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# "Having It All" Continuing Education For The Responsible Adult

Dianna Taylor

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**"HAVING IT ALL"**  
**CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR THE**  
**RESPONSIBLE ADULT**

**BY**

**DIANNA TAYLOR**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication  
Seton Hall University  
2002

### Author's Note

The author was inspired for the subject matter of this thesis based upon her own personal experience. She has experienced the first-hand frustrations and challenges of being a responsible adult learner that must juggle a full time job, child rearing, and school attendance. I frequently found most of my student peers were younger, single, and had no children. Nevertheless, I felt an inner desire and self-motivation to achieve academic success despite the many obstacles that lay before me. Not only is this thesis proof that academic success can be achieved, but it is also a proclamation that you can do anything that you set your mind to!

I would like to commend both Dr. Kuchon and Dr. McGraw for assuring, and perhaps even insisting, that the Master in Corporate and Public Communications at Seton Hall University continues to maintain a superior level of competence and efficiency from its students. Never, in my entire academic career, have I been pushed to this level of achievement. As a matter of fact, it was a pleasure to have had an opportunity to stretch my academic and research ability to such a great depth. In conclusion, this paper has proven one thing to me, and that is, barring any unusual special circumstances, the only true limitations that anyone has remains within their own mind.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Arise out of bed before the sunrise, get dressed, supervise the children getting dressed, fix breakfast for the family, see the children off to school, gather the To-Do list for the day, arrive to work by 8:30 a.m., work an often stressful and demanding 8+ hour work schedule, pick up the children from after-school programs, assist children with their homework, heat the dinner, eat, do the dishes, drop the kids off at the sitter, and of course be in your seat by 6 p.m. for your evening courses that will last until 9:40 p.m. This is one day in the life of an adult student.

#### Research Question

The research question of this paper is to explore and to explain what *motivates* adult students to initiate a commitment to completion of a degree program. Why do they “step out of the box” and make a degree commitment until completion, which so often will require many years of study, while still under pressure to satisfy their family’s needs, personal needs, and job responsibilities?

At first glance, one would think that all of these factors equate to an insurmountable challenge. How can all of these responsibilities be met, while maintaining a satisfactory grade point average? After all, as with most people, it is already enough to balance the stress of a full time job, family responsibilities and

something that is increasingly unheard of: “*leisure time*”. Consider, with all of these variables at play, and time management increasingly more difficult to achieve, then why would a mature adult return to school? The response to this question is as varied and multi-faceted as the persons involved and will be examined accordingly in this paper.

### Subsidiary Questions

The subsidiary question to this paper is to examine how much, if any, support from college and university staff plays in assuring the degree completion of its students? Do they play a vital role, or are students able to achieve degree completion based primarily their self-motivation and desire?

### Need for the Study

The purpose of this paper is to prove the need for educational institutions to recognize how *imperative* it is for them to continuously motivate their students upon initial enrollment through degree completion. Indeed, it is the hope, if not responsibility, of teachers and administrators to be compelled to assist their students towards achieving maximum performance and ultimately degree completion.

The first strategic approach is for educators to become acquainted with who is participating, why, and what conditions are likely to support greater participation. Once educators familiarize themselves with their student population and the various categories of motivation for students, then they automatically become more equipped to address and

satisfy the needs of their student population. The ideal outcome of this familiarity is, of course, to maintain high enrollment and rate of graduation.

As a starting point, it would behoove higher education institutions to survey, market, and service the life-long learner according to their motivational desires. While it is understood that some higher education students are in pursuit of a degree for career advancement purposes, still others are enrolled simply because of their passion for learning. This latter category of students is appropriately titled 'life-long learners'. By definition, the life-long learner takes courses solely for the sake of personal enrichment and personal satisfaction, as opposed to exclusively for career advancement reasons. In conclusion, if you can find out what motivates your students, then the likelihood for success and completion for degree becomes very promising.

### Objectives

Note, the adult educator must be reminded that many of their students, outside of their regular studies, are frequently operating in an atmosphere of numerous responsibilities including personal, work, and family obligations. Nevertheless, while these conditions may be difficult at times, they are nevertheless a *reality* for many adult learners today. The on-going objective is to prove that despite the seemingly limited time and resources available to the adult learner, they still continue in the pursuit of higher education and degree completion. Specifically, according to the U.S. National Center for



Education Statistics, (1999), 66% of all adult education participants have attained some college, have an Associate's degree, a Bachelor's degree, or higher.

### Definition of Terms

1. Adult education:

Any enrollment in any educational activity, except full-time enrollment in a higher education credential program. (U.S. National Center for Education Statistics)

2. Adult learner:

Any adult engaged in post High School activity. (full-time or part-time), whose main purpose is the acquiring of knowledge, skill, or information for reasons of job advancement or personal satisfaction

3. Continuing education:

Education beyond the High School level that is pursued as an optional/self-motivated lifetime endeavor.

4. Education:

An accumulation of knowledge obtained through many years of course work and study, which is inherently applied towards everyday reasoning and decision-making.

5. Life-long learner:

The never-ending pursuit of learning, for the sake of learning, and the personal satisfaction that it brings, versus an intended training or degree program for the purpose of job advancement.

6. Motivation:

Inner drive and determination which, (despite adverse conditions), results in the achievement of a set task or goal.

7. Self-regulated learners:

Active learners who efficiently manage their own learning experiences in many different ways. (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994)

8. Time management: the art of balancing family, work, and school obligations.

### Limitations

This contains no first-hand survey. Rather, the author chose to rely upon secondary surveys and relevant statistical data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (1999).

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### The Adult Learner- A Definitive Analysis

Just who is the adult learner? According to the U.S. Department of Education, 1999, the largest total of adult learners is encompassed in the age groups of 35-44 and 25-34. Together these two groups or "cohorts" make up 47% of all adult learners.

Despite the variety of definitions of *who* is an adult learner, a generic profile of adult learners has emerged. Ascertain that more often than not the adult learner is in the classroom because they want to be there. It certainly is not because their parents expect it of them, nor that it is necessarily a job requirement. They are there because they enjoy learning and self-enhancement. It is not "by chance" that they are in the classroom. Typically, the adult learner has a set objective and sense of purpose in mind.

By virtue of the fact that adult college attendance is voluntary, a research premium has been placed on reasons for participation. Self-directed learning has also emerged as a primary focus of adult education research. Many see this kind of learning activity planned, conducted, and evaluated primarily by the individual learner.

(Dissertation Abstracts. Year: 1982)

The traits of a broadly defined "typical" adult learner, as compared to the general population of adults, include:

- ✓ better educated
- ✓ younger
- ✓ have higher than average income
- ✓ white and employed full-time
- ✓ live in suburbia
- ✓ have been out of school for approximately five years
- ✓ slightly more are women than men

(Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 64).

While a profile of the typical learner obscures differences and cannot encompass all learners, it does give one a starting point from which to view adult learners. (DeJoy, J. 1997).

Furthermore, adult learners have common ambitions and modes of motivation that distinguish this group from their younger counterparts. For example, according to a study conducted by Cross and Roelfs (1975), adult students are more likely to:

- a) Know what they want out of college
- b) Feel challenged rather than bored with their classes
- c) Feel self-confident about their ability to keep up with their studies and to understand what is being taught
- d) Spend more time studying
- e) Express satisfaction with their classes and their instructors.

## The Learning Profile of the Adult Learner

According to Lenz E., & M. Shaevitz, (1977), based upon research and experience, here and in other countries, eight principles emerge to provide a manifesto for learning in maturity:

1. Adults respond positively to learning in which the information has some personal meaning for them (this is also true of younger students, as the cry for "relevance" indicates, but it is intensified in adults). Because of this adults, are especially receptive to "affective" learning, that is learning which is meaningful and which can be readily internalized, or related to one's own experience. New conceptions are emerging which place a greater emphasis on perception and emotion and which assign a more important role to experience and cultural influences.
2. Adults benefit by relating what they are studying to what they need to know. Since they are goal-oriented and feel the pressure of time more keenly than traditional students, they tend to be impatient with courses or routines that seem unrelated to their needs. Unfortunately, this principle is more neglected than any other in higher education.
3. Adults are eager for new information and experience. Since they bring a certain amount of mental baggage with them, they do not react favorably to ideas that seem overly familiar and too stereotyped to provoke fresh thought. Professionals in continuing education are highly sensitive to this principle and are continually seeking new and stimulating programs, as well as discovering the deeper

meaning of what is already known. This has led to increased experimentation with a variety of techniques including group discussions, value clarification, sensitivity training, encounter groups, role-playing, and to an increased use of audio-visual technology.

4. Adults learn best when they are active participants in the learning process. Taking their model from life rather than school, they see themselves as involved in give-and-take of teaching and learning between themselves, the faculty, and other students. In this type of learning situation, it is just as blessed to give as receive. The successful teacher of adult students functions as a facilitator, consultant, helper, and resource, rather than as the director of the process. The teacher-authority figures doling out knowledge from some Olympian height cannot meet the challenge of the mature student.
5. Adults require long and uninterrupted learning sessions, which means they will gain more from a two-hour seminar once a week than from three weekly fifty-five minute sessions. This is a reflection of their need to learn by discovery rather than rote. The traditional method of memorizing material in order to regurgitate it on exams may lend itself to brief, concentrated time periods, but integrating information with one's own judgment and experience requires a lengthier span of time.
6. Adults need to consolidate what they have learned before going on to new concepts or skills. This is known as "cumulative learning", in which there is a

gradual absorption of what is learned; in effect, new learning is built on a solid base of previous learning. Again, this is a time-consuming process but one that provides more lasting results than the "instant" variety.

7. Adults require feedback during learning in order to avoid the difficulties of unlearning. For this reason, lectures alone are not satisfactory. The lecture-discussion format works better since it provides an opportunity to ask questions and explore ideas in depth.
8. A learning program for adults should be structured so that they do not feel rushed or pressured by competition. Adult students are more concerned about how learning will benefit them as individuals than about coming out ahead of others. Although the evidence shows that adult students generally receive better-than-average grades, their concern is essentially with what the grades say about their individual performances; mature students tend to disapprove of grading on a curve, which assesses each student in relation to other students.

#### Change- As Related to the Adult Learner

So, what motivates higher education adult learners to take the initiative to "step out of the box" and make a degree commitment? After all, they typically have numerous responsibilities to handle already and now they are undertaking a degree program, which so often will require many years of study. The answer to this complicated question can

actually be answered with the use of one word, and that word is change. That's right, change. Research points to change as the primary motivator for the adult learner.

Asainian and Brickell (1980) found 83 percent of learners cited a *change* in their life as the reason for choosing to participate in adult education. Most of the transitions are work or family related. The authors conclude, "To know an adult's life schedule is to know an adult's learning schedule" (DeJoy, J., 1997)

According to Scott, (1993), the five major precursors of *return* to study include:

1. Previous level of education
2. Age
3. Marital separation
4. Family life cycle
5. Dissatisfaction with job

Overall, the actual factor(s) of just why mature adults return to school is as varied as the age groups. Motives differ for different groups of learners, at different stages of life, and most individuals have not one, but multiple reasons for continuing their education.

(Dissertation Abstracts International. Year, 1990)

The differences in motivation that appear between graduates and interrupters are interesting and subtle. Reason for return to study grow out of personal history and current circumstances and vary in coherent ways with a number of educational and life cycle variables.



## Analysis of Interrupters To Degree Programs

Items that discriminate between graduates and interrupters; are those; which suggest difficult personal circumstances. They include low self-regard, disappointment with life circumstances, and unsupportive or positively hostile families.

Chronologically mature age women students, including those who have children, are a heterogeneous group characterized by strong motivation to study, which nonetheless varies according to previous education, age, and life circumstance. (Those whose life circumstances are the most difficult are likely to be *both* very motivated and vulnerable to leaving their studies before graduation.) (Scott, C.; And Others, 1993) Some consideration by institutions for the difficulties faced by mature students who have the responsibility for caring for a family and juggling many demands would help. According to Scott, C.; And Others, (1993), some adult learners have expressed how inflexible and unsympathetic attitudes from institutions had turned difficulties into insurmountable obstacles that necessitated withdrawal from study.

While it is important to examine why students continue as life-long learners, it is equally important to examine the various reasons students choose to discontinue their studies. Specifically, the author recommends that higher educational institutions and their administrators examine the variables and circumstances, which consistently cause their students to be unsuccessful. It is suggested that possible patterns of common denominators be examined just prior to discontinuance of study. If so, this should now become the "road- mark" of the very pitfalls from which to steer away students. For example, if an institution finds that lack of childcare is a common factor that contributes

to discontinued studies, then it remains a feasible choice for the institution to explore providing child care services to its students. Other suggestions to assure graduation include a flexible and sympathetic approach to course organization that takes into account the life demands carried by student, plus the development and publicizing of support services for the most at-risk groups. (Scott, C.; And Others, 1993)

Overall, the paradox of graduation, versus interrupters to study, is that the motivating variables that causing students to interrupt their studies now become the “warning signs” that typically precede interruption to study. To explain, if students and teachers both keep abreast of what factors consistently cause a “drop out rate”, then this becomes an indicator of what to avoid, or at best, be alert to.

#### Analysis of Graduates To Degree Programs

Reasons interrupters give for *return* endorse study as a way to take their minds off their troubles or seek an escape from these difficulties. It may help them decide for instance, whether to stay in a difficult marriage for example, as is evidenced by their higher scores on the Role Questioning scale. Graduates with unsupportive families, on the other hand, seem to have already decided on *study* as a definite course of action, which helps to make their lives more satisfying, as is reflected in their higher scores on the Compensatory scale.

A possible secret of success for the graduates who were seeking escape from difficult spouses and hostile families was the support found among fellow students and university personnel. Analyses of the graduate sample that used a source-of-support

measure showed that those who scored very high on compensatory motivation very likely to have nominated fellow students and/or university staff as their main source of support (Scott, Burns and Cooney, 1992). Interrupters may not have been able to find similar support. (Scott, C.; 1993) Why do mature age students perform so well? This study aims to explore the posited relationship between motivation and success at study, as defined by successful completion of a course of study and subsequent graduation. (Scott, C.; And Others, 1993).

#### Teacher Effectiveness

An effective tool for the continuing education teacher is to know his/her audience, in this case, the student population. Clearly, adult learners vary in the number of reasons for participation in higher education. Most frequently they want to improve, advance, or keep up-to date in their current job. Other reasons include personal enrichment, training for a new job, and obtaining a diploma or degree. The reasons cited depend upon such variables as the participants' age, sex, race-ethnicity, and educational attainment. For example, young adults are more likely than senior adults to participate in adult education to obtain a diploma or degree or to train for a new job. (Dissertation Abstracts International. Year 1991)

Teachers must be consciously aware of the different motivating factors for younger cohorts (age 17-34), [which according to the (1999) U.S. National Center for Education Statistics accounts for 36 percent of the adult education population.]

For example, according to DeJoy, J., (1997), when working with a potential learner who is in the younger cohort, the adult education provider should recognize that this person is most likely interested in a *degree*. Therefore, the provider of adult education should emphasize the potential to earn a degree and the possible rewards that come with the completion of a college degree include educating the potential learner on how their goal of completing the degree can be accomplished.

In comparison, to a potential learner in the older cohort (Age 35-44), [which according to the (1999) U.S. National Center for Education Statistics accounts for 25 percent of all adult learners] the adult education provider should recognize that this learner may not need a degree and that the degree may not bring the monetary rewards that it might to a younger learner, but the older learner may want the degree to fulfill a *personal goal* and/or obtain a measure of personal satisfaction. Therefore, the adult education provider should emphasize to the learner that he or she will be able to fulfill a personal goal, obtain satisfaction and support, and a measure of socializing by interacting with other learners. (DeJoy, J., 1997)

### Teacher Analysis of Student Surveys

Educators must be reminded to function in a multiple role capacity in order to be most effective. Those roles are that of a consultant, helper, and resource person to their students. It is highly recommended that departments survey their own students and take teacher evaluations and student suggestions seriously. These can prove to be invaluable insights to student satisfaction levels.

Also, in line with this mode of thinking, an analysis of the "academic climate" at other institutions can provide an insight and comparison of what other institutions are doing right or wrong, for that matter, to attract students to their college or university. Proper analysis requires each institution to first conduct their own self-examination in which such questions as: a) Are we the only institution in the area that doesn't provide on-line courses? b) Are all of our programs conducive to the current times? c) Are we experiencing a decrease in enrollment because we are failing to offer courses of interest and use to our students?, are examined.

In general, institutions operate under the common goal to address and satisfy the needs of their students and stay monetarily strong. However, it is imperative that they go beyond their own self-examination of policy, practices, and procedures, and remain keenly aware of "the academic climate" of other universities as well. For example, the following is a prime illustration of how the results of a competing University's survey contain common elements that could be useful and applicable to nearly every college or university:

Based upon a 1996 survey of current graduate students at Boise State University in Idaho, (Belcher, M., Boise State Univ. 1996 Survey) seniors with good grade point averages, and individuals working in the Boise area mainly in the areas of technology:

The following obstacles to graduate study were identified:

- Finances
- Work schedules
- Course availability.

Desirable services cited by respondents were:

- Summer courses
- Graduate assistantships
- Courses through long distance learning
- Childcare
- Graduate housing.

Reasons given for attending graduate school:

- Personal satisfaction
- Career advancement
- Improved earnings and requirements of their job

Findings also indicated that potential graduate students were slightly younger than current students, and that a vast majority of graduate students will continued to enroll on a part-time basis, scheduling courses between work and commitments.

In addition to focusing on the demographic information provided as part of the adult learner profile, the adult education provider should recognize the motivations and developmental tasks of the learners. In this manner, the adult education provider will have a better understanding of their audience and be better able to speak to their needs. Adult education providers can apply this knowledge of adult learners in their interaction with potential learners. (DeJoy, J., 1997)

### Noteworthy Payoffs for the Adult learner

Consider the following objectives, and benefits therein, to the adult learner of a higher education program:

- ⇒ Increased self-esteem and confidence
- ⇒ Competence
- ⇒ Skills & knowledge
- ⇒ Benefit to family & enrichment to personal relationships
- ⇒ Availability/option to take on-line courses
- ⇒ Career advancement
- ⇒ Competitive edge over peers

In addition, statistical data from the (1999) U.S. Census Bureau indicates that enhancing one's academic credentials inevitably does pay off. As a matter of fact, adults with a High School diploma earn an average of \$24,572 per year. However, in comparison those adults with a BA degree earn an average of \$45,678 per year, and those adults with an MA degree earn an average of \$55,641 per year. That's a surplus salary difference of 36-44 percent respectively!

### Win-Win Scenario for Adult Learners and Institutions

Certainly, when a student is successful, so is the teacher! It creates a win-win scenario for all involved. The student's self-esteem is enhanced because they have increased their knowledge level and satisfied their academic goal. The teacher wins

because he or she has successfully accomplished the purpose of their position, and that is to effectively teach the subject matter. Finally, the institution providing the academic services and environment succeeds because as enrollment remains high (verses student withdrawal) the institution can survive monetarily and continue to cover its costs and expenses, while at the same time enhancing its reputation as a successful and competitive institution.

As an example, Colleges and Universities must be careful to make sure that they continue to offer “user-friendly” course programs which address such student issues as accessibility, variety of choices, supportive faculty, etc. By doing so, they will maintain satisfactory student enrollment numbers and assist themselves to maintain a competitive edge over their peers. Let us be reminded that without sufficient student enrollment, it is no longer cost-effective (regarding facility costs, salaries, campus programs, etc.) to continue a given program.

The market for adult learners is out there! The question is are universities and colleges doing all that they can to capture its share of the market? The focus is to capture and retain students’ interest in the programs offered. Otherwise, the compromise is that a competing institution, which actively addresses students’ needs and motivations, will be the one to attract and keep students.

### Summary

While it is understood that the adult learner’s lifestyle is as varied as it is complex, certain patterns of behavior must be implemented in order to achieve optimum



academic success. Despite the most judicious efforts of educators to improve student satisfaction and their institution's success rate, (whether that includes fancy consultants, elaborate statistical formulas, or simply being supportive towards their students), the ultimate success of his/her student lies with their own self-motivation and efforts extended towards studies.

Primarily, it becomes imperative for the continuing education student to set priorities and judiciously organize their time. Let us reaffirm that the main components to success, on any level, are of course *self-discipline* and *desire*.

Without a doubt, the biggest adversary to success is procrastination. Truly, the hardest part of any goal is the *initiation* of it. Better known as the ability to overcome the common tendency to procrastinate. It is suggested that the adult student must first 'role play' the set objective and anticipated outcome within your own mind. However, one word of caution is to make a conscious effort not to expend too much mental energy on the repetitive thoughts of: what you have to do, should do, going to do, etc., etc. (in others words, procrastinating).

Based on the notion that the human mind in effect plays out whatever it is programmed to do, the more the adult learner can *visualize* his/her success as a student, including the completion of assignments on a timely basis, the more likely it is to become a reality. Translated, the good news is, "yes, a mature responsible adult can have it all!"

The decision to become a student sets up the need for choosing and for assigning *priorities*. You will have to let certain things go. Some of your social life, some of your community activities, and some of your hobbies will have to be put aside while you are

attending college. Long, leisurely lunches with friends may no longer be possible; gourmet dishes that take hours to prepare may have to be replaced by quick meals (Siebert, A. & Gilpin, B., 1977). It will take a bit of adjustment from your family and some special motivation from within yourself, but the bottom line is that it can be done.

To achieve an optimum level of success the adult student must embrace a “take-charge” attitude similar to the Nike trademark of-Just Do It!

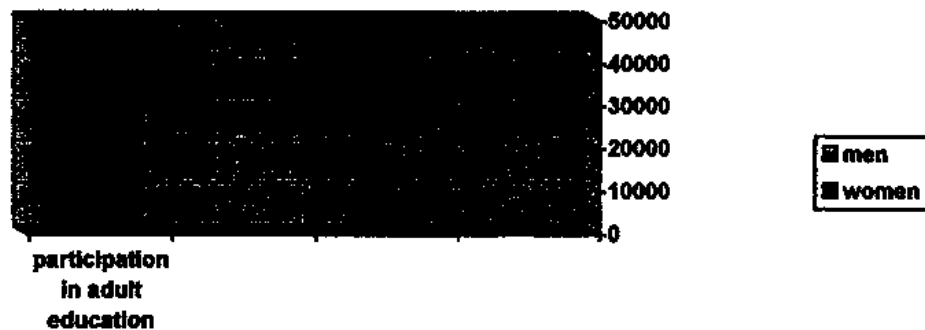
CHAPTER III  
DESIGN OF THE STUDY  
Population and Sample

Differences by Sex and Parental Status

According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, 1999, there was only a minor difference of 10 percent difference in enrollment between men (55%) and women (45%) participation rates in adult education. Men were more likely than women to enroll in courses to improve or update their work skills in their current jobs. Yet, women were significantly more likely to participate for personal/social reasons.

TABLE I.

U.S. National Center for Education Statistics-1999



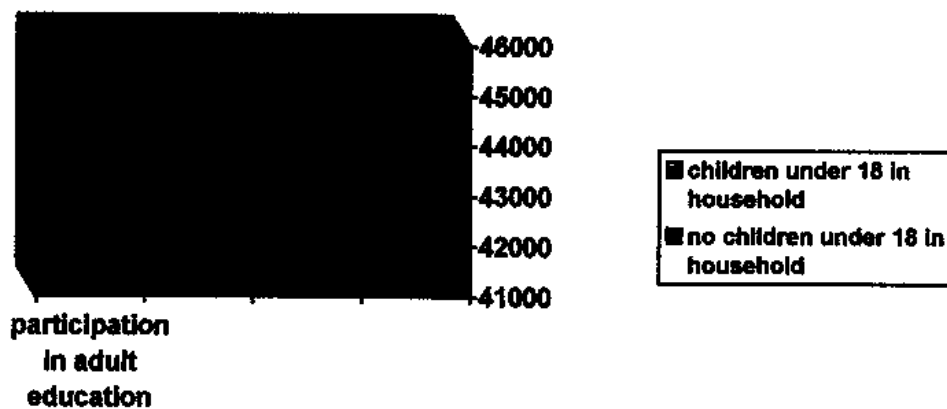
The last few decades have seen a rapid worldwide increase in the number of mature age students enrolled in higher education. Changes to the labor market including

the increase in required level of training for many professions have influenced this growth. Women have strongly been represented amongst the numbers of mature age students. Again, this may be attributed to social changes, such as the increase in the divorce rate and associated increased numbers of mother-headed families, changes to women's roles associated with the growth of the women's movement, and women's higher work force participation rate. (Scott C.; 1993).

In addition, U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (1999) indicates only a minor difference of 3 percent between adult men and women students who have children under 18 living in the same household (43,060) versus those that did not (45,749).

TABLE II.

U.S. National Center for Education Statistics-1999

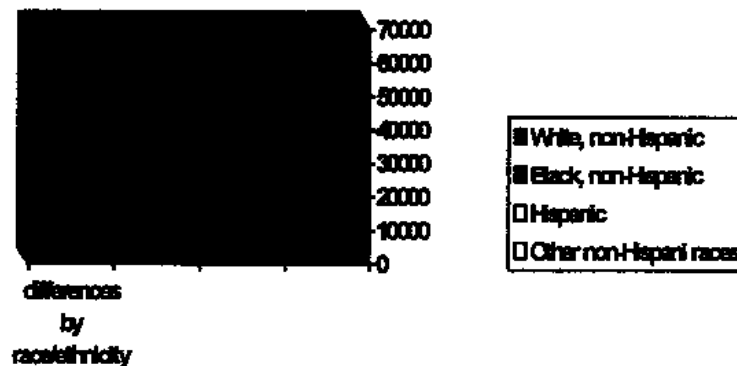


Differences by Race-ethnicity

Interestingly, the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, 1999, indicates that White/non-Hispanic participants account for as much as 74 percent of the entire adult education population. Followed respectively by 12 percent for Black/non-Hispanic, 9 percent for Hispanics, and 5 percent for other non-Hispanic races. Also, when it came to taking courses to advance on the job, or for personal /social reasons, the participation rates of whites remained the highest of all of the groups. Finally, Other non-Hispanic races were the more likely to enroll for a diploma or degree than any other group.

TABLE III.

U.S. National Center for Education Statistics-1999



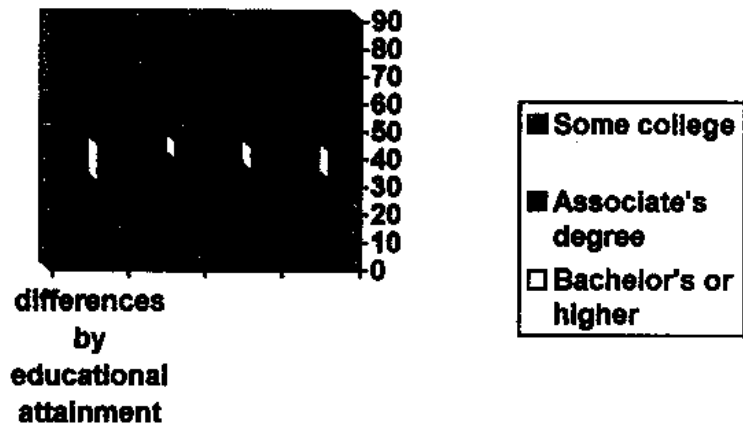
### Differences by Educational Attainment

Data clearly show that adults with some postsecondary education were more likely than adults with high school education or less to participate in adult education. This is interesting because the education gap between the two groups was further increased. Adults who needed additional education most were least likely to participate in adult education.

According to a study conducted by a comprehensive community college, (Dissertation Abstracts International, Year 1986) it was found that adult learners who exhibit the highest tendency to persist are females between the age of 25 and 45 who are the lowest income brackets, who have little or no previous post-secondary education, and who tend to be externally controlled. Previous studies which indicate that students who tend to persist are those who had experienced some previous post-secondary education. This study found just the opposite, and, thus, suggests many new areas and implications for additional research.

TABLE IV.

U.S. National Center for Education Statistics-1999



Differences by Age

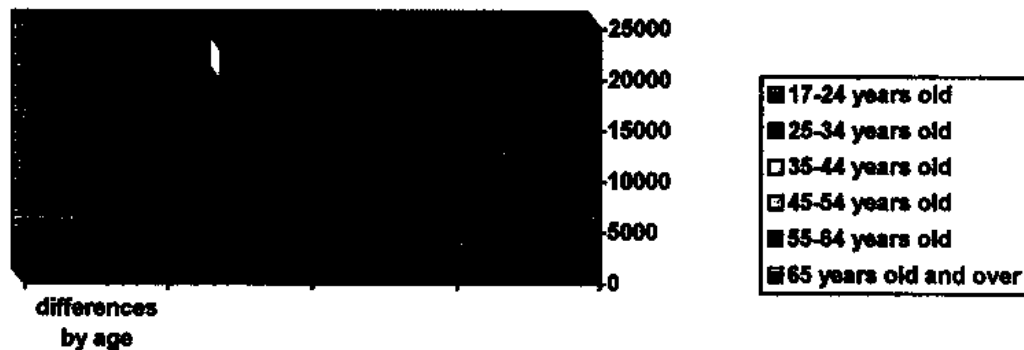
According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, 1999, the participation rates varied by age. Nevertheless, the survey does indicate a steady *increase* in the number taking adult education courses from the age span of 17 years old up

through 44 years old. Conversely, the survey does exhibit a steady *decrease* in participation in the age group of 45 years old to 65 years old and older.

Overall, the survey demonstrates that the *peak* years of attendance appear in the age group of 25-34 years old (26 percent) and the *lowest* participation rate is in the age group of 65 years old and over (6 percent). Similar to the overall participation rate, the rate for job improvement peaked during the mid-career of individual's ages 35-54 years old. (Average 65 percent). The participation rate gradually declined after age 55 and dropped to 22 percent for the 65 years and older.

TABLE V.

U.S. National Center for Education Statistics-1999



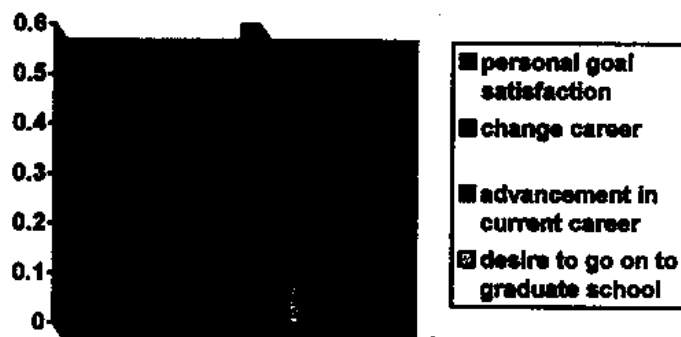
### Survey

Based upon a survey (conducted by DeJoy, 1996), of adult learners in George Fox University's Boise Center undergraduate degree-completion program, the following results were obtained:

- I. When asked to cite their primary reason for returning to college:

- 60%- Personal goal/satisfaction
- 20%- Change career
- 12%- Advancement in current career
- 8%- Desire to go on to graduate school

1996 survey conducted by DeJoy



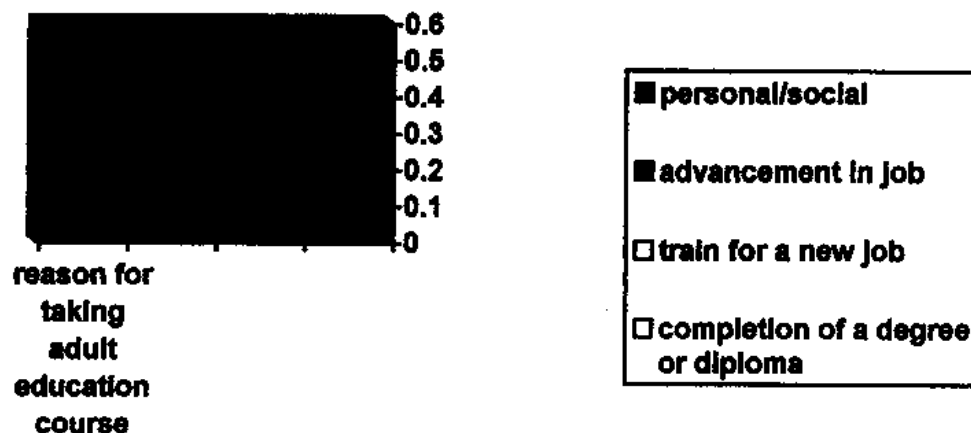
In comparison, a 1999 survey conducted by the U.S. National Center for Education produced the following results from adult education students:

II. When asked the reason of taking an adult education course:

- 43%- Personal/social
- 54%- Advancement in job
- 12%- Train for a new job
- 11%- Completion of a degree or diploma

1999 survey conducted by the U.S. National Center for Education





Interestingly, these surveys indicate a major increase in the number of adult education courses being taken for advancement purposes on the job. The author hypothesizes that the major increase for advancement in job (12 percent based upon a 1996 survey verses 54%) is based upon the ever-increasing computer technical international world that exists today. In addition, companies are willing to, and partially out of necessity, to provide technical training to their employees.

#### Data Collection

The research data indicates, younger adults, as expected, were more likely than older adults to participate in adult education for getting diploma or a degree, to train for a new job or career, or to improve basic skills. 23 percent of adults age 17 to 24 participated in adult education to train for a new job as compared to 4 percent of adults age 55 to 59. The research into lifespan development supports this contention as well. The learners in the 35-44- year cohort have different developmental tasks to accomplish.

They enter the 'maintenance phase' of their work lives, as they achieve a career plateau. This cohort view their career in a more balanced perspective, no longer wanting achievement for achievement's sake. When this happens, workers generally invest less of their ego and energy in the work world; they can afford to be more relaxed in their approach to their job, more satisfied with the work itself, more helpful to others. (Berger, 1994) With this reduced focus on career advancement comes less of a need to earn a degree or certification. (DeJoy, J.,1997)

Another up and coming significant age group noteworthy for discussion is the senior citizens population on campus. A seventy-seven year-old student at Columbia University has grown accustomed to people on campus assuming that he is a professor. He is one of the thousands of older students, in the postretirement-age bracket, who are entering higher education in ever-increasing numbers. As a result of early retirement and greater longevity, elderly men and women (65 years and older) now make up 19 percent of the adult enrollment. Dr. Aaron Warner, dean of the School of General Studies at Columbia University, describes these "seniors" as "good people to teach. Many of them are making up for educational opportunities they missed in their youth, and their presence on campus is providing a refreshing addition to campus life. We find them very highly motivated, very thoughtful people, and they are usually highly intelligent. Their life experience is rich." Younger students are also registering their approval of elderly students on campus, seeing them as a force for bringing events and ideas into perspective. (Lenz E., & M. Shaevitz, 1977)

In contrast, let us now shift the focus to the younger student. [According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, (1999)], Age group 17-24 years old and age 25-34 years old, makes up 36% of the participants in adult education. Continuing educators must be reminded that quite often, simply due to a difference in life-span agendas, as compared to the life-long learner, the younger students are in the classroom based upon a totally different agenda. Typically, the reasons include: their parents insisted on their attendance, they wanted to live away from home, or simply because the course is a college prerequisite.

According to Cross (1981), the younger cohort is degree oriented. Cross's view is consistent with the major theories of lifespan development. The 20's are a time to begin making choices regarding further education and employment specialization (Berger, 1994). The choices require a 20-something year old learner to be degree oriented in order to be able to qualify for an employment choice.

As men and women approach their 30's, they begin to re-examine and question previous commitments and career goals. Women begin to see the possibility of having more time to them now that their children are becoming more independent and begin to see that children become more costly to raise, as they grow older. As men approach their 30's they seek greater independence from their supervisors and ask for more responsibility at work. This transition into their 30's can cause women and men to be degree oriented as they attempt to either re-enter or advance in the job market (Berger, 1994)/(DeJoy, J., 1997)

In the area of motivation, mature students appear to have an edge. College administrators, faculty members, and counselors are almost unanimous in proclaiming the higher motivation levels of adult students. The tendency toward self-examination, which, as we've seen, comes through strongly in the midyears, can also work to your advantage. Self-knowledge is an excellent foundation for any educational program, whether it is intended for self-renewal, career advancement, or both. . (Lenz E., & M. Shaevitz, 1977)

## Chapter IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Since there are many common denominators among colleges and universities, institutions can profit from research/surveys conducted by other institutions. The following survey conducted by Hoffmann, J.; And Others, (1994), serves as a prime example of how the findings of a particular college's task force can serve as general 'check point' for nearly every educational institution. Based on review of the findings, these recommendations were formulated:

1. Maintain and consider increasing multiple scheduling patterns of classes (ex. day, late afternoon, weekend, and intensive session) to provide for student needs.)
2. Provide support to faculty in carrying out their roles at a quality level. They must be provided with the professional development opportunities and resources to continue to develop and implement high quality programs and courses to maintain the reputation valued so by the college alumni.
3. Provide faculty with course loads that ensure capacity for nurturance and support of students, individualized attention via instruction and advisement, and strong positive relationships with students.
4. Maintain and increase the number of courses with small class enrollments.

5. Provide multiple sessions of courses to allow for flexible scheduling both from a short-term (times of day and week) and long-term (multiple year) perspective.
  6. Maintain and expand support services to students relative to bookstore hours, library resources/hours, academic resource center services, development of information literacy skills (ex. library research, computer skills, communication skills) and advisement.
  7. Give consideration to communication mechanisms to provide timely information to students and to assist them in transition from the college to post-graduate opportunities.
  8. Consider further steps toward understanding and supporting the needs of adult learners. a) Survey faculty regarding issues relative to teaching adult learners, b) continue a survey of graduates every two years and maintain adequate student records for the efficient implementation of the survey.
- (Hoffmann, J.; And Others, 1994).

### Data Review

Little has changed since the first national study by Johnstone and Rivera in the 1960's (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Year after year, surveys consistently indicate a common pattern among continuing education students. Whether from the young cohort group or the older cohort groups, the results are nearly always the same. The formula is simple. Generally speaking, the primary motivator for continuing education is going to be

one of two alternatives. That is, the continuing education learner is most likely to be motivated by either personal satisfaction or career advancement. From a psychological angle, it becomes quite easy for the continuing education teachers to target and satisfy their student population.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key to success of any higher education program is to develop programs compatible with the needs and expectations of its participants. Let us be reminded that learning remains an on- going process for both the student and instructor. There is in fact a mutual dependency between teachers and students. When students are successful, so are their teachers and the institutions for which they work.

In keeping with the goal of promoting greater participation, the provider of adult education should not limit the research for future learners solely to new learners. Rather, because learning is addictive and because those who are educated tend to participate in adult learning activity (Cross, 1981), the adult educator should recruit future learners from the pool of current learners. For example, assuming the current learners are learning from curriculum designed for adults, the research suggests the adult learners will be motivated to participate in future learning. Therefore, the provider of adult education should provide additional learning opportunities for current learners. Examples of additional learning opportunities could include: Additional single courses, courses in a different but related subject area such as a minor related to the major field of study, advanced course work in the current field of study, and/or special topics courses. (DeJoy, J., 1997)

In line with maintaining a continued attraction of students, the author recommends the establishment of an on-site childcare facility. Finding evening childcare



can be the determining factor of attendance for many potential students with young children. In fact, it is not an uncommon practice for colleges or universities to coordinate a daycare program, staffed with early childhood education students. This allows the college to keep down costs while its student's gain much needed experience, and possibly college credits. Consider the difficulty of measuring how many potential students were lost to another college or university all because one institution offered childcare services and another one did not.

#### Future Study

Education is best defined in terms of purpose. While the main purposes of education have been quite consistent throughout the ages, certain purposes are more salient at a particular time and place. These purposes often reflect the society's current needs more than merely individual needs. (Gorman, B. & Johnson, W., 1991). With this increasing enrollment of adults there is a need to examine those factors that serve to attract, retain, and result, and result in successful graduation. (Hoffmann, J.: And-Others, (1994).

As a whole, research has consistently proven throughout the test of time that the two top motivators of continuing education students have not changed. Clearly, the research indicates that the primary motivators for adult students are based upon either reasons of personal goal satisfaction *or* for career advancement purposes. Thus, based upon historical analysis of the research, it is a fair projection that the future will not prove

any differently. The author hypothesizes that some *minor* differences can be anticipated. These differences will be symbolic of the 'societal- climate' at the time.

Today's social/economic climate includes many workers experiencing job layoffs and/or in need of more technical job related knowledge. As such, many adults are now taking the time to return to school for career advancement purposes. According to Alexander Paris, (2002), analyst for Chicago-based Barrington Research, -" recent layoffs appear to be sending many workers, including boomers, back to school to make them more competitive in a tight job market. For those adult students seeking personal satisfaction, today's 'societal- climate' is reflective of the number of baby boomers beginning to return to school for personal satisfaction. Also, he states that the reality today is that workers with degrees tend to get more pay raises and promotions."

Adult education providers report a surge in enrollment in recent years, fueled by never-to-be satisfied baby boomers heading back to school. That has meant new revenue for traditional colleges and universities and for profit universities. In 2001, about 20.8 percent of U.S. College and university students were age 35 or over, according to estimated figures from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Census Bureau. That's up from 11.7 percent in 1980, when boomers were boomers were between the ages of 16 and 34. (Yen, Hope (2002, February 10). Courier Post.p.D1.) "Boomers have always been seekers- looking for spiritual enrichment or intellectual enrichment," said Ed Shanahan (2002), an editor for *My Generation*, AARP's magazine for baby boomers. "When you get to the age of 45, 50, or 55 this is one of your last good chances to tackle something you always wanted to do but put off for several reasons. I think going

back to school is one of those things for them,” he said. Whether from the young, old, or “in between”, cohort age group, learning is and should be a life-long universal activity. [Ed Shanahan (2002)].

According to Al Siebert & Bernadine Gilpin, (1977) authors of Time For College, getting an education is the best insurance you can buy for a successful, secure future. Learning is a lifelong experience. Finding the right combination for relationships, work, and school can pay off big dividends in personal and professional satisfaction. As well as these tangible rewards for the efforts expended on study, mature age students and graduates report a wide variety of other personal benefits such as increased confidence, self-esteem, competence, skills and knowledge. (Scott C.; And Others 1993).

Members of our society see lifelong learning as a ubiquitous and powerful force to improve citizenship, families, and professions. In every curriculum that we plan and every text we use, there is an implicit, if not explicit, assumption about the future and why a learner will be better off knowing, feeling, or doing things differently. (Galbraith, M., & Sisco, B., 1992) Finally, let us look again at the real purpose of education. It is the enhancement of the individual human life and living. It is the glorification of the person. It involves the total human spirit. (Gorman, B. & Johnson, W., 1991)

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**Appendix A**

**Participation in Adult Education Statistics**

### No. 290. Participation in Adult Education: 1994-95 and 1998-99

[In thousands (189,543 represents 189,543,000), except percent. For the civilian noninstitutional population 17 years old and over not enrolled full time in elementary or secondary school at the time of the survey. Adult education is considered any enrollment in any educational activity at any time in the prior 12 months, except full-time enrollment in a higher education credential program. Based on survey and subject to sampling error; see source for details.]

Characteristic	Participants in adult education						
	Adult population (1,000)	Number taking adult ed. courses (1,000)	Percent of total	Reason for taking course (percent) <sup>1</sup>			
				Personal/social	Advance on the job	Train for a new job	Complete degree or diploma
Total, 1995	189,543	76,281	40	44	54	11	10
Total, 1999	184,434	88,809	48	43	54	12	11
<b>Age:</b>							
17 to 24 years old	25,276	13,028	52	34	32	20	23
25 to 34 years old	34,880	18,431	56	38	56	16	11
35 to 44 years old	45,258	23,047	51	41	62	13	9
45 to 54 years old	37,153	18,872	51	44	65	6	7
55 to 64 years old	24,309	9,003	37	49	56	7	9
65 years old and over	27,558	5,328	19	76	22	-	4
<b>Sex:</b>							
Male	92,946	40,204	43	34	59	11	13
Female	101,488	48,605	48	50	50	12	9
<b>Race/ethnicity:</b>							
White, non-Hispanic	143,679	65,547	46	45	56	11	10
Black, non-Hispanic	22,129	10,803	49	42	52	15	13
Hispanic	19,491	7,961	41	35	45	14	11
Other non-Hispanic races	9,135	4,478	49	35	49	14	19
<b>Marital status:</b>							
Never married	41,530	20,773	50	34	45	17	18
Currently married	118,568	55,966	47	46	58	10	8
Other	34,337	12,070	35	45	55	11	8
<b>Children under 18 in household:</b>							
Yes	83,365	43,060	52	41	55	12	12
No	111,070	45,749	41	44	53	11	10
<b>Educational attainment:</b>							
Up to 8th grade	11,078	1,527	14	41	39	3	21
9th to 12th grade	21,375	5,578	26	35	28	15	21
High school diploma or GED	53,468	19,683	37	39	52	12	7
Vocational school after high school	6,319	2,629	42	44	57	11	5
Some college	35,147	18,220	52	46	46	14	15
Associate's degree	11,377	6,735	59	38	60	15	14
Bachelor's or higher	55,851	34,426	62	45	63	9	8
<b>Labor force status:</b>							
Employed	132,227	70,849	54	37	63	12	11
Unemployed	7,963	3,433	43	39	23	32	22
Not in the labor force	54,244	14,527	27	72	17	7	10

<sup>1</sup> Reason for taking at least one course. Includes duplication. Excludes other reasons, not shown separately.

Source: U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, 1995 and 1999 National Household Education Surveys.

**Appendix B**  
**Earnings by Highest Degree Earned**

### No. 218. Earnings by Highest Degree Earned: 1999

[For persons 18 years old and over with earnings. Persons as of March, the following year. Based on Current Population Survey; see text, Section 1, Population, and Appendix III. For definition of mean, see Guide to Tabular Presentation.]

Characteristic	Level of highest degree								
	Total persons	Not a high school graduate	High school graduate only	Some college, no degree	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Professional	Doctorate
<b>MEAN EARNINGS (dot)</b>									
All persons <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	32,388	18,121	24,372	26,958	32,152	45,878	58,641	100,987	86,833
<b>Age:</b>									
25 to 34 years old . . . . .	29,801	16,818	24,040	26,914	28,088	39,768	46,768	58,043	60,852
35 to 44 years old . . . . .	36,900	19,984	27,444	34,219	35,370	50,153	58,816	100,240	94,836
45 to 54 years old . . . . .	41,485	19,707	28,883	36,935	37,506	54,922	62,158	118,327	87,859
55 to 64 years old . . . . .	36,577	22,212	27,586	34,240	35,703	50,141	57,680	132,326	97,214
65 years old and over . . . . .	24,283	12,121	18,704	19,052	17,809	30,624	35,839	104,056	76,333
<b>Sex:</b>									
Male . . . . .	40,257	18,856	30,414	33,614	40,047	57,706	68,367	120,252	87,357
Female . . . . .	23,551	12,145	18,082	20,241	25,079	32,546	42,378	59,782	61,136
<b>White:</b>									
Male . . . . .	33,326	18,823	25,270	27,674	32,686	46,884	55,622	103,450	87,748
Female . . . . .	41,586	19,320	31,279	34,825	41,010	59,806	68,831	123,086	87,076
<b>Black:</b>									
Male . . . . .	23,756	12,406	18,361	20,188	24,928	32,307	41,845	57,314	64,080
Female . . . . .	24,879	13,569	20,891	24,101	28,772	37,422	48,777	75,508	(B)
<b>Hispanic <sup>2</sup>:</b>									
Male . . . . .	28,821	16,381	25,848	27,538	31,885	42,530	54,842	(B)	(B)
Female . . . . .	21,684	10,734	16,508	21,356	26,787	33,184	44,781	(B)	(B)
<b>Hispanic <sup>2</sup>:</b>									
Male . . . . .	22,086	16,106	20,704	23,115	29,329	36,212	50,576	64,029	(B)
Female . . . . .	24,970	18,020	23,736	27,286	36,740	42,733	60,013	(B)	(B)
Hispanic <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	18,187	12,684	16,653	18,782	22,685	29,249	41,118	(B)	(B)

(B) Base figure too small to meet statistical standards for reliability of a derived figure. <sup>1</sup> Includes other races, not shown separately. <sup>2</sup> Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P20-536.