth century (Courtney, 1992). Among the early findings in adult education participation research has been that there appears to be a relationship between the amount of one's previous education and one's inclination toward continuing that education (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Bajtelsmit, 1990; Feasley, cited in Stahmer, 1990; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1980). According to Anderson and Darkenwald (1979), "the most powerful predictor of participation in adult education is the amount of [previous] formal schooling" (p. 3). Also, socioeconomic levels strongly influence whether or not one would enroll in an adult education program (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965). The higher the socioeconomic level, the more common it is to further one's education.

Houle's Typology

A major contribution to participation research came in 1961, when Cyril Houle concluded that there were three motivational orientations around which most adults participating in organized learning tended to cluster. His inquiry involved case studies of 22 adult learners who were all active participants in adult education. Termed Houle's *Typology*, he found that adult learners tended to have either a *goal orientation*, an *activity orientation*, or a *learner orientation* (1961). At a risk of oversimplifying these concepts, Houle contended that students tend to enroll because they are either pursuing a goal, or they are pursuing education as an activity without having a specific goal, or they are pursuing learning for the sheer sake of learning. Subsequent research by Roger Boshier 10 years later and others have tested and expanded on the Houle Typology, resulting in a better understanding of motives of participation. Boshier (1971) found 14 first order motivational orientations. Some studies have given support to Houle's Typology; none have really discredited it, although some expand the number of motives, typically to five or eight (Cross, 1981).

In more recent decades, participation in adult education has been studied more systematically, and with greater care being paid to reliability and consistency of the research instruments and methodology (Boshier, 1976; Courtney, 1992). Several studies have found that there are often more than one reason that a student engages in learning (Boshier & Collins, 1985; Clayton & Smith, 1987; Tough, 1968). Most of these studies have concluded that there are

first order motives as well as second order motives, that is, underlying factors, that are usually present when a student decides to enroll.

Decision Model Theory

Other studies have introduced yet another facet of participation. Patricia Cross (1981) suggests that there is more to enrollment in adult education than simply motivational inclinations of the participants and their backgrounds or the demographics of the individuals. A number of educators, Cross among them, offer explanations of participation in what is collectively referred to as decision model theory.

Cross (1981) attempts to explain the influences of such additional participation factors through a Chain of Response model, where participation is influenced by a sequence of events or circumstances culminating in participation in education. The sequence involves one's attitudes about education, life transitions that have and are occurring, and the accounting of such factors as barriers to enrolling, incentives or enablers that encourage participation, and the effects of life stages on the inclination to enroll. The life stages to which Cross (1981) refers include the concepts that,

younger people tend to be pursuing credentials . . . those in the age ranges of 25 to 45 are concentrating largely on occupation and professional training for career advancement; and those 50 and older are beginning to prepare for the use of leisure time. (p. 57)

The implications of such research is that participation is a conscious decision influenced by one's attitudes and an inclination to take action. Cookson (1986) builds on the work of David Horton Smith to explain the participation

decision process within the context of six factors. They include (a) external contextual factors, a catch all category for climate, geography, cultural differences and other limitations of a broad nature; (b) social background, which includes occupational status, socioeconomic status, early schooling, and so on; (c) personality and intellectual capacity; (d) attitudinal dispositions, including both general and specific interests in learning; (e) retained information, meaning the person's perception of available resources; and (f) situational variables, which are based on the immediate environment and situational factors with which the person exists.

Sean Courtney compiled extensive reviews of research dealing with participation in adult education both through his dissertation (1984) and in a more concise book entitled *Why Adults Learn* (1992). His premise was that participation in education is an extension of the concept of social participation. That is, individuals as members of their society choose to participate or not to participate not only in educational activities, but in a wide assortment of events during their lives. Participation in adult education, then, is indicative of one's general level of participation in social groups and other activities (Cookson, 1986; Courtney, 1992).

Barriers to Participation

Even though a student may have positive inclinations toward education, and life situations may be right for the person to enroll, there may still be factors which work against the person actually enrolling. These barriers have been the

subject of a number of studies in adult education (Carp, Peterson, & Roelfs, 1974; Cross, 1981; Rubenson, 1986). They have been classified within three general categories: (a) situational barriers--those that arise because of the general situation or environment of the individual; (b) institutional barriers--those that have been put in place by the institution, sometimes unknowingly; and (c) dispositional barriers--those that stem from personal background, attitude, and self confidence.

Among barriers to participation, up to 50% of respondents in survey research have reported that cost of education and lack of time are obstacles to education (Cross, 1981). Other barriers that sometimes interfere with enrollment include lack of child care, lack of transportation, (situational barriers), inconvenient locations, lack of relevant courses (institutional barriers), and lack of interest and lack of peer support (dispositional barriers; Carp et al., 1974; Rubenson, 1986). Many colleges have attempted to counter situational barriers and institutional barriers by providing such things as child care programs and distance learning; however, dispositional barriers seem to remain more difficult to counter.

Among dispositional barriers, lack of interest is, perhaps, the most compelling of barriers for the poor and disadvantaged, for they do not perceive the need for education in the same light as those in higher socioeconomic strata (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965). These individuals have "practically no interest in knowledge for its own sake . . . nor is education seen as an opportunity

for the development of self-expression, self-realization, growth, and the like” (Reissman, 1962, p. 12).

The Community College

The traditional community college, by its very name and nature, has played a key role in serving the educational needs of students, especially those looking for career or job training and for those who are beginning a college education. Community colleges can even help provide a student who did not graduate from high school with a General Education Diploma (GED) and better reading skills that are necessary to begin a college education.

Community colleges are an outgrowth of the junior college movement of the early 1900s. Technical and Trade schools evolved in many parts of the country to offer career preparation to residents of the community and the surrounding area. During the late 1960s through the 1980s, many technical colleges expanded their offerings to enable students to take arts and sciences courses that would lead to the first two years of a college degree. It was then possible for an Associate of Arts Degree from a community college to be transferred to a university in order to complete the last two years of a Bachelor’s Degree.

Most often, community college students are those who live relatively close to a campus, that is, in or near the community where the college is located. In some instances, satellite centers or outlying campuses, often in adjacent counties, have been established to make it more convenient for students living in other

communities further away from the main campus to participate in college courses. Even day care might be provided for the student with dependents.

Some courses at these centers are taught by college instructors who travel to or live in the outlying community. Many colleges have also attempted to reach out to the outlying student, as well as the working student with courses at night, on the weekend, and through distance learning interactive classrooms located at these centers. In this sense, distance education, in providing primarily traditional courses to students who find it difficult to travel to campus, has become a means of reaching students who otherwise might not enroll because the campus is too far away. But providing quality education in a convenient location does not always result in students enrolling.

Some individuals who enroll as distance learning students may do so for some of the same reasons that other adults enroll in on-campus courses: to seek a degree, to complete required training, to advance in their current job, etc. (Hawkeye Community College, 1998). Although the research that has been conducted in adult education participation can be a starting point for a study of participation of adults in distance education, few studies have explored this specific area.

Distance Education

Distance education is perhaps one of the most dynamic and challenging forms of learning that exists today. Potentially its delivery encompasses all of the structure of solid, effective college instruction that is normally used by the best

instructors. These include lecturing, discussion, testing and grading (McKeachie, 1986), to which I would add demonstration, and multimedia delivery. The added enhancement of technological tools of an up to date distance learning classroom at t has increased the potential for effective and visually interesting classroom presentations.

Historical Perspective

Distance education emerged as a new concept in the United States just over 100 years ago when William Rainey Harper established the first correspondence study department at the University of Chicago (Watkins, 1991). Perhaps in part, this was in response to the needs of individuals who could not attend college full time, but who wanted to pursue education if it could be delivered to them in a more convenient way.

During the twentieth century, especially the latter half, as advances in technology progressed, numerous studies proved the efficacy of technology-based and technology-assisted instruction (Beare, 1989; Chu & Schramm, 1967; Clark, 1983). These advances spawned newer forms of distance education. These have included audio conferencing, taped and broadcast telecourses, satellite delivered courses, interactive television, and most recently online courses taught over the Internet or World Wide Web.

In recent years, microchip technology in cameras, computers, and network components have enabled educators to utilize high quality images, sound and text in a cost effective manner. In this way, a student who cannot or will not

enroll in an on campus course, might be able to participate in a high quality and effective course that is delivered to them at a convenient location near to where they live through electronic means. In other words, the instruction is brought or delivered to the student instead of the student going to the instruction, as in traditional learning.

Distance education has unique challenges both for the instructor and for the student. Due to the variety of distance modalities (correspondence study, interactive television audio conferencing, web-based instruction, etc.) distance teaching is more than pedagogy transmitted through an electronic medium. Considerable attention must be paid to principles of instructional design, preparation of visuals, and interaction with students, otherwise the instruction may be ineffective (Hardman, 1998). For the student, the medium used in distance learning is the primary vehicle for communication between the instructor and the student and between student and other students. It is essential for the student to have a certain comfort level with the technology in order to participate fully in and benefit from the instruction.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

There are two common approaches to distance education. They are *synchronous learning* and *asynchronous learning*. Synchronous learning refers to instruction that is provided or delivered by the instructor at the same time that the student is receiving the instruction.

The tools used in synchronous learning with which many distance learning classrooms are equipped, include video recorders/players, one and three chip video cameras, computers, microphones, video disk and CD ROM players, electronic slide units, satellite reception equipment, phone lines, Internet connections, and almost any other form of media of either an analog or a digital signal that might be needed. Traditional college teaching might from time to time incorporate some of these approaches, but the typical college classroom is not so equipped for spontaneous use.

This scenario describes the new live interactive television classrooms that exist in Iowa and a number of other states that incorporate fiber optics, microwave, instructional television fixed service (ITFS) and satellite to deliver live interactive classes to distance learning students.

There are other scenarios that provide distance learning opportunities to students on a delayed or asynchronous basis. Asynchronous learning is learning that takes place as a result of the delivery or transmission of the course content in a non-live format, such as a taped presentation (telecourse) or electronic communication (web-based course) or a more recent combination of the first two formats called a teleweb course, each of which can be viewed at a different time from when it was created and sent by the instructor. Telecourses (either broadcast or taped), guided correspondence study, online or modem courses, and so on are examples of asynchronous learning. Many new or reentering college students might find several of these options available to them, at a growing

number of colleges and universities. And businesses are turning more and more to asynchronous learning to train and retrain their workforce due to the advantage of having the instruction delivered at a time that is most convenient to the worker.

These alternative delivery systems exist to enable a learner in an off campus location to enroll and participate in college courses without the need to drive to a campus, that might be many miles away. Most distance education programs are efforts to counter the barriers of time and location that could prevent enrollment. Technology will never guarantee success or even a conducive learning environment, but it can provide an opportunity for learning that the student would otherwise not have.

The potential student may or may not take advantage of this opportunity. If he or she happens to have a work schedule conflict, family commitment, disability, or perceived anxiety that dissuades them from taking college courses on a traditional campus, they will not enroll.

Unfortunately, the realm of distance education has paid little attention to *why* students enroll in distance courses or the precursors of enrollment. While many studies have explored distance learning from an effectiveness and achievement perspective (Beare, 1989; Cheng, Lehman, & Armstrong, 1991; Clark, 1983; Martin & Rainey, 1993; Soulder, 1993), few studies have explored participation and factors affecting enrollment. Distance educators have been seemingly happy to have students enroll regardless of their motives or goals. But

the students' motives for enrolling and other factors in their decision may have a significant impact on their ultimate success, their satisfaction, as well as ability to persist with the distance learning experience.

Distance Education Participation

There have been several studies that have attempted to investigate some aspect of or relationship to participation of students in distance education programs. For example, barriers to enrollment for distance learners have been eloquently summarized by Rubenson (1986). And four dissertations have investigated some aspect of participation or reasons for enrollment in distance education courses (Brown, 1986; MacBrayne, 1993; Rasmussen, 1992; Wilkes, 1989).

Characteristics of Distance Learning Students

Research on the characteristics of students, as noted earlier, has come primarily from the literature of adult education (Hopper & Osborne, 1975; Kaplan, 1945; London, Wenkert, & Hagstrom, 1963; Verner & White, 1965). Barbara Brown's (1986) dissertation research emphasis was on the characteristics of telecourse students in South Dakota. The data in her study are based on the Boshier Education Participation Scale and the Attributional Style Questionnaire. Over 80% of the subjects in her study were female. Most were either teachers or nurses, two professions which often have a higher percentage of women practitioners than men. In addition, 75% of the participants in the

Brown study had completed at least one college degree, and were enrolling in the telecourse as a refresher or for graduate study.

Two studies investigated the community college distance student enrolling for the first two years of college. Clyde Rasmussen (1992) explored factors that influenced adult students who participated in distance learning at two Oregon Community Colleges. And Pamela MacBrayne (1993) studied what motivates Associate Degree students in rural Maine to enroll in distance courses.

Rasmussen compared students who had enrolled in *instructional television* (meaning non-interactive televised instruction such as telecourses) and *interactive television* (meaning live televised instruction with at least two-way audio and one-way video interaction).

Characteristics of students in the Rasmussen study, and to some extent in Pamela MacBrayne's dissertation, showed an interesting profile of the adult distance learner. Of demographic interest, 75% of Rasmussen's sample were women and 68% of the sample were either married (56%), divorced, separated or widowed (Rasmussen, 1992). The greater involvement of women distance learners over men was similar in the MacBrayne study (78%) at the University of Maine in their Associate Degree program (MacBrayne, 1993). In addition, most (more than 50%) of the participants in both of these two studies were over 23 years of age, and worked part time or full time (MacBrayne, 1993; Rasmussen, 1992). It's important to note that both the Rasmussen study and the MacBrayne study included in their samples all students who were enrolled in their respective

institutions in a distance learning two year degree program, not selected students, nor students in a single program where one gender might tend to predominate as in Brown's study.

Motives of Enrollment

Rasmussen (1992) studied enrollment factors in his study, and found that there was no significant difference between students enrolled in academic or vocational programs for four enrollment factors in his survey: "Convenience, Instructor, Supplemental Activities, and Socializing" (p. 64). He reported that students felt that instructional television courses were more convenient than interactive courses, and he found that the two strongest influences on enrolling were convenience and the instructor (Rasmussen, 1992).

MacBrayne concentrated on what motivates rural adults to enroll in associate degree distance education programs. She used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This appears to be the only predominantly qualitative study that has been done with community college distance education enrollment motives until now. MacBrayne's (1993) research utilized a factor analysis of surveys returned by 1520 student who were enrolled in interactive television courses. It also involved interviews with 30 students who were identified as "highly motivated by the items in the various factors" (p. 36) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their underlying motives to enroll.

These Maine students were enrolled in courses taught over a live interactive television system of one form or another. In the study, four distinct

factors emerged as characteristic motivational traits. They included: “degree seeking, information seeking, participating, and job enhancing” (MacBrayne, 1993, p. 114). This study was the only one to also explore *barriers* and *facilitators* to enrollment. Of prime importance to most of the subjects was that the course was offered in a nearby location. The most common barriers mentioned were lack of time and lack of money, (MacBrayne, 1993).

In a study that dealt with student satisfaction and enrollment motives, Charles Wilkes (1989) found that there was little relationship between overall student satisfaction in an electronic distance education environment and students’ motivational orientations. His study was conducted in Utah with students taking courses utilizing the University of Utah’s COM-NET system, and included freshman through graduate school students. His study dealt exclusively with students who participated in an “electronic” environment. In other words, it involved live classes where students could communicate with the instructor through audio and video exchanges as well as through graphic and facsimile capabilities.

One other point of interest in Brown’s (1986) study was the finding that a gender difference was evident while viewing telecourses. Men, who made up only 19% of the sample, tended to have higher incomes, viewed the telecourse with more people in the room than did women, and felt that the path to greater success was through hard work rather than luck. Women were more inclined to take the telecourse for professional advancement than did men.

Summary

It appears that the decision to enroll in a course of study is no simple process, nor a decision that a student reaches with little forethought. There appears to be a complex process at work. This seems to be true whether the student is a traditional full-time student entering a community college or a distance learner.

Although these studies shed important light on the motives and characteristics of distance learning enrollees, there remain compelling questions about the factors that cause or inhibit community college students in enrolling in distance education programs.

Are there influences in a student's past experiences or psychological makeup that motivate adults to enroll? Do these students have peers or outside pressures that move them or persuade them to enroll? Do these distant students enroll for the same reasons as on campus students, or for different reasons? Does the technology itself, that is used to provide education at a distance, play a role in their participation, either encouraging or discouraging? And if these distance students are demographically different from on campus students, it would follow that they could very well have different motives for enrolling in a course, and be affected by different factors in their decision to enroll.

The reality is that some colleges and universities, utilizing little information on student motives for enrollment, especially from distance learners as a group, are making significant decisions about courses being offered over

distance learning systems as well as how they market these courses. Distance learning systems require a major investment in funding for the equipment involved (Jones et al., 1992), not to mention the extensive instructor time in training, then adapting or creating materials for use in distance education courses (Hardman, 1998). Many colleges assume that their students simply want to learn, and the college's role is to provide opportunities for that learning. But the research implies that the reasons for enrollment are much more complex than someone simply wanting to learn.

With the explosion of recent technological advances in society, distance education is on the verge of becoming a major educational thrust throughout the United States (Norris, 1998). Distance Learning is an already extremely popular form of adult education in such countries as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia where *Open Universities* enroll thousands of new students each year. The creation of the Western Governors University (WGU), which currently includes 17 states in a distance education degree consortium (Bankirer, 1998), as well as the recent collaborative initiative between the WGU and the British Open University in the United States (McCollum, 1998), and community college distance education consortia that have begun to function in several states (Susman, 1998), point in the direction of increased collaboration among higher education institutions to more effectively reach the distance learner. In addition, the success of the Public Broadcasting Services' Going the Distance Project, which at the time of this writing, involves 180 community colleges in 38 states (Public

Broadcast Service, 1998), is further evidence of the increasing emphasis on the importance of the adult distance learner.

Although there are individuals who participate in distance education in the United States from elementary age children to senior citizens, the focus of this research will be on reasons that Iowa adult college students enroll in distance learning credit courses at an undergraduate level. The study will be qualitative, following a long series of significant, even landmark studies in participation research (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Houle, 1961; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; MacBrayne, 1993; Tittle & Denker, 1980; Williams & Heath, 1936). It will involve community college students because this allows the investigation to concentrate on individuals just beginning to enroll in postsecondary education, in environments rich in distance education.

This study will: (a) attempt to add to the body of literature dealing with motives for participation, barriers, and enablers in adult and distance education, and (b) determine reasons that adult students choose to enroll, what factors affect that decision, and whether the individual technology or delivery system makes a difference to those students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methods and Procedures

In order to adequately investigate the research problem, a mixed methodology was used. The purpose of this study was to determine what motives, what barriers, and what enablers were present when adult learners at the community college level in Iowa enrolled in distance education credit courses. It was the further purpose of this study to determine whether these participation factors varied with the type or format of the distance education course.

The mixed methodology that was employed in this study was developed within a framework of participation factors in adult learning and distance education. The approach to this research was based, in part, on the literature of previous studies in these areas and utilized three phases of inquiry: (a) an online focus group, (b) a student questionnaire, and (c) in-depth interviews with selected distance learning students. What follows is a more detailed description of the methods and procedures used during the study.

The focus group was made up of seven distance education and adult learning experts from five different states. The purpose of the focus group was to suggest potential reasons for and barriers to participation in adult distance learning environments. From these discussions emerged a series of questions and areas of investigation that were explored with the subjects selected for interviews in the study.

A sample of distance learning students were sent a questionnaire in order to obtain demographic information about distance learning students and information about their motives for enrolling in distance courses. The questionnaire also acted as a screening device for the interview subjects.

The students to be interviewed were selected with the cooperation of the community college through which they enrolled, namely Kirkwood Community College, with its main campus in Cedar Rapids, in northeast Iowa. There were 23 individuals who were selected for an interview. All were students who resided in Iowa, and who had successfully participated in more than two distance education courses during the previous year.

The interview questions were based, in part, on participation research that dealt with such issues as, but not necessarily limited to, motives of individuals participating in adult learning, motives for participation of Associate Degree distance learning students, and motives of women returning to college.

The in-depth interviews with each subject were used to explore, probe, and clarify the motivations and factors as well as the life experiences that initiated their involvement in a distance education course or program. The interviews also explored the perceived barriers that the students felt they had to overcome, and factors that they felt acted to encourage or support their participation, including technology.

Qualitative Research Methodology

One fundamental question concerning this study is why conduct a qualitative study in the first place? Certainly, some, if not all of the research questions that were posed could have been addressed through an analysis of quantitative data. And a traditional style survey was used to collect demographic information as well as initial information about motive preferences. But the information gathered through quantitative research is inevitably impersonalized. Although it can offer means, ranges, and significance of relationships, quantitative research is less adequate, by itself, to offer deep understanding of life experiences and decisions or theory building.

Donna Mertens' (1998) presentation of qualitative research based on Patton (1990) states that the nature of the research question should dictate the type of research that is conducted. She identifies types of research questions for which qualitative methods would be appropriate. Qualitative methodology is appropriate where:

- (a) Detailed, in-depth information is needed about certain clients or programs;
- (b) The focus is on diversity among, idiosyncrasies of, and unique qualities exhibited by individuals; and
- (c) The intent is to understand the program theory—that is, the staff members' (and the participants') beliefs as to the nature of the problem they are addressing and how their actions will lead to desired outcomes. (Mertens, 1998, p. 163)

Information and data about motives, life experiences, and significant decision thought processes fall within the parameters of the three areas listed

above. Such areas of inquiry may be said to lack desired depth when considered in purely quantitative terms, whereas qualitative techniques offer the opportunity to delve deeply into answers and self-histories in order to find information and relationships that might otherwise be missed by the researcher. Another dimension of this study is the breadth of stories that were provided by the subjects, which offer a deeper understanding of the reasons and decision making process experienced by the distance students. These stories also provide a thick description of the experiences and precursors of the students' decision to enroll.

Procedures: Phase One, Online Focus Group

Focus Group Selection

A group of distance learning and adult education experts were enlisted to form an electronic or online focus group. The role of the focus group was to formulate the key issues and questions that would be explored in the questionnaire and during the interviews with the distance education students.

Focus group participation was voluntary. The primary means of communication initially was by telephone and email which alleviated some costs and time constraints. Those who expressed interest in participating in the focus group were sent more information about the procedures and topics to be discussed along with a copy of my dissertation proposal. Each of the members of the focus group were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form and each was asked to participate with as much or as little input as they felt comfortable in providing.

Members of the focus group were selected based on their experience and background in adult and distance education, or their experience in investigating motives of participation of adults in educational environments. These individuals also represented several different levels of education. That is, some of the members were from community colleges, others were from university environments, and one was from the Public Broadcasting Service's Adult Learning Service. But all of them had considerable experience in education either involving the education of adults in general, or education at a distance.

Members of the electronic focus group included: David Bunting--Kirkwood Community College (Iowa), Dr. Sean Courtney--University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Jacques DuBois--Brevard Community College (Florida), Dr. Ellen Kabat--Eastern Iowa Community College District, Dr. Pamela MacBrayne--University of Maine, Wayne Prophet--University of Iowa, and Sylvia Scinta--Public Broadcasting Service (Virginia).

Focus Group Procedures

The work of the focus group was predominantly conducted by email and through an electronic listserv that was set up through the cooperation of the University of Northern Iowa, and was called DLMOTIVES.

Background information about the study, the purpose of the focus group, and instructions about the procedures that were followed were explained to all members of the focus group in a DLMOTIVES FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions--see Appendix A). The members of the focus group were asked first to

consider a question, respond with their thoughts, feelings, experiences and suggestions, and then react to the responses given by the various members of the group. In this way, a discussion was generated, resulting in a rich environment of thought and idea formation.

The focus group discussion commenced with an invitation to present some biographical information as an introduction of each person. Then, an initial question from this researcher was presented. The discussion and concept threads then evolved as the members of the focus group considered the question and responded with their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They were then asked to also react to the responses given by the various members of the group. Subsequent questions were then posed to the group after everyone had had a chance to comment and react to the others' comments.

Focus Group Questions

The questions discussed by the online focus group included the following:

1. To begin the discussion let us consider the positive factors and incentives that often bring students to enroll in college classes, especially distance education. What are some of these factors? What motivations have been prominent? What do colleges do to draw students to enroll?
2. At the community college/associate degree level, what potential deterrents would these students face in considering their enrolling in a course of study? Consider situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers. Do you

agree with Cross and Rubenson, who seem to feel that dispositional barriers have been the least studied deterrents for adult education and distance learners?

3. In view of recent advances in communications technologies (such as the prevalence of computers, fiber optics, cell phones, etc.), what positive influences, and what negative influences might these technologies pose for students enrolling in distance education classes? Would certain students prefer a particular mode (telecourses, interactive television, online courses, etc.) of distance learning over others and why?

Formulation of Interview Questions

Once the members of the focus group had thoroughly discussed the questions, interview topics and possible questions for students to answer were identified. These issues and questions fell into the following categories: motives of participation, perceived barriers to participation, encouragement factors, the impact of technology on the student's motivation, and the dependency/independency of time and place for learning. Questions that might be asked during the interviews were then formulated to reflect the discussion that evolved during the focus group phase of the study.

Procedures: Phase Two, Student Questionnaires

Purpose of the Questionnaire

The purpose of the student questionnaire was threefold: (a) to provide initial data concerning demographics and some initial background information about the distance learning students, (b) to begin to explore their motives and

factors of participation/enrollment, and (c) to provide a screening instrument for the selection of approximately 20-25 successful distance learning students who would be willing to be interviewed for the third phase of the study.

Selection of Questionnaire Sample

With the cooperation of Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, especially their Director of Institutional Research and Enrollment (IRE) Services, and their Director of Distance Learning, a computer list was generated of all Kirkwood students who had enrolled in one or more distance learning courses during the fall semester 1996 through fall 1997. The list included approximately 7000 names on a 400 page computer printout. I initially received the document as an email attachment in spread sheet form, and later in computer printout form. The document included each student's address, age, gender, term(s) enrolled from Fall 96 to Fall 97 with courses that had been taken, and their respective grades.

The Kirkwood Community College area was selected as a research site because of the maturity of its distance learning program (more than 15 years), the variety of population densities served (from 150,00 population to towns of less than 200 people), and the variety of distance learning formats (live interactive television, telecourses, and web-based courses). These considerations were important to the study for several reasons.

There are a number of colleges in Iowa that have begun to offer distance learning programs during the last several years. The development of the Iowa

Communications Network (ICN) and the Going the Distance initiative are just two factors that have generated heightened interest in distance education in the state. For some adults, new distance learning offerings can be of interest because of the “newness” of the program, rather than their own personal motives. With Kirkwood’s program having a long history in the region, newness would not be a major factor for the students; thus there could be a reasonable expectation that the findings of this study might be applicable elsewhere. In addition, the population variation among the communities would represent at least a certain variety of students from very rural communities to a moderate size Midwestern community. And the several modalities of distance learning offered at the college would allow some diversity of format to be considered.

After the college location was determined, a student selection process for distribution of the questionnaires could begin. A conditional random selection process was used to determine which subjects would be sent the questionnaire. Appropriate students were selected based on the following criteria: (a) student had accumulated at least 6 semester hours of course work, (b) student was enrolled in a distance class during the current semester (Fall 97), and (c) student had been successful in completing most of their distance courses (Fs and Ws would not indicate success). In this way, students who received the questionnaire were more likely to be serious students who were pursuing their education primarily through distance education.

Approximately one student on every other page of the 400 page computer printout was selected to receive a questionnaire. This would provide a certain amount of randomness to the sample. Typically, a student with three or more distance courses would be selected on a given page over a student with only one distance course, since it would be difficult to determine initially whether the student with one distance course was really interested in the course at a distance or simply enrolling in a course that was needed. On some pages, no appropriate student was found, so the next appropriate student on the following pages was selected. A total of 210 names were selected.

Questionnaire Development and Distribution

A two page questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B) that included an introductory statement about myself and the purpose of the research. Questions on the survey included name, address, phone, miles to nearest Kirkwood site, which format of distance course they had taken, whether they had access to a computer at home, career field, and a series of 14 motive statements they were to rate using a five point Lickert scale about their incentives and decision to enroll. These last questions dealing with motives were adapted from the literature, especially the MacBrayne (1993) study. Two additional questions were added by the Kirkwood Director of Distance Learning about what the student liked about the course(s) and what might improve the courses they took.

The Director of IRE also composed a cover letter (see Appendix B) to accompany the questionnaire, that encouraged the student to complete the

survey, and that by doing so, it in no way would affect their grades or courses at the college. Confidentiality was also assured to the student. A self-addressed stamped envelope was also included in the mailing. The students were asked to return the questionnaire within a 10-day time frame. A follow-up letter (see Appendix B) and another copy of the survey was sent approximately two weeks after the first to the students who had not yet returned their survey.

The surveys were mailed on September 26, 1997 from Cedar Rapids. The students were originally asked to return the surveys by October 6. The return envelopes began to arrive on September 30. A total of 54 questionnaires were returned by October 6, and of that group approximately 40 indicated their willingness to participate in an interview. A follow-up letter was sent on October 11 to the students who had not yet returned their survey. An additional 30 questionnaires were returned by October 24. Subsequently, a total of 95 questionnaires were returned, but two did not include the student's name, home town, or gender, leaving 93 valid responses, or 44.3% return rate. There were 56 individuals who indicated their willingness to be interviewed.

Procedures: Phase Three, Student Interviews

Selection of Student Subjects

Criteria for selection of the interview subjects were that, in addition to their willingness to be interviewed and providing a phone number for further contact, the students, as a group, represented a cross section of distance learners

by age and major, and were geographically dispersed across the college's seven county merged area.

From the list of 56 names of those willing to be interviewed, 20-25 individuals were to be selected for an in-depth interview. It was felt that this number of individuals would constitute an adequate group from which motives of enrollment and life experience factors could be explored. Fewer than 20 was considered inadequate in view of the geographical and career interest differences that were possible in a group of community college students.

The selection process involved conforming to parameters that were identified during the proposal stage of the dissertation and that reflected the general demographics of the distance learner population. The subjects to be interviewed were to be representative of the following parameters: (a) at least 60% of the group were female, (b) at least 25% were male, (c) at least 50% had enrolled in a live course taught via a telecommunications system, (d) at least 30% had enrolled in a taped or broadcast telecourse, (e) at least 20% were 24 years of age or under, and (f) at least 50% were over 24 years of age.

The criteria listed above ensured that a broad representation of students would be interviewed. This procedure also helped to broaden the scope of responses from the student group. It also ensured a reflection of the gender and age distribution of most distance learner populations, and provided for representation of students who had enrolled in both live interactive television courses (ITV) as well as recorded or broadcast telecourses.

A geographic distribution was also sought. At least one student was selected from each of the seven college centers in the region, with no more than five from any one center. Representation of a variety of majors and career fields was sought. Those who had taken an Internet or web-based course were also selected for an interview.

A spread sheet system using Claris Works and Microsoft Excel was used to facilitate the selection of students to be interviewed. Sorts were performed by age, town, gender, work time, computer ownership, and motive statements. Initially, 24 students were selected for interviews from those who had agreed on the screening questionnaire. The selected interview group had at an average age of 33.9 years.

Contact with Subjects

Students that were selected to be interviewed were contacted by letter (see Appendix B) and a follow-up phone call (phone numbers were requested on the questionnaire) to verify their willingness to participate in the interview and to answer any questions they might have had about the study. An Informed Consent Form was included with the letter (see Appendix C). During the phone call, I explained in greater detail the purpose of my research and the procedures that would be followed. Agreement was reached on a date and time for the interview. Then a phone call was made to the director of the Kirkwood Learning Center in the community that was usually used by that particular student to arrange for a meeting room where the interview could be conducted. As part of

the agreement with Kirkwood Community College, all interviews were to be conducted in a Kirkwood facility. The director of distance learning informed the center directors of my research and requested their cooperation and assistance with the interview process, which I received.

Permission from the students was also requested for tape recording the sessions on audio cassette tapes. Confidentiality was ensured by not using the individuals' names in the research report. Instead, a substitute name (first names only) was used to refer to the student in referencing the information gathered during the interviews.

Interview Schedule and Questioning

A semi-structured interview schedule was created that incorporated questions and issues pertinent to the study (see Appendix D). These reflected the issues, questions, and concepts generated by the focus group during the initial phase of the study, and also adapted some of the questions used in the MacBrayne study. The use of a semi-structured approach also allowed for expanding questions into areas of interest that emerged during the interview itself. It allowed for the probing of student comments for clarification and elucidation. Field notes of the interview and environment were also collected by the researcher after each interview.

The interviews were conducted at the College Learning Centers as arranged, usually in a self-study room or adjunct faculty office. At the Iowa City

Center, an unused classroom was used. On the Cedar Rapids campus, a conference room used by student services was used for the interviews.

Interviews were arranged at the convenience of the student, often before or after a class that they were attending. The interviews usually began with a period of casual conversation lasting approximately 5 to 10 minutes. This allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the interviewees. During the interview a micro cassette recorder was used to record the interview. I also took brief notes on the interview schedule, and, at the conclusion of the interview after the student left, jotted field notes onto a pad.

Although six male students were selected for interviews, three of them did not come for either the scheduled interview or a rescheduled makeup session. No further attempt was made to reschedule the interview a third time. However, an attempt was made to interview additional male students.

The original list of distance learning students was reviewed, and three additional male students who had not returned surveys, but who otherwise fit the criteria for selection, were contacted by letter a third time. One of those returned the survey indicating a willingness to be interviewed. More than six attempts were made to contact the student by phone, leaving messages on his answering machine. Ultimately it was learned that the student didn't have a phone, but had supplied his brother's phone number. His brother, in a phone conversation with me, agreed to have the student contact me by phone, but it did not come about. No further attempts to arrange additional interviews were made. Two additional

women students who were at the centers while I was conducting interviews with other students volunteered to be interviewed. The total number of students interviewed was 23.

Data Analysis

Transcription

After all of the interviews were completed a transcriptionist was hired to create a written record and a computer file from the recordings of each interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim except for utterances of “uh” and “Hmm” that offered no pertinent information. Comments that were unintelligible to the transcriptionist were typed as “(?)” in order to distinguish them from “?” indicating a question. These unintelligible comments were added later to the extent possible, by my listening to the tape and placing the comment in context. In most cases, pertinent words were identified. (See Appendix E for a sample interview transcript.)

Each interview was then reviewed and analyzed. Comments made by the students were categorized and coded using software and layout forms created with FileMaker Pro 3.0 software.

Analysis Software

To facilitate the coding process, I reviewed several computer based qualitative analysis software programs, including Atlas ti, NUD*IST, Ethnograph, HyperResearch, and HyperQual2. Two regular data base programs were also investigated. FileMaker Pro 3.0 was chosen for use in the coding and analysis

process because I was (a) already familiar with the database, (b) already had the software, (c) was able to custom make several layouts and related file configurations needed for the analysis phase, and (d) was able to provide very similar analysis and coding capabilities as the commercially made analysis software.

Three primary files were created in Filemaker Pro 3.0 to facilitate the coding of the interview comments: (a) student information file, (b) interview code file, and (c) field notes file (see Appendix F for sample layout pages).

The student information file included one record per student, that was made up of mostly demographic information such as the student's name, age, major, interview date and place, and types of distance classes in which the student had previously enrolled. Scripted buttons enabled the researcher to go to and to create a new interview code record on that student at any point.

The interview code file had some demographic information fields, which were automatically looked up after the interview number was inserted in a new blank record. It also had fields for identifying a broad category, editable code phrase, page reference, and a text field where quotes from the interview could be inserted using a drag and drop technique from the text of the interview. Scripted buttons on the code layout included creation of a new code record, a link back to the student information page, a link to the field notes file, a find button, and an export record button which allowed for selected or found records to be exported to another text document that could be inserted into the dissertation findings.

A special layout was created to help analyze the barriers discussed during the interviews. Each of the barriers were listed on the interview code page for that individual, but check boxes were used that would, in a glance, indicate which barriers and with how many that individual had to deal. The text box in that layout was then filled with comments from the student about those barriers. Additional layout pages were created to facilitate the searching (Find), reporting and exporting text functions of the software.

The field notes file, included fields for the interview number, student's name and age, and a large text field for entering thoughts, summaries, observations, and other pertinent information that would not necessarily be collected in the code file. Scripted buttons on the field notes layout included find, export text and link buttons to the student information file and the interview code file.

Coding of Transcripts

Each interview was reviewed using headphones to listen to the tape of the original interview. The text of the interview was displayed on a desktop computer screen using a 17 inch monitor. And at the same time, the FileMaker files for that student were also displayed. Each response from the student for each interview question was identified with a specific category and a code phrase that identified the specific topic, thought or theme that the student was describing. During the coding process, the interview codes were edited and expanded as necessary to accommodate the types of comments being made. Ultimately, 45 code phrases

were created in the analysis. Nearly 900 records were compiled in the interview code file from the 23 interviews.

Analysis of the Data

Each category and code were individually sorted and analyzed using the FileMaker data base and the custom made layout pages. Individual codes, words, and phrases, could each be analyzed and sorted to see the data both for each individual and collectively when looking at a particular concept or issue. Groups of found records and excerpts from the interviews pertaining to a certain issue were compared and, in some cases exported into a text document for inclusion in the Findings chapter.

The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of data interpretation and analysis was used. The coded data was analyzed to determine emergent themes, categories, relationships and other circumstances that might have contributed to the student's decision to enroll. Comparisons were made with the interview data and categories. Among the categories of information that were analyzed were gender, age, goal and motivational orientation, previous experience with technology, including the presence of a home computer, longevity in the current distance learning program, type of program or career being pursued, previous educational experience, and positive or negative peer/spouse influence.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken after each interview. Additional “field notes” were made during the coding and analysis of the transcripts using a Field Note layout in the FileMaker Pro data base. This additional information was used to help interpret the data and to build a triangulation among the data that were gathered. However, in the agreement with the community college for meeting with, interviewing, and recording the students’ comments, each interview was to take place at a community college center. Therefore, the environment of the interview had almost no bearing or significance on the outcome of the interview. Each of the interviews were conducted in a testing room or classroom in a college center that was almost always neat and well lit, and was staffed with college personnel who were quite friendly and accommodating. In some instances the students talked about their home environment, and notes were made of those conversations in addition to being recorded. No significant information from the interview sites emerged except where it pertained to the activities in the centers themselves.

In the following chapters, the findings from the online focus group, the student questionnaire and the in-depth interviews will be described. The results of the online focus group and the data from the student questionnaires formed a basis for the information, stories and data that were collected during the interviews. Chapter 4 provides the results of the preparatory work completed during the online focus group and from the information collected from the

student questionnaires. Chapter 5 provides a compilation of results from the in-depth interviews of the 23 distance learning students, and an examination of the four main themes that were investigated in this study, namely, the motives, enablers, barriers, and technology. Chapter 6 provides a reflection and discussion of the findings and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARATORY WORK--THE FOCUS GROUP AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Preparatory Work—Overview

In this chapter, I will describe the work that was done in preparation for the interviews. There were two initial phases of research that laid the groundwork for the interviews with the distance learners. These two phases included (a) an online focus group that used a listserv to discuss issues and questions about distance education, and (b) a questionnaire that was sent to a sample of enrolled distance learning students. The purpose of the focus group was to provide a basis for the formulation of the key issues and questions that would be explored in the questionnaire and during the interviews with the distance education students. The purpose of the questionnaire was to act as a vehicle for the collection of student demographic information, to provide data concerning motives of enrollment of a sample of distance learners, and to act as a screening device and selection tool for the selection of the students who would be interviewed.

Preparatory Work—The Focus Group Discussion

Justification of the Focus Group

As the focus group process was set into motion, a long series of events and activities began, the culmination of which would come many months later as the stories and findings of the distance learning students unfolded. The online focus group represented a foundation and part of a triangulation of support for the

information that would eventually come from the interviews. On the one hand, the literature provided a solid basis of information with which to start the exploration of motives, on the other hand, the focus group gave direction and began to clarify certain elements and issues that had not emerged immediately from the literature. Later, the questionnaire would provide some initial information about the group of students that was being studied, including insight into their prior motives, their career interests, and their longevity in the distance learning program.

In this section, I will describe the findings of the online focus group activity. The primary purpose of the focus group was to formulate the key issues and questions that would be explored in the questionnaires and interviews with the distance education students. The focus group conducted all of its discussions online. This was done through email and a listserv that was set up by the University of Northern Iowa.

Members of the Focus Group

The individuals who agreed to participate in the focus group discussion were selected for their diversity of backgrounds and experiences in distance learning, and included educators, researchers, faculty and administrators from community colleges in two states, and from universities in three states.

The focus group included: David Bunting, Dean of Off Campus Instruction--Kirkwood Community College (Iowa), Dr. Sean Courtney, Professor and researcher--University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Jacques DuBois, Director of

Distance Learning--Brevard Community College (Florida), Dr. Ellen Kabat Director of the Advanced Technology Environmental Education Center--Eastern Iowa Community College District, Dr. Pamela MacBrayne, Director of the Education Network of Maine--University of Maine, Wayne Prophet, Interim Director, Center for Credit Programs--University of Iowa, and Sylvia Scinta, Director of Telecourse Marketing--Public Broadcasting Service (Virginia).

Focus Group Procedures

All of the seven members of the focus group contributed to the online discussion about distance learners and their motives of participation. The focus group was conducted in the following manner. As moderator of the focus group, I first presented a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions--see Appendix A) which established protocols of discussion, procedures, and other information concerning listserves and our online discussion. Part of the FAQ dealt specifically with the DLMOTIVES listserv that was established for this research by the University of Northern Iowa. The FAQ was presented in question and answer format. Once all of the members of the focus group were subscribed to the DLMOTIVES listserv, questions were presented, in turn, for the members to discuss.

Focus Group Questions

Questions that were posed to the online focus group included the following:

1. To begin the discussion let us consider the positive factors and incentives that often bring students to enroll in college classes, especially distance education. What are some of these factors? What motivations have been prominent? What do colleges do to draw students to enroll?

2. At the community college/associate degree level, what potential deterrents would these students face in considering their enrolling in a course of study? Consider situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers. Do you agree with Cross and Rubenson, who seem to feel that dispositional barriers have been the least studied deterrents for adult education and distance learners?

3. In view of recent advances in communications technologies (such as the prevalence of computers, fiber optics, cell phones, etc.), what positive influences, and what negative influences might these technologies pose for students enrolling in distance education classes? Would certain students prefer a particular mode (telecourses, interactive television, online courses, etc.) of distance learning over others and why?

Results of the Focus Group

As the discussions of the listserv began, it became apparent that the breadth of knowledge and experiences of these educators would provide a rich forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences. These ideas would result in a grounded basis of inquiry on which the interviews could be based. The questions primarily dealt with three issues that reflected the research questions under study, namely, the motives and enablers that draw students to the distance

education setting, the barriers or deterrents that the students must overcome, and the role, if any, and impact of technology in that decision. The focus group discussion began on April 6, 1997 with an introductory statement from me, and concluded on June 26, 1997 with a final summary and thank you message from me.

All references taken from the listserv discussion as presented below are cited as a personal communication, and are not included in the Reference List at the end of this paper. The text reference format follows the style recommended by the Web Extension to the American Psychological Association Style (WEAPAS) per their web site (Land, 1998).

Among the significant comments that were contributed during the discussions included the point that *convenience* was indeed a factor for many prospective college students. The requirement of juggling home, family, work, and school, makes the opportunity to take off campus courses with minimal driving time the only way that these students could attain a degree.

. . . the major motivation for individuals to enroll in distance education college courses is due to the "convenience" factor. This method of delivery most likely will save them travel time. This [distance learning] may also be the only feasible method in which they could attend the class or program. (E. Kabat, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserv, Apr 30, 1997)

The matter of convenience is commonly offered as a simplified explanation of the success of distance learning, but the issue seems to be more complex than that.

The issue of convenience should not be underestimated . . . nor should it be confused with "laziness" or lack of sufficient motivation. "Convenience"

is what these students need in order to juggle work, family and community responsibilities. Limited time, money and the need for childcare make distance learning a viable alternative. (P. MacBrayne, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, June 5, 1997)

Although several members of the focus group had primarily worked with graduate students in distance programs rather than community college students, the thought was offered that some similarities may exist with motivation of associate degree students.

For these folks and at this level [graduate], the overwhelming motivation for enrollment in a program is career/personal advancement. They have had positive experiences with their previous education (it's been responsible for their having a job in the first place!), and they seek more education, because they understand that it will make them more worthy and valued in the workplace. . . . Overall, it readily appears that utilitarian self-interest drives their enrollment. (W. Prophet, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May, 1, 1997)

Several important concepts are described here: (a) the student's interest in a degree, in large part, is driving their enrollment, (b) job or career interests are strong motivators, and (c) their own self-interest is playing a roll in their decision. There may be other motivations as well.

I find that many students enroll because the course content itself is of particular interest to them or they thought enrolling in a college course would be fun. Others want to prove to themselves that they can successfully complete a college course. Some, with college degrees, enroll to take courses outside their field. Others want to earn a college degree . . . not necessarily because it will lead to a better job but because it is a lifelong goal that could not be pursued earlier. And, some younger students take courses at a distance prior to spending the money to go to a campus. (P. MacBrayne, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, June 5, 1997)

Several members of the focus group felt that incentives and enablers for prospective college students are also important factors that contribute to a

student's decision to enroll. Marketing is often most effective when it is by word of mouth. "Colleges can certainly get the word out via their regular communications, however I think word of mouth by actual users of this mode of delivery is the most effective technique" (E. Kabat, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, Apr 30, 1998).

One individual felt that these "personal influences" were stronger than external incentives: "The point about word of mouth or 'personal influence' over more impersonal information sources has been borne out by the research. I and a colleague, Wayne Babchuk, have a paper on that in The International Journal of Lifelong Education" (S. Courtney, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May 12, 1997).

But external factors such as peer and spouse support, flexibility from their employer to attend classes, child care provisions, even toll free phone numbers sometime make a difference in the student deciding to and actually enrolling in the class. However, accommodations for part time students may be less forthcoming at colleges than for full time students.

Although the majority of students are interested in pursuing degrees and the majority of community college students are part-time 65-75% depending on your college (70% at BCC), most of our institution have only made minimal concession to the degree needs of part-time students. Many distance learners are those students who want to complete a degree (over 50%) and do so before they are too old to benefit from it. (J. Dubois, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May, 8, 1997)

Barriers to participation were seen by the focus group to be perhaps even more significant for distance learners than for on-campus students, because the time factor and often the transportation factor are reduced to some extent when

the course is offered in a convenient, nearby location. But still other barriers become more significant, such as age and lack of self confidence, which also become deterrents to enrollment. It was suggested that perhaps the first barrier that must be overcome is self-doubt.

My hunch is that while all of these factors may seem to be jumbled up in a potential student's mind . . . that, in fact there is first the hurdle of "Do I want to do this?" and "Can I do this?", which must be gotten over before they are ready to think of convenience factors. (S. Courtney, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May 12, 1997)

Self-doubt and low self esteem represent dispositional barriers. Such similar barriers as lack of money, poor academic preparation, and lack of spouse support, as well as demands and limitations of their jobs may also discourage potential learners.

For many of these folks, the major obstacle to higher education may be the demands and pressures of their work roles and family lives. Regardless of how accessible an employer or an institution makes higher education to them, there is nonetheless the "day work" that still needs to be accomplished (employers can be infuriatingly contradictory about this) and the out-of-work time that belongs to not always wholly supportive spouses and children (if any). (W. Prophet, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May 1, 1997)

In similar research in Maine, MacBrayne (1993) found 13 unique potential barriers to be significant to the Associate Degree student. Listing them in rank order, MacBrayne commented on the list:

1. lack of money
2. lack of time
3. poor academic preparation
4. too far to travel

5. family responsibilities
6. lack of information
7. forgot how to study
8. low self-esteem
9. too old to learn
10. lack of interest
11. lack of support
12. no transportation
13. lack of childcare

This research was conducted with students who were enrolled, so they had overcome these barriers. We may find a very different picture if we were to survey those who have not enrolled. (P. MacBrayne, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, June 5, 1997)

The concepts of Time Dependence/Independence and Place

Dependence/Independence are other issues in distance learning that ultimately may influence whether or not a student enrolls and what form of distance learning is most appealing. A certain degree of self-discipline is essential for the success of the distance learner. But self-discipline becomes more important to the student's ultimate success as time and the location of the course become more independent. Less self-discipline tends to be needed when the course is more time and place dependent.

Many adult learners have developed a learning style which they recognize and gravitate to. Distance Learning (telecourses, online instruction) are forms of independent study, unlike two-way interactive instruction (extended learning--still time-dependent), and students who are motivated, are focused about goals, have the proper learning skills, are well-organized will select time-free and place-free learning modes for learning style preferences again because they know this is how they learn

better, and how they can be their most productive (control schedule and work when they are at their best). Again, this speaks to convenience but explains why convenience is significant. (J. Dubois, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May 8, 1997)

The prevalence of women taking distance learning courses may well be an emerging fact of education as pointed out by one focus group member. “The number of women enrolled part-time [in college classes] almost tripled from 1.2 million to 3.6 million between 1970 and 1993.” And, she added, “distance learning often constitutes an appealing alternative for working adults with career and family responsibilities” (S. Scinta, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, May 1, 1997).

Technology itself that is used in many distance learning classrooms can be intimidating to some students. Even taking a telecourse at home does require that the student correctly uses the VCR. And still another issue in relation to technology that will be more significant as colleges begin to offer courses on the Web involves problems with access to an efficient Internet provider, especially in rural states. However, the issue also raises questions of accessibility for any of the technologies that are used in distance education.

It would seem important to explore accessibility of various technologies, comfort level with those technologies and comfort with the different pedagogies each entails. We have been moving to a mix of technologies but have had to move slowly in the area of Web-based courses for our particular circumstances. (P. MacBrayne, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, June 6, 1997)

Another issue that was identified is that the age of distance learners may also be a factor in their comfort with the technology. If that is true, then the

question becomes, is there anything that the college can do to alleviate that concern?

Adults may be much more uncertain and fearful initially to use these technologies. During the initial era of audio conferencing it was fear of using the microphone. . . . With interactive television it was fear of the microphone and being “on-camera”. We need to help create a “comfort zone” with these new technologies to overcome the negative influences. (D. Bunting, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, June 20, 1997)

With the advances in technology and its increasing use in the daily lives of many Americans, the almost mystic aura of technology may eventually disappear. At greatest risk, in the mean time, may be the many adults from ages 30-60 who were past their formative years when the technological revolution began. High school and elementary students of today may be of less concern as they are being exposed to computers, and other technologies in their schools at early age.

Summary of the Online Focus Group

The purpose of the online focus group was to identify important issues and questions that could be included in the interview questions posed to the distance learning students. There were a number of issues that emerged from the online discussion.

The focus group identified convenience as an underlying motivating factor for enrolling in distance education, but convenience, *per se*, was seen as a broad concept that might be disguising additional factors. Degree seeking motivation, work or career advancement, are additional facets of these students’ lives that make it necessary to seek or be attracted to a non-traditional approach to college courses.

Marketing, more so by word of mouth than by overt college marketing campaigns, was seen as a potential and effective enabler. Personal influences, including spouse or family encouragement as well as flexibility from their employer to attend classes that would normally interfere with working hours, could also be important enablers.

Barriers that were seen as significant by members of the focus group included lack of money, lack of time, lack of transportation, lack of family or peer support, poor academic preparation or readiness, and self-doubt. The quintessential advantage of distance learning may be that it counters the barriers of time and transportation which can deprive a person of the ability of traveling to a campus unless they live or move to the vicinity of a campus.

Technology itself is an integral part of almost all forms of distance learning. It is essential, then, for students to feel comfortable with technology in order to succeed in the class. Fear of technology, it was felt, could be more of a problem for individuals over age 30 than for individuals who are traditional age college students or even those in their 20s.

Another aspect of distance learning is the independence of time and/or place that it can offer. Students who know their own learning style and motivational drive may be more interested in classes that are not only time independent but place independent as well. Conversely, less self-motivated students might tend to be more attracted and do better in a class that is more time and place dependent, such as live interactive television courses that meet

regularly with the instructor present in the classroom, and offer more structure to the learning process.

Reflections on the Focus Group Discussion

The focus group brought into play a myriad of issues concerning distance learning. Some of these issues, such as the convenience factor, degree seeking and career enhancement motives are well founded in the literature of participation. The concepts of time and place dependency and fear of technology is a relatively recent issue that will be further explored in the interviews. Age and gender also appear to be issues of importance, especially in view of the predominance of women over men who are learning at a distance.

Little discussion in the focus group centered on the previous educational experiences of students, but that may be from the perspective of educators who are involved with students who have enrolled, and not students who have not enrolled because of previous lack of success in learning. Another area that was mentioned only in passing is potential impact and influence that work and work time have on the college student. Yet, for the adults who must work, and perhaps are also responsible for children or a family, the extra demands of attending college classes cannot be easy. These issues will be further investigated in the questionnaire and the interviews.

Preparatory Work--The Questionnaire

Justification of the Questionnaire

Following the online focus group and the literature, which represent the perspectives of researchers, educators and other professionals, the study now moves to the level of the student. As with any exploratory study, the first activity is to collect some preliminary information about the population that is being studied. The most expedient way of doing this is through a short questionnaire that is sent to a broad representation of the group under study.

In this case, over 7000 individuals were identified as having taken at least one distance learning course from Kirkwood Community College during the previous four consecutive terms. The time span of four terms (Fall, Spring, Summer, Fall) was seen as a long enough time frame during which students who had enrolled would seem to indicate that they were making a purposeful effort at pursuing a degree at a distance. It would have been possible to draw from a population of currently enrolled students only, since, ultimately, those chosen for an interview preferably would be students who were enrolled that term (Fall 97). However, when the questionnaire was developed, that criteria was not yet firmly established. It was an advantage for the students to be currently enrolled, but not essential to the research. Also, the original dissertation proposal did not include this additional questionnaire phase of the research. The interview candidates were to be selected directly from the list of distance students, and a stratified sample was to be sent letters of inquiry concerning their interest in participating

in an in-depth interview. But, in the end, this additional step allowed for some preparatory information to be gathered, in addition to effectively identifying potential interview students.

This population of students offered this researcher a fertile group from which to draw individuals for in-depth interviews. A procedure was used that would help identify successful distance learners rather than those who had simply tried a course at a distance with no interest or intention of pursuing a degree at a distance. It was also necessary to incorporate a method of communicating with the potential interviewees by phone.

Thus the questionnaire served three purposes: (a) to collect initial demographic information about the population, (b) to collect initial information about the motives of participation of these students, and (c) to act as a screening and selection device with which to identify appropriate and willing students who would participate in an in-depth interview. In the following section, I will describe the results and the analysis of the information gathered through the questionnaires that were returned from the sample of distance learning students.

Questionnaire Selection Process

Following my initial contact with the Director of Institutional Research and Enrollment Services at Kirkwood Community College and their Director of Distance Learning, I received by email and later in printed copy a computer generated listing of all students who had enrolled in one or more distance learning courses during the previous four terms.

The initial list of distance learners totaled over 7000 entries. To allow for a certain degree of randomness, one name was selected from approximately every other page in the 400 page listing that was printed out. These students had enrolled in at least one distance class during the current and three previous terms (fall 96 through fall 97). The sample of 210 names was selected from this population based on the following criteria: (a) enrollment in at least six hours of distance classes in a previous semester, (b) a modicum of success in their studies (not predominantly Fs or Ws), and (c) current enrollment in a distance class (fall 97).

These 210 students were each sent the student questionnaire (see Appendix B). A follow-up letter with another questionnaire was mailed 10 days after the first to those who had not returned a survey. Since the purpose of the questionnaire was not to get a high return rate for a quantitative analysis, but rather to serve as a selection device for the interviews, no additional mass mailings were made to the students.

Demographic information

Ninety-three valid questionnaires were returned, giving a return rate of 44.3%. The average age of the initial sample of 210 distance learning students who were sent questionnaires was 28.8 years and ranged from 18 to 55 years of age. The average age of the 93 students who returned questionnaires was 31.3 and ranged from 18 to 52 years of age. The average age of the 56 students agreeing to be interviewed was 33.9. The average age of the 23 students that

were selected for an interview was 35.2 and ranged in age from 19 to 50 years of age. The students who were interviewed were not meant to be a random sampling of the distance learning population. Instead, the students who were interviewed were meant to reflect a balance of gender, geography, major field, and age from a group of successful distance learners.

An analysis of the questionnaire responses showed that:

74% of the respondents were female.

80% of the students worked at least part time.

32% worked 40 hr. or more per week.

57% had access to a computer in their home.

Average distance to a college site for a distance course was 11.8 miles, and for some it was less than one mile.

89% had enrolled in a live interactive TV (ITV) course.

78% had enrolled in a telecourse or Guided Self-Study (GSS).

5% had enrolled in an online course.

68% had enrolled in two or more types (formats) of distance learning courses.

24% had only enrolled in live ITV courses.

8% had only enrolled in GSS courses.

Of the four students who had enrolled in an online course, all but one had also taken both ITV and GSS courses.

The questionnaires yielded a variety of data that are reflective of the breadth of interests of these distance learning students. Those respondents who returned questionnaires resided in 29 different communities that had populations, according to the Iowa Department of Transportation, from 166 to

108,772 (1990 Census data). The students represented an interest in 46 different career fields or declared majors. No one career field or major tended to dominate. These career fields clustered among the 12 categories identified in Table 1, where $\underline{N} = 93$.

Table 1

Representative Career Fields (Majors) of the Students

Major	\underline{n}	Major	\underline{n}
Accounting	7	Human Services	10
Business	13	Management	3
Computer related	8	Nursing	6
Criminal Justice	7	Office Admin	4
Education	9	Psychology	5
Fire Science	2	Other	19

It is also interesting to note that the vast majority of these students, 68%, had taken distance courses in more than one medium. Most of them had enrolled in live interactive television courses as well as Guided Self-Study telecourses. Only 8% and 24% respectively had taken only GSS or ITV courses.

Motive Statements

The motive statements that were listed in the questionnaire were taken from the literature and were meant to determine the primary motives for enrollment held by the students. The 14 questions sought to identify which motives were most commonly held by these distance students. The students were asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale with regard to the extent that they agreed or disagreed with the statement. These motive statements clustered among the following: (a) degree seeking, (b) job enhancing, (c) information seeking, (d) outside factor, and (e) participating.

The students identified strongest agreement with five of the motive statements. They were with statements 1, 3, 7, 11, and 13, and are listed here in rank order by mean score. The entire list of motive statements with the mean score of each statement and the standard deviation is given in Table 2.

11. I wanted to start earning a college degree (Degree seeking) $\bar{M} = 4.52$,

1. These courses are required in my degree program (Degree seeking)
 $\bar{M} = 4.48$,

7. These courses were offered in a location/time convenient to me (Outside factor) $\bar{M} = 4.39$,

3. These courses are important to my future (Information seeking)
 $\bar{M} = 4.33$,

13. These courses will help me to acquire skills/knowledge needed for a job (Information seeking) $\bar{M} = 4.32$.

Table 2

List of Motive Statements, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Most of these courses are required in my degree program (D).	4.48	0.92
2. The course content is of interest to me (I).	3.90	0.88
3. These courses are important to my future (I).	4.33	0.93
4. I thought taking college courses would be fun (P).	2.67	1.11
5. My employer wanted me to take these courses (J).	1.35	0.90
6. A friend or spouse encouraged me to take these courses (O).	2.12	1.47
7. These courses were offered in a location/time convenient to me (O).	4.39	0.90
8. The courses will improve my chances of promotion in my work (J).	2.95	1.55
9. I wanted to take college courses rather than learn on my own (P).	3.52	1.38
10. I wanted to prove to myself that I can successfully complete a college level course (P).	3.64	1.46
11. I wanted to start earning a college degree (D).	4.52	0.95
12. I took the courses because I wanted to meet people (P).	1.95	1.05
13. These courses will help me to acquire some of the skills or knowledge I need for a job (I).	4.32	1.10
14. Other (please describe)	--	--

Note. Key to Table 2 abbreviation: D--Degree seeking, I--Information seeking, P--Participating, J--Job enhancing, O--Outside factor.

Least agreement overall were with statements 5, 6, and 12, and are listed here in reverse rank order by mean score.

5. My employer wanted me to take these courses (Job enhancing)

$\bar{M} = 1.35,$

12. I took these courses because I wanted to meet people (Participating)

$\bar{M} = 1.95,$

6. A friend or spouse encouraged me to take these courses (Outside factor)

$\bar{M} = 2.12.$

The motives identified by the ranking of these statements provide an initial look at the reasons and rationale of the students' motives of enrollment. Three concepts seem to emerge at the top of the list: (a) a degree, (b) their future, and (c) convenient location and/or time. The prevalence of degree and job motivation by the majority of these students, despite age variances, would indicate that most of these students are purposefully pursuing a degree that would enhance their future and most likely their quality of career. The fact that these courses are available at a convenient time and/or location seems also to be very important, ranking third among the various responses. Whether the ultimate purpose of their coursework is job related or if there are other notions of purpose will be explored during the interviews.

Interview Candidate Selection

The third function of the questionnaire was to provide a vehicle for identifying appropriate students who would be willing to participate in an

in-depth interview. Of the 93 valid surveys that were returned, 56 students indicated a willingness to be interviewed and provided a phone number for contacting them. The final selection of interviewees was made in consideration of gender and age parameters that were identified in the methodology. The final selection was also determined by: (a) attempting to acquire a geographic distribution among the seven regional college centers, (b) attempting to acquire a balance of career fields (there was an abundance of business related majors), and (c) attempting to acquire a representation of ages in each age category from 19 to 50 years of age.

Summary of Questionnaire Findings

The student questionnaires served three purposes as described earlier. The questionnaires did indeed provide some interesting and essential demographic data that will be very useful as a starting point for the interview students. In addition, the motive preferences of the students who returned the survey instrument offers the first glimmer of information revealing motives and reasons for enrollment of these distance learners. And thirdly, the questionnaires helped to identify students who were willing to participate in an interview.

The results of the student surveys seem to indicate that three primary forces are at work among the majority of the students who returned the distance learning questionnaire. Their primary motives for enrollment appear to be that they are predominately degree seeking students and information seeking students. And that the distance courses are offered at a time and place that is

convenient to them appears to be a key factor in their decision to enroll. The goal orientation of some of the students is apparent in their looking toward applying the information gained from the courses to their future careers.

The diversity of careers represented among the distance learning students seems to indicate that there is an interest in the course offerings and a degree that transcends individual disciplines or career fields. It is also probable that many of these students are pursuing an Associate in Arts degree almost exclusively through distance education courses, while others might simply be completing some of their requirements and electives in a more convenient manner than attending on campus.

Eighty-eight percent of these students had enrolled in at least one live interactive television course, while 78% had enrolled in at least one telecourse or Guided Self-Study (GSS) course. But 68% of the survey respondents had taken a combination of distance courses, i.e., ITV, GSS, and/or Internet courses. Almost a quarter (24%) of the sample had only taken their distance courses via live ITV, while 8% had only taken distance courses via GSS. It seems that a relatively small percentage of the distance students prefer to limit their coursework to only one form of learning or another.

Of the four who enrolled in Internet courses, three had previously taken both ITV and GSS courses. The fourth student had previously taken a GSS course only. In other words, they were veteran distance learners. This may change as

the years progress, and as colleges begin to attract a percentage of students who will prefer to take all of their distance learning courses via the Internet.

Perhaps one of the most striking characteristics of distance learning programs at community colleges across the country is the gender distribution that appears to be very consistent from state to state. A significantly higher percentage of distance learners in Associate Degree programs are female. Of the entire sample of Kirkwood Community College distance learning students who were sent surveys, 74% were female. In the MacBrayne (1993) and the Rasmussen (1992) studies, 78% and 75% respectively were female, and all of these students were at the community college or in an associate degree program. Of the Kirkwood distance learning students under age 25, 62% were female compared to an on campus representation of just over 50% (Sabotta, 1998a). What draws more women to distance learning classrooms than men? That is a question for further research and possible investigation during the third phase (student interviews) of this study. However, the strong plurality (80%) of those distance learning students who work (with almost one third working full time or more) might suggest that their lives are already full, and the classes they take are truly squeezed into their limited extra time.

Conclusions From The Preparatory Work

In conclusion, the factors that influence adults to enroll in this community college distance learning program appear to be strongly influenced by the student's desire to seek a degree and prepare themselves for a future career, even

when they are in their 40s or 50s. Although many factors, both positively and negatively, might be affecting their decision, this predominantly female population appears to be strongly attracted to the convenience of taking courses that lead to a degree, that are near to their homes, and are offered at times that are flexible, or allow minimal intrusion into the demands of their lives.

The information gleaned from the preparatory phases of this study, namely, the online focus group and the student questionnaires will now provide a solid foundation and direction with which to move into the in-depth student interviews. The following chapter will present the results of the interviews that were held with the 23 distance education students in the final phase of this study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The Interviews—An Overview

In this chapter I will present the findings of the interviews. Four primary themes were explored in this study: (a) motives, (b) enablers, (c) barriers, and (d) technology. In the following sections, each of these themes will be described in turn.

The interviews became for me a series of journeys. These were journeys into the lives of 23 distance learning students. All were unique; all were interesting from a sociological standpoint, as well as an educational standpoint. As with all journeys, one encounters many things that are new, while some things seem familiar. Each student described to me their background, their goals, their working experiences prior to and during their college life, as well as their life just before they made the decision to enter college through distance learning courses.

The backgrounds and experiences of these students may or may not differ significantly from students who enroll in traditional on-campus classes--that was not the purpose of this study--but their stories offer rich insight into the life experiences that preceded their enrollment in distance learning classes.

There were, for most of these individuals, many factors that contributed to their decision to enroll. On the following pages are the descriptions of the various factors that affected, both positively and negatively, each student's decision to enroll in their distance learning program. As a result of the focus

group and the student questionnaire, four main categories emerged as being relevant to this study: (a) motives, (b) enablers, (c) barriers, and (d) technology. Each of these factors will be considered in turn.

The names of the students used in this study are pseudonyms. They are used here to protect the anonymity of the students. However, the circumstances, age, gender and other relevant information are accurate representations of the students. Only the names have been changed.

Description of the Interview Group

Of the original list of 7000 distance learning students (students who had taken one or more courses identified by the college as distance learning during the previous four terms), a sample of 210 veteran distance students were sent a screening questionnaire to facilitate the selection of at least 20 students who would be interviewed (see Chapter 3 for a description of methodology). Of that group, 56 students agreed to be interviewed. The students who were selected for interviews represented a stratified sampling by age of those who (a) returned a questionnaire, and (b) indicated a willingness to be interviewed. A predetermined array of students was selected to reflect the gender and age range of the larger sample of distance learners. For example, at least 60% were to be female, while at least 25% were to be male; at least 20% were to be 24 years of age or under, while at least 50% were to be over 24 years of age. Other efforts were made to balance the interview group in appropriate ways, such as geographically and by career or major.

Ethnicity was not considered during the selection of interview candidates. Approximately 7% of the student population at the college (Sabotta, 1998a) are identified as minority students, it was not felt that this factor was important to consider for the selection process. It is unknown to this researcher whether any of the students interviewed were of a minority background.

A minimum of 20 students was to be interviewed. In fact, 23 students were interviewed. Three of the students were male¹ (13%) and 20 were female (87%). They ranged in age from 19 years to 50 years. The age distribution of the 23 interviewees is given in Table 3.

Table 3

Number in Each Age Category of Students Interviewed

Age	<u>n</u>	Percent
19-24	4	17.4
25-29	2	8.7
30-34	5	21.7
35-39	4	17.4
40-44	3	13.0
45-50	5	21.7

¹ A total of six men were contacted for interviews, but three of them did not come to the scheduled interview on two different occasions. An additional male was contacted by letter and agreed to an interview, but repeated phone messages failed to provide any further contact.

During the selection process, an effort was made to have a fairly wide representation of majors, i.e., not mostly business majors, and not mostly general education majors. The career fields or majors represented by those students who were interviewed are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

List of Majors of Students Interviewed

Accounting (2)	Human Services (2)
Business Administration (3)	Liberal Arts (2)
Computer Science (2)	Management Development (2)
Criminal Justice (2)	Office Administration (2)
Education (2)	Print & Photo Communications (1)
Fire Science (1)	Psychology (1)
Health Information Management (1)	

Note. The number in parentheses indicates the number of individuals of those interviewed majoring in that particular field ($N = 23$).

Summary of Characteristics

These distance learning students represented a stratified cross section of successful distance learners who had enrolled at Kirkwood Community College during the period under study. These students lived in communities of various sizes, ranging from less than 200 to over 100,000 in population. Their ages

ranged from 19 to 50 years. Their major areas of study represent a diversity of interests being pursued by distance learners. And, although this was not a random sample of majors, it was a purposive sample that was more of a cross section or a representative group of distance students than a random sample might provide.

Motives

The research question that this section explores is: What motives of participation are present among college students who enroll in distance education courses? There is much research on the general topic of motives of participation as described in Chapter 2. The following section of this dissertation delves into the motives of participation and background of distance learning students. In order to offer the reader a sense of context for these factors, some additional background information is offered on selected distance learning students at the beginning of the section. This will be followed by a listing of the questions asked during the interviews and responses from the students relating to the factors that contributed to their motives.

Background Information on Four Students

At the beginning of each of the following four sections, a description of a particular student is presented to help give a sense of context to the numerous elements of information that were taken from the interviews. The four students are Sharon--age 38, Tracy--age 32, Nancy--age 24, and Thomas--age 49. These individuals come from different walks of life, and arrived at their decision to

enroll in distance courses from different motives and life circumstances. Sharon and Nancy have taken both live interactive television courses (ITV) and Guided Self-Study courses, while Nancy and Thomas have taken all of their distance courses via an ITV system. It is hoped that their stories may help the reader to understand the thought processes and living experiences that these students felt as they considered and then determined to enroll in distance learning courses.

Background Information--Sharon

Sharon is 38 and, with her spouse, is a parent of four children ages 5 to 20 years. Sharon is a high school graduate, but never attended any other college. Her childhood was seriously disrupted with her parents divorcing when she was three. She spent part of her childhood with her mother, but was later placed with her father because of her mother's affliction with alcoholism. Her father worked two jobs to make ends meet, including one tending bar at night. When the state found that her father worked at a bar, Sharon and her siblings were placed in foster homes, several over time. One of the foster families adopted Sharon, but she did not want to be adopted and ran away. She was placed in the Quakerdale Children's Home at age 12. There, Sharon was given responsibilities that she enjoyed receiving, such as choosing her own clothes, and making decisions for herself. She later attended high school and succeeded.

Now, years later as Sharon attempted to reenter education, she was awarded a scholarship from Quakerdale:

Then when I started taking these classes, I had to do a report one day on group homes or something in that area. I picked group homes because I

had been in one. I wrote and got all the information and they wrote back and sent me all kinds of pamphlets and stuff, and said that I should apply for that scholarship. I thought, there's no way I'll get it. I thought, I'm 38 and they're probably giving them to like high school graduates. I got it for two semesters, \$1000.

Along with her family, Sharon lives about two miles from the college center where she takes most of her classes, and 45 miles from the main campus. Sharon is majoring in Criminal Justice and would like to be a probation officer in a moderate sized city. She is also interested in a career called Evidence Technician. But the decision to enroll was a difficult one. She described some of her thoughts before enrolling:

One thing was, could we afford it? Was I going to be able to do it, plus raising a family, working part-time, and going to school. There's a lot of pressure to think about. Like I said, my ex-husband always told me that I wasn't smart enough to go. That really did worry me, because I hadn't been in school for 20 years. I was very nervous about it . . . it was a difficult decision.

Sharon works part time now at a movie rental store. Her husband has a full time job. But for six years, Sharon worked as a receptionist for a storage company. It was a "low paying job; no chance for advancement. College was something that I always wanted to do. I had my son so young, at that time it wasn't an option."

Perhaps the desire for something better triggered her eventual decision to seek the information and to enroll. She describes that day in this way:

I think when I was at work that day, I just had a really bad day. I think we had talked about getting a raise and it was right around Christmas time. When I first started, he gave us--I'd only been there a month--a huge Christmas bonus and a ham. The next year we got like the same bonus and the ham. The next year it didn't go well and he didn't give us the ham. The next year he took away the bonus completely and gave us a sweatshirt.

His company was getting bigger, yet he was giving employees . . . less. I just felt like I wanted something more.

For Sharon, the experiences that led to her decision to enroll in her first distance learning course are somewhat typical of a number of students whose work experiences have become less than satisfactory. In order to investigate life stories such as Sharon's, a series of questions that relate to their motives of enrollment and life before classes were formulated and asked of each of the distance education students. Their responses will be presented in this section of the study.

Interview Questions About Motives

In a previous section, I dealt with, among other things, motive statements of the distance students who returned the student questionnaires. By far the most common motive was degree seeking. In fact, four of the five most common responses were either related to obtaining a degree or job related. The other motive statement in the top five had to do with the advantage of the distance course being offered—"at a time and/or place that was convenient."

To more thoroughly understand these motivations, and to delve into the heart of this study, the interviews explored on a more in-depth level, what was behind the students interest in obtaining a degree through distance education and improving their job skills.

Interview questions that explored motives for enrolling included questions about the following:

- Student's background
- Work environment
- Type and satisfaction with work and career
- Long range plans
- Goals in general
- Goals in distance learning
- Previous education
- What the student hoped to accomplish through distance education
- Life before classes
- Problems encountered (what they didn't like)
- Trigger situation for enrollment
- Organizational affiliations.

In exploring these factors in the student's life experiences, it was hoped that a general picture of the basis and precursors of enrollment would emerge. The following section will provide excerpts from selected students on several of these topics. In each example that is given, the student's pseudonym is indicated along with their age.

Life Before Classes

One of the more telling areas of inquiry resulted from questions about the students' life before they enrolled in distance classes. In addition to Sharon's experiences, the following passages from other students also illustrate a sense of dissatisfaction with the respective jobs that these individuals had.

- I was working at three jobs, part-time. Working like 28 out of 30 days, solid, full-time. I was working for a nursing service out of Dubuque which had you stay for twenty-four hours, like a week at a time. I was working nights at the Manor Care and running back and forth to a resident, and working, watching her. . . . So, after working and getting burned out I thought there's got to be a better way of life. (Sandra, 47)
- I had worked at this one bar for 10 years. We closed it down. I sat back and drew unemployment for a little over a year. I started working at the bowling alley and helping out. Started out just to be helping out and then pretty much turned back into full-time. I just didn't want to do it anymore. I felt like I'd put my time in. That's what made me decide to move on. My son graduated and I just felt like it was time to go on. (Delores, 37)

As reported earlier, 80% of the students who responded to the survey worked at least part time, and about a third worked at least one full time job. A thread that permeates these comments is that many of these students shared a common sense of dissatisfaction with the jobs that they had. Many of these individuals had been in the work force for a number of years, and in some cases, had achieved a high level of skill in their field. However, limitations on their potential for advancement, or insufficient salary raises also seems to have contributed to their sense of dissatisfaction.

Others who were interviewed explained their sense of wanting to take charge of their situation. For some, it was a result of their job situation, as in Roberta's case. For Vicki, it came after a recent divorce.

- I worked full-time at the a Financial Group, as a benefit specialist. It was a dead end. Even though they said there was room for advancement, if you didn't go out and drink and party with the manager, you didn't advance. I felt like I was stuck there and was just putting in my time. Got pregnant, ended up out of work on disability. Everybody at work was kind of frosty about that. I elected not to go back to work after I had my child. I don't think I could have anyway. It would have been really hard. Took a part-time job, just locally in town

at a video store. That was a reality break. I felt kind of bored, maybe not bored, but like, is this it? The rest of my life's going to be like this? That wasn't acceptable so I decided to put some changes into effect. (Roberta, 36)

- At that time I was working full-time, same as now. I was married then. So, my kids were really little and I was basically coming home and taking care of the family situation. That was mostly it. After I got a divorce, I all of a sudden got this new, "It's time to look out for me," attitude. I probably never ever would have went back had I stayed married, just because I had my place. That's hard to say, but I probably wouldn't have had the time or the drive to do it then, like I do now. (Vicki, 31)

Those students who felt a sense of dissatisfaction with their job or their potential for advancement, came to a point in their lives where a change of course seemed appropriate. In each case education was the answer they chose. For some of these individuals, there was a definite event or set of circumstances to which they could point, that was a precursor to their enrollment. Such a trigger event is not uncommon in people making life changing decisions. To explore that facet, the students who were interviewed were asked if they had such an event, and then to describe what happened.

Trigger Event

Related to their life prior to enrolling, for some, there may have been an event or a situation which seemed to act as a triggering mechanism. According to Aslanian and Brickell (1980), these students may have been experiencing a disequilibrium in their lives, and, following a triggering event, the students anticipate and hope that their new tack will result in balance once again in their lives. This trigger, when present, moved the individual to take action, in this case

to enroll. The following comments concerning such a trigger were made by several of the students.

- The lady I was taking care of, and I had been at her house for two years, she was dying. I knew I had to do something. I could not go on and take care of anybody else. I've always wanted to go to college; I just never had the opportunity. Things just kind of--. I filled out the application for financial aid and I thought if it comes back, but I don't get any money I just won't go. If I get money, I'm going. Everything worked out. (Theresa, 31)
- I think it had to do with my mom passing away. I think I just set a goal for myself to prove to my dad--. I don't think my dad thought that I was going to get anywhere, and I thought to myself that I had to prove to him that I could actually do something on my own. I happened to rely on him to get through something. I think that was the big reason for going to school. (Kirk, 31)
- I got into a fight with my boss. It was just one of those things that--. They teach you in management that you're suppose to, or I guess especially if you're the grocery chain, you're all suppose to work together, but yet you were suppose to kind of cut each other's throats. I didn't like a situation that had happened there too well and I went and asked him about it and he yelled at me. I never got yelled at before and it just kind of made me mad and I thought, well, I don't know if I want to put up with this the rest of my life. I thought the first step was more education. That's probably what triggered me off to go back to school. (Kimberly, 41)
- My drug counselor told me that I wouldn't do it. She just challenged me. Pretty much, made me mad, so I just did it. . . . I don't know if I would ever have started [otherwise]. Dana, 25)

Although most of the students who were interviewed had previously received their high school diploma, some of the students were attracted to the appeal of completing a General Education Diploma (GED). That became the trigger for them to enroll in a full college credit course and ultimately, a degree program.

- I think I just wanted something different to do. [Hadn't thought about it] at all before that, no. Then I came up and got my GED, so I finished that. And then I just decided to keep going. (Tracy, 32)
- I think the availability of funding to help me be able to go to college. . . . I wanted the GED, and then after I got that, Ok, I can go further. I can do this. (Kathy, 47)

Reasons for Enrolling and Goals

Related to a triggering event and their life before classes, the students were also asked about their goals for enrolling in college and specifically in taking distance learning courses. Besides the degree seeking motive, several students also saw distance education as a means of doing something for themselves, as described in the following excerpts.

- I wanted to better myself. I hope to achieve a degree. to find a different job. Become self-supporting, and just better myself. (Delores, 37).
- I wanted more for myself. I wanted a career instead of just a job. Something to enjoy. I want to have a job where I want to get up and go to work everyday. A job that I can help, maybe work with kids that are troubled teens or something like that. Something that, you know, you're making a difference in someone's life. It was real important for me to do something. . . . I wanted to do something for me. . . . I guess as you get older you get more selfish. (Sharon, 38)
- It was because I wanted to do something for myself. Yeah, it was definitely my turn. I needed to do something, I couldn't just stay around the house and do nothing; the kids were gone. (Theresa, 31)
- I wanted time to myself. I wanted something for myself. The distance learning because that is what was available, here. I could get it close to home. It was readily available and close to home. Even if I would have decided to go back to school at that time, and there wouldn't have been this here, I probably wouldn't have done it. I definitely wouldn't have taken as many classes because driving back and forth is not feasible. (Vicki, 31)

For some of the students a strong sense of self-worth and accomplishment became part of their goals in pursuing a degree through distance learning. And the advantage of having a new career to show for the effort was very important to them, as the following comments exemplify.

- I wanted to finish my two-year degree. I didn't have to drive to Cedar Rapids. . . . I want to get that degree. I want to be in a position where if I get the opportunity to buy this office, I'll have the financial backing because I've got the education to back up; that I'll be able to prove to show to them that I can do this. I want the satisfaction that I did it! That I competed with the kids that are coming out of high school and I did a good enough job to say that I made it at this stage--pat myself on the back. (Monica, 43)
- I wanted to go to college. It meant that I was stepping out into the world, like taking my first step towards being an adult, even though I already had a child. I was taking that first step towards where 95% of the people are. (Nancy, 24)
- It sounds so terrible. It was because I didn't want to go back to work. My job was a dead end job. It paid good. I just wasn't going anywhere with it. It was like I was looking for something more than that. I felt like I was better than that, more capable. Part of it was due to the fact that I did not believe that I would be able to get a job that I would be satisfied with, without it [college]. (Roberta, 36)

There also was also evidence of extrinsic motivation, especially considering the potential of better paying jobs, and advancement opportunities in their careers. The following comments illustrate this point.

- Besides a better job and better pay? Better benefits? I don't know what else. That's what I started out for. I wanted to get out of there [nursing]. (Sandra, 47)
- I wanted advancement. . . . I was going to make more money, for basically doing the same job. And probably because it was convenient. (Ellen, 46)
- I wanted to find a good paying job, which I enjoy, or which had to do with bookkeeping, which I enjoy. (Karen, 50)

- I wanted a degree in law enforcement. There is some different hiring criteria and some police departments don't care if you have college and some do. I heard that there was a movement for at least two-year college. I wanted to get that, and if I didn't get it I didn't need it. And because it was closer than a regular campus. (Melissa, 26)

Hope to Achieve

Fundamental to the motives for a given action is the underlying desire to achieve something. Although goals and motives both point to reasons that an action is taken, another question was asked about what the student thought they would like to achieve as a result of their course work.

For most of these students their primary interest was in completing a degree, which was consistent with comments made regarding goals and their reasons for enrolling. Sixteen of the 23 students (70%) mentioned obtaining a degree in response to the question about what they hoped to achieve. Eleven of the 23 (48%) mentioned a job or career as the goal of their efforts. Four (17%) identified learning or knowledge as their ultimate achievement. However, many of these students mentioned a combination of getting a degree, a new job and learning or knowledge. The following excerpts illustrate this interest:

- I just wanted a degree. When I first came, I was going to go into the sign language translator program, but there was no way I was going to stay at Kirkwood as long as it took. I could almost have a BA in that time. I thought, no you're going to go for the big one. That's what happened. And knowledge. All the same things I would get out of a classroom. (Theresa, 31)
- Get my two-year degree; possibly move on to a four. And keep learning. Need to learn something everyday. (Helen, 39)
- What I want to achieve is very specific. I want my certificate in my fire science program. I have the corresponding college background courses for my AA in fire science. (Thomas, 49)

- I wanted to have a degree, so I could have a career instead of just a receptionist job. To do something that I enjoy and help other people from it. (Sharon, 38)

For several of the students, their interest in getting a degree was linked to another achievement that they saw as being very important to them, that of increasing their own self esteem and self confidence.

- I hoped to get the degree. Learning, I love learning. More knowledge. To keep confidence and higher self esteem. (Melissa, 26)
- To get a job as a secretary. And being able to fit into a job, knowing that I'm capable of the job. Before I would look at these ads for office people and I would know that I couldn't type, so I couldn't take the job. Now I look at these ads and say, "I can do this." (Karen, 50)
- I wanted to have a degree. I wanted to have more respect from work because of it, and I do. I do have a lot more respect at work. I wanted to open the possibilities if I wanted to make a job change, to have the opportunities. (Kimberly, 41)

Some of the students, especially some of those around age 30 and under, were more uncertain and nebulous about what they hoped to achieve, as indicated in the following comments:

- Obtain my self-goals. To be whatever I want to be. I don't know what that is, so you can't ask. (Dana, 25)
- To learn more about the world. I suppose, [I would] like to get a better job, to make better money. (Michelle, 23)
- I don't know, knowledge I guess! I don't know, I just like to find things out. I like to take classes all the time. I like to learn new things all the time. (Tracy, 32)
- I guess I wanted to show myself that I could get an "A" in a college course. I guess I want to do the best I can, striving for an "A". I guess I would hope to achieve the knowledge that I'm expected to gain. (Todd, 20)

When asked what they wanted to achieve, many of these students cited that their primary interest was in completing a degree, but to conclude that the degree for its own sake was their only goal would be inaccurate. Tied to their degree was the resulting improvement in their job opportunities or job skills. This was more prevalent among those over 30 years of age. The specificity of their goals could be articulated more clearly among those non-traditional students who had already experienced a working environment for a period of time. For them, the degree would lead them to a better job, and perhaps more satisfaction, greater self esteem, even more respect from others. Learning for its own sake was actually cited in conjunction with a degree and job enhancement. For many of these students, the degree, a better job, and their enjoyment of learning were as one.

In addition to the motives, goals and triggers that provide an indication of the decision making process in a student's decision to enroll, two other factors that are often investigated concerning participation in education. These other factors are the student's previous education and their involvement in social organizations. They were explored during the interviews, and the results of those comments are presented next.

Previous Education

Almost all of the distance learning students that were interviewed were high school graduates. Only two had not finished high school--they each had completed a General Education Diploma (GED) prior to their enrolling in college

courses. One of the students was age 32, the other age 47. Eight of the students had at least one parent who had attended college, and one student reported that both of her parents attended college and completed degrees. In general, the majority of these distance education students fit the profile of non-traditional students who had returned to continue their education as an adult after reasonably successful previous educational experiences.

Organizational Involvement

The students were asked if they had been or were currently involved in organizations, in order to get a sense of their interest in social and group affiliations. Of the 23 interviewees, 8 had not been involved in any organizations, 6 had minimal involvement, such as with a high school club, and 9 had been involved in a group or organization in an ongoing basis as an adult. Few conclusions can be drawn from this information. Although 40% of these students were involved in organizations, and an additional 25% had some involvement in high school, there was still one third of the group that reported no affiliation with any organized group even in high school.

Summary of Motives

As students consider and then decide to enroll in college level courses offered through distance education technology, they will often pass through a period when their thoughts and concerns result in a sense of disequilibrium. Something isn't quite right in their lives, and often that sense is a result of dissatisfaction with their jobs. For some, a trigger event causes them to look

critically at their life situation, and, at that point, they perceive that education and a degree may result in improved opportunities for a more satisfying career.

This sequence of events has apparently played itself out among a number of students who have come to a college to enroll in a course of study. The *degree because of a job motivation* seems to be quite strong and prevalent among these students. There are, however, other elements in their lives that have a part in the decision making process, particularly the triggering event.

Some of the traditional indicators of continuing education, such as prior education and social or organizational involvement were explored during the interviews. The previous education factor could be considered as corresponding to previous research--most of the students had completed high school, a few had had some previous exposure to college. But two individuals were high school dropouts. Their completion of their GEDs resulted in their enrolling in the college credit courses that moved them into the path of a degree through distance learning. There was broad range of social involvement, and little conclusion could be drawn from this facet of the interviews.

The motives, goals and life experiences that act as precursors to a student's decision to enroll may be numerous and complex. They appear to be strongly connected to the student's working situation, especially where a sense of disequilibrium from job dissatisfaction may cause an individual to question their situation. But in order to take action, the student sometimes experiences a triggering mechanism or situation that compels them to take action at this critical

time. But there may be external factors that enhance the chances of the student actually enrolling in classes. Those enhancers are sometimes called *enablers*, and that is the subject of the next section of this study.

Enablers

The research question that this section explores is: What enablers or encouragement factors are perceived to exist by distance education students? Such enablers as marketing efforts allows the student to learn about courses, the college, and distance learning opportunities. But encouragement and support that comes from a spouse or friends also can help a student reach a decision. And certainly financial aid has been an important enabler to numerous college students, especially at the community college level. The following section explores the concept of enablers as they impact the student's decision to enroll.

Background Information--Tracy

Tracy is 32 years old and has four children. Her first was born when she was sixteen, and she had three children before her 20th birthday. She did not like high school. She didn't do well, and did not graduate from high school. But as an adult, she completed a GED program, and then, just kept going as she began her college years.

Tracy works full time at a day care center, and began taking distance courses in the fall of 1996 at the college center in her community, which is only a mile away from her home. Her major is Human Services, and she hopes to finish

her degree and get a good job. "I know I want to work with children and maybe counseling of some type . . . [in a city] like Cedar Rapids, something like that."

Her spouse has been "very supportive" of her taking courses and working toward a degree. That support has been very important to her.

Very important, especially when you're having a tough subject and you want to quit, and they kinda give you a little support that you need to get you through. Sometimes I get really upset and call and, "Oh no, no hang in there." Then I hang in there, and it gets better.

Before making her decision to enroll, Tracy had to consider how she felt about her life and what she was doing. She described her life this way:

I had a daycare in my home then. Non-driving. I didn't have my driver's license either . . . I'd never had one. Just, bored, I guess. I mean, it was all I could do because I didn't have a license, really, and I wanted to stay home with the kids until they were a little older, so . . . I think I just wanted something different to do . . . Then I came up, and got my GED. So, I finished that. And then I just decided to keep going! I think I was just tired of staying home and wanted to get out and do something. [The center] being here in town made it a lot easier to be able to go.

For Tracy, the education that she now seeks is her way of reaching for a more satisfying life. A life that was not possible before with the family responsibilities that she has had. Her experience with children can now help her prepare for a new career that will capitalize on her previous experiences and goals for a more professional job. The support that she now receives from her husband, according to her report, has probably helped Tracy a great deal in making her decision and in being able to persist in her efforts in distance education. And the fact that the college center was very close to where she lived became another enabler that made it possible for her to become a distance learning student.

Interview Questions About Enablers

Interview questions that explored factors that acted more as an enabling element included questions about:

Support received from spouse and other family members

Support received from friends and from co-workers

Importance of that support

Receipt and importance of financial aid

College or distance learning marketing efforts of which they were aware

Assistance they received from the college center

Proximity to the center

Accommodations made by the workplace to allow them to take courses

Other factors that they felt contributed to or made their decision to enroll easier.

In exploring these factors from the student's perspective, it was hoped that a sense of how important these enablers were to the student as each considered whether to enroll would be learned. The following section will provide excerpts from selected students on several of these topics. In each example that is given, the student's pseudonym is indicated along with his or her age.

Support

Support from spouse and peers, even fellow workers appears to have had a positive influence on a number of the distance students who were interviewed. A fairly typical comment was offered by Roberta, age 36, in her description of the support she has received from her family.

- Very [supportive] . . . Wow, my husband does dishes, does laundry, cooks. He has been extremely supportive. My children will baby-sit. They're starting to get tired of it, it's been two years. They've all been very supportive. "Mom has to go to class tonight, oh, OK well, we'll rearrange our schedules." (Roberta, 36)

Other students described the support that they received not only from family members, but from friends as well.

- It was just encouragement of friends, and a lot of my family's been really supportive of me coming back. I think that's really helped plus all the people up here at Kirkwood have been really super about helping me if I need something. There's been a lot of support. That really helps a person. (Kirk, 31)
- I have a couple [of] close friends that have been [supportive]. It's really important. . . . It makes you feel good knowing that somebody else cares about what you're doing too. It makes you almost feel like you're not just doing it for yourself, you're doing it for everybody that didn't have a chance to go. (Theresa, 31)
- It seems like every time you talk to somebody they tell you it's the right thing to be doing. . . . It's real important at times. It gets to kind of be a hassle when you work full-time, trying to go to school. . . . It just kind of reinforces what I already really know, but sometimes you lose sight of what you're after. (Kimberly, 41)

A couple of the students found that the company for whom they worked also provided some encouragement for their taking classes. And as one student describes it, even encouraged her to take classes that she might not otherwise have taken.

- Actually, the company I work for has [been supportive]. They pay for my classes and books. . . . They talked me into taking classes that I wasn't going to take. I was going to put it off and they said, "No, no, now would be the time to do this." My co-workers have also encouraged me. (Ellen, 46)

A few individuals didn't depend on outside encouragement, or in a few cases, didn't receive it. But, in addition to Tracy, most felt that the support was

important to their success and persistence, as illustrated in the following comments to the question of whether it matters:

- Yeah, it does. It makes it easier. . . . It makes you feel more like doing it when you got somebody who also thinks you should or encouraging. They'll just say, how was the test last night? They'll know I have a test. They'll see me at lunch and I'm in studying. (Vicki, 31)
- It's important. It's not everything, but it's important. It's reassuring. (Dana, 25)

Another characteristic emerged as some of the students admitted that the support wasn't the determining factor for their enrolling. "No not really. . . . I pretty much decided it on my own" (Melissa, age 26). Melissa's comment illustrates a strong sense of self-determination that was also evident in some of the comments made by other distance learning students, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

- I don't think it's [support] real important, because it's something that I'm doing for myself, not for someone else. (Karen, 50)
- I would probably still do it anyway, even if someone told me "I think it's stupid that you're doing it." I want to do it for me, and I will do it. That's it, I'm going to complete it. I didn't do it right when I was younger; I will do it right now. (Kathy, 47)
- Not a whole lot. It's just, I guess, it seemed more like what I'm doing is not selfish, I guess. With kids and me going to school and not having a full time job, I always felt like I was being selfish because I wanted to go to school and get a career and all that. It helps when people say, "It's good that you're doing that." You're not being selfish. (Nancy, 24)

Just as support from spouse and peers can encourage an individual to enroll, for many, the need for financial assistance is significant. For these students the financial assistance that they are able to receive become a very important enabler.

Financial Aid

Twenty of the 23 students (87%) who were interviewed received some form of financial aid. Most received Pell grants, Stafford or William D. Ford loans, or were in the Work Study Program. A few received financial assistance from the company at which they worked.

- Only through my company. . . . It used to be reimbursement was based on what grade you got. Then it went to 80 %, regardless of the grade. Now I think it's back to based on your grade. . . . There's also another financial aspect to it. If I take two classes in a term, it reduces our responsibility for my son's tuition. That was one of the big factors of why I continued after my Management Development. (Ellen, 46)

For many of these students, the financial aid that they received was an essential precursor to their enrolling, as the following comments attest.

- That's the only way I could have done it too! Pell grant. Iowa Voc-Tech. Then Department of voc. rehab. And then I get the Stafford Loans. (Carol, 34)
- I'd say the scholarships are a big part. . . . And if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't have come to Kirkwood. (Todd, 20)
- The daycare and the Pell grant, and I feel so lucky that I have the opportunity to use that. I feel bad for people that have to pay for college, it's so expensive. I think they should do that for more people, because then it encourages people to keep taking schooling rather than "Oh, I gotta pay that, I just can't afford it, so I won't do it." It's really helped. (Nancy, 24)

As critical as financial aid is to the prospective student who does not have adequate funds for college, it is also essential that the student receives adequate information about a wide variety of topics pertaining to the college, the courses, distance education, and other items. This is the job of marketing that is provided by the college.

Marketing

Each student was asked about the marketing efforts that they could recall being publicized by the college. Many of the students could not identify any specific marketing that was done by the college that drew them to that institution, although there were some students who could.

- Oh yeah. Nancy's always on the local radio station. Little ads and stuff, when the new semester comes. It works. (Helen, 39)
- From the flyers that they send out . . . mailed directly to the house. (Kimberly, 41)
- They publish them quite well. They have booklets, in the newspaper; we have mailings; you can come out here; you can call. They have stuff at the high school. (Terri, 42)

However, for most of these students, the presence of a college center in their community or within a few miles of their home, provided them with a sense of education being available nearby. Information about the centers and courses was seemingly passed on through individual and peer contact. Word of mouth marketing, for many, became the most common source of information.

- I just knew there was a Kirkwood center here in Monticello. I don't know who told me. Just when I got interested in it I just looked around and found out where they were. (Sandra, 47)
- When I was in high school, I went into the guidance counselor's office and got some things on law enforcement. One of them was at Kirkwood. Someone told me that there was a Kirkwood center here in Tipton, so I came over and asked. (Melissa, 26)
- I just knew that . . . just through friends. They told me that they went to Kirkwood and they were telling me that you could take courses for college in Washington, through the system and stuff. (Kirk, 31)

In addition, the personal marketing that was provided by staff at the center when the student inquired about classes and requested assistance was prominent and appreciated. Some of the students attended a workshop that was offered at the college center in each of the communities on career exploration.

Actually, I went to--they had like a workshop, seminar type of thing. That's what actually got me started on it. "Are you ready to change careers?" type of thing. They explained to us about the long distance [courses] and all that. (Delores, 37)

The Centers that were located in each of the counties of the region not only served as a source of "local" marketing for the college and its distance learning program, but it also provided students with a facility that was quite close to where the students lived. That became another enabler that facilitated enrollment in distance education.

Proximity to Centers

For a number of these students, the proximity of a college center to their home was an important factor. Not only was it much closer than the main campus, but it seemed to the students to be less intimidating, and the staff members who worked at the center were reported to be very helpful. For Delores, age 37, "this center [was] a big factor in the decision." And for Helen, age 39, the thought of driving miles to attend classes was unappealing. "I would hate to have to drive; you worked that many hours and then have to drive somewhere else." I then asked her, if this center wasn't here would she be pursuing a degree now? She answered: "No, I would probably still be working out on the floor, making

parts.” Another student commended the center director for the help that she had received.

Yeah, John [Center Coordinator] has always been real helpful. . . . [He would] sit down, and explain to you which classes you had to take; how to get the financial aid and different things to apply for, that would help you get the scholarships. (Sharon, 38)

Summary of Enablers

The distance learning students who were interviewed described several situations that helped them to make a decision to enroll in their courses. The support that they received from their spouse, from friends, and from their workplace were important to most of these individuals. Several of these students, however, had a strong sense of self-determination or resiliency, and said they would have done it even without that support. For almost 90% of these students financial aid was an factor in their decision to enroll. And, although a couple of students indicated that they might have attended even if there had not been the financial aid, others indicated that without the financial aid they would not have been able to enroll. But the college learning centers throughout the region served as both a source of information about the college and distance courses (marketing), as well as well staffed facilities that were conveniently located for the students to attend classes close to their home (proximity). These enablers appear to have provided encouragement and support to the distance students by offering benefits that the students, in most cases, really needed in order to attend college classes. In many instances, these enablers countered some of the barriers that will be explored in the following section.

Barriers

The research question that this section explores is: What barriers are perceived to exist for students who enroll in distance education courses? Many people who consider getting a degree, or even just taking a few college courses, never enroll because of barriers. *Barriers* are those circumstances or perceptions that discourage or prevent an individual from taking action or accomplishing a task. Cross (1981) identifies three kinds of barriers: (a) situational barriers, (b) dispositional barriers, and (c) institutional barriers. In the following paragraphs, I will present information from the interviews that dealt with the barriers that these students felt affected their decision to enroll in distance courses.

Background Information--Nancy

Nancy is 24, and after graduating from high school, she entered the Navy. For periods of time, she was stationed in France, Israel, Italy, and Turkey. She has two children from her first marriage, has been divorced, and has recently remarried. She has been taking distance learning classes since Fall term, 1994, majoring in Special Education.

He [first husband] was abusive and he was abusive to our son. He was not an encouragement for me going to school. We didn't have any money. He didn't like to pay bills. It was kind of a hole, a rut that I just couldn't get out of. I guess by starting to think about going to school then, that kind of got me out of that rut. . . . I kind of was afraid that he might not let me do it. It's kind of a controlling thing. I wouldn't make it, because he wasn't supportive, and he didn't help me. . . . It was kind of like having a roommate. And I did the housework, took care of the kids, did school, and didn't get any help from him. It's just from there I've kind of been like my own person.

Despite her first husband's lack of encouragement, Nancy's decision to enroll, and then to keep going was influenced by her mother, who has a Bachelor's Degree and is a Registered Nurse.

I didn't really start thinking of it, and my mom had mentioned something to me about it. I thought, well, since they had the center here, maybe I could start in. I started in for a couple years I had two classes at a time. Then I gradually went to taking summer classes and taking three classes a semester. . . . I guess I wanted to get on my feet and get away from him [first husband]. If I start going to college and get my degree I can be my own person and get on my feet.

As Nancy, began to take courses, the help she received from the college center, 15 miles from her home, became significant. "I just was interested, and I came in and talked to her [Center director], and she's helped me ever since I've been here." Nancy also faced financial difficulties and concerns about how to pay for her college courses. She is assisted by receiving some financial aid: "The daycare and the Pell grant, and I feel so lucky that I have the opportunity to use that. It's really helped."

Nancy, like many other students, have faced barriers in their lives that have been significant. Discouragement from another, especially a spouse, can be overwhelming. Sometimes, students face many barriers to their enrollment in college courses, while others may face only a few. During the interviews, the students were asked questions about the barriers they faced, and what they did in order to deal with them.

Interview Questions About Barriers

Barriers to enrollment are those factors that are perceived to prevent or hinder the enrollment process or the student's decision to enroll. Situational

barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers are usually cited as the three types of barriers that students encounter. All of these were explored in a series of interview questions that dealt with a variety of such barriers, and what the student did to deal with that problem.

The following barriers were investigated by asking the student whether this item was something with which they had to deal when making their decision to enroll: (a) lack of money, (b) lack of information, (c) affordable child care, (d) not enough time, (e) no interest, (f) no real benefit for me, (g) it seemed too difficult, (h) no support from others, (i) too far away, (j) no transportation, (k) family responsibilities, (l) thought I was too old, (m) forgot how to study, and (n) afraid of the technology.

Adult education literature shows that among barriers to participation, up to 50% of respondents in survey research have reported that cost of education and lack of time are obstacles to education (Cross, 1981). Other barriers that sometime interfere with enrollment include lack of child care, lack of transportation, (situational barriers), inconvenient locations, lack of relevant courses (institutional barriers), and lack of interest and lack of peer support (dispositional barriers; Carp et al., 1974; Rubenson, 1986).

Of those students interviewed, almost 70% indicated that “lack of money” and “not enough time” were barriers or problems for them, and needed to be overcome. In addition, almost 48% indicated that they had forgotten how to

study, almost 40% indicated that they thought it might be too difficult, and almost 40% felt that they thought they were too old.

In Table 5, the specific barrier, the number of students who cited that barrier as a problem for them, the percent that cited that barrier, and the mean age of those citing that barrier is given. The table is organized in rank order by the number of those indicating a given factor was a problem.

Besides the number and average age of those students reporting a problem with particular barriers, it is also of interest how each of the individuals dealt with that particular problem. For example, all but three of the students that were interviewed received some form of financial aid. Most cited Pell Grants, but some included Stafford Loans, scholarships, work study, and employer paid benefits. The following section will provide excerpts from selected students on several of these barriers. Each student was asked if an item was a problem for them. If they answered yes, I asked them to give me a further explanation or to tell me how they dealt with that problem. In each example that is given, the student's pseudonym is indicated along with their age.

Lack of Money

As with a large proportion of community college students, financial need is often an important factor in their decision to enroll in college. This is just as true for distance learning students as for younger, traditional students. Almost 70% of the students who were interviewed cited lack of money as a problem. The cost

Table 5

Barrier Listing

Barrier	<u>n</u>	%	Mean age
Lack of money	16	69.6	33.13
Not enough time	16	69.6	36.75
Forgot how to study	10	43.5	38.40
Seemed too difficult	9	39.1	33.11
Thought too old	9	39.1	36.11
Too far away	7	30.4	35.57
Affordable childcare	6	26.1	31.33
Family responsibilities	6	26.1	37.83
Afraid of technology	5	21.7	36.80
No interest	3	13.0	34.67
No transportation	3	13.0	38.33
Lack of information	2	8.7	34.00
No support from others	2	8.7	36.50
No real benefit	1	4.4	41.00

of education is a formidable barrier for many of these students, as the following excerpts suggest:

- Definitely. Struggled and gave up a lot of things. Had a few arguments. Financial aid helped and then the scholarships helped. As I kept going I found out about different things. There's a program

called Project Start. That really helps. It helps pay for your childcare . . . mileage . . . books. . . . I think it's mostly for women that want to go back to school. (Sharon, 38)

- I qualified for financial aid. Would not have been able to go to school without the financial aid. (Dana, 25)
- Definitely. Applied for Pell [grant] and was qualified for it in that case. I was on Title IX with my children, and the government, the program that they did start; I signed up before they started it. The program did start to help educate the mother's of dependent children. It was one of the best things they ever did. (Kathy, 47)

One student qualified for financial aid, but then turned it down:

- I applied for financial aid, but then I turned it down. I decided to go ahead and just keep paying for it. I'd thought about quitting my job and going to school full-time, but I changed my mind on it. I'm just paying for it as I go. . . . I didn't want the loans to have to pay back. I'd rather just work my way through. (Kimberly, 41)

Not Enough Time

Of all of the barriers that distance students face, finding the time for taking the classes and studying was reported to be a major obstacle, as expressed by almost 70% of the students who were interviewed. One student, who now lives with her 20 year old son, responded this way when asked if 'not enough time' was a factor with which she had to deal:

- Yeah, that's every day. There's usually not enough time for me to study. I just started telling my husband, 'I'm going up to Kirkwood.' You say you're going to study at home and its too hard when you have kids. Kids just get out of high school and get to go to college; they don't know how lucky they are. They get to have all their free time too. And that's real tough. (Sharon, 38)

Another student explained how time constraints have affected her efforts to pursue a degree.

I didn't study as much as I should have. I've cut down my hours at the office too. My study time has suffered. I had to give up time at the office and I've had to give up time going to the kids' stuff. That's probably what I miss the most. (Monica, 43).

Other students had similar situations as illustrated in the following

excerpts:

- Big time. That's been a major factor. The time factor has probably been my biggest stress. I feel guilty that I don't spend as much time with the kids, I feel guilty that I don't spend as much time with my homework so that it accurately reflects what I'm capable of. Of course, Kevin, poor guy, he's on the bottom end of the totem pole. He's got no time left for him. The time thing has been unbelievable. Big hairy stress. (Roberta, 36)
- I manage time pretty well with the three jobs that I have. Instead of taking classes everyday I just take--. There's a three hour course then I had two classes on Monday, one on Wednesday, and one on Thursday, so it was spaced out pretty even. The work-study really helps. Then I get a chance to study on Friday, which I probably wouldn't be studying otherwise. (Michelle, 23)
- I had three jobs after going to school for a year or two. Then I got another job. Then I had four jobs. So, I had less time yet. Now I'm down to one job. The jobs that I had when I had four, I was working seven days straight. Never a break. (Sandra, 47)

Forgot How to Study

Almost half (44%) of those interviewed felt that their study skills had diminished from their earlier years. Helen, age 39, talked about what she did to compensate in distance class:

That was a learning experience. That's why I got my recorder. One of my teachers only gives lectures, and every three weeks we had a test. Everything that was on the test was what he said in class. Take notes and listen; pay attention.

Other students also indicated that they had forgotten how to study.

Comments about studying included the following:

- I think I needed a re-fresher in studying. Yep, I went to a little seminar thing one day here and they showed you different techniques of doing things, so I wouldn't get in there and freeze up. They provided a lot of stuff like that here. (Vicki, 31)
- In that Project Start folder, it had some ideas on what to do to study. I think even in some of the classrooms there's pamphlets and stuff that tell you different ways. (Sharon, 38)
- Took Time Management class. I had to change my study habits anyway. I was learning a new system for my own benefit. (Carol, 34)
- I don't think I ever really knew how to study until I went to college. In high school, I didn't care, so my high school grades are atrocious, they're Ds. I had to talk my government teacher into passing me, so I could graduate. It wasn't that I didn't know how to do that. Some of the teachers, before they would give a final, would give you a study guide to study for. I loved that. That was great, because then you knew exactly what you were responsible for. (Roberta, 36)

Seemed Too Difficult

Almost 40% of those interviewed perceived the difficulty of taking college courses as a problem, especially at first. Again, Helen, age 39, responded with a typical comment: "At first, I was probably overwhelmed. I hadn't been in school for 17 years. Kind of scary, I guess."

Other similar comments included the following:

- Yeah at first it probably was. Now since I've been in it here for awhile, I don't think it's as bad as I thought it was going to be. (Kirk, 31)
- Originally it did. If you got a fear, you've got to face the fear. I just jumped right in. (Melissa, 26)
- It seemed difficult at first. Naturally it would, I mean, it was a big change from high school to college. You adjust to it. (Todd, 20)

Thought Too Old

Age is often a barrier to those attempting to undertake a challenge where the majority of participants are under age 24. Almost 40% of those who were interviewed cited this problem as one with which they had to deal. However, for most of these individuals, it became apparent that the age barriers would not necessarily be overwhelming. Typical of those commenting on the problem that they thought they were too old was Kimberly, age 41. “You look around and you see somebody a little older than you. I think sometimes you think, yeah, that’s a problem. Then you realize you’re never too old.”

Other typical comments on this barrier included the following:

- I thought well, tough crap. They don’t have to look at me and I don’t have to—. Like I said, after the first time I went down and got books, I felt pretty out of place. I thought well, I’m just going to have to deal with it. If I’m the oldest person there, then that’s the way it’s going to have to be. I was just ready to do it. I felt that way, but I figured I’d deal with it when it happened. All of my first classes, there were just ranges of 18 year-olds to 60 year-olds. So, it wasn’t near as bad as I expected. (Vicki, 31)
- Somewhat, I was concerned about that. I thought I was going to be the oldest student in all these classes and that I was going to look really stupid. I’m not. There are students here that are older than I am. That was very gratifying to learn. I’m not the only one who’s doing it at this stage in life. (Roberta, 36)
- Yeah, I did it anyway and found out that these kids were just great. It was no big problem, the kids are great. I thought all these kids would say, “She’s my parent’s age, what’s she doing here?” They’re great. I’ve ran into some that I don’t have a direct problem with, they are a problem. I don’t know why they’re there. Otherwise, the biggest majority of them, they’re great. I suppose I had enough teenagers at home during part of this time, so I could relate to some of it too. (Kathy, 47)

One student felt somewhat intimidated, not by being older than many of the other students, but younger than most: “Actually I feel too young in some of those classes. There’s a management class, everybody is like way over 50. I’m the youngest one in there” (Lindsay, 20).

One of the students sees the age difference from a totally different view point, resulting in a different kind of problem for her.

- I wondered, yeah. Then how you’re going to fit in with a bunch of younger kids. I still have a problem. I told you they sleep in the class, they don’t have their homework done and I’m thinking “why are you even here?” My view and their view are completely different than I think if we were closer in age. The things that are said in that classroom are total opposites. (Theresa, 31)

Too Far Away

Distance is one of the primary barriers that distance education counters. Just over 30% of those interviewed cited this factor as a problem for them. In most cases, the distance to the main campus was 35-50 miles from where the student lives. Taking a class in a location that was much closer than the main campus was an important factor for many of these students in their decision to enroll. Delores, age 37, put it succinctly: “This center [was] a big factor in the decision.”

Others responded in a similar manner when asked about the main campus being too far away:

- That was a consideration. I hate driving in winter; I hate it. Especially coming to college with 11,000 people who have only had their license for two years. It scares the heck out of me. (Theresa, 31)
- That’s been a problem. That’s why I dropped my biology class this year, otherwise I’d be finishing. [It was not a distance learning course].

I had too many things popping up this semester with car problems and--. I got behind and I didn't feel like I could catch up. (Roberta, 36)

- I didn't want to go to school like in Cedar Falls or Iowa City, where I would have to drive that far, so I picked the closest one I could go to. (Sandra, 47)

Affordable Childcare

Over one fourth of those interviewed cited affordable child care as a barrier to their enrolling. The individuals citing that barrier, collectively accounted for the youngest average age of any other barrier, 31.3 years. Sharon, age 38, put it this way, "Yeah, that was hard. When I first started, I was helping my friend with childcare. We kind of just traded off. Then I found out about Project Start, that's helped for the last three semesters."

Other students described how the problem affected them, and explained how they overcame that problem.

- Yeah, that was a problem. I didn't know if--when I had my classes--if I would have somebody to watch the kids. Had one child when I started, and now I have two. To be able to find child care at night, if you didn't have it, is harder opposed to during the day. Then when I started taking some day classes, then I didn't know who was going to be there during the day. It's always an iffy thing with childcare. (Nancy, 24)
- That definitely. I had to change sitters in the middle of the year. That was always a worry, trying to find somebody that I could afford that I was comfortable with. (Roberta, 36)
- Yeah, that was. Just paid it. Didn't do other things. Cut back on certain things so I could pay the childcare. . . . I was just recently divorced and you're so used to the two-income thing. Now you're one income, not really sure that I should be spending the money. You're already spending it all day while you're gone and now you're spending it at night too. (Vicki, 31)

Family Responsibilities

There was also over one fourth (26%) of the students who cited family responsibilities as a problem with which they had to deal. One such student was Sandra, age 47. “My mom just got out of the hospital. I might have to, if she don’t get any better, take a medical leave from work, and take care of her. She just got out Sunday, so I wasn’t in school last week. I called up and said I’m not coming.”

Others who were interviewed described similar scenarios in dealing with their family obligations.

- Oh yeah. Big time. Last semester, let’s see, both my boys were in the hospital with their tonsils and adenoids coming out. My daughter had her appendix removed. The December before that she had bi-lateral knee surgery. Got the same thing going on now. That’s constant. That’s just constant. Me and the doctors, I think we should reserve a room and put my name on it! (Roberta, 36)
- Yes and no. Always finding a sitter for the kids sometimes is difficult. That was my main thing, always making sure you had a baby-sitter and if the baby-sitter’s sick then you have to find another baby-sitter. (Vicki, 31)

One student offered some advice to other distance learners: “Advice: make the family share the responsibilities a little more” (Sharon, 38).

Afraid of Technology

In this factor, the students were responding to the question of whether or not they felt a general fear of technology, and what they did to counter this fear. Of the students who identified this as a problem (approximately 22% of those interviewed), it became clear that their fears were more with technology in

general or more in the visage of computers, than in a fear of the interactive television system *per se*. A typical response was that of Theresa, age 31:

Oh yeah, definitely. I had never done anything We got a computer and we just got it last year. I didn't have no idea how—I've never touched one. I put it together myself and everything. Now, I'm just like, well if it blows up, it blows up! Just use it. I'm getting right in there with technology.

Some of the other comments on technology included the following:

- Well, yeah. My computer course, I was scared to death. I was petrified that first summer. Maybe not the classroom technology, but--. Every time my daughter comes home she changes something on the computer. I say you gotta leave things where they are! (Terri, 42)
- A little bit of computers, but the introduction of microcomputers that I took last fall, the book was really excellent. It basically said click here and turn this, step by step. I think that was good. The instructor, she basically had people that knew everything there was about a computer and there was people like me that barely knew how to turn it on. She related to us, but yet didn't bore the rest of them The microphones were a little bit scary at first. They were not a problem once I got used to them. (Karen, 50)

Other Fears

When asked about other fears that they had experienced concerning distance education or enrolling in college courses, the students responded in varying ways. Several echoed their concern about the age difference and competing with younger students, while others talked about their fears of the distance classroom environment, and still others expressed more personal concerns about their own abilities in a college level class. Some of their comments follow:

- I was just kind of worried that when I went out to the Washington center that there'd just be like 18 year-old kids. I didn't realize that

there would be so many more people that were closer to my age going to school out there. (Kirk, 31)

- I thought, “I’m too old. I’m going to be in a room with a bunch of 19 year-old people and I’m going to be way out of place.” That was my main thing [fear]. And then even after I went down and got my books for the first time, I looked so old compared to . . . all these people in the bookstore are all like these young people and I thought, I really made a mistake. But then when you come to these classes, it mostly is older people. There’s younger people too, but the ratio is a lot better than I expected. (Vicki, 31)
- Actually, it wouldn’t just be the distance learning. I didn’t know if I had enough brain cells left to go back to school. That would probably be my biggest fear, that I wouldn’t be able to compete with the kids coming out of high school with the kind of education that they get now. I figured I had probably forgotten almost everything I’d learned in high school, other than what I use all the time. I just wouldn’t be able to compete and I found out that’s not a problem. (Monica, 43)

In a similar vein, a few of the students feared that they wouldn’t do well in a college level distance learning class.

- My fear that I wouldn’t do well. I feared that the instructor would call on me and I would not have an answer to the question. (Melissa, 26)
- Yeah, I was very fearful. I had been out of school for 15 years. I wasn’t a great high school student, mostly because I didn’t really care. I knew that I could do it, but I didn’t know if I could. You know what I mean? Yeah, I kind of had two minds about it. I hope I can do this, and I know I can do this. (Roberta, 36)
- Yeah, that they [classes] would be hard. It had been a long time since I had been in school. To go back and pursue something is real difficult. Anticipation of not being able to cut the mustard with my cohorts in the class, some of them I had served the year before in the lunch line. (Terri, 42)
- I’d always been kind of scared to go back, I thought. I never really did real well in high school. Didn’t want to go out and fail classes. (Ellen, 46)

Some of the students expressed their fear of certain aspects of the distance learning environment itself.

- Thinking maybe I wouldn't learn as much without the instructor being there. (Kirk, 31)
- I thought it might be harder than a face to face. I expected it would be harder for me to learn because I didn't have the person right there in the room. (Vicki, 31)
- Probably the lack of interaction with the teacher. I didn't realize how you use videos and microphones and the difference that would make. (Michelle, 23)

Some students expressed or reiterated a fear of certain aspects of the technology of the distance learning classroom, as depicted in the excerpts that follow. Where an exchange occurs between the student and the researcher, the student's comments follow an "S", and the researcher's comments follow an "R"².

- Talking on the intercom [microphone]. . . . It's just not something that I was used to. It didn't take long. It took about five minutes and that was it. (Dana, 25)
- S: Being on camera. Don't call on me in class, I didn't care about being on a microphone.

R: How did you get over that?

S: I just did. One of my classes, I think it was Time Management, we had to give a little speech about a paper we wrote. I just didn't look at the screen [camera] at all, kept my eyes on my paper. (Carol, 34)

- When the screen [camera] is on you and she calls on you specifically, you know everyone is looking at you. Even though they don't know you, it was kind of like, you know--. I kind of felt more like on the spot, even though I know that some people aren't paying attention. They're

² In these excerpts, and several that follow, the comments made by the student (S) and those made by this researcher (R) are designated. It was felt that this conversational flow would add more clarity to the student's responses.

probably talking about me. . . . It's like what if people are talking about my answer and saying things about me? (Lindsay, 20)

Discouragement

Of all of the barriers to enrollment, discouragement from a spouse, a family member or a coworker could have a profound and personal impact on a person, especially if the student does not have a lot of self confidence to counter the discouraging words. Several of these adult students overcame such discouragement. The following comments were in response to the question, Have any friends or family discouraged you from enrolling? Where an exchange occurs between the student and the researcher, the student's comments follow an "S", and the researcher's comments follow an "R".

- S: Husband.

R: How did you deal with that?

S: Goes in one ear and out the other. He's a pretty negative person. I've got a long life yet to live. I'm going to learn all I can. He thinks he's done learning, fine. (Helen, 39)

- I was married to my first husband. . . . He always told me that I was not intelligent enough to go to school. (Sharon, 38)
- Just my daughter. . . . The younger one doesn't think it's necessary. She has dropped out of high school and she thinks it's a waste of time. (Terri, 42)

In several cases, parents or extended family made discouraging comments to the student, such as the following:

- Mom does all the time. No good--she doesn't want me going to school, because I'm getting too old to go to school, according to her. . . . Too old to waste time and waste the money. I should be out there working. (Sandra, 47)

Several other students reported similar situations involving family members. Again, the student's comments follow an "S", and the researcher's comments follow an "R".

- S: I've had family discourage me from going into law enforcement.
R: Do you know why they don't want you to go into law enforcement?
S: They don't want me to get hurt. (Melissa, 26)
- My parents did at first. In fact my dad kept carrying newspapers in, and said look for a job. I think when I brought that first 3.8 home--. He now is ok, and school wise is--I'm still on academic probation, because of a previous thing. With a 3.8, it got my grade point average up to a 1.9 for fall term. My teachers here have signed waivers and they just cannot believe I'm getting As in my classes now. The potential's there, it's never been really, really tried. (Carol, 34)
- Sisters-in-law. "Are you sure it's going to be worth it when you get all done"? "Is that education going to be worth anything, cause you just go get a job now and get the same--." Those kind of things. They're my sisters-in-law, so I suppose they feel I'm a burden on my husband while I'm going to school, and I should be holding my own instead of wasting my time in college. (Theresa, 31)

In some cases, the student's employer or supervisor discouraged them.

- My boss doesn't like me going. They thought I was going to leave. They were not real happy about it, but they didn't say you absolutely couldn't. Of course, I can do whatever I want on my off time. They were very concerned about it because they thought I was planning on leaving. (Kimberly, 41)
- At the workplace . . . they would say you can't bring your book in here to read. They wanted you to work. (Sharon, 38)

Summary of Barriers

Whereas motives and enablers may serve to point a student in the direction of education by bringing to the surface a need and enhancing or amplifying the availability of courses that would help to satisfy their need,

barriers act to discourage or prevent the individual from pursuing or even attempting to reach for a goal. To a certain extent, barriers are the counterpoint to enablers. And enablers have the effect of being counters to barriers.

The various barriers faced by these distance education students were, in some cases, formidable. There were fourteen barriers that were explored, in addition to the “other” barriers identified by the students.

Situational barriers included the following: lack of money, not enough time, family responsibilities, lack of affordable childcare, lack of transportation, and lack of support. Institutional barriers included the following: lack of information and too far away. Dispositional barriers included the following: forgot how to study, thought they were too old, seemed too difficult, no interest, afraid of technology, and no perceived benefit.

The two barriers that were most frequently cited by these distance learners were both situational barriers: lack of money and not enough time; these were cited by almost 70% of these students. Following these barriers in frequency were primarily dispositional barriers: forgot how to study, seemed too difficult, and thought they were too old—cited by roughly 40% of these students. The next group of barriers in frequency fell into all three of the categories, with fewer students (13 –30%) citing these, as listed in Table 5 above: too far away (institutional), affordable childcare, family responsibilities, afraid of technology, and no transportation (situational) and, no interest (dispositional). The final group of barriers in order of frequency cited included (< 10%) lack of information

(institutional), no support from others (situational), and no perceived benefit (dispositional).

There are certain barriers over which the institution has a fair amount of control, for example the institutional barrier of the student having not enough information. This barrier is often countered by marketing efforts and advising. However, there are other barriers, particularly dispositional barriers, and in some cases situational barriers, that are difficult for the institution to counter. For example, the institution would normally have very little effect in helping a student deal with their family responsibilities, a situational barrier. And yet, the most widespread barriers for these students were situational barriers (lack of money and lack of time), that have been countered by financial aid and the availability of courses at a distance; the enablers served to provide financial assistance to those in need and to reduce the amount of time necessary to travel to and take the courses.

The dispositional barriers that were cited by about 40% of these students may represent the most difficult barriers for a college to counter. The perception of being “too old” to take courses, or that the subject matter may appear to be too difficult, is largely a facet of self confidence. Bolstering self confidence may well be beyond the reach of an institution, since instilling self confidence from afar is often extremely difficult to accomplish. Only a conscientious instructor might be able to help alleviate those feelings in a student, but then, only after the student

actually enrolled. Prior to that, only peer and spouse encouragement would counter that barrier.

Another way of looking at the barriers listing is with the perspective of age. That is, what barriers were more prominent among individuals in different age categories. By referring to Table 5 above, where the average age of the students who were interviewed is given for each of the barriers, and then sorting the barriers by average age, one can see which barriers had a greater affect on younger students in general and which had a greater affect on older students in general. Although this perspective would be more valid with a larger group, I think it is of interest to consider, even with the limited number of students. Table 6 illustrates this data by grouping those barriers where the average age of those affected was between 31 and just over 33 years, and for those barriers where the average age of those affected was between 35 and 38 years. As a point of reference, the average age of the entire group of students that was interviewed was 35.2 years, and ranged from 19 to 50 years of age.

Considering only the items that were mentioned by 20% or more of the group, the younger students (average age 31-33.2 years) cited: affordable child care, seemed too difficult, and lack of money as barriers. Other barriers that were cited by students whose average age ranged from 35-38 years, included: too far away, thought they were too old, not enough time, afraid of technology, family responsibilities and forgot how to study.

Table 6

Barriers Grouping by Average Age

Barriers	Average Ages
affordable child care seemed too difficult lack of money	31-33.2 years
too far away thought they were too old not enough time afraid of technology family responsibilities forgot how to study	35-38 year

These students also described experiences of discouragement from their spouse, or friends. These barriers act to prevent and discourage individuals from enrolling in college courses offered at a distance. One of the barriers, *afraid of technology* was cited by more than one fifth of the group. But several students described their anxiety with computer technology, rather than the distance learning technology. Yet, technology can be both a potential barrier as well as an enabler. In the next section, the findings of the study that dealt with the role that technology plays in distance learning will be presented.

Technology

The research question that this section explores is: Does previous use of technology or a prior experience in a distance education course change the anxiety of participation for a distance learning student?

Technology has become ubiquitous in our current society. Most methods of delivering distance education that have become popular in recent years have utilized some form of technology (satellite, television, computers, etc.), and with web-based courses becoming more popular everyday (Bankirer, 1998), technology will likely remain at the heart of most distance learning environments. In the following section, the role played by technology and questions concerning the student's comfort level with technology will be explored.

Background Information--Thomas

Another distance learning student, Thomas, at age 49, is seeking a career change. Married and a father of a teenage son, he is a high school graduate and has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and Psychology. He works full time as a jailer and a court security officer in a county seat town. But for him, the courses he is taking in Fire Science and related subjects, will help him fulfill his goal of working at a medium size airport fire department, perhaps as Chief.

He lives only two miles from a college center where he can attend live televised classes, but he is 90 miles from the main campus, and probably would not have enrolled had it not been for the proximity of the classes. "I can't

complain. They kept this one satellite [center] open for me here . . . and I'm the only student in the deal [class]. It's saved me an enormous amount of money. Why they did that, I don't even know."

For Thomas, the decision to enroll, and to pursue another degree was brought on partly by personal motivation, and partly by a desire for a better career. Important to him was: "The anticipation of a better position, there's economic forces at work, there's a certain amount of personal incentive." But Thomas also enjoys learning for the sake of learning itself: "I like the sheer pleasure of going to school. Education is a lifelong process. It's something I want to learn, I want to know about."

That incentive had something to do with the fact that Thomas has worked in a number of different jobs, including that of a police officer for 16 years, an airport fireman, a utility worker at the civic center, and in a county Sheriff's department. He sees the education and the degree as a ticket to a new future.

I need the AA degree and I need the technical knowledge because I'm also close to getting my own instructor's certificate. I failed my examination and that's the reason I need to go back into the books and get the technical background. That kind of disappointed me because that is really getting your ticket punched. I want my instructor's certificate.

He has looked at other alternatives to distance education, but the "opportunity" in taking the courses nearby was a major factor.

I guess the opportunity, because it's one of the few places that was available that you could get the fire science program versus going to Peosta and getting on--or even going to Ames for their workshops. It was the convenience, the location; the fact that it was available in this part of Iowa.

Like Thomas, and many other distance learners, the technology that brought the education to him, has been responsible for his being able to pursue a degree and a change in careers.

Interview Questions About Technology

Interview questions that explored factors relating to technology included questions about the student's comfort level with technology in general, aspects of distance learning systems that they liked and disliked, their interest in online courses (courses taught on the Internet or World Wide Web), general television viewing habits, computer usage and preferences for time and/or place independency.

In exploring these factors about technology from the perspective of the student, it was hoped that a general picture of the student's sense of technology and the role played by technology in the learning environment and the student's decision to enroll would emerge. The following section will provide excerpts from selected students on several of these topics. In each excerpt that is given, the student's pseudonym is indicated along with their age.

Computer Access

Of the 23 distance students, 14 (61%) had a computer at home, but only 5 of them also had Internet access in their home at the time they were interviewed (fall 1997). Ten of those 14 students who had a computer in their home were computer or business-related majors (business, accounting, office management, etc.). That is to say, a smaller percentage of Arts and Sciences majors (education,

human services, psychology, etc.) owned a computer themselves than did business-related students.

Internet Courses

Although only 1 of the students who was interviewed had enrolled in a course taught over the Internet, 17 of the 23 students (73.9%) reported that they would like to try a web-based course. As a follow-up question, the students were asked if they were to take an Internet-based course, what concerns would they have about taking the course? Concerns that were expressed included: (a) being able to easily read the information from the computer screen, (b) getting technical help when they needed it, and (c) getting access to the Internet in the first place, especially in rural areas.

Time/Place Dependency

One of the issues that surfaced in the online focus group was that of time and place dependency and independency. The students were asked which was more important to them: to have flexibility of where they could take a course or when, or both.

Kimberly commented that both were important: "Both. Yeah. It needs to be offered out here at a time I can take it." This response was typical of the students who felt that the advantage of taking a course nearby, giving them flexibility of place, was just as important as being able to take the course at a time that fit into their schedule. Ten of the 23 students (43.5%) wanted both place and time independence, while 9 (39.1%) of the students felt that time independence

was more important than place. Four (17.4%) of the students felt that place independence was more important than flexibility of time. Figure 1 illustrates these preferences for time and/or place.

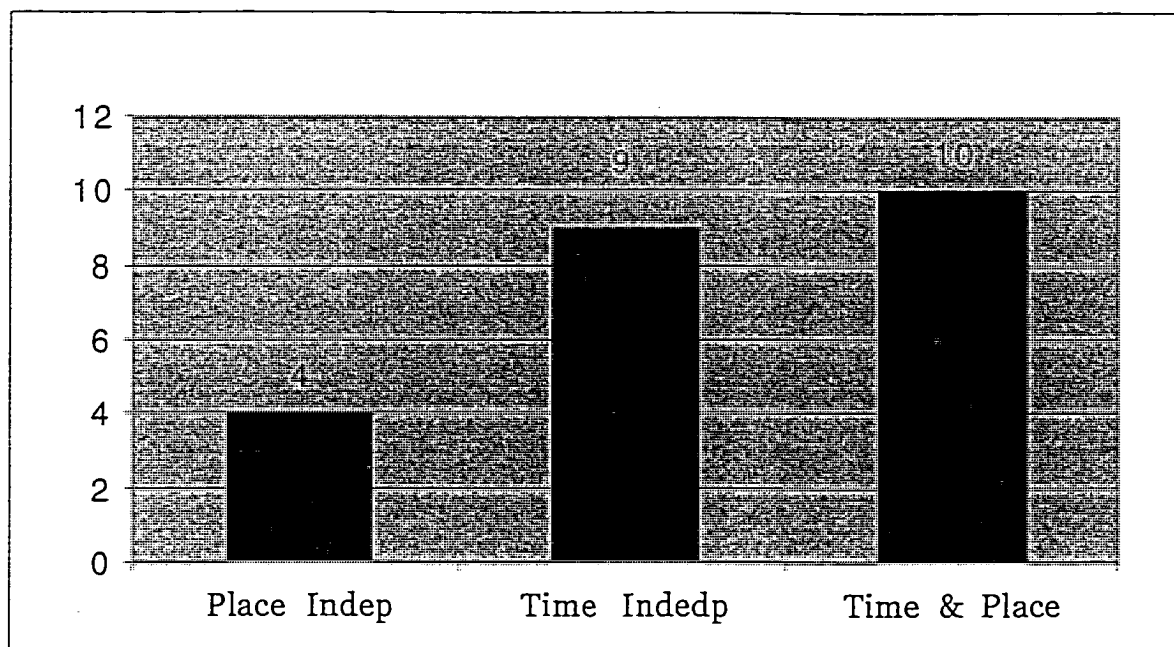


Figure 1. Time and Place Independent Preferences (N = 23).

Media Format

The research question that this section explores is: Are motives, perceived barriers and enablers the same for students who participate in various kinds of distance education formats, i.e., interactive television, telecourses, computer based instruction, audio conferencing, etc.?

Of the 23 students who were interviewed, only 1 had taken an online course, 14 had taken both live interactive television (ITV) courses as well as

Guided Self-Study (GSS) telecourses, 7 had taken only live ITV courses, and 2 have taken only GSS courses. An analysis was made of the students' age and the type of distance courses they had taken.

There appears to be a trend among the students who were both in the original sample group and among those interviewed that would indicate a preference toward certain formats as the individual ages. Three of the 7 interview students who had only taken live ITV courses were under age 25, while, only 1 of the 16 remaining students who had taken GSS courses was under age 25. The range was from 18 to 51 years of age. Figure 2 expands this analysis to the entire group of students who returned the questionnaire.

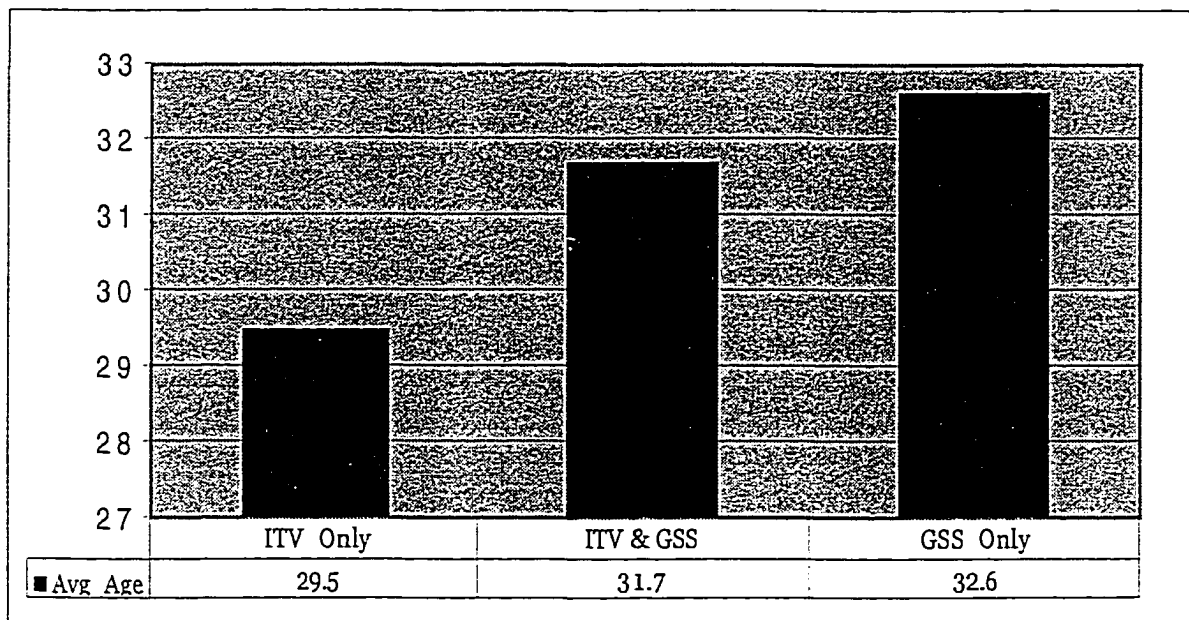


Figure 2. Average Age of Students by Media Preference (N = 93).

As Figure 2 illustrates, this trend was also borne out in the survey of the initial sample of distance learning students. Of the 93 valid questionnaires that were returned in the second phase of this study, the average age of those students who had only taken live ITV courses was 29.5 years ($\underline{n} = 22$). Of those students who had taken both ITV and GSS courses, the average age was 31.7 years ($\underline{n} = 58$). And for those students who had taken only GSS courses, the average age was 32.6 years ($\underline{n} = 10$). From this pattern, one could say that fewer students seemed to enroll in Guided Self-Study telecourses exclusively, and, on average, they tended to be slightly older than students who enrolled in live courses.

Television Viewing

In response to a question about their television viewing habits, 11 of the 23 (47.8%) interviewees replied that they did not watch or enjoy watching television. The other 12 (52.2%) replied that they either enjoyed watching certain television programs or that it was “okay.” One of Boshier’s (1971) elements in his *Education Participation Scale* was that the individual dislikes watching television, so they might be more interested in education instead. Those who enjoyed television viewing cited programs such as *ER*, *NYPD Blue*, *Seinfeld*, *Aly McBeal*, *X-Files*, soaps, and sports. In other words, a variety of genres.

Summary of Technology

Distance learning technology is the medium through which instruction at a distance is made possible. Technology therefore, plays a role of being an essential element to the distance education environment, while at the same time,

technology plays the role of being a potential barrier to enrollment, as described during the interviews in a previous section. This dichotomy is an issue that will require continuing effort in order to surmount the problem caused, at least in the minds of some students, that technology is something to be feared. The fact that a majority (61%) of this interview group own a computer is a positive indicator that such fears are being overcome. It would also seem positive that almost three-fourths of the interview group expressed an interest in taking an online course. This could reflect previous success by these students in other Guided Self-Study courses that also provide a flexible schedule for instruction that is essentially set by the student.

It seems clear that the preference for time independency is, likewise, an expression of interest in having the maximum amount of flexibility in when a course is offered. However, the fact that many of those interviewed preferred both time and place independence seems to indicate that where a course is offered is often vitally important. The average ages of students who had enrolled in live courses, which are more structured and set in terms of meeting time and place was lower, than the average ages of students who had enrolled in Guided Self-Study courses (telecourses), which have a greater amount of flexibility in terms of meeting time and, to an extent, place. This could indicate a natural preference by students who are more mature and self-directed toward courses that have greater flexibility of instruction, but also require more self-discipline in order to complete the course.

Summary of Interview Findings

There were, for most of these individuals, many factors that contributed to their decision to enroll. The overriding motive that seemed to undergird, for most, their decision to enroll was pursuing the opportunity to attain a degree and, in the process, improve their career through that degree, and they would accomplish this by minimizing the impact on their work and family life through distance education.

Other factors that appear to have influenced their decision included for some, their previous working environment. Quite often these individuals perceived their job to be a dead end job. They thought they should, and in fact, needed to have a more satisfying career.

There were often several enabling factors that may have had a positive or encouraging effect on their decision. For many, their financial needs were such that a college degree was not possible unless there was some kind of financial aid available to them. One other factor that influenced many to enroll, was support and encouragement that they received from a friend, a spouse or a co-worker, sometimes overcoming discouragement from another individual. In addition, there was also vital assistance and guidance that they received from staff members of the college centers, where they would take their distance learning courses. The conscientiousness of the center directors had positive influences on the distance students enrolling in courses.

One enabling factor that was essential to many of these students was the proximity factor. The college learning center where the courses were made available, was often only a few miles away—close enough to reduce or eliminate any problem with travel needs.

The fact that these students were not required to enter the world of traditional higher education (traditional on-campus college), the opportunity for a degree through distance learning not only was physically closer, often available in or near their home town, but psychologically closer as well, fewer students enrolled at each site which made for a smaller and more comfortable group. This proximity factor alone serves to counter several potential barriers for students, namely not enough time, too far away, and lack of transportation.

For most, these were barriers that, in the past, had prevented them, or at least discouraged them, from enrolling. Specifically, inordinate travel time to attend on a main campus, insufficient funds, lack of time, and the impact of age on their self confidence and ability to study were all deterrents to their enrollment. Each student dealt with such problems in varying ways, but all overcame them.

Not all barriers affected students equally. Perhaps most telling is illustrated in Table 6, which shows that age might play an important part in identifying what barriers and how those barriers affect students and their decision to enroll. Younger students in their 20s and 30s may be affected more by such barriers as the need for childcare and lack of money, while students in

their 30s, 40s, and 50s may be affected more by the impact of travel distance, a sense of being too old, inadequate study habits, and lack of time.

The technology itself has become an increasingly important part of the learning environment, and some students expressed apprehension about the technology. Yet, the students' fear of technology does not seem to be a major concern for most of these distance learners. Apprehension of computers, appears to be more pronounced than apprehension of television cameras. Although these students encountered new technologies in these distance learning classes, which may have been somewhat intimidating at first, their fears were usually overcome through experience with the systems that were being used.

Finally, a slight tendency might exist for older students to gravitate toward courses that are more time and place independent, such as Guided Self-Study Telecourses or online/web courses. It is reasonable to expect that older students will be more mature and more self-starting than younger students. Non-traditional students may also tend to be more focused on their goals than younger students, as suggested earlier in the interview findings. Therefore, older students may be more successful in and gravitate toward distance courses that require more self-discipline.

Some of these issues will be discussed further in the final chapter of this study: Discussion, Reflections, and Recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter I will present a synthesis of and a reflection upon the data presented in the previous chapters, culminating in a suggestion for a theoretical construct of distance education participation among community college students.

Specifically, there were four main themes that were embedded in this study; they were: the motives, the enablers, and the barriers that students face, and the role played by technology in distance education enrollment. Additional themes that emerged as a result of the study included the prevalence of women students in distance education, the impact of age on enrollment, and other factors that became evident from the interviews. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further study, recommendations to community colleges, and a concluding observation.

A Review of the Research Questions

The research questions posed in this study included the following:

1. What motives for participation are present among college students who enroll in distance education courses?
2. What barriers are perceived to exist for students who enroll in distance education courses?
3. What enablers or encouragement factors are perceived to exist by distance education students?

4. Are motives, perceived barriers and enablers the same for students who participate in various kinds of distance education formats, i.e., interactive television, telecourses, computer instruction, audio conferencing, etc.?

5. Is age or gender a factor in participation in distance education?

6. Does previous use of technology or a prior experience in a distance education course change the anxiety of participation for a distance learning student.

Summary of the Findings

The Context of the Study--Qualitative Research

As stated in an earlier chapter, some, if not all of the research questions that were posed in this study could have been addressed through an analysis of quantitative data. However, in order to delve beneath the surface of immediate responses from subjects and survey research, a mixed methodology was used. The methodology included both some initial quantitative procedures (a student questionnaire) and qualitative procedures (focus group and interviews). It was hoped that through the use of these methods would emerge a thick description of the motives and backgrounds of these individuals that would offer a deep understanding of the life experiences that led to their decision to enroll in distance learning classes in a community college.

Information and research about motives, life experiences, and significant decision thought processes fall within the recommended parameters of qualitative research (Patton, 1990). When considered in a purely statistical

framework, such areas of inquiry tend to lack depth, whereas qualitative techniques offer the opportunity to delve deeply into answers and self-histories in order to find information and relationships that might otherwise be missed by the researcher.

Another dimension of this study is the breadth of stories presented in the previous chapter by the students. The personal responses and explanations of their struggles and successes described during the interviews by Tracy, Sharon, Thomas and Nancy (pseudonyms) were meant to give a better understanding, and a more personal perspective of the life experiences that these and other students have had. In this way, it was hoped that the study would offer a deeper meaning to the reasons and decision process experienced by the distance students.

The Focus Group and Questionnaire

The primary purpose of the focus group was to identify issues and questions that would be addressed in the interviews with the distance learning students that might not necessarily be gleaned from the literature.

The focus group identified a number of issues for investigation, among them was the concept that convenience was an underlying motivating factor for enrolling in distance education, but convenience, *per se*, was seen as a broad concept that can conceal additional factors. Students who are motivated to enroll in distance education often are pursuing a degree, and may be doing so for work related motives and career advancement.

The focus group suggested that the marketing of distance education courses may be more effective when it is by word of mouth rather than by overt, college driven marketing campaigns. Other enablers included personal influences, including spouse or family encouragement as well as flexibility from their employer to attend classes that might normally interfere with working hours.

Barriers that were seen as significant by members of the focus group included lack of money, lack of time, lack of transportation, lack of family or peer support, poor academic preparation or readiness, and self-doubt. The greatest advantage of distance learning may be that it counters the barriers of time and transportation which can deprive a person of the ability of traveling to a campus unless they live or move to the vicinity of a campus.

Technology itself is an integral part of almost all forms of distance learning. It is essential, then, for students to feel comfortable with technology in order to succeed in such classes. Fear of technology, it was felt, could be more of a problem for individuals over age 30 than for individuals who are traditional age college students or even those in their 20s.

Another aspect of distance learning that was suggested by the focus group is the independence of time and/or place that it can offer. Students who know their own learning style and motivational drive may be more interested in classes that are not only time independent but place independent as well. Conversely, less self motivated students might tend to be more attracted and do better in a

class that is more time and place dependent, such as live interactive television courses that meet regularly with the instructor present in the classroom, and offer more structure to the learning process.

Members of the focus group also suggested that the number of women who are in distance education classes may not be unusual. Women have been participating in college courses in increasing numbers during the past three decades. Many of them may be looking for alternatives to the traditional college environment, which is offered through distance education.

The questionnaire was instrumental in gathering preliminary demographic information about distance learners, and in gathering insight into their motives for enrolling in distance classes. The questionnaire also served as a screening instrument for the selection of the students who would be interviewed. Ninety-three questionnaires were returned, which was a 44.3% return rate.

In the sample of 210 distance students, the average age was 28.8 years, and ranged from 18 to 55 years. The sample, reflecting college-wide distance education enrollment, was 74% female. In this sample, 80% worked at least part time and 32% worked 40 or more hours per week. Fifty-seven percent of the sample had access to computers at home, but more of these computer owners were in business related majors than arts and science related majors. The average distance that these students lived from a college center was 11.8 miles. Eighty-nine percent of these students had enrolled in live ITV courses, 78% had enrolled in a GSS telecourse, and 5% had enrolled in an online course. Sixty-

eight percent of these distance learners had enrolled in two or more types of distance courses.

The primary motives for their enrollment in distance courses included degree seeking and information seeking motivations, and convenience of time and location of the course. The motives and other factors related to the students' enrolling in distance courses were further investigated in the interviews. A summary of the results of the interviews follows.

The Subjects of the Study

The students who were the subjects of this study and were interviewed are all unique individuals, and yet they are all part of a growing number of students who are seeking to begin their education at a distance at a community college, university or private college. Based on statistics gathered from both the state level and the college level, during the 1997-98 school year (fall 97 through summer 98), there were over 34,300³ enrollments in Iowa alone in some form of televised distance instruction at the college level (this does not include web course or correspondence course enrollment). This figure is increasing at a rate of approximately 15% per year. The majority of these students are Midwest students primarily from middle-class family backgrounds.

³ Sources for this statistic include: Iowa Public Television Telecourse Enrollments—Fall 97, Spring 98, and Summer 98; Iowa Communications Network Educational Classes Survey—Fall 97; Iowa Educational Classes Enrollment Data—Fall 97—Iowa Regents Universities and Independent Colleges and Universities; Iowa Communications Network Spring 1998 Educational Classes Survey—Final Report; Iowa Central Community College ICTN/ICN Credit Class Enrollment—1996-1998; Distance Learning Class enrollment data from Kirkwood Community College, Hawkeye Community College, Iowa Lakes Community College, and Eastern Iowa Community College District, and other ICN schedulers.

A similar Midwestern background was characteristic of those who were interviewed in this study. The fact that almost 90% of these students qualified for and accepted financial aid implies that most were living within a minimal means of support. In the large sample of distance learning students, almost 75% of these students were women and 60% were between 24 and 55 years of age, or within the non-traditional age range.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss the key information that was offered by the distance learning students concerning their motives, enablers, barriers, and their thoughts on technology.

Motives

What motives for participation are present among college students who enroll in distance education courses? There appear to be several motivational factors that these distance students experienced. They are primarily related to their interest in seeking a degree, in enhancing their career, and in seeking information that would enhance their interests. However, there are also factors such as a trigger event and prior education that form part of the basis for their motives to enroll.

Degree Seeking

Almost all of the students who were interviewed identified the attainment of a degree as at least one, if not the major reason for their enrolling in distance education. In today's society, it is not necessary to have a degree to succeed, if success is measured by an adequately paying job. However, a degree may often

help a great deal in securing a satisfying career in a field of the individual's choice.

There are many jobs and careers that require at least a two-year degree if not a four-year degree. There are also a growing number of career opportunities that require certification, or a specific training program as preparation for a given job. For many of these distance learning students, their pursuit of an Associate's Degree was perceived to be their direct path to a more prosperous future. A future they hoped would include a job that was more challenging, more worthwhile, and more satisfying to them personally than what they had been doing previously.

Career Advancement

From the comments offered during the interviews, most of these students had experienced some level of dissatisfaction with their jobs or working environment. In some cases, the dissatisfaction was due to their working in a relatively low paying or low responsibility job in which they felt their skills or abilities were not being utilized. In other cases, it seems to have been due to the fact that the routine of their job was not challenging enough. In most of these instances, there seemed to have been little chance for career advancement. There were a couple of individuals who stated that potential career advancement depended on their enrolling in additional coursework, new certification, or a degree. In almost all cases, the students sought education at a distance as a way

of propelling them to a new or better career. Or, as Thomas said, a way of “getting your ticket punched.”

Information Seeking

Several of the students mentioned their love of learning during the interviews. For these students, it would appear that their motivation was information seeking, at least in part. But it is interesting that each of these particular students in the same sentence also mentioned their desire to achieve a degree or get a better job as the reason for their enrolling in distance courses. This seems to confirm others (Boshier & Collins, 1985; Clayton & Smith, 1987; Tough, 1968) who have concluded that for many college students, their reasons in seeking education and in seeking a degree are based on a combination of motives. Those motives may be driven by their desire to seek a degree in order to enhance their career opportunities, but are only possible if still other factors happen to fall into place.

Trigger Event

Many of the students who were interviewed, such as Kimberly, Kirk, Dana, and Theresa, were able to identify an event, which they felt was a key point in their lives, during which they decided to seriously explore or actually enroll in courses. The events which triggered the act of enrollment for these individuals varied considerably. For one it was the passing of a parent, for another it was a “fight” with the boss, and for still another it was a challenge from a counselor. But in each of these cases, as well as in others, a life changing or at least a

significant emotional event occurred. This event compelled the individual to reevaluate their current situation and environment. Education by way of distance learning emerged as the logical path for them to follow.

Prior Education

One of the most reliable predictors of adult education participation is previous education (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979). A corollary to this axiom would be that one of the most reliable predictors of participation in distance education is previous distance education. All but two of the students had received their high school diploma. However, by their own admission, these students did not all perceive themselves to have been “good” students in high school. But years later, their career and degree motivations, as well as their greater maturity and increased self-discipline were stronger. Together, these factors seem to have been instrumental in moving them to enroll and in predicting their success. The two who came back to complete their GED, and just “kept going” were ages 31 and 42 respectively when they reentered education. They were well into their adult life before they were moved to enroll in college courses, yet, still did.

Barriers

Patricia Cross (1981) and others have described three types of barriers to enrollment. They are situational barriers, dispositional barriers, and institutional barriers. It would seem from these interviews that situational barriers are not only the most problematic, but also the most common, followed by several of the

dispositional barriers. The most frequently mentioned barriers among those interviewed included the following: (a) lack of money, (b) not enough time, (c) forgot how to study/too difficult, (d) thought they were too old, and (e) too far away. These barriers were the most prevalent, and most frequently cited by the distance learning students.

The first two, cited by almost 70% of these students, are situational barriers. This is an even higher percentage than the general average cited by Cross (1981), who identified these same two barriers (cost of education and lack of time) as being problems for up to 50% of respondents in survey research across all areas of adult education. The other three barriers most frequently cited by these distance learners were dispositional barriers. A review of each will be presented next.

Lack of Money

Among the students who were interviewed, 87% received some form of financial aid, and 80% worked at least part-time. Approximately 70% cited "lack of money" as a barrier to them when they considered enrolling. As Theresa, age 31, described her feelings about her decision, she explained: "I filled out the application for financial aid, and I thought, if it comes back, but I don't get any money I just won't go. If I get money, I'm going. Everything worked out." And for many students like Theresa, that was one of the deciding factors.

Not Enough Time

In contemporary society, we hear the comment, “I don’t have enough time,” all too frequently. So it is not unusual that these distance learning students would also cite this factor as one with which they had to deal. The challenge for them was to balance family, job, class assignments, and other activities in their schedules. Time Management workshops, in which several of these students participated, and the sharing of responsibilities in the home were mentioned as helpful solutions to this problem. But by enrolling in distance education, an enormous amount of time that they would normally spend driving to and from a traditional campus was virtually eliminated. That savings of time was seen by most to be of great importance.

Forgot How to Study/Too Difficult

Although these two factors are discussed together here, it should be noted that of the 10 who cited “study” and the nine who cited “difficult,” there were only four of these students who cited both. The students who felt that the courses might be too difficult ranged in age from 24 to 50 years, while those who expressed a concern about their study habits were mostly in their 30s and 40s. Age appears to have been a factor among those who struggled to relearn good study habits, while the perception of difficulty spanned almost the entire age range. Three of the four who cited both barriers were in their early to mid-thirties.

Too Old

For the almost 40% of these students who thought they were too old to enroll in courses, many of them overcame that fear with simply a determination to not let that bother them. “I thought, well, I’m just going to have to deal with it. If I’m the oldest person there, then that’s the way it’s going to have to be” (Vicki, 31). However, most of these students found that, not only were they not the “oldest” person there, but, it was not a continuing problem. It was, however, an initial concern, and might prevent some potential students from ever enrolling. It would behoove colleges to consider portraying non-traditional students, particularly those in their 30s and 40s, in their marketing brochures more frequently.

Too Far Away

Approximately 30% of these distance learning students felt that being “too far away” was a barrier to their enrollment. But with the College Learning Centers located throughout the region, and in many cases, 10 or fewer miles from the student’s home, the distance barrier was reduced. For some students, even the few miles that they would have to travel to one of the college centers, might be significant. For many of those, the opportunity to take Guided Self-Study or Web-based courses might be even more appealing, since travel on a regular basis would be reduced.

Enablers

Of the various factors that can be termed enablers, there were four factors that stood out as being significant to the distance learners. They were: (a) financial aid, (b) proximity of the centers and help from support staff, (c) marketing, and (d) family and peer support.

Other enabling factors, such as affordable child care, career choice workshops, and even technology itself, which enables electronic and televised communication that didn't widely exist 10 years ago, are also important factors that should not be overlooked by colleges today. But the role played by the other four factors seem to play a more fundamental role in helping a student to make that decision to actually enroll in a distance learning course.

These enablers, to varying degrees, help to counter the barriers that act to prevent students from enrolling. And although these enablers do not counter every barrier, they appear to counter-balance in a positive way, the negative pressures of many of the barriers that may be present for the distance learner. Each of these enablers will be reviewed next.

Financial Aid

Financial aid was used by 20 of the 23 distance learners or 87% of the interview group. This figure is somewhat higher than the percentage reported by many community colleges whose students are eligible and choose to receive some form of financial aid (Hawkeye Community College, 1998). It is no surprise that these distance learning students also found financial aid essential to their being

able to enroll. "I qualified for financial aid. Would not have been able to go to school without the financial aid" (Dana, 25).

These students will probably enjoy learning that near the end of 1998, new federal legislation was signed that put into place new rules which increase accommodations for distance learners applying for federal financial aid (Mendels, 1998).

College Centers

Most of the students who were interviewed reported living a considerable distance from the main college campus, but only a few miles (less than 12 miles on average) from a center that was fully staffed and operated by the college. The proximity of the centers to the homes of the students acted to counter the barriers of transportation problems (lack of transportation), and not having enough time, both of which were reported by almost 70% of the interviewees. Research is "unanimous in documenting the importance of proximity and access to educational services" (Cross, 1981, p. 60). Helen, age 39, described the alternative if the center had not been there: "No, I would probably still be working out on the floor, making parts."

But the center provided more than just a classroom that was nearby. The staff, particularly the directors of the centers, were reported to be key individuals in assisting the students in the selection of their courses, helping them with their schedules, and providing a personal and helpful contact at the college center. The praise offered by the students of all of the center directors is noteworthy.

“John [Center Coordinator] has always been real helpful. . . . [He would] sit down, and explain to you which classes you had to take, how to get the financial aid, and different things to apply for” (Sharon, 38). And, although some students might have needed less assistance than others, the fact that help was provided for the many students who needed the extra personal assistance, probably resulted in increased enrollments for the college.

In addition to the advising and personal assistance, the centers also offered the students a comprehensive array of support elements and classroom types. These elements included: classrooms connected to the distance delivery systems (fiber optics Iowa Communications Network (ICN) and microwave television system), a room for viewing telecourses and Guided Self-Study, computer classrooms, information about the broad range of programs offered by the college, and access to library services via the Internet. But the benefits of all of these services would go unnoticed if some form of marketing didn't occur to let people know of the opportunities and services that were available.

Marketing

Some of the students mentioned overt marketing pieces that they recalled, such as schedule mailings, radio announcements about the college, and newspaper ads. But as initially pointed out by members of the focus group, many of these students “heard” about the center from their peers, and they heard good things about the distance classes that were held there. This “word of mouth” marketing may be more effective than marketing campaigns that usually cost

thousands of dollars. However, the marketing campaigns are often necessary to make the college services known to residents of the communities in the area. It is necessary to help make the public aware that the college is indeed there and has classes and services to offer to the residents, especially new people just moving into the community or area.

Peer and Family Support

Most of the students felt that the support that they received from their spouse, other members of their family, or from friends or their workplace was important to them. There is no doubt that pursuing a college degree is a challenging and rigorous activity. As many of these students explained how they attempted to balance their family responsibilities with their work activities, and still complete assignments for their courses, it became apparent that this challenge was almost overwhelming at times. Shared family duties was reported to be very helpful, as in Roberta's case. "Wow, my husband does dishes, does laundry, cooks. He has been extremely supportive. My children will baby-sit . . ." (Roberta, 36).

And support from their coworkers, and even their bosses, helped to give some of these students the extra drive to enroll in the first place and to persist in their studies. It is also possible that some of these students really didn't make their decision to enroll until they felt they had sufficient support from their spouse or family. "It was just encouragement of friends, and a lot of my family's been really supportive of me coming back" (Kirk, 31). Their enrollment may have

been a family commitment as much as a personal commitment to learning for their own benefit.

Technology and Format Preferences

The distance students who participated in this study were enrolled in three different types of distance education. They included the following: (a) live interactive television classes that are taught via a fiber optics network—The Iowa Communications Network (ICN)—and via a college owned multi-county microwave television system; (b) Guided Self-Study courses (GSS) that usually use pre-produced telecourses that the students can view at a time of their choosing, that require the student to complete assignments given by a local instructor, read the textbook, and complete the required tests; and (c) web-based or online courses that are taught through web pages by way of the Internet. None of the students who were interviewed indicated that they were involved in forms of distance learning other than these. Each will be discussed, in turn.

Interactive Television

Throughout the history of distance education, students have been attracted to the flexibility of courses offered in convenient locations. The use of microwave and fiber optics systems, such as the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), have enabled instruction to be live, interactive, visual and spontaneous. Unlike courses offered via satellite, student-teacher and student-student interaction over ITV systems can be spontaneous and immediate by using microphones.

This format offers the student at a distance a learning environment and a feel very much like a traditional classroom, except for the television equipment that might be involved. It is probably the best distance education environment for the student who desires a more structured or traditional learning experience. Live interactive television classes have an instructor present, meet on a specified day or days of the week at a particular time of day or evening, just like a traditional class. The difference, though, is that the ITV course is transmitted to receive sites that are in closer proximity to the student than the main campus. But the course itself retains much of the normal structure of a traditional course. This is a benefit for the student that desires that structure, but cannot enroll in the course on the main campus.

Guided Self-Study/Telecourses

It was interesting to note in the findings that there was a higher average age for those who were taking the GSS courses than there were for those who were taking the live ITV courses. While an ITV course meets at a given time on a given day, every week (more structured), and has the advantage of having an instructor immediately available during the class meeting, the GSS course content can be viewed at any time, but the instructor and other students might not be available for questions at that moment. Thus, the GSS course requires more self-direction on the part of the student, but can also involve less immediate stress than a live ITV course. The GSS student can view the taped material at a

time of their choosing, but it is up to the student to carve that time on a regular basis out of their busy schedule.

The failure and non-completion rate among distance learners is well documented (Cookson, 1990; Dille & Mezack, 1995). Students enrolled in telecourses have traditionally experienced a higher non-completion rate than those enrolled in live distance courses or on-campus courses because of the increased need for the student to be self-motivated and more mature. If the student is not self-motivated, they are often prone to fail or to withdraw from the course.

Online/Web Courses

Only one student who was interviewed had taken a web-based course. Therefore, there are insufficient data to draw any conclusions. However, comments from the student did indicate that, in her view, web-based courses should be flexible and not as structured as traditional courses. It also seemed important to note that a large majority (74%) of these distance learners were interested in trying a web course in the future.

In a general sense, the television technology, not to mention computers and the Internet, have made it possible to hold live courses over fiber optics networks and the World Wide Web, and almost totally eliminate the barrier of distance, and still receive high quality education. Future advances in newer technologies may even further advance the potential of electronic distance learning. Younger students, who now are becoming very comfortable with

computers and electronic equipment in schools and in their homes, should have even less discomfort with such technology in future semesters.

Other Factors

During the research and the analysis of the data, there were several factors that emerged from the data gathered during the focus group and the interviews. Some of this information suggested that there might be additional aspects to the issues of motives, barriers and enablers that were not prominent in the literature. Among these issues are the following: age, gender, a sense of student determination, and time and place independency. These issues will each be discussed in turn.

Age

Whether or not age is a factor in distance education is subject to further discussion and research. The ages of the distance learners in the original sample ranged from 18 to 55 years. Those educators who closely identify with the concept of "life long learning," would agree that one is never too old to continue or even begin a college education. It is evident from this research and from other studies (Moore & Kearsley, 1996), that non-traditional students (over age 23) are usually more motivated and more serious than younger students. A comment by Theresa, age 31, illustrates this point: "I told you they [younger students] sleep in the class, they don't have their homework done, and I'm thinking, "why are you even here?" My view and their view are completely different than I think if we were closer in age." This kind of attitude, which reflects a more serious interest

in the courses, may result in greater success for such non-traditional students, whether in a traditional campus setting or in a distance learning environment.

One thing is indisputable among non-traditional students, it is that part of their adult life is behind them. Their family and working responsibilities are often central to their lives. For these individuals, as students, the degree at a distance was an essential part of their motivations and goals. These non-traditional students tended to be more focused, as illustrated in Chapter 5 by the more nebulous goals described by some of the younger distance learners compared with the goals of many of those over 30.

Regardless of their age, however, these students all saw barriers and overcame them; they almost all felt the importance of spouse and peer support, and appreciated that; they all saw education at a distance as a means to a new and brighter future, and set their sights on that goal when they enrolled.

Women as Distance Learners

Another facet of the study is the predominance of women in distance learning programs. Although distance education, to my knowledge, has never been considered a “women’s” issue, it may be appropriate to consider this in the future—at least the immediate future. In Janet Stephens’ exploration of women who have attempted to be mothers, while also attempting to maintain a professional-level career, she described the “voyage” that the interview itself was for the subjects of her study. “This was a voyage of self-discovery for some as they had perhaps not had the opportunity to articulate feelings to an interested

outsider before” (Stephens, 1996, p. 47). The interviews in this study with many of the distance learning students perhaps became such a voyage for them as well.

The fact that almost 75% of the distance students in this study were women seems to me to be a significant and a recurring facet of distance education. That fact should at least be worth noting by community colleges. The proportion of enrollments in this study, in an uncanny way, was almost identical to the proportion found by MacBrayne (1993) and Rasmussen (1992) in their studies on opposite sides of the country. And yet, community colleges apparently do not ordinarily give special note to this situation.

One might ask if there should be any special attention given to this gender imbalance factor. Nursing students are predominantly women students; education students, especially those in elementary education are more frequently women. But these are “programs,” i.e., nursing program, education program, that may periodically attract members of one gender or another to enroll because of a particular appeal of that career. However, distance education, is a delivery method that provides courses in a wide variety of programs that do not have a general imbalance in terms of gender. But still, distance education appears to be drawing mostly women students to its classrooms. The question remains “why”?

Already in the early 1980s women were enrolling in increasing numbers in colleges across the country. Cross (1981) contends that the reason for that fact was tied to the removal of many traditional barriers that women faced in earlier years. Removing those barriers was enough to generate increased numbers of

enrollments of these women. One could say that offering courses at a distance has reduced other traditional barriers: that of frequent required travel to a campus as well as the time involved. This fact may be part of the reason for women making up the majority of distance learners.

Perhaps the answer to this question also lies in the overall goals of the students. These students are, by and large, seeking a degree at a distance to enhance or begin a career--a wide variety of careers. By itself, this is not too different from traditional students. However, distance students as a group are older than traditional on-campus students, more highly motivated, appear to be more focused in their goals, and already (most of them) have one job, if not several to make ends meet. Most also already have family responsibilities, which by itself, often prevent students from enrolling. But the most significant barriers to these students are the financial needs, the lack of time, and the travel distance from a traditional campus. Distance learning along with financial assistance breaks down those major barriers to allow these students the opportunity to enroll, and with effort, to achieve their degree and a new or better career. This may help to answer the question of why more women than men enroll in distance education.

There possibly are other factors at work here as well. Among these are such items as brought forward in the online focus group, describing the increasing number of women who are participating in education in general during the past three decades. And studies described by Pat Cross (1981) of

similar increasing participation by women in educational programs have long indicated this phenomenon. Is it perhaps that distance education environments allow greater access to learning for women, more so than for men, than does a traditional campus? Further research may help to answer this question.

Determination

One outcome of this investigation was evidence that for many distance learners a strong sense of self-determination exists, and that that determination or resiliency may be integral to their motives of enrollment, and ultimate success in attaining their degree. Nine (39%) of the 23 students who were interviewed emphasized their determination in enrolling and persisting in their distance degree. Some of the comments included the following:

- I could have done it without it [support]. I made up my mind I'm gonna do this. They could have not asked, I'd still be here. (Monica, 43)
- I'm determined to do it, and I think I would anyway. . . . The fact that I don't want to be a bartender, cook for--my feet are tired. (Delores, 37)
- Sometimes I stayed up all night. Sometimes just finding the time after--. Come home from school at 10, I'll have a test in the other class tomorrow night. So then stay up till two or three studying because you have to work the whole next day. You just make the time. It's not always enjoyable, but you do what you gotta do, I guess. (Vicki, 31)

This feeling of determination almost transcended the encouragement, or lack thereof, the goals, degree motivation, even the advantages of financial aid.

All but one of these nine students were over age 30.

Time and/or Place Independency

One concept that was put forward during the Online Focus Group dealt with time independence and place independence. For almost 40% of the interview students, time independence was more important than place independence. This may be the result of the need to counter the barrier of not having enough time. By providing flexibility or independence from time restraints, the student becomes able to fit the course into their schedule whenever they can. It may vary from day to day or week to week, but the student has that flexibility. For some that becomes a very important ability.

On the other hand, just under half of the students who were interviewed felt that both time and place independence were important to their decision to enroll and to their choice of courses. For these students it appears to not be enough to be able to just vary the time of their course. It appears to be equally important to these students to also have flexibility in where they have their courses. “Yeah. It needs to be offered out here at a time I can take it” (Kimberly, 41). In other words, a place of the student’s choosing, which might be the college center, or, for some, it might even be in their home or even their workplace. This then becomes one of the institutional decisions that must be made: where to offer the course, at what time of day or day of the week if it is to be a live course, and by what technology if it is to be asynchronous.

Decisions of this nature, that are made on the institutional level, invariably impact the ability of the students to attend, thus impacting their ability to enroll.

The student's preference for time and place independency returns us to the question of convenience.

The Convenience Factor

As pointed out in the focus group, many students enroll because of a sense of "convenience" in taking courses at a distance instead of traveling to a main campus for classes. As pointed out in the focus group ". . . the major motivation for individuals to enroll in distance education college courses is due to the 'convenience' factor. This method of delivery most likely will save them travel time" (E. Kabat, personal communication, DLMOTIVES Listserve, Apr 30, 1997). But what does the convenience factor really mean?

One of the motive statements on the student questionnaire was that "the course was offered at a location/time that was convenient to me." Individuals might comment that they shop at a certain grocery store because it is more convenient than another. It may not be that the grocery is closer to where they live. It could be that the grocery is near the route they take when they go from their workplace to their home, i.e., it's on their way home. In this sense it is not closer to their home, but rather it is closer to their normal route of travel. They don't have to go out of their way in order to do their shopping. It may also be that another store, say a department store is near a grocery store, so it becomes more convenient to do grocery shopping there, and also be able to shop at the department store that is next to it. Again, proximity to home would not be the determining factor.

Another way of looking at convenience is that it minimizes impositions to one's way of life and normal routine. Convenience, therefore refers more to minimizing the impact on one's lifestyle than on proximity to one's home. It might, however, at times relate to minimizing some aspect of travel, e.g., being able to shop at two stores in one stop rather than having to travel between the two stores, but that will result in a savings of time, in addition to a savings of travel.

For students, then, convenience will usually reflect a sense of minimizing travel, time and general impact on their daily routine and life style. In this light, distance education is more convenient than education on a main campus. But because of various other aspects that contribute to the decision to enroll, convenience is only one factor among many.

An interrelationship seems to exist between the students and the college in a distance education environment. The role, importance, and interplay of the motives, barriers, enablers and the technology form a cluster of elements that are part of the precursors of and decision to enroll in distance education. Some of these elements may be controlled by the college, some of them may be controlled by the student, but some also are part of the persona of the individual or rise from the life experiences that exist as part of the individual's pattern of life, and are difficult to control or predict. They can only be considered as unpredictable elements in the cluster. The next section will consider this theoretical framework, this cluster of elements of enrollment for the distance learner.

Distance Education Participation—A Theoretical Construct

The foregoing discussion may serve to open new avenues of thought, and form a basis for a new model of distance education participation. The following section will offer a discussion of such a model of distance education participation, first by describing the relationships of the various elements that come to bear in this decision, the life experiences and values that the student carries with them, the counterbalancing of barriers and enablers, and finally, the role played by technology in the distance education environment.

A model of distance education participation might be based on the various elements that have been described in this study. These elements emerge from the data of this study and build on the literature of previous studies, especially on Cross' Chain of Response Model (1981) and Cookson's Model of Participation in Adult Education (1986). These elements, as illustrated in Figure 3, coalesce from the following: (a) the background experiences, motives of participation, and goals of the learner; (b) the barriers faced by these distance learners: situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers; (c) the enablers or facilitating activities that provide encouragement, support, or essential information to the student, often countering barriers that exist; (d) the trigger events that may suddenly jolt a person into a mindset of action; e) other life experiences, including the value that the individual places on education itself; and (f) technology that brings learning to the student, but also may cause anxiety in the student. Figure 3

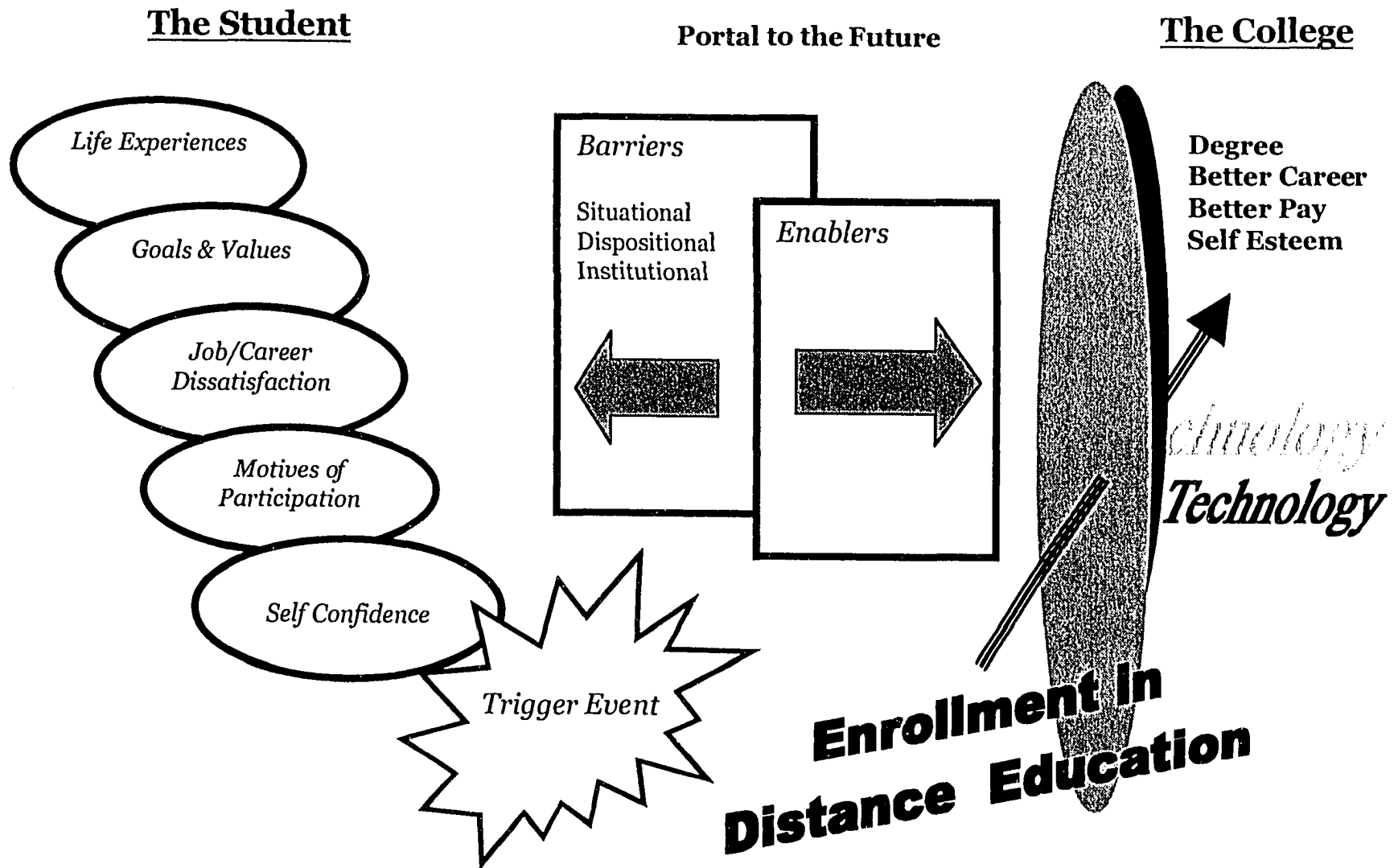


Figure 3. Elements of Distance Education Participation

attempts to illustrate the relationships that these elements form as the student considers enrollment and participation in distance education.

The Relationships of Participation Factors

As Figure 3 suggests, there are complex factors and clusters of elements at work in the individual as he or she moves along a path toward education at a distance in the community college. It may even be suggested here that the “train track switch” that moves them from their current path onto the path that leads to education is the trigger event that brings them to the realization that they must make a choice while reexamining their life, their values, their career or job, their family situation, and their needs for the future. For many of these individuals, their expectations of distance education include a degree, enhanced opportunities for a satisfying job or career, improved financial security, and enhanced self esteem. These elements were all articulated by the distance learning students who were interviewed in this study. To reach their goals, the elements of distance education enrollment emerge. The move from the student’s experiences, values and goals, to the act of enrolling is a life-changing event that can result in a new future for the individual. It is an act which is made possible only by the barriers faced being countered by the enablers present. Included, and often central to the student, is having the courses offered at a distance, i.e., at a convenient time and place.

Referring to Figure 3, and based on the data from the interviews and previous studies as mentioned above, initially, the individual carries with them

the sum-total of their life experiences. Included in these experiences are their values, especially how they value education. For those who do value education, often a result of reasonably positive experiences with prior education, and see it as a possible means to personal and career improvement, education becomes a reasonable option for them when the need arises. For those who do not value education (lack of interest) due in some cases to a lower socio-economic situation and poor experiences in prior educational settings, education will hold little value, and not present itself as an option when the need might arise.

Grounded in the interviews, there appears to be certain precursors to enrollment. They will vary somewhat among individuals, but for most, they will include some or most of the following: (a) an unsatisfied career goal, (b) job dissatisfaction, (c) a reevaluation of goals (d) consideration of adequacy of current employment in relation to personal and family needs, (e) a sense of self confidence, (f) a reasonable expectation of success that would result from their educational efforts (part of their life experiences and values), (g) a consideration of the various barriers with which they must contend if they enroll, (h) a consideration of the various enablers and supporting elements that may counter some or most of the barriers, and (i) a trigger event that moves them to enroll.

Once the decision is made to enroll, two other factors can significantly influence the completion of the enrollment process, and ultimately, the successful completion of courses. They include another enabler, that of affirmation by spouse and peers, in other words encouragement and support that reassure the

person that they are making the right decision; and determination within the individual to do it, despite potential discouragement that they might encounter as another barrier. These last two enablers might need to arise again and again to reinforce the student's decision. This would probably be true whether the individual were a traditional student, a distance learner, a non-traditional student, or even a doctoral student.

The Path to Participation at a Distance

It could be said that such individuals reach a point in their lives when they would consider education, and specifically distance education, as something worthy of pursuit. They would arrive at this point after their life experiences, their goals, and level of job satisfaction reach a point where they find themselves questioning their career or their future. Their goals and values at this stage must be such that the individual considers education to be a viable path to a better future, a better job or a new career.

Their motives of participation begin to form at this point. Enablers, both personal enablers and institutional enablers begin to weigh against perceived barriers, such as lack of time, potential for success and positive outcomes, self-doubt, available finances, and information and assistance from the college itself. Proximity and available transportation are considered as well as how family responsibilities will be affected, how childcare will be managed, and how routine home decorum will be maintained.

For a number of such students, an event in their lives may act as a triggering mechanism for their action of enrollment. It may be a significant emotional event such as a death in the family, a change in family makeup, or a realization that their job or career may not prove satisfactory or sufficiently lucrative in the long run. At this point, the individual may take the critical first steps at exploring the possibilities of going back to school.

Barriers and Enablers

Every individual will encounter some barriers in their consideration of a college education. For almost all barriers, there are enablers which will counter the problematic effects of those barriers. But the enablers must adequately counter the respective barrier in order for the student to feel encouragement enough to move psychologically toward enrollment. When it does, the barrier is neutralized and no longer, by itself, prevents the person from enrolling. Table 7 offers a comparison of barriers and the enablers that can counter the given barrier. The barriers are presented here in the order of frequency given by the students who were interviewed. Each barrier is identified as being a dispositional (D), situational (S), or an institutional (I) barrier. The enabler(s) that function to counter the given barrier is listed in the right hand column.

Much of the foregoing discussion might be the same for an individual who is considering going back to school on a full time basis in a traditional campus setting, but at this point, two major factors come to bear on the distance learner. These two barriers are “not enough time” and “it’s too far away.”

Table 7

Barriers—Enablers

<u>Barriers</u>	<u>(Countered by)</u>	<u>Enablers</u>
Financial Need (S)	↔	Financial Assistance
Not Enough Time (S)	↔	Reduced Travel Time
Too Far Away (I)	↔	Delivery to Distance Locations
Forgot How to Study (D)	↔	Study Workshops
Thought Too Old (D)	↔	Peer & Family Support
Lack of Transportation (S)	↔	And Marketing depicting non-trd'l students Minimal or no driving required
Afraid of Technology (D)	↔	Technology Orientation And Positive Experiences w/ technology And Ubiquity of Technology
Family Responsibilities (S)	↔	Shared Responsibilities
Lack of Childcare (S)	↔	Affordable Child & Day Care programs
Lack of Information (I)	↔	Marketing Efforts
Lack of Support (S)	↔	Encouragement or Determination
Discouragement (D)	↔	Peer Support And Marketing And Determination
Self-Doubt (D)	↔	Encouragement And Marketing And Value Education And Positive Prior Educational Experiences
Fear of Competing with Younger Students (D)	↔	Support And Social Participation

Note. Key to barriers: (S) Situational, (D) Dispositional, (I) Institutional

When available time for travel and for study are considered, as well as, maintaining a job while attending classes, the barriers of time and transportation requirements become major considerations. These barriers may not be resolved unless there are provisions for distance learning. When those provisions are

made reasonably available, barriers involving time, continuing work, and being too far away from the college, may well be adequately countered to enable the student to enroll at a distance.

It is often because of the proximity of a nearby college center or flexibility of how a course is offered, such as with Guided Self-Study, or web-based courses that can be pursued in the home, that these needs can be resolved. If other barriers are countered such as financial need with financial aid, inadequate study habits with study workshops and so on, the individual may then enroll in the course of study and become a distance learning student. One final factor plays a role in the decision of a distance learner to enroll and that is the technology itself.

The Role of Technology

Technology may play three different roles in the decision to enroll, and as such, affects how the student deals with and perceives distance learning. Technology is an embedded aspect of a student's decision to enroll in a distance education course. Among the three roles that technology plays in distance education, two roles may act as barriers to enrollment and one acts to enable or encourage enrollment.

The three roles played by technology in distance education include: (a) an enabler of communication and instruction. with the technology acting as a vehicle of communication between the instructor and the student; (b) a barrier whereby the communication technology itself may act to filter, create "noise," or limit either visual information or the verbal message itself; and (c) a barrier to the

student in the form of their perceived fears and anxieties about technology in general and fears of specific technologies such as computers.

Point (a) above differs from point (c) in that (a) refers to the role played by technology in the communication process itself, in this case distance learning technology, as part of a physical, but usually neutral system of communication, whereas, (c) implies a psychological or a perceptual factor that can result in discouraging the student to enroll and participate in the instruction.

Communication through technology is the result of having the voices and images of the instructor and students transmitted electronically through the use of cameras and microphones, and is inherently less detailed (role [b]—filter effect) in the output at the receiving end than the reality of physical presence at the origination site.

These three roles stem from common communication theory that has evolved through the works of Schramm, Berlo, and McCroskey (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 1993). The roles also stem from the fact that technology acts as a physical vehicle by which teaching, learning, and communication between the students and the instructor are conveyed over distances—acting as both a mechanism of communication and a filter to the communication and the instruction. However, the student also may hold in their mind a sense of fear of technology as described by some of the distance learners in this study.

To expand on this argument, in most instances technology functions as an *enabler* in the communication process without significantly filtering, distorting,

or interfering with the fluency of the message or the instructional information. The distance education technology can adversely affect the message, thus act as a barrier, in two different ways. The first, as mentioned above, is that the technology inherently offers less detail to both the student and the instructor. Unlike a physical classroom where an instructor can move to within a short physical distance of the student, in a distance learning system the image on the television screen, especially for the instructor to view, will almost never offer enough detail to reliably offer facial expressions and subtle body language on which some instructors come to rely in a traditional classroom. The other way that the technology can filter the message is when there is equipment that fails.

When the technology (and some systems can be extremely complex), does not work properly, it functions as a temporary barrier to the communication by interfering with the fluency of the message, and at times disrupting the flow of instruction. If the problem is an integral part of the technology system, for example a slower modem that is inadequate to accommodate an instructional web page laden with graphical images, the message interference could be a more significant barrier, and ultimately cause ineffective instruction, dissatisfied students, and decreased enrollments. This is one reason why technical support of educational telecommunications systems as well as instructional design support is so vital to the success of distance learning.

The other barrier role played by technology results from the perceptions of the students: the fears, the anxieties, and inexperience with certain technology

that can make the student hesitant to even try a distance learning course. These fears and anxieties may stem from inexperience with interactive television technology and microphones (which are not normally used in traditional classrooms), lack of experience with computers and certain software that might be used in a class, and even the fear or discomfort of seeing one's own image on a television screen, which might be the result of a low self image or lack of self confidence.

It was encouraging to note that among the interviewed students, most of those who expressed a fear of some aspect of technology, also expressed either a confidence in overcoming those fears or expressed a sense that the problem did not prevent them from enrolling in the first place.

Thus, technology alone plays a complex role in distance education and in the student's decision to enroll. The technology will ultimately result in facilitating the distance student's success or his or her failure in the pursuit of their educational goals. But it is inherently embedded in the student's decision just as the institution is an inherent part of the granting of the degree.

Recommendations For Further Study

For future researchers, this study may have spawned additional questions concerning motives of enrollment in distance education, along with questions about the other factors that have been described. The following ideas are offered as suggestions for additional research.

What draws women to distance education? The strong discrepancy between the percentage of community college women students who attend classes on a main campus, in this case, around 55% (Sabotta, 1998b), and those who attend in distance learning classes, around 75% is unexplained.

What barriers to distance learning in the community college still exist for individuals who do not enroll in courses and whose needs are not yet being met? Studies heretofore have concentrated on college students who enroll in classes, and some studies have explored reasons for students dropping out of classes, but there are few, if any, that have involved individuals who have not enrolled, and why they don't.

This study, as well as the MacBrayne and Rasmussen studies, dealt primarily with students in a mostly rural part of the country. Are the goals, needs, motives, and characteristics of community college distance learners similar or dissimilar in more densely populated areas of the country, and for that matter in other countries?

Technology is an enabler; technology is a barrier. How significant is the barrier role played by technology? Will it seriously prevent students from enrolling in distance education classes because of inborn fears and anxieties regarding technology? Will younger students who are growing up with computers and VCRs in their homes and classrooms, be completely anxiety free of technology?

There appears to be a preference for greater flexibility of time and place among distance learners as the age and maturity of the student increases. Is this an aberration? Or is this a generalizable conclusion that can be verified through further research? GSS telecourses and web-courses typically require greater self-discipline on the part of the student than live ITV, which usually meets on a regular basis week after week. Does the student's age and maturity, and level of self-discipline correlate with their format preference?

How critical is the role of self confidence in a student's decision to enroll in distance education. In this study, a number of students overcame barriers and discouragement through a sense of self confidence and determination or resiliency. Is that an essential element of the decision to enroll, or simply an additional facet of some of these distance learners?

Women have generally lagged behind men in their comfort level with technology and representation in technology-related fields (Henwood, 1993). Is there a paradox here in that women form the majority of distance learners, but the trend in distance education is toward greater independence from the structure of the traditional classroom that inherently involves technology, particularly computer technology? Will women generally succeed in web courses as they have in televised instruction?

Recommendations for Community Colleges

Since this study focused on community college students, it seems fitting to suggest some points that could be utilized by community colleges to attract and

better serve potential distance learners. The following are a few ideas for consideration.

Some of the activities, services, and policies that appear from the interviews to be appreciated by the students, and may thus act as models for other colleges include the following:

1. Maintaining or establishing distributed college learning centers for live ITV classes as well as other services for students throughout a geographical region; such services should be extended to students taking on-line courses by making as many on campus services available through the web, e.g., library services, registration, advising, placement services, and financial aid application.
2. Providing adequate and courteous support staff in the centers for administering the programs, advising, and for clerical and technical support.
3. Providing space and equipment in the centers for distance learning classrooms along with other classroom spaces, computer labs, study areas, vending machines, etc.
4. Providing efficient and courteous financial aid services for students.
5. Providing easy to understand and easily navigated web-based instruction that incorporates effective principles of learning.
6. Providing greater sensitivity to the needs of women students, and students over 30.
7. Portraying non-traditional students, particularly those in their 30s and 40s in the college's marketing brochures more frequently.

In general, colleges can accomplish much by recognizing that distance learners are not the same group of individuals who comprise the day-time traditional campus population. The needs, goals, and motivation of distance learners are by and large more focussed than those of traditional students. More flexibility may need to be extended toward distance learning students than would normally be extended to the traditional college student.

Concluding Observations—Portals to the Future

Distance education has experienced rapid growth and change during the past decade. Distance education initiatives such as the National Telecommunications Infrastructure Act (NTIA), Star Schools Grants, The Iowa Communications Network (ICN), PBS's Going the Distance Project, and the Western Governors University (WGU) among others, have brought timely funding and recognition to the needs and interests of distance learners throughout the United States.

The recent modernization of telecommunications systems and information technologies used to transmit and conduct classes at a distance has significantly improved the quality and dependability of electronic based learning systems. These advances have also expanded the potential audience of learners to the whole world: from the remotest village in Kenya to the smallest community in Iowa. They have, in effect, reduced--even eliminated--some of the barriers that have always existed for adult learners.

These initiatives and advancements, coupled with an increased emphasis among colleges on teaching effectiveness, assessment, providing a high level of support services to students at all locations, developing collaborative and consortia relationships with sister institutions, and offering courses that lead to a degree and a productive career, may have finally provided a clear path for the adult student to follow. This path will be available regardless of where the student lives or what other responsibilities they might have.

For many adults, whose lives are already filled with a family, a job, and limited time, there is a need for more than simply offering courses—they need and want a degree, a meaningful career, and a better future. And these individuals will need more and more flexibility as to where and when they can pursue that degree. That is the new challenge for community colleges—to provide access to learning wherever and whenever adult students want it, using the technologies that best fit the learning and personal needs of the student.

We cannot predict the future, but we can attempt to move institutions onto a path that helps to meet the needs of such students. As technology provides incredible opportunities for communication under almost any circumstances and to almost any location, the barriers of time and place can be eliminated for everyone. This would enable almost all individuals whose life experiences, goals and motives have taken them to a threshold, to walk through this distance education *portal to the future*.

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APPENDIX A

ELECTRONIC FOCUS GROUP FAQ

[The following was sent by email to the Focus Group members immediately following my opening housekeeping message, April 13, 1997].

List Serve DLMOTIVES FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Listserve in general--

How do I subscribe to a listserve?

Subscribe to the listserve by sending a message to: mailserv@uni.edu
the message should include: `sub DLMotives yourEmailname@host.domain`
(note that `*mailserv*` has no e on the end)

How do I unsubscribe?

Unsubscribe by sending a message to: mailserv@uni.edu
the message should include: `unsub DLMotives yourEmailname@host.domain`

How do I tell who else is receiving the listserve?

For a list of subscribers, send a message to mailserv@uni.edu
the message should include: `send/list DLMotives`

What is the difference between a `*listserve*` and a `*mailserve*`?

These two terms refer to the same thing. UNI uses `mailserv` as its designation.

How do I post a message to the listserve?

Start as you would any email message in your browser or email package, but address the message to: DLMotives@uni.edu

What if my message comes back with an error?

If error or undeliverable messages occur, check carefully to see that the addresses and domain information is spelled correctly, and that the periods (dots) are in the correct place, not commas. The most common error is misspelled words in the address.

Does everyone receive every message from everyone?

Everyone who subscribes to the listserve will receive every message sent by a subscriber to the listserve. A message from a non subscriber will be rejected by the mailserve computer, and will not be posted.

How do I send a message to just one or a couple of people on the listserve?

To send a message to just a couple of the listserve subscribers, address the email message to each individual, not the DLMotives group. You can send one message

to two or more people by separating their email addresses by a comma and space. Use the list of subscribers if you do not have the person(s) email address.

DLMotives Listserve, specifically--

Can anyone join the DLMotives listserve?

For technical reasons (less conflicts and problems with email software) this listserve is "referred", i.e., all subscribers are submitted to me for approval. So, no phantom subscribers can just join the group on their own. It is possible, however, for someone to join at any time, if that is necessary.

Can anyone else view the DLMotives messages?

The only individuals who will receive the DLMotives messages will be those of you who subscribe to the listserve.

Should I quote a prior message that I am discussing?

For clarity it may be necessary to quote a passage from another message, but it will be best for the quotation to be as concise as possible to prevent messages from becoming overly large and cumbersome. A reference to whom you are quoting may also be helpful...Dave said..., or Pam mentioned..., etc.

Can I just use the Reply button to reply to a message? or do I have to create a new message addressed to the listserve?

The Reply button would automatically address your new message to the sender of the previous message, however, the Reply to All button should send your message to other list serve members as well. The original sender will get two copies of your reply.

Is there any limit on how long or how short the messages can be?

A word or a sentence may suffice, but I have also received long newsletters via listserve that are 20 pages when printed. It just takes a while to download the message.

Can I add attachments to my message?

I would encourage using the copy and paste method rather than adding attachments. There have been many messages sent that appear in mime format and garbled characters at the receive end. It is possible to save the email message and then unencode the message later as a viewable text file, but that is an extra step that can be time consuming.

Should I save all the messages?

The messages will remain in your inbox until you delete them. You can also save each message as a text file by using the File menu, and the Save or Save As command. Then give the message a title, and save it into a single folder or directory for future review.

How will we know when we are done with our task?

After we have addressed all of the questions and explored with each other all of the issues, we should end up with the information that I need to create a semi structured interview schedule with the distance learning students that I will interview during the summer. That's my hope!

Roger Rezabek
Researcher
April 13, 1997

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES AND LETTERS

Student Questionnaire

Dear Student:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Northern Iowa conducting a dissertation research project with the cooperation of Kirkwood Community College on motivations for distance learning. The specific purposes of this study are to determine what motives, what barriers, and what enablers are present when adult learners at the community college level in Iowa enroll in distance education credit courses and to determine whether these participation factors vary with the type or format of the distance education course.

The following questionnaire is being used to gather some demographic information, and to determine your interest in and willingness to participate in an indepth interview for this research. The information you provide will be coded for research purposes, with your identity remaining confidential. No one will be able to associate your responses with you personally.

Please answer the following questions, and return this questionnaire to me in the preaddressed stamped envelope that is enclosed, by October 6, 1997

Thank you very much for your assistance in this important research.

Roger Rezabek
Cedar Falls, Iowa

1. Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ City/State/Zip _____
2. Are you currently enrolled in at least one distance learning course at KCC this semester (Fall, 97). Yes___ No___
3. During what semester did you first enroll in a distance learning course (of any kind, at any college)? Term: _____, Year: _____
4. How many miles (approximately) do you live from a Kirkwood Center or campus? _____ miles
5. What types of distance learning courses have you taken? (check all that apply)
 - a. Live interactive/instructional television courses _____
 - b. Guided Self Study _____
 - c. On line (internet) course _____

6. In addition to your coursework, do you also work part time or full time? Yes___ No___

If so, how many hours per week do you work (including work study hours, if any)? _____

7. Do you have access to a computer at home? Yes___ No___

8. What career field are you most interested in? _____

9. Would you be willing to participate in an in depth interview¹ (approximately 1 hour) to further explore your motivation and factors that affected your decision to enroll in distance learning courses? Yes___, No___

10. Of the various reasons you may have had when you enrolled in the distance learning course(s) this semester and previously, please indicate the extent of importance each of the following were to you. (circle one response for each question).

	Not Important			Very Important	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Most of these courses are required in my degree program.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The course content is of interest to me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. These courses are important to my future.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I thought taking college courses would be fun.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My employer wanted me to take these courses.	1	2	3	4	5
6. A friend or spouse encouraged me to take these courses.	1	2	3	4	5
7. These courses were offered in a location/time convenient to me. ¹	2	3	4	5	
8. The courses will improve my chances of promotion in my work. ¹	2	3	4	5	
9. I wanted to take college courses rather than learn on my own. ¹	2	3	4	5	
10. I wanted to prove to myself that I can successfully complete a college level course.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I wanted to start earning a college degree.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I took the courses because I wanted to meet people.	1	2	3	4	5
13. These courses will help me to acquire some of the skills/knowledge I need for a job.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Other (please describe)	1	2	3	4	5

Your responses to the following questions will assist Kirkwood Community College in assessing and improving the delivery of distance learning courses:

¹ Interviews will be conducted at a Kirkwood Center/Campus at a time that is convenient to you.

(Please specify the type(s) of course(s) you are referring to in your response; interactive instructional television, guided self study or internet.)

What did you like about taking the course(s)?

1.

2.

3.

How could the course(s) have been improved?

1.

2.

3.

Other comments:

Sabotto (Kirkwood) Letter to Students

September 24, 1997

Dear

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to participate in a study of distance education. Your name is one of 210 that have been selected from a list of several thousand Kirkwood students who have been enrolled in at least one "distance" class since the fall of 1996. The 210 students have been identified to provide a sample that represents the gender, age, location of class, and type of class (Kirkwood offers three types) that best represents our student population.

There are two parts of the study. The first part is to complete and return this short questionnaire in the envelope provided. The second part will be limited to 20 or 30 individuals and will be a private interview, about 1 hour in length, to be conducted at the Kirkwood site most convenient to you. Your participation is voluntary. Any responses that you provide will be held in strictest confidence. In no way will your decisions or comments affect your grades or your records at Kirkwood. I encourage you to complete the enclosed questionnaire even if you don't want to have an interview (see question 7).

The researcher conducting this study is Mr. Roger Rezabek who is the distance education director for Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo. This research will form the basis of his doctoral dissertation, but it will also help us at Kirkwood to better understand students who participate in distance education. We will use the information gathered to inform our decision making processes as we continually strive to improve our offerings to students.

Thank you for your willingness to consider this proposal. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at the addresses or telephone number given below.

Sincerely,

Tom Sabotta, Ph.D.
Director of Institutional Research and Enrollment Services
e-mail: tsabott@kirkwood.cc.ia.us
campus mail: 214 Kirkwood Hall
Telephone: (319) 398-4905

Follow up student letter/questionnaire

Dear Kirkwood Student:

About two weeks ago you should have received an envelope from Kirkwood Community College asking you to complete a questionnaire about your distance learning courses. This survey is part of a research project that I am completing for my doctorate in Education Administration at the University of Northern Iowa. Your participation in this research is very important. As of this mailing, I have not yet received your questionnaire. However, if you have just sent it in, I thank you very much for your help, and you may disregard this letter.

If you have not yet returned the survey, I would still appreciate your help in completing and returning it immediately to me at the address below. As an alternative, if it is more convenient, I invite you to complete the questionnaire over the phone. You may call my work phone at Hawkeye Community College, which has a toll free number: 1-800-670-4769, ext. 1464 during the day. Or, after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends, my home phone: 319-277-0377.

Your identity will remain confidential, and your answers will be coded for research purposes. In no way will your answers affect any grades in any courses at Kirkwood.

Your experiences and factors that affected your enrolling in distance learning classes are important to this research, so please complete the survey as soon as you can and mail it, or call me so the questionnaire can be completed over the phone. If I happen to be unavailable when you call, please leave your phone number and a time that you would prefer me to call you back. I will be happy to do that.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance in this project. Please return your completed questionnaire to:

Roger Rezabek
1036 W. 14th St.
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

1. Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ City/State/Zip _____
2. Are you currently enrolled in at least one distance learning course at KCC this semester (Fall, 97). Yes___ No___
3. During what semester did you first enroll in a distance learning course (of any kind, at any college)? Term: _____, Year: _____
4. How many miles (approximately) do you live from a Kirkwood Center or campus? _____ miles
5. What types of distance learning courses have you taken? (check all that apply)

a. Live interactive/instructional television courses	_____
b. Guided Self Study	_____
c. On line (internet) course	_____
6. In addition to your coursework, do you also work part time or full time? Yes___ No___

If so, how many hours per week do you work (including work study hours, if any)? _____

7. Do you have access to a computer at home? Yes___ No___

8. What career field are you most interested in? _____

9. Would you be willing to participate in an in depth interview¹ (approximately 1 hour) to further explore your motivation and factors that affected your decision to enroll in distance learning courses? Yes___, No___

10. Of the various reasons you may have had when you enrolled in the distance learning course(s) this semester and previously, please indicate the extent of importance each of the following were to you. (circle one response for each question).

	Not Important			Very Important	
1. Most of these courses are required in my degree program.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The course content is of interest to me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. These courses are important to my future.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I thought taking college courses would be fun.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My employer wanted me to take these courses.	1	2	3	4	5
6. A friend or spouse encouraged me to take these courses.	1	2	3	4	5
7. These courses were offered in a location/time convenient to me. ¹	2	3	4	5	
8. The courses will improve my chances of promotion in my work. ¹	2	3	4	5	
9. I wanted to take college courses rather than learn on my own. ¹	2	3	4	5	
10. I wanted to prove to myself that I can successfully complete a college level course.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I wanted to start earning a college degree.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I took the courses because I wanted to meet people.	1	2	3	4	5
13. These courses will help me to acquire some of the skills/ Knowledge I need for a job.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Other (please describe)	1	2	3	4	5

Your responses to the following questions will assist Kirkwood Community College in assessing and improving the delivery of distance learning courses:

(Please specify the type(s) of course(s) you are referring to in your response; interactive instructional television, guided self study or internet.)

¹ Interviews will be conducted at a Kirkwood Center/Campus at a time that is convenient to you.

What did you like about taking the course(s)?

1.

2.

3.

How could the course(s) have been improved?

1.

2.

3.

Other comments:

Student Interview Letter

1036 W. 14th St.
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
November 7, 1997

Dear <Student>:

A few weeks ago, you completed a questionnaire that I sent with the cooperation of Kirkwood Community College about your experiences in distance learning classes. I want to thank you for agreeing to a follow up interview to further explore your motives and factors that influenced your decision to enroll. The study I am conducting is part of my dissertation research through the University of Northern Iowa in Education Administration.

Out of 210 surveys that were sent, 93 were returned, which is a good response from all of the students. You are one of only 24 students that I have selected to interview. I have selected a cross section of students from different communities in merged area X, ranging in age from 19 to 50, representing 14 different majors.

The interview will be conducted at a Kirkwood Center near you in <Center>. A copy of this letter is being sent to the director of the center, and I will arrange that a room is available for our meeting. The interview will probably take from an hour to an hour and a half. I will record the interview, so that I can make an analysis of your comments at a later time. Your comments will remain confidential. A pseudonym will be used instead of your real name in the dissertation, so there can be no way of tracing the information back to you personally.

In order to interview the number of people that I have planned, the interviews will be spaced over the next several weeks. I will be calling you soon to find a time that is convenient to you when we can meet for the interview.

I have enclosed an informed consent form which is required by the University of Northern Iowa for all research projects. I would ask you to sign it, but I can pick it up at the interview.

If you have any questions before the interview, please call me either at work at Hawkeye Community College 1-800-670-4769, ext. 1464 or in the evenings at 319-277-0377.

Thank you very much for your willingness to help in this important research. The information collected will be helpful to educators and distance learning programs both at Kirkwood and at other Community Colleges throughout the country.

Sincerely yours,

Roger Rezabek

Letter to Center Directors

1036 W. 14th St.
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
November 7, 1997

Dear Kirkwood Center Director:

A couple of weeks ago, you should have received a memo from Wendell Maakestad informing you of the research that I am conducting in Merged Area X for my dissertation at the University of Northern Iowa. The research involves in depth interviews with community college students who are enrolled in distance learning courses. Specifically, I am investigating their motives of participation and other factors that influenced their decision to enroll in the distance learning program.

I have compiled data from a questionnaire that was sent to 210 distance learning students attending Kirkwood. Of that group, I have selected 24 for follow up interviews, which I would like to conduct at your Centers for the convenience of the students. The following is a list of the students that I wish to interview at your site. I hope to conduct these interviews during the next couple of weeks.

Students

Home

Center

I plan to make arrangements with each student for a time that is convenient to them and that also works into my schedule. At the interview, we will need a quiet room or space where we will not be disturbed for a period of an hour or so. I will be recording the interview on an audio cassette tape recorder that I will bring. Most of the interviews will probably be conducted during the afternoon hours or in the evenings, however I may have to conduct some interviews on a Saturday, if that is an option. I will contact you by phone when I have times and dates from the students for these interviews.

I sincerely appreciate the cooperation that Kirkwood has afforded me in conducting this research. I am looking forward to meeting you and your Kirkwood students.

Sincerely yours,
Roger Rezabek

cc: Wendell Maakestad

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Statement--Focus Group

You are being asked to participate in one phase of a dissertation research project that I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Northern Iowa.

The purpose of this study is to determine what motives, what barriers, and what enablers are present when adult learners at the community college level in Iowa enroll in distance education credit courses. It is the further purpose of this study to determine whether these participation factors vary with the type or format of the distance education course.

The Focus Group phase of the research will involve experts like yourself in the fields of distance education, adult education and participation research. The purpose of the focus group will be to suggest potential reasons for and barriers to participation in adult distance learning environments. From these discussions will emerge a series of questions and areas of investigation to be explored with the subjects selected for interviews in the second phase of the study.

The primary vehicle for the focus group discussions will be E-mail and Electronic Listserv. I anticipate that the duration of the focus group on-line discussion will take approximately two months to complete. Your involvement will be almost entirely at times of your choosing. You may contribute as little or as much as you desire.

Due to the nature of and the professional positions of the participants in the focus group, I am requesting that you waive your right to anonymity. However, if you prefer, your comments and contributions to the focus group will be anonymous as reported in the dissertation.

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate or if you wish to cease participation at any time, you may do so. There will be no penalty for not participating nor for withdrawing.

It is hoped that this study will provide a greater understanding of distance learning students and help to identify the motives and factors affecting their participation in distance learning courses. I thank you for your cooperation and for your involvement.

Informed Consent Short Form--Focus Group

The elements of informed consent have been given to the me.

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of participation in this project as presented to me and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

(Signature of subject or responsible agent/witness)

Date: _____

(Printed name of witness)

(Signature of investigator)

Researcher: Roger J. Rezabek

Doctoral candidate at
the University of Northern Iowa
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Post
Secondary Education
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Phone: (319) 296-4017 (day)
(319) 277-0377 (evening)

email: rezaber8166@uni.edu

If you have questions about this research and the rights of research subjects, please contact:

The Office of Human Subjects Coordinator
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa
Phone: (319) 273-2748

Informed Consent Statement--Student Interviews

You are being asked to participate in one phase of a dissertation research project that I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Northern Iowa.

The purpose of this study is to determine what motives, what barriers, and what enablers are present when adult learners at the community college level in Iowa enroll in distance education credit courses. It is the further purpose of this study to determine whether these participation factors vary with the type or format of the distance education course.

You will be asked to participate in an interview with myself as the interviewer. The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour. During the interview I will ask you questions about your perceptions of and feelings about your enrolling in the distance education courses that you have taken at your community college. It is possible that a follow up interview will be needed to clarify some information or to explore a topic that was not covered in the first interview.

The interviews will be audio tape recorded, and transcripts will be made of the interviews to help in the analysis of the information that is collected.

You will remain anonymous in the reporting of the interview data. A pseudonym (alternate name) will be designated for you, and will be used for all of your comments throughout the dissertation. Your true identity will be known only to myself. The assistant who transcribes the interviews will not know your true identity.

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate or if you wish to cease participation at any time, you may do so. There will be no penalty for not participating nor for withdrawing.

It is hoped that this study will provide a greater understanding of distance learning students and help to identify the motives and factors affecting their participation in distance learning courses in Iowa community colleges. I thank you for your cooperation and for your involvement.

Informed Consent Short Form--Students

The elements of informed consent have been given to the me.

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of participation in this project as presented to me and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. and I further agree to allow the audio tape recording and transcribing of the interview to take place. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

(Signature of subject or responsible agent/witness)

Date: _____

(Printed name of witness)

(Signature of investigator)

Researcher: Roger J. Rezabek

Doctoral candidate at
the University of Northern Iowa
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Post
Secondary Education
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Phone: (319) 296-4017 (day)
(319) 277-0377 (evening)

email: rezaber8166@uni.edu

If you have questions about this research and the rights of research subjects, please contact:

The Office of Human Subjects Coordinator
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Phone: (319) 273-2748

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Site: _____ Date of Intvw: _____

Name: _____ Home Town: _____

Gender: __M __F Age: _____ Phone: _____

Date Started at KCC: _____ Major: _____

Date of first Distance Learning Course: _____

What career/jobs are you most interested in? _____

Do you have any long range goals, plans, or dreams about your career? _____

How many hours per week do you work _____, Doing what? _____

Are you a high school graduate? __Y __N Where?: _____

Any previous or other college: __Y __N Where?: _____

Did either of your parents attend college? Where?

Did either complete a degree?

Do you have a family or dependents that live with you? __Y __N

Spouse/Partner __Y __N, Children __Y __N, Ages _____

How supportive are they of your taking college classes? Very 1 2 3 4 5 Not at all

Have any of your friends or extended family encouraged you? __Y __N, who? _____

How important is that encouragement to you? _____

Have any friends or family discouraged you from enrolling? Y N, who? _____

Has anyone at your workplace encouraged you? Y N, who? _____

Has that made a difference in your enrollment or persistence? Y N

What else has helped you to enroll or keep going? _____

How many distance courses have you taken so far? _____

Can you remember what types & quantity:

- a. Telelink or ICN (Live interactive/instructional television courses) _____
- b. Guided Self Study (telecourses) _____
- c. On line (internet) course _____

Distance from KCC Center: _____ mi. Which? _____

- Take Distance Ed classes there? Y N
- Take regular classes there? Y N
- Take any classes on main campus? Y N

Distance from Main Campus: _____ mi.

Have you received any financial incentives for your courses? (scholarships, financial aid, employer?)

How did you find out about the distance learning courses offered at Kirkwood?

Do you remember any marketing that caught your attention, such as

Radio, _____
 Billboard, _____
 TV, _____
 Newspaper _____
 Other _____

Was there anything that Kirkwood did or provided that really helped you or encouraged you to enroll?

Are there things that you would like to see that would help you more or make it easier to take distance classes?

Background

What did you do for fun in high school?

What do you do for fun now?

Do you belong to organizations or groups? Which ones?

Do you like to go to meetings?

Have you ever been an officer in a club or group?

Tell me a little about your life the year before you enrolled in a college course.

- Could you describe a typical day?
- Were there things you didn't like about your life then?

Was there anything in particular that caused you to enroll in college at that time?

- Was there anything that changed in your life that allowed you to participate?
- Did anyone influence your decision?
- What did you think about as you considered whether to enroll or not?
- Was it a difficult decision?

What did you hope to accomplish or gain by enrolling in courses?

- Did you feel it would be different, in taking distance learning courses rather than traditional on campus courses?
- Did you feel that would be an advantage or disadvantage?

Originally, what did you think you would like best or enjoy about taking distance education courses?

Was there anything that you feared about taking the courses?

Goals

When you first decided to enroll in college, it was because...

When you enrolled in your first distance learning course, it was because...

Tell me more about what you hope to achieve through these courses.

Were there other ways you might have achieved your goals?

What alternatives did you consider?

Barriers

Were there reasons you did not enroll sooner? such as:

obstacle	√	what changed?
a. lack of money	___	_____
b. lack of information	___	_____
c. affordable child care	___	_____
d. not enough time	___	_____
e. no interest	___	_____
f. no real benefit for me	___	_____
g. it seemed too difficult	___	_____
h. no support from others	___	_____
i. too far away	___	_____
j. no transportation	___	_____
k. family responsibilities	___	_____
l. thought I was too old	___	_____
m. forgot how to study	___	_____
n. afraid of the technology	___	_____

Can you describe any other difficulties you faced once you decided to take college courses?

- Obstacles
- Changes in family or work routine

Technology Comfort

Have you taken college courses on the main campus/traditional setting? ___Y ___N

How did you like that?

Do you feel that you are learning as much through the courses you are taking through television as courses you would take on campus in a traditional setting? ___Y ___N

Do the differences bother you in any way?

Do you like to watch television when you're not taking a course that way? ___Y ___N

Do you enjoy using a computer? ___Y ___N

Do you have access to a computer at home? ___Y ___N

- If so, do you have access to the internet at home? ___Y ___N
- Do you enjoy browsing or using the internet? ___Y ___N

- What do you like best about the internet?

Do you think you might want to try a course that was taught on the internet? __Y __N

What would be your greatest concern about taking an online course?

For Interactive TV (telelink/ICN):

How important to you is the fact that you do not have to take classes on the main campus? Very important 1 2 3 4 5 Not important (circle a number)

Can you explain your reasoning...

What are some other reasons that you like to take courses in a distance learning setting?

- a. I simply don't have the time
- b. I don't like to travel
- c. I can spend more time with my family/children
- c. don't have to travel as much
- d. don't have to leave my community
- e. don't have to leave my home

For Guided Self Study (telecourses):

How important to you is the fact that you don't have to leave your home to take a class?
Very important 1 2 3 4 5 Not important (circle a number)

Can you explain your reasoning...

What are some other reasons that you like to take telecourses?

- a. I simply don't have the time
- b. I don't like to travel
- c. I can spend more time with my family/children
- d. don't have to travel as much
- e. don't have to leave my community
- f. don't have to leave my home

Time Dependency/Independency Place Dependency/Independency
Which is more important to you? That you have flexibility in when you can take your course, or where you can take your course or both?

Is there anything else related to your decision to enroll in college that you would like to talk about?

APPENDIX E

A SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview Site: Vinton

Date: December 11, 1997

Pseudo Name: Vicki

Age: 31

Session began with general chit-chat for a couple of minutes.

R: What is your major.

S: Business Administration.

R: When did you start at Kirkwood?

S: Two and a half years ago, so it would have been spring of '95, winter of '94.

R: Did you take distance learning classes that semester?

S: Yes I did.

R: What career or jobs are you most interested in?

S: That I'm not sure. Business, I'm not sure where I want to be in business. My advisor keeps telling me that when I grow up maybe I'll decide.

R: What are your long range goals or plans or dreams ten years from now or beyond? What do you hope to be doing?

S: As soon as I graduate from Kirkwood, I'm going to Mt. Mercy. I plan on getting my four-year degree there. I probably want to run a business, be a GM or something, is what I'm in the distance working for.

R: What is a GM?

S: General Manager.

R: Do you work?

S: Yes I do.

R: How many hours a week?

S: About 45.

R: And what do you do?

S: I don't have a title. I do job costing.

R: Is that with a company?

S: Yes it is.

R: Here in town?

S: In Cedar Rapids.

R: What actually does that involve?

S: I look at... say you ran a certain machine that we bill at \$21 an hour and you ran it two hours. I'm billing \$42 on that machine. Then I go down, everything that was done on that job and then I see what our cost was and then how much we're going to mark it up and...

R: Are you a high school graduate?

S: Yes I am.

R: Where did you graduate from high school?

S: Independence.

R: Have you had any other previous college, other than Kirkwood?

S: I went to Kirkwood in 1984 and 1985.

R: Any other place?

S: Nope.

R: And then you didn't finish anything at that time?

S: No I didn't.

R: Then you went away for a few years and now you're coming back. Did either of your parents attend college?

S: My mother did.

R: Where at?

S: AIB in Des Moines.

R: American Institute of Business. Did she get a degree?

S: Yes she did.

R: Was that a bachelors degree?

S: Yes it was.

R: Do you have family or dependents that live with you?

S: Two children.

R: What are their ages?

S: Nine and six.

R: No spouse or partner?

S: I'm divorced.

R: Can the kids appreciate your going to school? Do they know what you do?

S: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Like next semester I'm only taking one class at night, the other one I'm doing guided self-study. They like that a lot because most of the time I'm gone two or three nights a week and I'm gone all day. So, I see them for an hour and a half, two hours in between there. They understand, but then they don't too.

R: Have they been supportive, understanding of you?

S: Yeah, they have. I show them I have to do homework just like they do and they think it's all right.

R: Have any of your friends or extended family encouraged you to go to school?

S: Yes. A lot of my family is encouraging, especially my dad really wanted me to go back and do it again. Finish what I didn't finish before.

R: And other friends that you have?

S: Yeah. I have a couple aunts that are professors and they've been after me.

R: Where are they at?

S: At the University of Wisconsin.

R: In Madison. What do they teach?

S: My aunt Theresa is in it's like medical. She works on monkeys and stuff, I'm not exactly sure what. The other one is more on the medical, people side. Both medical fields, but...I don't know exactly what they do.

R: How important is that encouragement to you?

S: Oh, I think it's pretty important. There's certain semesters where I just think, I'm not coming back this semester, I'll do it later. Then they'll say Wendy if you quite now then you're not going to want to. I thought about taking summers off. They say, well, you take the summer off, come the fall you're probably not going to want to do it because something else will come up. So, they're right, I probably would have, so I didn't. I just kept going.

R: So you've been taking courses during the summer also. Have any friends or family discouraged you from enrolling?

S: Nope.

R: Has anyone at your workplace encouraged you?

S: At my new job, yes they did or where I'm at now they do encourage me. At my old job where I was for the last five years, up until June, they weren't very enthused about it. My new job will work a lot easier with me. If I wanted to take a class and be here at 5, they'll let me come in at 7. A lot more flexible. My other job wasn't very...

R: What was your other job?

S: It was at the Area Substance Abuse Council. Mostly I just did a lot of typing. Typing assessments and discharges and treatment plans.

R: Has that made a difference in your enrollment or persistence, knowing that there are other people who are encouraging you?

S: Yeah, it does. It makes it easier... it makes you feel more like doing it when you got somebody who also thinks you should or encouraging. They'll just say, how was the test last night? They'll know I have a test. They'll see me at lunch and I'm in studying.

R: What else has helped you to enroll or keep going?

S: My advisor here, Lynn. She's been a great help. She's always trying to go get different things for me, just to make it easier. She knows my time is very precious, so she'll meet me times when she's not really supposed to be here. After hours and stuff like that which has been very, very nice.

R: How many distance courses have you taken so far?

S: Wow. A lot.

R: My next question's going to ask you to break it down by live courses, the telelink and ICN, and then guided self-study. So, if you want to take them separately that'd be fine.

S: About 30. I've only got one semester left, so you gotta figure I'm trying to...

R: How many of those have been live courses?

S: That was just live, I'm sorry.

R: How about guided self-study?

S: I've taken seven, with the one I'm taking right now.

R: All together about 37. Any Internet courses?

S: No I have not yet.

R: How far do you live from this Kirkwood center?

S: About six blocks.

R: You've taken distance ed classes here. Have you taken regular classes here, where...

S: Yeah, I have taken three.

R: Have you taken any classes on the main campus?

S: Yes I have.

R: How far are we from the main campus at Kirkwood?

S: About 35 miles.

R: Have you received any financial incentives for your courses? Scholarships, financial aid, work-study?

S: Yes. I get financial aid. The first couple semesters I also go, where I worked her, whatever couple of hours.

R: Work-study?

S: Work-study, there you go, but I just don't have time with my work to do that any more.

R: Have there been loans, grants?

S: I've got a student loan.

R: Is that like a Stafford loan or Ford loan?

S: US...or something. I can't think of what it is.

R: Some kind of a student loan. Is there any other kind of financial help?

S: One semester I won this...I had to write an essay and won this \$400 grant.

R: Where was that from?

S: It was from here. It was from the legion or something here in town.

R: For Kirkwood students? How did you find out about the distance learning courses offered by Kirkwood?

S: I had a friend who had just signed up the previous semester and was taking one. All of my classes previous, '84, '85, had all been face to face. I just thought I would try it, I honestly didn't know if I'd like it or not. So, when I signed up I said sure, I'll try it.

R: A friend basically told you about it?

S: Yes, then I came down here and talked to them about it.

R: Do you remember any marketing that caught your attention? Such as radio, billboards, newspapers?

S: Kirkwood would send a flyer type of thing in the mail.

R: Was that like a course schedule?

S: There would be a course schedule of what was coming that semester, like the whole book that...the Cedar Rapids classes and everything in there.

R: Was there anything that Kirkwood did or provided that really helped you or encouraged you to enroll?

S: I think just because they had a site here in Vinton. There was several other places that I looked at also, but not somewhere that I could be home in five minutes or less than five minutes. That's why it looked so good to me.

R: Are there things that you would like to see that would help you more or make it easier to take distance classes?

S: I can't think of anything. It's pretty easy right now.

R: Think back to when you were in high school. What did you do for fun in high school?

S: I was in all sports. I really liked sports. And music. I played every sport there was. I was in like swing choir and small groups and that kind of stuff.

R: What do you do for fun now?

S: Spend time with my kids. Sometimes do nothing, that's kind of enjoyment to me anymore. No running around here and there, just relaxing or going for a walk.

R: Any hobbies?

S: I like to read. I don't read as much as I could anymore because I've got so much homework to read. I lose interest in recreational reading.

R: What's your favorite author?

S: I don't really have a favorite, I just go from different...and I don't really have a certain type. All different books.

R: Do you belong to any organizations?

S: I'm a volunteer for Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The Variety Club, I do a lot with them.

R: Is that a local, community...

S: Yeah, it's in Cedar Rapids. They raise money for kids.

R: Do you like to go to meetings?

S: Yes and no. Yes I like to be involved in meetings and stuff. Sometimes I think I'm a little over-extended. That's when my thoughts on meetings start to diminish a little bit. There's certain weeks where you've worked long hours and had a rough day and then a meeting that night. Then I don't like them so much, but otherwise I do, yes.

R: You kind of like the involvement?

S: Oh, yes I do.

R: Have you ever been an officer in a club or group?

S: Oh, I was the secretary in the group at church.

R: Tell me a little bit about your life. What was a typical day like? What were you doing a couple of years ago, before you enrolled?

S: At that time I was working full-time, same as now. I was married then. So, my kids were really little and I was basically coming home and taking care of the family situation. That was mostly it. After I got a divorce, I all of a sudden got this new, it's time to look out for me, attitude. I probably never ever would have went back had I stayed married, just because I had my place. That's hard to say, but I probably wouldn't have had the time or the drive to do it then, like I do now.

R: Were there things that you didn't like about your life then?

S: Yeah, there were a lot of things. I was pretty... I'm a lot more independent now than I was then. I was pretty bored, I don't know if that's a nice thing to say. It was just work and home and work and home and work and home and now I have more "me" time, even if it's sitting in a class that I particularly might not like at the time. At least it's time where it's just me, not my kids, not my husband or ex-husband. Just my time.

R: Was there anything in particular that caused you to enroll at that time?

S: I don't think so, I mean I can't think of any certain thing. My dad had talked to me a couple of times and said if you'd like to go back I'd help you financially if that would... That probably helped, know that he would help fund it if I decided to. I don't think there's anything that really... I just thought, I'll think I'll take a couple of classes. Honestly, I don't think when I first started that I honestly would finish. I think I just thought I'd take a couple classes and get out of the house, but I don't think I was looking at a degree and then a four-year degree and that's just evolved since I've been coming. I think it was just to... like I took a psychology class first. I thought just some interesting stuff that I thought would be interesting. Not even that I thought that I'd do anything with it.

R: Was there anything that changed in your life that allowed you to participate at that time? How did the divorce play into that?

S: Probably because he wouldn't have wanted me to be gone two and whatever nights a week. It was more of my duty to stay at home. I guess that's the way he saw it. I saw it at the time, where I didn't see it that way then. I think it was just the situation I was in at the time. I don't think it would have worked.

R: The divorce was probably a key element in your ending up going to school.

S: Probably.

R: Did anyone influence your decision? You mentioned your dad had really supported you. Do you think that was really significant that it was a part of it?

S: I think it was a part of it.

R: Was there anybody else that you can remember that kind of influenced you at that time?

S: I can't really think of anybody. I can remember talking to people about it, what do you think? And saying yeah, go ahead, try it. But, I can't think of anybody except for Dad who might have gave me that little extra push.

R: What did you think about as you considered whether to enroll or not?

S: I thought, I'm too old. I'm going to be in a room with a bunch of 19 year-old people and I'm going to be way out of place. That was my main thing. And then even after I went down and got my books for the first time, I looked so old compared to... all these people in the bookstore are all like these young people and I thought, I really made a mistake. But then when you come to these classes, it mostly is older people. There's younger people to, but the ratio is a lot better than I expected.

R: Thinking back to your decision to go back and take some courses, was it a difficult decision for you?

S: yes. I guess the most difficult part is because I am away from my children so much. Now that I was divorced and their dad is gone, it's basically just me. So, you're leaving them with a sitter. Between school and sitter all day long and then with a sitter at night too. That was pretty tough in the beginning. Just like you're taking something away from them that I shouldn't be. But then if you realistically look at it, I have class at 7, usually go to bed at 8 or 8:30, so I'm really only missing an hour and a half of time. The last two and a half hours that I'm at class, they're asleep anyway, so it isn't time that would be doing a lot anyway. That was the toughest part.

R: What did you hope to accomplish or gain by enrolling in courses?

S: At first, not much just some time by myself. Learn something new, but I really didn't expect too much out of it in the beginning.

R: Did you feel that it would be different in taking distance learning courses rather than traditional on campus courses?

S: Yeah, I figured it would be pretty different. I honestly didn't know if I would like it, until I tried it. There's still some classes that I probably would not recommend taking, distance learning, but the majority I don't really see a difference. I think you have about the same interaction as you would if the person was in the room. You can talk to them. I prefer the rooms that when they can see me, I can see them, rather than like there's one room here where he cannot see us but we can see him.

R: Which courses were the most...you mentioned some of them probably shouldn't or were not as easy to..

S: Like Statistics. I'm not sure that that was just because if it was distance learning; I was the only person in the room and like they'd break into small groups. I didn't have anybody to break down with, I'm by myself. When you're doing a math problem and you've got it all mapped out and you're not sure where you're going wrong and there's nobody there to show you. I was in the room with one way video, so I couldn't even stick it in front of the camera. It was hard. That was a difficult class to have that way.

R: Did you feel that there be an advantage to taking the distance learning courses or a disadvantage?

S: Advantage in the beginning. Advantage, get me out of the house and give me some time on my own. Disadvantage taking time away from my kids. I guess at the time I was more selfish than feeling bad about not being with my kids. I thought it was more important that I had some time on my own than spend the time with them.

R: Originally, what do you like best or enjoy about taking distance education courses?

S: I don't think I feel as nervous in a distance learning class. Sometimes you get that...a lot of the classes are smaller than in the traditional class, so that might be it. I think our age spread probably makes it a lot easier. A couple of the classes I've taken on site or on campus have been pretty much all quite young people compared to the distance classes. If you want to get up and get a drink or go blow your nose, you can and it doesn't bother anybody. You're not really interrupting because they don't even know you are doing it.

R: Was there anything that you feared about taking the distance learning classes?

S: I thought it might be harder than a face to face. I expected it would be harder for me to learn because I didn't have the person right there in the room.

R: I'm going to start a phrase and I'd like you to finish it. When you first decided to enroll in college it was because:

S: I wanted time to myself. I wanted something for myself.

R: When you enrolled in your first distance learning course it was because:

S: The distance learning because that is what was available, here. I could it close to home. It was readily available and close to home. Even if I would have decided to go back to school at that time, and there wouldn't have been this here, I probably wouldn't have done it. I definitely wouldn't have taken as many classes because driving back and forth is not feasible.

R: Can you tell me a little bit more about what you hoped to achieved through these courses?

S: I want to get my degree. I want to get a better job. More money.

R: Were there other ways that you might have achieved your goals?

S: I think I could probably reach my goals without going to school, but it would have taken me longer. I think I probably could have worked my way through a company to get where I want to, just because I think I have that drive. I think I could work and do it, but I don't think I could reach it near as fast without a degree. If I would stay where I'm at right now, I'm sure I could work my way up to that position, but I'm sure it would take me quite a bit longer than without the piece of paper.

R: I'd like to talk to you a little bit about barriers and obstacles that you had to deal with. I've got a list of them here. Just tell me yes or no as to whether or not that was a factor, something you had to deal with. If it was then we'll talk about it a little bit. Lack of money?

S: No.

R: Lack of information?

S: No.

R: Affordable childcare?

S: Yes and no. It's pretty affordable, especially when I was just recently divorced and you're so used to the two-income thing. Now your one income, not really sure that I should be spending the money. You're already spending it all day while you're gone and now you're spending it at night too. Yeah, that was.

R: How did you deal with that?

S: Just paid it. Didn't do other things. Cut back on certain things so I could pay the childcare.

R: Not enough time?

S: Sometimes. I think there's always enough time if you can make it. Sometimes it feels like you're over-extending. You're in this group and you've got meetings these nights and you've got school this night and now you work late on this night. Sometimes time is a factor that's kind of hard to deal with.

R: Have you been able to deal with it?

S: Yeah, most of the time.

R: What have you done?

S: Sometimes I stayed up all night. Sometimes just finding the time after...come home from school at 10, I'll have a test in the other class tomorrow night. So then stay up till two or three studying because you have to work the whole next day. You just make the time. It's not always enjoyable, but you do what you gotta do, I guess.

R: No interest?

S: No.

R: No real benefit?

S: No.

R: It seemed too difficult?

S: No.

R: No support from others?

S: No.

R: Too far away?

S: No.

R: No transportation?

S: No.

R: Family responsibilities?

S: Yes and no. Always finding a sitter for the kids sometimes is difficult. That was my main thing, always making sure you had a baby-sitter and if the baby-sitter's sick then you have to find another baby-sitter.

R: Thought you were too old?

S: Sometimes, yes.

R: What'd you do about that?

S: I thought well, tough crap. They don't have to look at me and I don't have to... Like I said, after the first time I went down and got books, I felt pretty out of place. I thought well, I'm just going to have to deal with it. If I'm the oldest person there, then that's the way it's going to have to be. I was just ready to do it. I felt that way, but I figured I'd deal with it when it happened.

R: Did it turn out to be as difficult an issue to deal with?

S: No it didn't. All of my first classes, there were just ranges of 18 year-olds to 60 year-olds. So, it wasn't near as bad as I expected.

R: Forgot how to study?

S: I think I needed a re-fresher in studying, yep.

R: Did they provide that?

S: Yes, they have little workshops here. A lot of times I get to where I know...you and I could sit here and I could tell you everything. Then I get in and I know I have this big test and I get all nerved up. I went to a little seminar thing one day here and they showed you different techniques of doing things, so I wouldn't get in there and freeze up. They provided a lot of stuff like that here.

R: Afraid of technology?

S: No.

R: Were there any other difficulties or obstacles that you faced or had to deal with?

S: No.

R: Were there changes in your family or work routine that you had to make?

S: I've had to make changes in my work schedule. Certain classes that I would need didn't always start at the times I needed them to. So, I've had to change my work schedule.

R: That's been helpful that your workplace has been able to work with you?

S: Yes.

R: Have you taken classes on the main campus in a traditional setting?

S: Yes I have.

R: How did you like that?

S: I probably don't like it as good as the distance learning. The majority of the classes that I've taken down there have been pretty big groups and pretty young groups.

R: How did that make you feel?

S: I felt sort of out of place. I didn't feel badly out of place, like I couldn't participate or couldn't be involved, but just not right.

R: Do you feel that you are learning as much through the courses you are taking through television as courses you would take on campus in a traditional setting?

S: Yes I do.

R: Why do you say that?

S: There's been semester where I take a face to face and a guided self-study or even a telelink. I've gotten the same amount. I've done the same in all of my classes not matter how I've learned. My grades have been pretty much the same all around, no matter if it's guided self-study or face to face.

R: Do the differences bother you in any way?

S: No. The only thing was I think there's certain classes that I don't think...I have a girlfriend, it's funny I was meeting you tonight, she called me last night

and she had a, she's in this philosophy class. It's over the TV and they had to break into small groups and give this presentation. Well, her presentation was with three different sites, so these are people she's not meeting. She's not in the same place with. You don't have any control over something like that. You do your part, but then you cut it lose to somewhere else. To work in a small group, you almost have to be in a small group. It's pretty hard to do it over the TV. That'd be another situation where I wouldn't think they'd work very good.

R: Do you like to watch television when you're not taking courses?

S: Not much. There's a few. I like *ER*. There's a few shows I like, but if I miss them, it's no big deal. I very rarely watch it.

R: Do you enjoy using a computer?

S: Yes I do.

R: Do you have access to a computer at home?

S: Yes I do.

R: Do you have access at the Internet at home?

S: Yes I do.

R: Do you enjoy browsing the Internet?

S: Yes I do.

R: What do you like best about the Internet?

S: I just like that there's so much stuff, not matter what I'm doing in school no matter what I need to find, there's always information. I just had to do a paper for Economics and I was going to do it on Cattle Congress. I had to do it on a business that was not doing good. I went in there and typed in Cattle Congress and here's all this information, so I didn't have to go to the library and do any research through newspapers till midnight. That's the best part, I can do it at 1 o'clock in the morning if I want to be doing it. I don't have to be on somebody else's schedule, open hours or anything. It's very nice.

R: Do you have a modem connection at home?

S: Yes I do.

R: Who do you subscribe to?

S: I have America On-line. Actually I have CompuServe, America On-line; I have Microsoft Network.

R: Do you think you might be interested in trying a course that was taught on the Internet?

S: Yeah. I don't think it would be bad at all.

R: What do you think would be your greatest concern about taking an on-line course?

S: How soon they would get the information back to me. If I'm having a question about a project I'm doing right then on it, how long is it going to be before somebody sends me mail back that says, OK this is... If it's eight at night and I'm in the middle of doing it and I can't proceed, that would be my main concern.

R: One a scale of one to five, one being most important, how important is the fact that you do not have to take classes on the main campus?

S: I think it's most important. A one.

R: And why?

S: Just because time restraints. If I had to... I work in Cedar Rapids, but I'd have to come home and pick up my kids and get them to a sitter and then I'd have to drive back to Cedar Rapids. Either that or I'd have to find somebody to pick them up after school... Just for ease of managing my life, it's very much easier that it's here.

R: On the guided self-study, were those ones where you came here and sat and watched the program or how did that work?

S: All of them that I've taken so far... You'll have lots of lessons and stuff you do at home and then I come down here and watch these films. Watch a film and take the test here, otherwise everything else is done at home. Usually every unit, there'd be one short little video that you'd have to watch. You do all the other lessons, you come down, you test. So, maybe you had to come down here six or seven times for brief periods of time for the whole class.

R: And you could watch a couple of problems at the same time?

S: You could watch two or three.

R: Was there an assignment with every one of the sections or program?

S: Some sections didn't have programs. Some sections would just be strictly bookwork.

R: How important was it then, again on a scale of one to five, that you had that kind of flexibility of time to do that and participate in that course whenever you wanted to?

S: One also. I really like guided self-study classes. There's certain ones that I didn't like, but that's just because I wasn't interested so much in the topic. I just like them because I can be at home and I can be...it's not my night for class and I can be getting my laundry done and doing everything, but still doing my homework.

R: You don't have the travel involved, you can spend more time with your family, you don't have to leave your community. Much of it you didn't have to leave your home. Looking at two factors, time and place, which is more important to you? That you have flexibility of when you can take a course or where you can take a course or both?

S: Probably both. Time is very important, but place is also important. It's going to be pretty tough after I finish this next semester and all my classes are going to be in Cedar Rapids. It's going to drastically change the way we do things. That's going to take some getting used to. If I had to change time and go during the day, that wouldn't work either. I have to work. I think they're both pretty important.

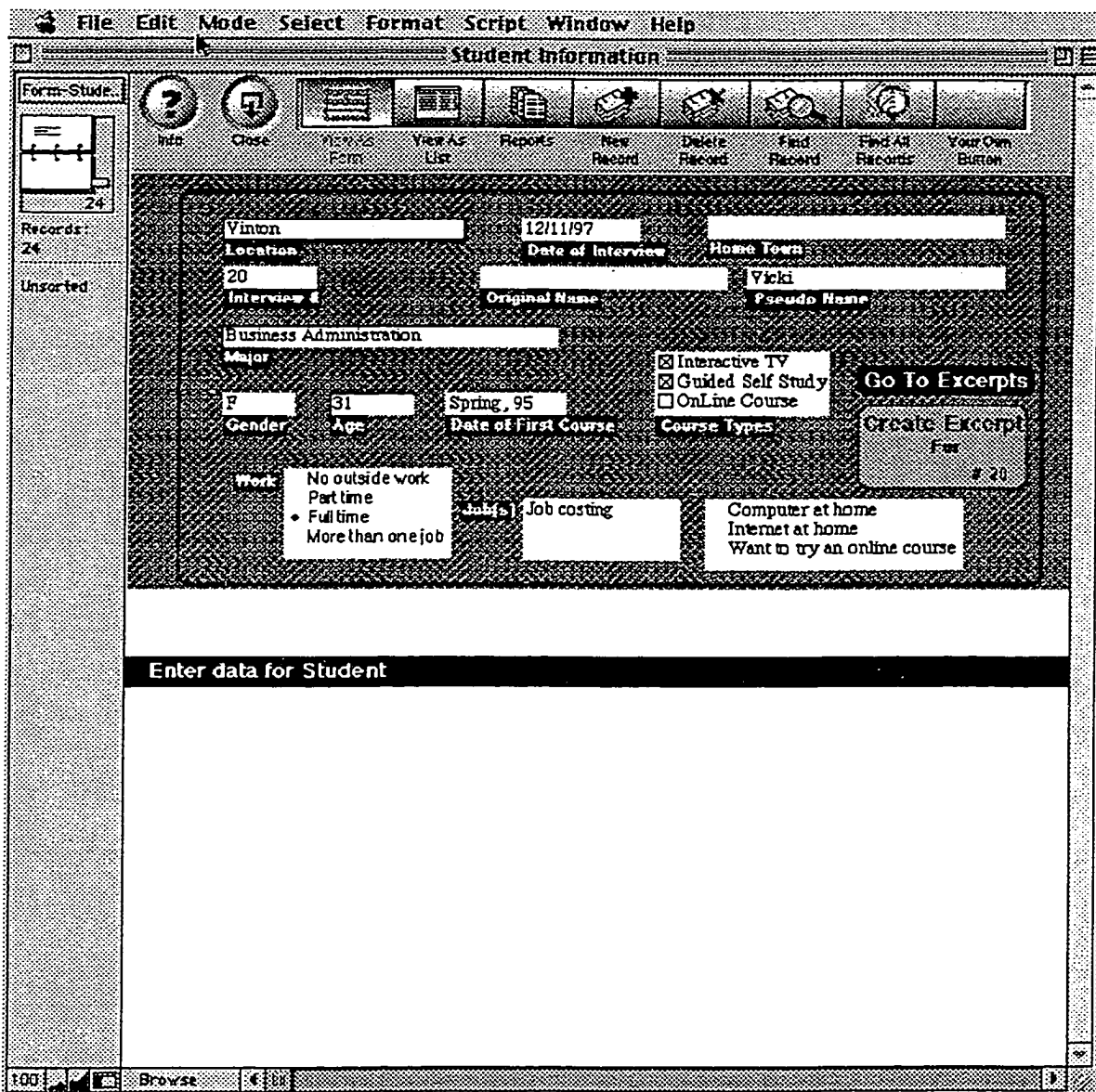
R: Is there anything else related to your decision to enroll in college that you would like to talk about?

S: I can't think of anything. I'm really glad I did it, now that I look at it. There's been times I think it wasn't the smartest thing I've done, but in the long run I think it's done me a lot of good. I'm a lot more outgoing and independent. I don't know if I would have been if I hadn't got involved in so much of it.

APPENDIX F

FILEMAKER PRO—LAYOUT PAGES

Student Information Layout



Interview Code Layout

The screenshot shows a software window titled "Interview Codes" with a menu bar (File, Edit, Mode, Select, Format, Script, Window, Help) and a toolbar with icons for Info, Clear, View As List, Reports, New Record, Delete Record, Find Record, Master Sort, and Your Own Button. On the left, a "Form-View" sidebar shows a record count of 882, 41 found, and 1 unsaved. The main form contains the following fields:

- Moncelln (Location)
- 12 (Interview ID)
- SHATOR (Original Name)
- Criminal Justice (Major)
- 38 (Age)
- Spring, 95 (Date of First Course)
- Interactive TV (checked)
- Guided Self Study (checked)
- OnLine Course (unchecked)
- Course Types
- Motives
- Difficult Decision
- Page #
- Category
- Code

An excerpt of text is displayed in a scrollable area:

One thing was, could we afford it? Was I going to be able to do it, plus raising a family, working part-time, and going to school. There's a lot of pressure to think about. Like I said, my ex-husband always told me that I wasn't smart enough to go. That really did worry me, because I hadn't been in school for 20 years.

At the bottom of the form are buttons for Find, Find All, New Excerpt, Export Records, Intvw Source, and Cancel. A black bar at the bottom of the window contains the text "Enter Interview ID and Excerpt".

Interview Code Layout--Barriers Listing

File Edit Made Select Format Script Window Help

Interview Codes

Form View

Records: 24
Found: 24
Unsorted

Washinton Location Helen Pseudo Name
11 Interview ID Computers Major
F Gender 89 Age Fall, 95 Date of First Course
Interactive TV
Guided Self Study
OnLine Course
Course Types

Page #	Barriers Category	Listing of Barriers Code
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of money <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of info <input type="checkbox"/> Child care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not enough time <input type="checkbox"/> No interest <input type="checkbox"/> No benefit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Too difficult <input type="checkbox"/> No support/others	<input type="checkbox"/> Too far <input type="checkbox"/> No transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Family responsibilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Too old <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forgot how to study <input type="checkbox"/> Afraid of Technology

Notes

[No Time]-I try to get the classes during the day, while I'm at work, so I'm out of here and not have to go home and do homework...Adjusting the schedule a little bit and cooperation from work?
 [Difficult]-At first...I was probably overwhelmed. I hadn't been in school for 17

Export Records Find Intvw Source Cancel

New Excerpt

Enter Interview ID and Excerpt

Browse

Excerpt Report

Excerpt Report

Sort Intyw Source Find Find All Export Records to Text

Code: Trigger-particular situation Category: Motives
 Interview ID: 12

Pseudo Name: Sharon
 Major: Criminal Justice Age: 38

Excerpt: I think when I was at work that day, I just had a really bad day. I think we had talked about getting a raise and it was right around Christmas time. When I first started, he gave us, I'd only been there a month, a huge Christmas bonus and a ham. The next year we got like the same bonus and the ham. The next year it didn't go well and he didn't give us the ham. The next year he took away the bonus completely and gave us a sweatshirt. His company was getting bigger.

Code: Trigger-particular situation Category: Motives
 Interview ID: 13

Pseudo Name: Theresa
 Major: Psychology/Education Age: 31

Excerpt: The lady I was taking care of, and I had been at her house for two years, she was dying. I knew I had to do something. I could not go on and take care of anybody else. I've always wanted to go to college; I just never had the opportunity. Things just kind of...I filled out the application for financial aid and I thought if it comes back, but I don't get any money I just won't go. If I get money, I'm going. Everything worked out.

Code: Trigger-particular situation Category: Motives
 Interview ID: 14

Pseudo Name: Monica
 Major: Accounting Age: 43

Excerpt: Probably my daughter going to school and she was going to commute, was probably the thing that made it easiest for me to go back. She was a little nervous about going off. She's a homebody and I thought if we both went it would make it easier for her to get into the routine. She's turned around and we didn't have that first semester where kids don't do well. She did OK that first semester. I think it was probably because she was still living at home and I was with her and kind of

Field Notes

File Edit Mode Select Format Script Window Help

Interview Field Notes

Intvw Source New Note Page Find

Interview # 9 Interview Date 11/24/97 Roberta Age 36

Notes

Started as education major, now liberal arts.
 [brought kids to the interview]
 HS grad, Grinnell HS

Previous college right out of HS, Abilene Christian Univ. skipped classes. no transfer credit.

Dad took a couple of college classes while in the service.

spouse and children...16, 14, 3, 3
 spouse HS grad.

Flexibility at work will make a difference in enrollment.

9 live/KTS
 4 GSS
 no internet

lives 2 mi. from Belle Plaine Center

45 mi. from main campus.
 Has taken two courses on main campus.

Little time for fun now. "I used to love to read. I don't read for pleasure anymore. I used to do needlepoint. I don't have the patience for it anymore. I don't really have any hobbies anymore. I used to show dogs, I don't have time for that anymore." p. 2 [hobbies]

Out of school for 15 years, not a great student in HS, didn't try.

Had a dead end job

Loves to learn. "I really like to learn new and better and more." p 3[barriers]

[Not enough time]--"Big time. That's been a major factor. The time factor has probably been my biggest stress. I feel guilty that I don't spend as much time with the kids, I feel guilty that I don't spend as much time with my homework so that it accurately reflects what I'm capable of. Of course, Joel poor guy, he's on the bottom end of the totem pole. He's got no time left for him. The time thing has been unbelievably... Big hairy stress.

Form Notes

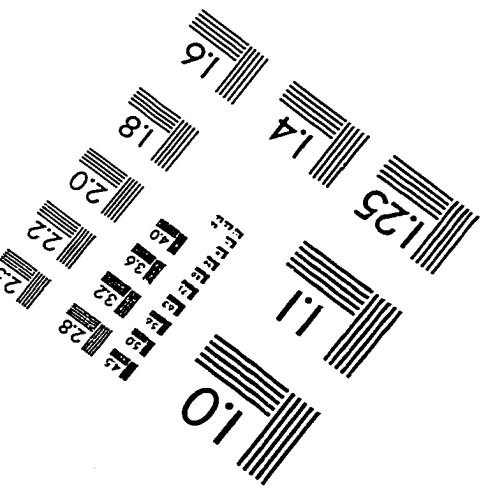
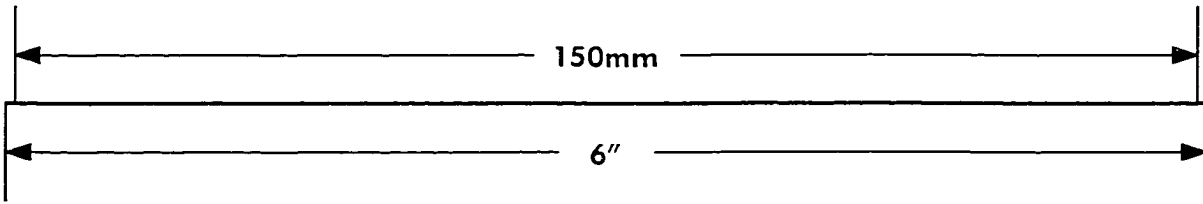
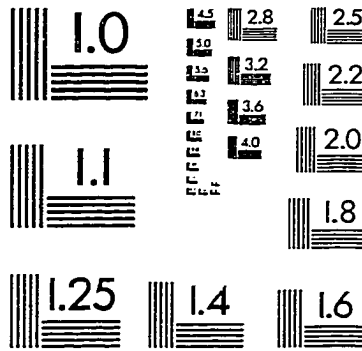
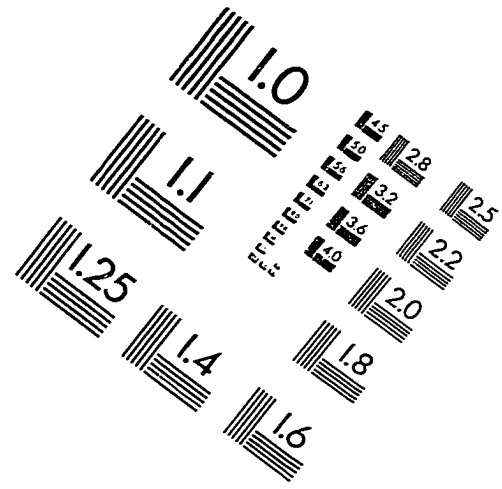
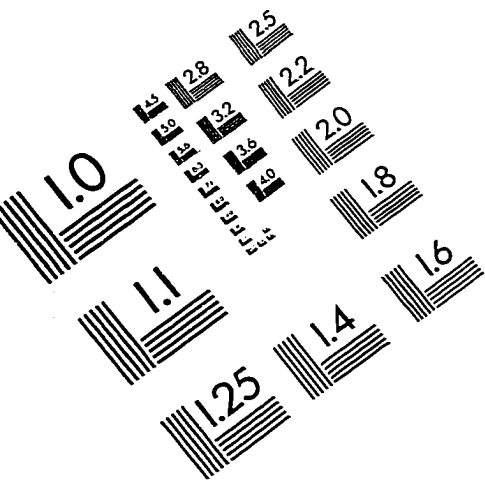
Records: 24

Found: 2

Unsorted

Browse

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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