Factors affecting persistence of re-entry women at an urban state university

Carolyn Sheriff Mayfield

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Factors affecting persistence of re-entry women at an urban state university

Mayfield, Carolyn Sheriff, Ed.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1989
FACTORS AFFECTING PERSISTENCE OF
RE-ENTRY WOMEN
AT
AN URBAN STATE UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Carolyn Sheriff Mayfield
May, 1989
FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERSISTENCE OF
RE-ENTRY WOMEN AT
AN URBAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Approved May, 1989 By

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Chairman of Doctoral Committee
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who sacrificed the most: to my husband, Spencer, and to my daughters, Kerrita Kimberly, Karrin Alicia, and Kellie Edwina.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When one undertakes a project of this magnitude, many human resources must be used if it is to be a product of which one is proud. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to have been exposed to so many that were helpful in so many ways. It would be virtually impossible to recognize each one of them for their many words of encouragement and words of advice; however, sincere appreciation is deeply expressed to all of them.

I am grateful for the guidance, wisdom, patience, and counsel of my advisor, Dr. James M. Yankovich, who also served as my Dissertation Committee Chair, to Dr. Sally A. Franek and to Dr. Aaron A. Gay, Dissertation Committee Members, who shared with me their expertise and created within me a deep respect for the ritual of conducting worthwhile research. They unselfishly gave of their time and their energy to help me reach this worthy goal. I also wish to thank Dr. John Thelin and the faculty of the Higher Education Administration Program who provided scholarly role models worthy of emulation.

Many members of the Norfolk State University family have encouraged my efforts and assured me of their confidence in my ability to reach this goal: Dr. Harrison B. Wilson, President; Dr. Jesse Lewis; Dr. Maxine B. Allen, and her entire staff of Institutional Research and Planning; my colleagues in the English and Foreign Languages Department; the NSU Army ROTC cadre and ESTP; and many others at the University who showed an interest in this research topic and provided valuable insights and means to pursue and complete it. Mrs. Patricia Long and Ashton Thurman provided essential data and computer programming, without which this research would still be just an idea. They and others provided assistance in ways too numerous to mention.
To the "Hyacinths" who responded to my request for information on their personal lives and their academic pursuits, I owe a debt of gratitude, for without their candor and prompt responses, this dissertation would never have been completed. Their interest in a topic dear to them and to me generated a lot of enthusiasm and contemplation.

To my family--a small but powerful group of sincere, loving people--I thank them for all of their support, encouragement, and numerous sacrifices. I especially wish to thank my grandparents: Arthur and Rita Sheriff and Viola Bryant; my parents, James and Earline Allen (the consummate re-entry woman); my husband, daughters, siblings, other relatives, and numerous friends for believing in me.

Finally, yet foremost, I thank God for His providence, for the scripture reads, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy path".
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nature and Significance of Study

"... But raising kids gives you persistence, and what I want is what I'd like for them."

from "Hyacinth"
Janet Munro (1988)

The student population in American higher education has undergone many changes in the last twenty years. This period has seen dramatic changes as students have become one or more of the following: a commuter; part-time; low income; international; handicapped; a single parent; rural; and adult. These nontraditional students have had a significant impact on institutions higher education (A. Astin, 1984, Lewis, 1988).

One of the most notable trends in the last two decades has been the dramatic increase in continuing education among nontraditional-aged females. Such factors as the human potential movement, changing demographic profiles, inflation, advanced technology, divorce, and growth in the number of one-parent and dual-career households have prompted participation by women who had previously deferred career preparation, college, or continuing education. In addition, women's development of political consciousness, greater self-awareness, and need to be self-supporting are other factors that have affected women's life patterns and spurred women's participation in education and work (Lewis, 1).

The "quiet revolution" that is happening on campuses across the country began in the sixties and seventies and has increased its intensity ever since. Although this revolution has occurred with little fanfare or media attention, it has had and will continue to have a more significant impact on higher education than did the riots and demonstrations of the sixties (Apps, 1981). This "quiet revolution" is the return of thousands of adults to college.
campuses. They may have attended college for one or more years and then dropped out. They are adults who may have received a baccalaureate degree but found the need for additional education, and adults who may never have attended college (Apps, 11).

The returning of World War II veterans during the middle 1940s created the major concern for seating space and resources in institutions of higher education. The major concern of today's returning students are more subtle and complex. The "quiet revolution" will occur because older students will insist on changes. They will not accept current policies about routine administrative procedures, student services, the quality of instruction, nor any other aspect of their academic environment that will negatively affect their persistence (Apps).

An important trend in this development is that the number of older students has been growing more rapidly than the number of younger students. Women comprised only thirty-nine percent of all college students under thirty-five in 1968 (Tittle and Denker, 1980). Between 1970 and 1985, the enrollment of students under age 25 increased by 15 per cent. During this same period, enrollment of adults 25 and older increased by 114 per cent. In the later part of this period from 1980 to 1985, enrollment of students under 25 decreased by 5 per cent, while the enrollment of students 25 and older increased by 12 per cent. (Digest of Education Statistics for 1987, 116).

Of major concern in these data are statistics pertaining to women in this growing population of adult students. In 1980, the total number of female students was 2,459,000 (483,000 full time; 1,976,000 part-time). In 1985, the total number of female students was 2,895,000 (708,000 full time; 2,187,000 part-time). The projected number of full time women 25 years and older in
higher education for 1988 is 3,036,000. The full time projection for 1993 is 3,135,000. The projected number of part-time women 25 years old and older in higher education for 1988 and 1993 is 234.2 thousands. (Digest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Enrollment of Women in Higher Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AGES</td>
<td>FULL TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 and older</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>482</td>
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| 1985    |                                         |
| AGES    | FULL TIME | PART-TIME | TOTAL  |
| 25 - 29 | 299       | 662        | 961    |
| 30 - 34 | 527       | 161        | 688    |
| 35 and older | 238      | 998        | 1246   |
| TOTAL   | 1064      | 1821       | 2895   |

(Digest of Education Statistics for 1987, 116)

Lewis provides additional statistical data on women's increased participation in higher education in recent years:

(1) Women accounted for fifty percent of the total number of participants in adult education nationally.

(2) The number of women over twenty-five returning to post secondary
education has increased almost ten-fold in the past twenty years. They have filled the gap created by the declining number of traditional aged students.

(3) Women outnumber men two to one among people over thirty-five and older in post secondary institutions.

(4) Women over twenty-five comprise forty-two per cent of all part-time enrollment in higher education.

(5) By the year 2000, fifty-two per cent of all undergraduate students will be women, with fifty percent of those twenty-two years old and older.

With the growing enrollment trend and the projected enrollment figures of women students over age 25, post secondary institutions have been forced to acknowledge this trend and to accommodate those who are initiating this unprecedented attendance pattern in higher education. This growing group of nontraditional students needs special attention, consideration, and study because of the unique set of circumstances they face. These circumstances have not been encountered before by any other group of students on campuses of today's institutions of higher education. How this group persists in its academic pursuits is significant.

A leader in research on retention in higher education, Vincent Tinto states:

Persistence in college requires individuals to adjust both socially and intellectually, to the new and sometimes quite strange world of college. Most persons, even the most able and socially mature, experience some difficulty in making that adjustment. For many, the period is brief. Though most individuals eventually make the transition to college, some find it difficult so as to induce early departure [nonpersistence] from college (1987, 47-48).

A study of the factors that affect persistence is significant because of the uniqueness of the population of re-entry women. Also, the institutions that recruit and accept these students should be aware of these factors as a
means of minimizing their potential for non persistence. "Renewed efforts need to be initiated to change institutional structures and to build agenda that truly promote access, equity, and support for re-entry women" (Lewis, 1).

"Urban State" University is an urban, historically black institution that was founded in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression. Since its inception over fifty years ago, numerous changes have occurred to this institution of higher education and, of course, to higher education, generally. Among the most significant changes with regard to this research is the change in the student population. (Hereinafter, the University will be referred to as "Urban State University".)

Committed to maintaining its viability in the community where several institutions of higher education co-exist, Urban State University, one of the largest predominately Black institutions in the nation, has established a tradition of meeting the needs of urban students who aspire to reach their fullest potential.

It is the philosophy of the University that all people, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, sex, age, handicap or national origin, were entitled to profit from educational opportunities and advantages to the fullest extent of their capacities (Urban State University Catalogue, 1987-89, x).

Urban State University has graduated many generations of traditional age students, and it has innovatively served generations of adult students, often in special day programs designed to help them upgrade their skills to enhance their employment opportunities and in the evening college where many adults have met requirements to obtain their associate's and baccalaureate degrees.

As the adult population of students re-entering higher education has grown nationally, Urban State has continued to serve this growing population and to include them in its mission statement and in its institutional goals.
The University shall continue to define those areas in which it can make the most effective contributions to the total educational enterprise of the community, state, nation, and the world. The University shall continue to utilize its assembled expertise in research and public service to develop programs specifically related to urban needs. The University shall continue to develop its management capability in order to provide adequate, efficient, and timely services to its constituents. (Catalogue, y)

As the University provides sufficient services to its re-entry women constituents, more information is needed on means of assuring them of their potential for academic success.

Research Questions

Acknowledging that "higher education once aimed to produce men prepared to engage with the society of man," Chickering observes that "the focus in student development has shifted from men to subjects, from persons to professionals" (1969, ix) to reflect the changes in the times and the student body. As the focus on the population has continued to change to include women and other populations, a review of the development of the diverse populations should occur simultaneously.

Introducing his volume on student development, Chickering describes the emotions of the typical male student: "He is happiness and unease, tentativeness and courage" (6).

What follows from this tentative and hopeful beginning? What changes occur as a student lives four years in the 'climate' of his college, as he becomes part of that social system, as he encounters the strains, seductions, hypocrises, opportunities, and dead spots of that setting? And what institutional conditions make a difference? What patterns of institutional organization and educational practice, what constellations of relationships provoke or inhibit change? At graduation four or five years later, what consequence has been experienced, how has the young adult been positioned to step toward the future? (6)

These insightful queries prompt the writer to pose some of the same
questions about the special population being studied. Of course, Chickering's frame of reference is the typical, traditional student for whom these questions probably have some typical, traditional answers; however, the questions do not change drastically for re-entry women or for the disabled or for any other special population who experiences the "tentativeness" of an experience in higher education. How the answers change for re-entry women is the focus of this study.

The emergence of non-traditional students on today's college campuses is a challenge for higher education. As retention plans are developed for all students, certain questions must be asked and some concessions must be made for these students. For the non-traditional student who is a re-entry woman, some specific research questions must be asked to obtain some relevant answers. The following questions are posed to obtain significant research data on this unique population.

Main
What are the factors that influence re-entry adult women students to persist to graduation?

Subsidiary and Instrumental
What reasons do re-entry women give for their persistence in higher education? Which group of variables--those that affect academic adjustment or those that affect social adjustment--have more significance on persistence?

Subsequent and Speculative
After the factors have been identified, how can re-entry women's persistence be positively affected?
How do the factors indicated by the persisters at Urban State University compare or contrast with the findings in the literature?
To answer those questions, the following hypotheses will be tested:

**Main Hypothesis**
Certain identifiable factors have varying influences on the persistence of re-entry women students in accordance to their ages.

**Sub-Hypotheses**
Certain identifiable academic factors have varying influences on the persistence of re-entry women students in accordance to their ages.
Certain identifiable social factors have varying influences on the persistence of re-entry women students in accordance to their ages.

**Limitations of The Study**
The literature cites many types of barriers or problems that the re-entry woman may encounter: situational barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers; practical barriers, psychological barriers; and sociological barriers (Cross, Ekstrom, Grottkauf, Davis). This study focuses on the barriers, problems or factors that affect the re-entry woman over age twenty-five in her adjustments to the academic and social environment of her higher education experience at Urban State University.

Over six hundred and fifty re-entry women students over age twenty-five were enrolled at Urban State University during the Fall, 1988 semester. This figure represents all of the possible categories of re-entry women: full time, parttime; undergraduate, graduate; freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors; and other categories. The number of re-entry women who are full-time seniors was eighty-eight during the fall semester. This small number represents the re-entry women's population over age twenty-five. The generalizations drawn from the responses were generalizable to a hypothetical
population of re-entry women. Prompt and honest responses enabled these generalizations to be made.

The simplicity and the clarity of the questionnaire should enable the respondents to answer quickly and honestly. The anonymous nature of the questionnaire assured cooperation that made generalizations possible. Generalizations of socioeconomic status were not made, nor did the instrument enable one to infer one's socioeconomic status.

**Theoretical Framework**

Much of the research on student retention in higher education has been based on Vincent Tinto's (1975) theory. His model involves a complex series of socio-psychological interactions between students and their institutional environment. All students bring to college certain characteristics such as family background (socio-economic status, parental values), personal attributes (sex, race, academic ability, personal traits) and experiences (pre-college social and academic achievements). They also bring with them a predisposition to goal commitment and institutional commitment or loyalty to the college.

These characteristics interact with formal and informal attributes of the college environment, which lead to integration into the academic (grades and intellectual development) and social (peer group and faculty interactions) systems of the college. "Other things being equal, the higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college systems, the greater will be his [her] commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion" (Tinto, 1975, 96).

Tinto's Theory of Individual Departure relies heavily on the works of Van Gennep (1960) and Emile Durkheim (1951). Van Gennep's classic study details
ceremonial stages that move an individual from youthful to adult participation in society.

Van Gennep describes the transmission of relationships between succeeding groups by identifying three distinct stages, each of which has an accompanying ceremony or ritual that marks an individual's transition from youth to adulthood. These stages are separation, transition and incorporation. Each of these stages represents a change or interaction between the individual and other members of society.

Separation: The separation stage involves the separation of an individual from past associations. It is characterized by (1) a marked decline in interactions with members of the group from which the person has come and (2) by the use of ceremonies (e.g., marriage, employment, and child bearing) whose purposes are to mark as outmoded the views and norms which characterized the group.

Transition: The transition stage is a period during which the person begins to interact in new ways with members of the new group into which membership is sought. Isolation, training and sometimes ordeals are employed as mechanisms to ensure the separation of the individual from past associations and the adoption of behaviors and norms appropriate to membership in the new group. It is during this transitional stage that individuals come to learn the knowledge and skills required for the performance of their specific role in the new group.

Incorporation: The incorporation stage involves the taking on of new patterns of interaction with members of the new group and the establishment of competent membership in that group as a participant member. Full membership or incorporation into the new group is marked by special ceremonies which announce
and certify not only the rewards of membership but also the responsibilities associated with it. Though the persons may begin to interact once again with past group members, they will now do so as members of the new group. They have completed their movement from the past and are now fully integrated into the culture of the new group.

As Tinto explains, Van Gennep believed that his concept of rites of passage could be easily applied to many situations, especially in the situation of the adult student who is returning to higher education after several years of an interrupted collegiate experience or who is entering higher education for the first time. In this research situation, the adult student completes or leaves the education environment (separation), returns to a new setting, namely, to higher education (transition), and attempts to adjust to the new situation and to acquire some of the behaviors of the traditional student (incorporation).

For the older returning female adult, these stages involve moving from a position where one was acclimated or at least assimilated within a peer group as a known member of that group to the position of becoming a veritable stranger when she returns to the new setting. As a result of this situation, older returning women often suffer feelings of inferiority (weakness) and isolation.

Tinto asserts,

Having given up the norms and beliefs of past associations and not yet having adopted those appropriate to membership in a new community, the individual is left in a state of at least temporary normlessness. The consequence of normlessness, that is, the absence of guiding norms and beliefs, is to heighten the likelihood of departure from the community [nonpersistence] prior to incorporation (1983, 93).

It is precisely for this reason that Van Gennep stressed the importance of the
rituals and ceremonies of the rites of passage. They not only served to publicly announce the movement of the stranger [re-entry adult female student] to membership into the community, but also to provide a visible structure to assist the stranger in coping with the difficulties that that movement [re-entry] entailed. These rituals may manifest themselves in many forms, for example, support groups, mentor type relationships, and other such affiliations (Tinto).

Tinto's use of Durkheim's Theory of Suicide does not imply that one's leaving an institution is through the method of suicide nor that it is a form of suicidal behavior. The implication is on the analogy of voluntary withdrawal from local communities and the "rejection of conventional norms regarding the value of persisting in those communities" (99).

Durkheim, a sociologist, conducted a study on suicide rates in various countries to demonstrate how an understanding of the character of the social environment, its social and intellectual attributes could be used to account for those variations in ways which other disciplines could not.

Durkheim categorized four types of suicide: altruistic, anomic, fatalistic, and egotistical. Altruistic suicide may be regarded as morally desirable in some situations because of the norms of a culture or society; anomic suicide occurs when there is a breakdown in the social and intellectual bonds that dictate how people will act in certain situations; fatalistic suicide occurs as a result of excessive normative control or regulation; and egotistical suicide occurs when individuals do not become socially and intellectually integrated into society.

Of those four types, the one which more closely relates to adult persistence is the egotistical suicide, which occurs when an individual is
unable to become integrated and fails to establish membership within the communities of society. Social integration and intellectual integration must occur to provide membership into a new educational environment.

Social integration occurs as a result of personal affiliations; intellectual integration occurs when common values are shared by members of a group.

Insufficient integration and the absence of community membership may arise from the holding of values which deviate from those of other members of society (that is, intellectual isolation or deviance) and/or from insufficient personal affiliation between the individuals and other persons in society (that is, social isolation) (Tinto, 102).

The analogy of suicides in society enables one to examine the significance of social and intellectual integration in one of society's institutions--higher education. Institutions with low rates of departure among its students may attribute this success to students' having found adequate means of achieving social and intellectual integration.

Van Gennep and Durkheim developed their theories to explain the behavior of individuals who assume permanent residence in the larger society; however, there are several parallels in the experience of re-entry students for whom their academic experience and the role the institution plays in that experience are very consuming relationships.

The formal and informal structure of the academic and social systems of an institution are significant for all students. However, for the re-entry woman student this significance can make the difference in whether or not she graduates or achieves whatever academic goals she has established for herself. The formal social system of the institution, which includes extracurricular activities, the informal social system, daily activities among classmates and others, and the formal academic system are interrelated, yet one or more of
these may exist without the other. A student may receive honor grades, yet she may not become involved in any social activities for numerous reasons. For re-entry women students especially, external social systems may produce a conflict with their achieving social and academic integration. Resolutions of this conflict should be obtained in order to encourage their persistence (Tinto).

Tinto's theory has been validated by at least six separate quantitative studies at four-year institutions as reported by Terenzini and Pascarella (1980) and Pascarella and Chapman (1983). The theory has been validated in four-year urban commuter colleges by Pascarella, Duby, and Iverson (1983). These studies were all quantitative and did not discriminate between adult or traditional age students. Four-year institutions were studied in their research.

At least two studies have attempted to validate Tinto's model for adult students. Weidman (1985) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing older women students enrolled in a vocational-technical two-year program. Comparisons were based on data obtained from 52 program graduates and from 97 dropouts during the winter of 1979.

An analysis of their studies revealed that students more than faculty were seen as important social contacts for the women students. As an expansion of Tinto's model, evidence provided strong support for the consideration of "extra-institutional factors" such as familial support and the ability to cope with problems of children and other circumstances as significant factors (Weidman, 1985).

Neumann's dissertation (1985) explored adult persisters from the standpoint of transfer students in a community college. He used focused
interviews to obtain data from 15 leavers and 15 persisters. His findings refute those of Pascarella, Duby, and Iverson (1983) and Pascarella and Chapman (1983) who claim that social integration is less important than academic integration. Neumann found social integration to be more important than academic integration. He attributes this partially to the image of community colleges as having low prestige, and, therefore, academic integration is not sufficient or significant (Neumann, 1985). He claims that external forces (family, neighborhoods, peer groups and work settings) may influence decisions to go to college; however, once adults enroll, the importance of these forces is minor.

A study on adult re-entry women at urban institutions is important to research on retention. Quantitative methods and qualitative methods could reveal information pertinent to the processes involved in attrition and retention. In situations where the qualitative research done on adults relies on typical cases, studies of exceptions to the rule could explore the process even more to give administrators, faculty and other higher education personnel a comprehensive analysis of adult students' decisions to leave or to stay in a four-year institution.

The value of this approach of looking at the exceptions to the rule has been noted by Brawer (1983), Fox (1985) and Tinto (1985). The value of studying the adult population has also been noted by Tinto (1982) since not enough research has been done on this population.

Achieving social-academic integration is essential for the success of all students who engage in the higher education experience. Younger students who enter college at the traditional age have less of a problem integrating the two phenomena, simply because this is a common and mutual experience among their
peers who are attending institutions of higher learning. For the older female who is re-entering higher education, achieving this integration is made more difficult because of the obvious age difference and because of the apparent lack of a peer group. With study, assistance and diligent institutional efforts, social-academic integration can be achieved to affect the persistence of re-entry women students.

Definitions of Terms

An understanding of several terms that are used throughout this research are pertinent to the special population being studied. These terms and their functional definitions follow.

Traditional Students: Traditional students are typically described as young adults in their late teens or early twenties who experience college attendance as a normal progression in their development and the college environment as a continuation of the familiar classroom setting (Warchal and Southern, 1986); those eighteen to twenty-two who have gone to college directly after high school (Apps, 1981).

Nontraditional Students: Nontraditional students are identified as being older individuals in their late twenties and older who enter college as a result of a personal or occupational change and who lack understanding of college routine and recent experiences in the classroom (Warchal and Southern).

Re-entry (Returning) Undergraduate Women Students: Re-entry undergraduate women students have interrupted their post-secondary education for at least several years in order to do something else, usually to raise a family, to work, or both; they did not complete higher education at the traditional age, so they are going back to school. They have been labelled as "returning
"Returning women are diverse in their socioeconomic backgrounds and run the gamut in their educational and career continuity and discontinuity. They range in age from twenty-five to over sixty-five, with the majority between twenty-five and fifty. They may be single, divorced, married, or widowed, with or without children. Sometimes referred to as dropouts, stopouts, empty nesters, second or ongoing careerists, homemakers, or veterans. They may be working class, economically deprived, upwardly mobile, or upper class. Some may have been absent from an educational setting for more than thirty-five years, while others simply left briefly to assume family responsibilities or to pursue employment" (Lewis, 5-6).

**Persistence:** Persistence is traditionally defined as completion of a baccalaureate degree within a four-year period of time. The norm for nontraditional students appears to be part-time attendance. Their lifestyles--family, job, financial responsibilities--often necessitate temporary leaves of absence. Therefore, persistence may be defined as continuing registration for and completion of courses in the pursuit of the baccalaureate degree (Brenden, 1985).

**Nonpersistence:** Nonpersistence is withdrawal; formally discontinuing work towards the degree--with or without one or more leaves of absence prior to withdrawal (Brenden).
**Academic Integration:** Academic integration is the acquisition of grades and intellectual development acquired while matriculating in the higher education environment (Tinto, 1987)

**Academic Adjustment:** Academic adjustment occurs when academic integration is achieved.

**Social Integration:** Social integration is interactions with the peer group and faculty members while matriculating in the higher education environment (Tinto).

**Social Adjustment:** Social adjustment occurs when social integration is achieved.

**Situational Barriers:** Situational barriers are those obstacles that come from one's situation in life at a given time (Cross, 1981).

**Institutional Barriers:** Institutional barriers are those practices and procedures that limit adults' participation in educational activities (Cross).

**Dispositional Barriers:** Dispositional barriers are those obstacles related to the adult students' perceptions of herself as a learner (Cross).
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In conducting the review of the literature on re-entry women and the factors that determine their persistence, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of the women who are described as "re-entry women" and to establish the existence of problems associated with the success of re-entry women students, a special category of nontraditional students.

As the number of nontraditional women students over age twenty-five who re-enter higher education continues to grow, a closer examination should be made of the problems and barriers that these women experience while in pursuit of their education. Of primary concern, are those circumstances that make their matriculation unlike that of traditional age females who are twenty-five years old and younger. Numerous questionnaires, surveys, studies, interviews, and other means of acquiring data have been used to identify, assess and address the many characteristics of these women in order to determine what their needs are and to determine how to meet them in a manner that will assure them of academic success. Many institutions that have accepted the challenges posed by these women have devised special programs that provide services for them, realizing that the obstacles and insecurities they face may require strategic intervention in order for them to succeed academically and socially.

Profile of Re-entry Women

"What did she mean, re-entry woman. I never had the chance to be her before . . . ." Munro

How does an ordinary female become a re-entry woman? It is not an easily
delineated process nor is it an easy decision for a woman to make; for many women it is a difficult decision that may often have complicated consequences.

Brooks (1976) views the re-entry process as a series of stages; she acknowledges, however, that they may not always occur in such an orderly manner. Stage One is Vague Discontent; re-entry women are bored and dissatisfied with their present life but are unsure of the reason. Stage Two is Inner Preparation; the re-entry woman tentatively decides to become involved in a new role outside of the home. Stage Three is Intensive Family Involvement; the re-entry woman shares her feelings with her family which may be counterproductive. Stage Four is Assessment; she identifies her interests and abilities. Stage Five is Generating Alternatives; she dreams and fantasizes about her options. Stage Six is Narrowing Alternatives and Value Clarification; she reduces her options. Stage Seven is Implementation and Goal Setting; she must actively plan short-term and long-range goals.

As women reach their thirties and forties, the demands and needs for their mothering activities lessen. For all women--married or single--their volunteer and social commitments may seem at this period in time to become increasingly superficial or less satisfying, and they undergo a period of re-assessment. Many have previously thought of themselves primarily in relation to others--as someone's daughter, wife, or mother, not as individuals in their own right. Self actualization or realization and the idea of 'personhood' in this sense is a new concept for them (Nichols, 1974, 123).

Another important aspect in the consideration for re-entry is the woman's perception of herself. "In addition to motivation, self concept is an important variable in a woman's decision to pursue higher education... For some women who have been away from school for a long time and who were skilled in other than educational or occupational areas, the sense and acceptance of self are important determinants in whether they will venture outside the home" (Astin, 58).
Results of early studies on the characteristics of re-entry women indicate a variation between the range of thirty to forty years of age, married with two or three children, some college experience, and a goal of job entry preparation. Their occupations and majors were traditional--education, the social sciences, the humanities, social work, or library science, with a small percentage in business administration (Doty, 1970; Likert, 1967; Campbell, 1973). Groups of re-entry women have also been identified as the older woman with a low-level job, the older single career woman seeking career advancement, and the younger single woman with a low-level job with higher aspirations (Tittle and Denker, 1980).

The profile of the re-entry woman is a changing one, for there are several sub-groups with different characteristics and academic and social needs. During the 1960's, the typical re-entry student was a white, middle-class housewife in her thirties or forties who was preparing for or reacting to the "empty nest" syndrome (Hersh, 1980). In the 1970's, discussions on re-entry women focused on their boredom, self-fulfillment, and career preparations as the prime motivators of women's return to education settings (Lewis, 1988). The literature focused on women who were going back to school to satisfy personal goals, or who were looking for challenging and better-paying jobs; however, there was little mention of them in the literature on the development of college students (Astin, 1976). The focus was on women "pioneers who dared to deviate from the norm [of] domestic tranquillity, or on women whose futures were dictated by economic necessity" (Lewis, 6). As research has continued in this phenomenon, other reasons for re-entry have been identified.

In recent years the profile has changed by the growing number of other types of women who reflect a significant societal change that focuses on
"lifelong learning" versus the traditional pattern of early and continuous learning. The profile shows the influence of changes in the workplace and special programs to encourage minority women to return to college (Hersh). To the old profile, Hersh adds a new dimension of the younger woman in her mid-twenties and early thirties who attends college intermittently because she has to divide her time between school, employment, and family.

Wheaton and Robinson (1983) describe a re-entry woman who has had prior educational experience. She may have had two years of liberal arts education before dropping out. She has been out of school for fifteen years. Usually in the "middle-motherhood" phase her of career as a homemaker, demands from children decrease, the husband is involved in his career, and she is confronted with identifying herself apart from her role as a wife and as a mother. Her return to school is a search for identity.

These profiles reflect several new phenomena: (1) women marrying later, (2) women having their first child later, (3) women having fewer children, (4) the increasing divorce rates, and (5) scheduling that is flexible enough to allow couples to participate in their educational pursuits and career development simultaneously. A conscious effort is often made to integrate family and work roles for women as a means of changing society's social and economic arrangements (A. Astin; Ekstrom, 1981; Tittle and Denker).

The largest group of re-entry women may be placed in the Displaced Homemaker category because this group spans a larger number of years than does any other category. Displaced homemakers are characterized as being twenty-seven years old or older, having been homemakers for most of their adult years, not gainfully employed and having difficulty in securing employment. They have been "displaced" by the loss of support by someone on whom they were
dependent through separation, divorce, disability or death. They also have not
been able to secure public assistance as the parent of one or more children
(Suchinsky, 1982; Lewis).

Women in this group have lost their place due to a change in their role
as primary developer and maintainer of the home and family to that of being on
their own as a result of a failed and dissolved marriage. Their reaction to
displacement may extend the gamut of feelings--from depression and anger to
feelings of freedom and happiness. Whereas, these women may have great
educational potential, the range of emotions and experiences may be
troublesome to themselves and to others (Suchinsky; Swift, Calvin, Mills,
1987).

Her feelings of isolation, need for emotional support, and the need for
high paying employment are atypical to the traditional aged female student.
The Displaced Homemaker's return to higher education is a means of establishing
self-sufficiency. Her re-entry may create an additional set of problems
because of these circumstances: lack of financial means; lack of sufficient
time; poor study skills; child care; and inadequate support services. Re-entry
is viewed as a panacea to these and other problems, especially the financial
woes. She often finds, however, that the financial and emotional costs of
being a student are too difficult to handle (Swift, Calvin, Mills).

Many displaced homemakers and single parents, already
struggling to make ends meet, lack the resources to pay for
their educations as well as care for their children. There
are over 11,431,000 displaced homemakers in the United States
(Displaced Homemakers Network, 1987).... In addition, there
are over 3,223,000 single parents who would be in [this]
category if they were not employed full-time. The number of
single parents with minor children, coupled with the fact that
nearly one-fourth of the nation's displaced homemakers have
children under eighteen in their care, makes it obvious that
there are subgroups of special-need re-entry populations
for whom childcare is a critical issue (Displaced Homemakers
Network, 1987). This situation is only compounded when one
considers that childcare is also a pressing need for returning women from intact nuclear families (Lewis, 9).

Suchinsky explains the phenomenon that the Displaced Homemaker experiences once she has ended her marriage. *Now she can be free, a state she was unable to achieve while in the marriage.*

The individual who so easily and painlessly gives up a supposedly close relationship...is saying something about her capacity for relationships...is saying something about her capacity for relationships, in general. The presence of substitute narcissistic character pathology...is highly probable.... Withdrawal from the environment or relationship involves not independence or independence or autonomy, but a residual infantile attachment of expectation to environmental nurturance" (35).

This "attachment" may be expected in the higher education environment as well.

The findings of Clayton and Smith (1987) counter the hypotheses that re-entry women’s primary motives for returning to school are as a result of the empty-nest syndrome or that one dominant motivation exists for her to return. They, however, posit that the reasons for their participation are broad. They may range from the need to acquire a new perspective on one’s marital role and responsibilities to meeting the needs of a social situation. They also list other reasons: needs to become financially self-supporting; to grow; to raise self-esteem; to learn about life and the world, to take pride in achievements, to prepare for employment, and to increase their chances for getting hired or promoted. Other motives include the need to relate intelligently with their children, peers, and family; the need to make others proud; to help others, and to meet different people.

Lewis adds rural women as a special category of re-entry women who fit into the category of the displaced homemaker/single mother category. They have few options and resources available to them because of the smallness of their communities. Minority women who reside within ethnic communities with strong
cultural traditions, no responsible partners, and limited resources are also included in this sub-population of displaced homemakers.

The Empty Nest, the phenomenon that exists in a home when all of the children have left home for college, employment, marriage, and other reasons, creates another kind of re-entry female student who has the ambivalence of regrets about a lost family and the opportunity to pursue personal interests. Many of these women grew up during the period when women had no involvement with work or education, and they devoted themselves totally to maintaining a family. These older women have the problems associated with their age and their physiology. Their educational re-entry will usually be affected by their marriage and their children's difficulties even though their children are no longer at home.

Suchinsky identifies yet another kind of re-entry student--the "Blue Collar Wife"--who returns to higher education usually for two reasons: economic necessity and individual identity. Her educational re-entry is marked by feelings of anxiety and concepts of self-esteem and autonomy. Women in this category have married early as a means of leaving a home in which acquiring an education for a woman was not a valued goal. For these women to return to college, they need a great deal of motivation, courage and initiative. Their persistence will depend largely on the external supports provided by the institution (Suchinsky).

Hooper and Traupmann (1984) identify women who are over fifty years old without classifying them by name. This group is described as very highly motivated by career goals even though retirement age in imminent. With children now out of secondary school or college, they have returned to higher education. These female students have had traditional family roles while
raising their children. This "familial traditionalism" has not prevented their academic pursuit at an untraditional age. Dissatisfied with merely being involved in the community, they emerge as active and vital women who are seeking new horizons.

To the characteristics of re-entry women that include age and family circumstances can be added the multiplicity of the roles that a re-entry woman has to assume. This distinction also separates them from the traditional-aged student whose principal academic function is only that of a student, whereas, the re-entry woman assumes the roles and "responsibilities of being a wife, mother, significant other, wage earner, community member, and any combination thereof" (Lewis, 7). Her ability to balance all of these roles has earned her the dubious distinction of "Superwoman" (Lewis) or "Supermom" (Brooks). The demands from work, family, friends, and the community can pull her in many directions. Lewis states that "identity line tension--the point of discomfort where the definitions of gender role threaten other aspects of an individual's life, is not uncommon when conflicts occur as a result of a female's return to an educational setting" (7) Friends, spouses, family members, and employers may feel threatened by or opposed to a woman's educational or career pursuits (Lewis). The lack of time to devote to family, home, and domestic responsibilities can result in the need to develop a wide range of coping behaviors that will enable her to maintain her existing relationships and to avoid conflict while at the same time enabling her to incorporate her ethic of caring for others (Gilligan, 1982). Single parents may have additional problems because of their limited finances and possible social disapproval because they are single (Lewis).

Re-entry marks a transition in a woman's life. The priority she places on
relationships when making decisions may help to explain such sequences as partial education, marriage, birth of children, more education, and career involvement that have traditionally characterized women's lives (Lewis).

The necessity to adapt to changing circumstances of life constitutes a powerful motivating force for learning. Some changes are almost universal and represent the phases of the life cycle: first job, marriage, children, increasing responsibility on the job and in the community, retirement, and so forth. Other changes may be sudden and traumatic: loss of job, divorce, illness, death of spouse. These "trigger events [are] potent motivating forces (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Cross, 144).

Recent literature (Lewis) includes the disabled re-entry woman as another very important sub-population. Her circumstances include many of those cited in other re-entry women populations, but they are compounded by her disability. In many instances, this student has led a sheltered, protected childhood, and she was discouraged from participating in activities that would pose risks. She was also discouraged from involvement in activities that could produce a sense of independence for her. Because they are made to feel insecure and incapable of becoming independent, they often begin adulthood without a strong sense of self.

When a woman has become disabled later in life because of injury or disease, her family and significant others play a major role in her acceptance of herself. Often, her husband leaves, and the woman must fend for herself and her children. In these cases, self-esteem is more dependent on her ability to handle her children and everyday life. Thus, the woman's capability and the messages she receives from those in her world, will affect her view of herself and her self-esteem (90-91).

There is no one profile of the re-entry woman, for she exemplifies many persona, many identities. She is many people to others, and she is many people even to herself; she out of necessity fulfills multiple roles in her attempt to fulfill yet another--that of becoming a student.
Problems of Re-entry Women

"In the registrar’s office They told me
You’ve got all deficiencies! No grade
point average. No math. No Science.
No foreign language. No English com-
position. No employer’s name. No
spouse to speak of. As if deficiencies
were badges. As if I’d earned them."

Munro

A review of the literature on the numerous problems that are unique to
this group of students reveals concerns that may thwart a woman’s persistence
once she re-enters the academic environment. Ryan (1979) categorizes the
problems that adult re-entry women ("the older woman student") face into two
groups: institutional problems and personal problems, acknowledging the
interrelatedness of the two groups.

Cross (1981) identifies these factors that limit adults’ participation
in higher education as "barriers to participation", acknowledging that it is
often harder to ascertain why people do not do something rather than finding
out why they do do something. Cross classifies this group of obstacles as (1)
situational barriers, (2) institutional barriers, and (3) dispositional
barriers, with numerous examples given of each. Ekstrom categorizes these
obstacles as (1) institutional barriers, (2) situational barriers, and (3)
dispositional barriers, also.

Grottkau and Davis (1987) identify the barriers that women encounter as
(1) practical barriers, (2) psychological barriers, and (3) sociological
barriers. Practical barriers are those college practices or procedures that
may create apprehension and fear in re-entry women. Psychological barriers
are those that make re-entry women feel guilty because of their perceived
selfish motivations and other uncertainties and fears related to their personal
and academic adjustment. Sociological barriers are those that focus on "gender appropriate" roles that women assumed in their youth that socialized them into a world that has changed drastically. Their new educational experiences will help them relinquish those out-dated behaviors that will inhibit their acquiring their independence.

Among the problems in the institutional category are ten special needs:

1. On- and off-campus orientation programs,
2. Relevant admissions standards,
3. Financial aid,
4. Credit for life experiences,
5. Credit for earlier education/acceptance of credit from other institutions,
6. Career counseling,
7. Class scheduling,
8. Child care,
9. Faculty/peer support and counseling, and
10. Special programs and/or courses of study (Ryan).

Cross's summary of major barriers to participation in descending order are: (1) lack of time; (2) costs; (3) scheduling problems; (4) assorted institutional requirements/red tape; (5) lack of information about appropriated opportunities; (6) problems with child care or transportation; (7) lack of confidence; and (8) lack of interest" (146).

In a questionnaire survey conducted by Kelman and Staley (1975) at Colorado State University, the results indicated that the highest priority need for re-entry women are convenient day care for pre-school children, orientation at initial re-entry to campus, social skill training, social contact with
peers, assistance in vocational choice, vocational preparation, and job search.

Orientation should include "perspective transformation" which is the process that enables adult women to recognize culturally-induced dependency roles and relationships and to take action to overcome them. Information provided by women's organizations and the print and electronic media will help provide a positive perspective to make the transition easier (Ekstrom).

Admission standards should be relevant to older students. This relevance will necessitate predictors other than those used for the traditional college age group, e.g., the SAT or the ACT or even GPA's. Such predictors are less reliable among older students. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) serves as a barrier to some low-income women because the topics included are those with which they have little familiarity. This inclusion of experiences other than those learned in formal education would better measure their knowledge. Other instruments that provide credit for experiences other than classroom learning would also assist re-entry women. Experiences acquired on a job, through travel, in the community or at home could be considered for credit (Ryan; Ekstrom).

Financial aid through grants, scholarships and loans often presents problems for this population because of their limited eligibility which may be based on total family income and repayment arrangements. Husbands can create problems in this situation by giving the wife his encouragement to acquire an education with the accompanying challenge to find a way to pay for it. His salary may also prevent her receiving financial aid because it is computed before eligibility is determined (Ekstrom).
Acknowledging that the suggestion may be a bit "radical", Ryan recommends the establishment of a "Mothers' Bill for Educational Opportunity" for financial assistance for women that would be similar to the G.I. Bill as a reward for her contribution. This is one of the many plans designed to attract women students and to remove financial aid as an institutional barrier.

For the older woman, career counseling is usually either too limited in scope, unrealistic or nonexistent. Ryan asserts that older women should receive accurate information initially as to whether or not they should attend college at all if they want to improve their job status, since "68 percent of the adults in the upper-income brackets reached that position without college degrees" (16).

Career advising should be realistic for all students and especially for the older students who need to be informed of their opportunities to enable her to plan realistically. They need opportunities to develop the confidence which her academic success will help her to develop.

As many of the male-oriented employment barriers disappear, women are being given opportunities that have never been accorded them, thereby creating need for realistic guidance, diagnostic services and more middle-aged women career counselors for realistic guidance.

The need for role models to provide support and encouragement as personal counselors is also urgent. Inadequate counseling may be the result of administrative insensitivity to the needs of this population. Female role models can also give women the courage to persist and to develop their own potential. Re-entry women need opportunities for student leadership positions. Assistance from faculty who are sympathetic to their problem is
essential in providing clarity for assignments and opportunities for tutorials as well.

Women need counseling to help them avoid costly risk taking and to help them to establish a degree of self-reliance. A re-entry woman student who has been trained to handle the special problems of other women like herself could serve as a role model. Although they and other counselors should be able to diagnose potential, evaluate prior education and review work experience, admissions counselors could also provide some of this assistance that would encourage her to develop her own abilities and aspirations and not to accept any chauvinistic concepts about career and goal setting (McGraw, 1982).

Child care is frequently cited in the literature as an obstacle that many re-entry women face (Ryan; Cross; Ekstrom, Lewis). It may be regarded as an institutional or a situational barrier depending on who is recommended to alleviate his problem or to assume responsibility for eliminating it is as a barrier. The costs, inconvenience, and availability of quality child care make it a very significant issue and a difficult one to resolve. Because some women find it impossible to enroll unless they have child care provided by a relative or a day-care center, Ryan suggests a logical solution to the dilemma by staffing a rotating day-care center with re-entry women who are mothers who will provide the on-campus child care. The lack of sufficient university funding or facilities often make child care a difficult service for institutions to provide.

Other institutional factors include non-traditional approaches to facilitate earning college credit towards a degree, weekend classes, television courses, telephone courses, home reading, classrooms on wheels, self-paced learning, and module scheduling. Developmental education ("Education which
upgrades the basic skills of persons who are socially or educationally disadvantaged (Ryan, 24) should be provided through remedial or refresher courses in the basic skills, auditing classes or the creation of special re-entry classes and gradual mainstreaming into regular credit classes. The re-entry woman's academic performance will take more effort than her younger classmates. Instructors will need more patience and understanding. Conflicts may occur between the re-entry woman and the younger student. She may become impartial with their psychological immaturity not acknowledging that their adolescent behavior is typical, and her feelings of inferiority may be tinged with a kind of hostile admiration and envy (Suchinsky).

Ekstrom recommends acceleration of courses or programs as a means of alleviating child care, transportation and other such problems. She includes limited access to academic resources as an institutional barrier. Time used after class to conduct research in the library may conflict with other barriers such as child care, employment, and transportation.

Seldom noted among institutional barriers in the literature is the infrequent problem of student housing for re-entry women. This may be attributed to the fact that few institutions require students to reside on campus. However, if such requirements do exist, they must be flexible for this population (Ekstrom).

Economic difficulties pose a major problem for women and it motivates their re-entry to higher education to prepare for work and retraining (Hersh; Suchinsky). Displaced homemakers, single mothers, and women over sixty comprise a "disadvantaged" group of re-entry women who number in excess of 26 million. This group suffers more than other women form sex stereotyping.
and denial of the educational opportunities that would provide them with the skills to earn a decent living (Groftkau and Davis, 1987).

Acknowledging that women returning to school and to work share similar problems, Brooks lists three salient issues for this population with suggested intervention strategies for low self-esteem, poor time management and role conflict and guilt. To alleviate low self-confidence, she recommends opportunities for the re-entry woman to express her concerns with others, particularly with academically successful women which helps her to develop self-confidence. To help her manage her time wisely, she urges the re-entry woman "to consider how time can be saved by using small snatches and combining tasks" (36). To reconcile the role conflict and guilt, she suggests discussion with peers.

Being a Supermom could possibly prevent the children's independence. . . . Assertiveness training and communication skills training can be especially helpful with women who encounter resistance from their husbands. Sharing self as a person with feelings and needs instead of always playing wife and mother helps involve the family and get their cooperation. Resistance from husbands can take many forms, from overt hostility to subtle behaviors, such as asking for affection when their wife is struggling (Brooks, 36). Disability women have problems that, of course, are unique to their physical conditions. It is essential that they resolve or adjust to some of their circumstances over which they have little or no control. Because they were probably not encouraged early in their lives to become independent as a means of coping with their disabilities, they tend to have poor self-esteem which impedes their abilities to bond with others as they try to succeed academically and financially as they attempt to obtain employment (Lewis).

In order for them to succeed, they must acknowledge their disabilities and
accept others who do without becoming defensive. Setting realistic goals academically may have financial and physical significance since they may have limited resources that will not enable them to explore several academic options. Consideration should also be given to how some majors fit with their disabilities; some majors may offer more opportunities than others. Being cognizant of their disabilities and their options prevents future disappointments. Acquiring a degree does not prevent the likelihood that they will experience limited job opportunities because of subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination. "The struggles and persistence of people with disabilities do not remove the discrimination that many [disabled women] endure" (Safman, 92).

A problem seldom mentioned in the literature is faculty attitude toward re-entry women.

Although administrators may welcome re-entry women as a solution to declining enrollment, faculty are apparently less enthusiastic. Brought up in the tradition of turning out scholars in their own image, many male (and female) professors balk at students who are nontraditional in age and sex, and perhaps in class, race, and other ways. In some cases, experience has reinforced their fear that these students will be more likely criticize traditional forms of pedagogy and less likely to follow in the footsteps in their mentors. In short, a large body of faculty are threatened by all manner of change, and other women, especially those who are involved in women's studies, are likely to be most threatening. The researcher will have to be prepared for resistance and lack of cooperation from some faculty, and, if possible, devise means of countering or moderating their attitudes. (Hersh, 35-36).

A close examination of the many categories of women and the numerous circumstances they face demands that institutions provide the kinds of assistance they require in order for them to achieve the academic and social integration that are essential for them to succeed in higher education. The richness of their experiences and the maturity of their perspectives
provide institutional challenges unmatched by those of the traditional age student.

**Programs for Re-entry Women**

"Reentry--generations packed in my head and heart, a full Bulb, freshly planted."

Munro

As many institutions attempt to cope with the growing population of re-entry women, many programs have been established to meet their specific needs and to provide special accommodations for them.

Re-entry implies a return to work or school after a lapse of time. The term connotes excitement and anxiety, for it refers to change that promises self-improvement, fulfilled dreams, and a better life. The promise of a better life, in whatever form it takes, appeals to thousands of women who return to the workforce to to school, or who participate in training programs. For others, the promise is obscure. There are women who enter...programs and bring with them myriad problems that must be addressed before the promise becomes a personal dream (Safman, 79).

Although counselors and therapists in educational settings and community health centers are in a strategic position to advance the achievements of the personal and professional goals of the re-entry woman (McGraw), many of the programs cited in the literature are not based at institutions of higher education; however, their goal is to prepare re-entry women for college or employment as a result of an intervention that may occur at a training center, an agency, or other such facilities. Designed to meet the specific needs of the re-entry sub-populations, these programs provide the academic, social, and psychological support that they need. Safman provides detailed descriptions of four programs for re-entry women who pose a challenge for those who work with them.
The Displaced Homemakers Project in the Phoenix Institute is a nonprofit career and employment training center that was established in 1971 as result of funding from the Utah Displaced Homemakers Act with the purpose of providing economic independence through pretraining, "individual and group counseling, assertiveness training, anger management, career planning, resume writing, communication skills, interviewing techniques, interest and ability testing, assistance with problem solving, and referrals to community resources" (Safman, 81). The women are recruited through referrals; interviewed; and her needs are assessed. This program has served about three hundred women since it was funded in February, 1987 (Safman).

The average age of the participants is forty, with children between the ages of five and twelve. They usually live in their own homes with their children and most of them do not receive public assistance. The participants reflect Utah's homogeneous Mormon population although some minorities do participate. Most of the women are drop-outs with limited basic skills and computer knowledge. They enter the program for purely economic reasons with the expectation that completing the program will provide them with adequate income skills to become economically stable (Safman).

Typically, these women have poor self-esteem because they see themselves as failures. Their confusion as a result of their loss of the homemaker role causes them to isolate themselves and show signs of depression; their feelings of helplessness replace their sense of security provided by their husband's presence.

This program is successful because it provides the assistance needed for these women to acquire their self-esteem through therapy; it provides childcare options at low cost; it provides opportunities to develop their skills, thus
enabling them to prepare for job entry; and it assists them in their job search. Some women experience a lack of success in the program because they do not fully commit themselves to it, often because they cannot resolve their dependency needs nor their homemaker acculturation. Adequate funding is also a major problem (Safman).

(2) The New York State Department of Education funded the Rural Women's Readiness Project in 1985 as a demonstration project in three rural communities in central New York for the purpose of providing comprehensive educational services to rural women who needed them. Using a linkage of five service agencies, these women became aware of education, training, and employment options. It offered "skills assessment, career exploration, goal setting, job market assessment, time management, stress management, resume preparation, job-seeking skills, and interviewing and educational counseling (which included testing, evaluation, and referral)" on a daily basis for six hours and reimbursement for childcare and transportation to women on public assistance with children in Head Start programs (Safman, 84).

These women were between the ages of twenty-two and forty-fours years old; forty-seven percent had dependent children. Most of them were single heads of households; some lived with male partners. Half of them had high school diplomas.

They had low self-esteem because of their feelings of degradation, boredom, isolation and spouse abuse. Exposure to a neighboring community college and an opportunity to consider some viable options enabled them to raise their self-esteem, engage in job preparation activities, and to become sensitive to political issues that affected them.

The attrition rate of the program was affected by the cultural pull, lack
of commitment to the program and family conflicts that resulted as a result of their participation. Other barriers to success were their inability to maintain the assertiveness at home that they learned in the program and problems with funding (Safman).

(3) Mi Casa Resource Center for Women enables the re-entry Chicana women in Denver to bridge between their homes and work. It offered crisis advocacy for housing, food, clothes, health care, individual and group counseling, job readiness skills, resume preparation, interviewing, assertiveness training, skills assessment and a GED in a one-week intensive program funded by local agencies.

The racial composition included Chicanas, Caucasians, Blacks, Native Americans and Asians, with a majority incomes of less than five thousand dollars annually. A bilingual staff provided instruction to these confused, abused, angry women with low self-esteem and marginal skills. The Chicana women shared the cultural deprivation of role conflicts with partners and families. They were accustomed to passive, subservient roles.

The program's focus was on employment. It provided testing, career counseling, job searches, and other employment related information, assertiveness training and positive role models. Some of the barriers to success were poor self esteem, lack of quality childcare, traditional cultural expectations and immigration laws.

(4) The Center for Disabled Student Services at the University of Utah was founded in 1973 for the purpose of providing experience in higher education for disabled women whose disabilities included those of mobility, learning disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments that may have been congenital or acquired later in life as a result of an accident or a disease. Students
were given assistance with housing, childcare, transportation, equipment, advocacy, referrals and orientation.

The women in this program returned for financial reasons. While enrolled, they receive medical and financial support for tuition, books, housing, and other resources. They are encouraged to seek advanced degrees. The program teaches time management, limitations and accommodations they must make for their disabilities. Serving as an advocate for the disabled, the program provides special services such as convenient access to classrooms, readers, and opportunities for socialization.

Poor self-esteem, acceptance of their disabilities, realistic goal setting and disability discrimination are obstacles that they must overcome. The benefits of the program are that it provides an opportunity for self-sufficiency; accessibility; support services for academic and personal counseling, time management, and assertiveness training; a supportive learning environment and consortial development that will enable the disabled woman to acquire job training in nontraditional fields.

There are many programs across the country for the population of re-entry women who do not bring with them emotional and psychological problems to the extent that they may need counseling intervention before they can enroll in higher education and become actively involved in the academic setting. Copland (1988) provides a very comprehensive review of the academic programs available to re-entry women in two-year and four-year institutions. These programs that focus on academics reveal a variety of curricula. (See Tables 2 and 3.)
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<td>Pass/fail; no grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chatham College (Pennsylvania)</td>
<td>Gateway Program</td>
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<td>Adult College</td>
<td>Lower Tuition; variable length sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephens College (Missouri)</td>
<td>College Without Walls</td>
<td>Required interdisciplinary course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Washington University</td>
<td>Fairhaven College</td>
<td>Self-designed degrees; no traditional exams or grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copland, p.37.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Service Unit Name</th>
<th>Special Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)</td>
<td>Office of Women's Resources and Services</td>
<td>Library on women's concerns; women's resource directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland (College Park)</td>
<td>Second Wind</td>
<td>Peer support; program handbook for re-entry women; Warmline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania State University (University Park)</td>
<td>Returning Adult Student Center</td>
<td>Orientation; student orientation; Outstanding Adult Student Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Carolina (Columbia)</td>
<td>Mature Students Program</td>
<td>Freshman core courses; incentive scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Texas</td>
<td>Office of the Dean of Students</td>
<td>Returning student survival kit; childcare association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copland, p. 38.
Among the services available to re-entry women at many institutions are "orientation, counseling, advising, childcare, support groups, informal workshops and seminars, housing, special awards or honors, and student organizations" (Copland, 39).

The concept of orientation as a one-hour class that instructs one in the ways of the campus is an outdated notion for programs that enroll re-entry students. Among the possibilities researched by Copland include many innovative approaches to welcoming the re-entry woman to campus. Pennsylvania State University uses the orientation period creatively to involve students in their re-entry process. They plan orientation panels scheduled for day and evening to accommodate the students' schedules; orientation receptions and registration; panel presentations by administrative personnel; campus tours; and videotape presentations.

The University of Texas at Austin uses orientation to complete registration, for time management, and other topics. They send a guide to the new students a month before classes begin with the orientation schedule. The summer orientation programs were modified for the re-entry students' needs.

The University of South Carolina provides a half-day orientation session that includes a panel of upper-division students and student affairs administrators who review survival strategies, administer placement examinations and computer-assisted registration.

"Network intervention" is a strategy that increases the social interaction between new graduate students and faculty. Designed to minimize the re-entry woman's anxiety, it increases the social interactions between graduate students and faculty. Other features of this strategy include the dissemination of information through mailings and social activities for the women, the faculty and their guests.
Many institutions do offer credits ranging from one to three credit hours for orientation classes. The University of Maryland offers classes that are taught by professional counselors. The curriculum may consist of career exploration, academic advising, vocational testing, basic skills, student issues and concerns, campus resources and time management. Grades are based on attendance, class participation, journals and class projects.

Counseling and support are important components of programs that offer services for re-entry women. Because older students' perceptions are distinctly different from those of the traditional student, their support needs are different. Many of the issues that younger students must reconcile, the older student has already resolved.

Several institutions report individual and group counseling sessions for re-entry women with the intention of exploring the relationship between the academic stresses they are experiencing and adult-development issues. "Some of the developmental issues include bodily decline, family, work, biological timetables, disparity between expectations and career achievements, the financial pressures of being 'in between' two generations, and the shift to a 'time left' perspective" (41). Many re-entry students become impatient with the time required to complete baccalaureate programs to the extent that they often take a larger load than they can manage. Tutorial groups often provide the necessary support for the time conscious re-entry woman (Buckey, et. al., 1976).

Since childcare is one of the most significant concerns of re-entry women, many institutions are providing adequate child care to enable re-entry women to begin their academic careers before their children reach school age. Institutional resourcefulness is demonstrated in some of the creative means
that institutions have employed to meet this critical need. Pennsylvania State University's New Kensington campus has a childcare center in the main building that is maintained by parent volunteers who exchange work for childcare. It also serves as an observation site to early childhood education students. For mothers who don't exchange work for childcare, there is a small fee.

Institutions of higher education in the states of New York and Connecticut have childcare centers that are supported by city and state funds. Mills College in Oakland California has twenty-four apartments reserved for adult students with children. The University of North Carolina at Asheville with a population of fifty percent older students, offers childcare for special events, thereby enhancing students' opportunities to experience the social as well as the academic environment. The University of Wisconsin offers childcare tuition assistance. All of these institutions operate on the assumption that high quality childcare facilitates the re-entry woman's chances of persistence.

Goddard College in Vermont conducts the Single Parent Project that enables single mothers and their children to live in dormitory suites while the mother pursues a degree and the children are cared for in a childcare center on campus. The institution pays a part of the tuition, and the state and federal government supplement the remainder.

The University of Georgia established the Women's Opportunity Network (WON) to assist re-entry women with legal and consumer rights, strategies for career development and advancement, and managerial skills. Programs for displaced homemakers continue to be established. The special services provided to them include "permanent job placements, career planning sessions, academic coursework, and professional and personal development workshops..."
back-to-school workshops...[and] special programs to increase self-confidence" (Copland, 44).

The Returning Adult Student Center at Pennsylvania State University recognized outstanding re-entry women students through a campus-wide competition with faculty, staff and student nominations. Awards are made on the basis of the difficulty of her circumstances and her resourcefulness to overcome them.

Re-entry students have organized themselves with the purpose of providing support, social opportunities, and as an advocacy group. They are often supported through activity fees. In some cases, re-entry women's participation is hampered by their multiple roles. "Nevertheless, the presence of such an organization on campus demonstrates a commitment to serving the nontraditional adult and returning [woman] student" (45).

McGraw's review of university-based programs for re-entry women revealed that the workshops that were the most successful provided the greatest support, decreased isolation, provided a forum for sharing concerns, improved their interpersonal relations, improved their self-concepts and clarified their personal goals.

Copland's review of institutional practices that enhance the persistence of re-entry women is impressive, yet it represents only a fraction of the numerous institutions of higher learning that recruit and admit women as a special population. Hopefully, other institutions will take their lead, and, perhaps, re-entry women will organize and request some of the support services that make not only the academic experiences possible but the social experiences possible as well, while enhancing their chances for persistence.

Copland recommends Askell's three stages of institutional adaptation to
re-entry students to those institutions that are serious about becoming more responsive to this special population. The stages are: (1) the laissez-faire stage, in which the barriers to adult re-entry are removed, for example, age requirements, and parental consent forms; (2) the separatist stage, where facilities and services are separated and limitations are placed on opportunities for mainstreaming; and (3) the equity stage, where institutions actively recruit this population through integrated curricula and faculty, receive credits for learning and experiences, and provide convenient administrative services and available academic advising (Askell, 1982).

Askell's model is practical for institutions that wish to attract this population. The policy implications are as follows:

Institutions should modify their mission statements to include a commitment to serving re-entry students, as well as other nontraditional populations. The president and other central administrators must express this commitment to their various constituencies (including faculty, staff, students, and the wider community). Any long-range or strategic plan of the institution ought to address the needs of adult students, and not just those who are twenty-five to forty-five years old, but also those who are in preretirement and retirement. Officers in student services, admissions, registration, financial aid, career development, and counseling must adapt their programs and services to fit the needs of traditional and nontraditional students alike. Methods and the timing of the programs and services ought to reflect the varied needs of students, no matter what their ages. Finally, the institution must address the disparity that may exist between its stated policies of what is needed for satisfactory academic [and social] progress on the part of all its students (Copland, 45-46).

On campuses where there are significant numbers of re-entry women enrolled, institutions should review their existing student services for the purpose of determining how well they meet the needs of this population. Where they do meet their needs, efforts should be made to provide convenient access for them; where they do not, programs should be implemented that would
assure their academic and social success while accommodating the diversity of very highly motivated, goal directed students. Programs and services should be staffed with well-trained personnel and the facilities should be convenient for them to assure re-entry women of their success.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

To ascertain the variables that affect the academic persistence of re-entry women over age twenty-five at Urban State University, data were obtained from female students in that category who enrolled at the University during the Fall semester of 1988 and who continued to be enrolled for the Spring semester of 1989. Since by classification, these women were seniors, no determination was made as to their candidacy for graduation.

Data obtained from these students will be valuable for a determination of whether or not the documented factors that affect the persistence of this population nationally are the prevalent persistence factors for re-entry women at Urban State University.

The instrument that was used to study this population was a survey that was sent to all of the senior women. The survey addresses the social-academic integration achieved as a result of these students' experiences at Urban State University and other factors that may have affected their persistence. The sample included by age all of the categories of re-entry women. For example, those more likely to fit into the categories as identified in the literature, that is, "displaced homemakers", "empty nesters", and other designations typified by age and socioeconomic status. The population included a wide representation among the academic schools.

Data on this population were obtained from a sample of women students over age twenty-five who registered for full-time matriculation. Their names were provided by the University computer center. Recent statistics from the computer center indicate that 170 women over age
twenty-five matriculated during the Fall semester of 1987. During the Spring, semester, however, this population had decreased to fewer than 90 women. Enrollment of this population for Fall, 1988 was eighty-eight women.

The survey on the academic and social adjustment of re-entry women is divided into three sections: Section One--Demographic Information; Section Two--Academic Adjustment; and Section Three--Social Adjustment. Section one contains six items, and sections two and three contain ten questions each. Each item consists of a significant factor that affects persistence as identified in the literature on the persistence of re-entry women.

The survey was reviewed by the following university personnel: a vice-president of academic affairs; two admissions administrators; a university counselor; and two professors. Each reviewer thought that the survey would enable the writer to obtain the information on the variables of academic and social adjustment of re-entry women. Their suggestions for revisions have been incorporated into the final survey and field tested on five re-entry women over age twenty-five who are currently enrolled at Urban State University but who were not a part of the population that received the survey. They were asked to evaluate the instrument for clarity and relevance. They indicated that the instrument was clear and that the factors significantly related to their own academic and social experiences as re-entry students. The final form of the survey was administered upon receiving permission to conduct the survey from the Human Subjects Committee at The College of William and Mary. Once permission was granted, the survey was mailed. Each survey included a stamped, pre-addressed envelope for convenient return to the Office of Institutional Research at Urban State University. Eighty-eight surveys were mailed. None were
returned for an improper address nor for any other reason. One of the returned surveys was damaged in the mail; however, the responses were legible.

Responses to the items in sections two and three of the survey were rated using a Likert-type scale with values given to each possible response: Strongly Disagree--1; Disagree--2; No Opinion--3; Agree--4; and Strongly Agree--5. Responses were be scored and analyzed using a t-test of significance. In addition to the analysis of the variables of academic and social adjustment as they pertain to persistence, the variables of age, race, marital status, children and major will be examined. (A copy of the survey is enclosed in the appendix.)

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to provide a frequency distribution for each of the following variables in the three sections. The variables in section one were age, race, number of children, number of children at home, major, and marital status. The variables in section two were factors that affect academic adjustment: prior educational experience, academic orientation, instructors, class attendance and performance, tutorials, academic counseling, assistance from advisors, and career plans as a motivating factor for re-entry. The variables in section three were factors that affected social adjustment: classmates who were younger, classmates the same age or older, friends who did not attend college, family members, husband/mate, campus organizations, cultural activities at Urban State, employment, day care for children, and transportation to campus.

Several telephone calls were made by respondents to provide additional information on their educational experiences. (Telephone numbers were included on the cover letter.) Using the factors as indicated on the survey,
they shared some their feelings about their experiences--both academically and socially. (Four of those conversations are included in the appendix.)
DESCRIPTION OF STUDY POPULATION

This study of the factors affecting persistence of senior women over age twenty-five yielded very specific results. The study was conducted using a survey of re-entry women at Urban State University. It was based on data received from the respondents. Of the eighty-eight surveys mailed, only forty-six were returned. The returned surveys were completed as requested and several of the completed instruments contained useful annotations.

The one-page survey contained three sections: demographic data, factors pertaining to academic adjustment, and factors pertaining to social adjustment. Section One contained items that the respondents had to self report: age, race, and other demographic variables. Sections two and three (the academic and social adjustment variables) contained Likert-type responses. Responses to the three parts were coded for a tabulation of frequencies.

As indicated in Table One, the ages of the respondents ranged from thirty-five to fifty-six and over, with the largest percentage in the thirty-five to forty age range and the smallest percentage in the fifty-six and over age range. As the ages increased, the representation decreased.

TABLE 1
Factor: Age Of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE RANGES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35 - 40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-53-
Racial demographics of the respondents indicated that 41.3 percent of the respondents are white and 58.7 percent are black. Urban State University has received funds from the state and private sources to provide financial assistance to other-race students, and it has been successful in those efforts.

**TABLE 2**

**Factor: Race Of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLACK</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents had two or fewer children with the largest percentage with two, and the smallest percentage with five. Twenty-two respondents reported two children or 47.8 percent of the total respondents.

**TABLE 3**

**Factor: Number of Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The "empty-nest" syndrome prevails in the largest number of re-entry women's homes. Thirty-seven percent reported no children at home. The smallest percentage of re-entry women had three children living at home or 6.5 percent.

**TABLE 4**

**Factor: Number Of Children Living At Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN AT HOME</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table reveals a wide variety of academic interests among re-entry women. The largest concentrations are in the departments of Early Childhood Education, Interdisciplinary Studies and Special Education with 13.0, 15.2, and 15.2 percents respectively.

**TABLE 5**

**Factor: Majors Of Re-entry Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLEGE MAJOR</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest frequency reported in the marital status was in the category of "married", with 58.7 percent. The lowest frequency of reported responses was in the category of "single", with 4.3 percent. The category of "separated" was not included for marital status; however, those in that marital status should have checked one of the others which would still be an appropriate choice. The choice "separated" is actually "married"; however, women in this category may not actually consider themselves as such.

TABLE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARRIED</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIDOWED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGLE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVORCED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO RESPONSE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANALYSIS OF SUB-HYPOTHESES

Sub-Hypothesis Number One: Certain identifiable academic factors have varying
influences on the persistence of re-entry women students in accordance to their ages.

The data relative to the sub-hypothesis were subjected to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences sub-program t-test. A t-value of 0.83 was computed. The mean difference was 1.17. There were 44 degrees of freedom with a probability of .41; therefore, the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant at p<.05. The null hypothesis is accepted and the research hypothesis is rejected.

Due to the return rate, the age groups were collapsed into two groups: GROUP ONE: 35 to 40 years old and GROUP TWO: 41 to 58 years.

TABLE 7

Summary Of T-Test Of Academic Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>STD DEV</th>
<th>DIFF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32.70</td>
<td>3.861</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>5.719</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub-Hypothesis Number Two: Certain identifiable social factors have varying influences on the persistence of re-entry women students in accordance to their ages.

The data relative to the sub-hypotheses were subjected to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Subprogram. A t-value of 1.28 was computed. The mean difference was 1.78. There were 44 degrees of freedom with a probability of .21; therefore, the difference between the groups is not
statistically significant at p<.05. The null hypothesis is accepted and the research hypothesis is rejected.

**TABLE 8**

**Summary Of T-Test Of Social Adjustment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>STD DEV</th>
<th>DIFF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31.48</td>
<td>5.345</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33.26</td>
<td>3.445</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these data no appreciable difference has been shown in the academic and social adjustment according to ages of the re-entry female population who responded to the survey they received containing factors that affected their persistence. According to Vincent Tinto's theory of academic-social fit and the role it plays in retention and persistence, the factors included on the survey had no affect on the persistence of the re-entry population at Urban State University.

**FURTHER ANALYSIS**

**Factors Affecting Re-entry Women's Academic Adjustment**

The largest percentage (41.3 percent) of the respondents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their prior educational experience(s) helped them to make the academic adjustment upon their re-entry. Thirty-seven percent indicated no opinion or no difference, and 20.7 percent disagreed that it was a factor.
TABLE 9

Factor: Prior Educational Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This factor generated the largest percentage (73.9 percent) of responses in agreement that orientation to the academic environment enhanced their academic adjustment. ("Orientation" as a factor that affects re-entry women's persistence receives prominence as a barrier or a problem that is encountered by re-entry women.) The percentage of respondents with no opinion was 17.4 percent. Less than nine percent (8.7 percent) disagreed that Orientation was a factor.

TABLE 10

Factor: Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents disagreed that their instructors' help enhanced their academic adjustment. There is no wide disparity among the
responses: 30.4 percent agreed; 32.6 percent had no opinion; and 37 percent disagreed. Since instructors' contact and sensitivity to the re-entry woman student are important, their attitudes toward the re-entry woman student may be a factor that needs further study.

TABLE 11
Factor: Instructors' Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Class attendance" as a factor received a large percentage of responses who agreed that it was a factor in their academic adjustment. Numerous responsibilities or multiple role assumption is a factor that affects re-entry women's persistence. Class attendance obviously is critical to academic adjustment. An area for further study is improving the academic delivery for this population through technological advances that might minimize their time on campus or that may provide options when classes have been missed.

TABLE 12
Factor: Class Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-60-
Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents agreed that there were problems completing assignments which like class attendance is critical in making the academic adjustment essential for persistence. Only 17.4 percent indicated that they did have problems. Those with no opinion number 15 or 32.6 percent.

**Table 13**

**Factor: Problems Completing Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Label</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over thirty percent (30%) disagreed that good study habits were a factor in their academic adjustment. Almost thirty percent agreed that good study habits were a factor in their persistence. Over forty-five (45%) percent had no opinion.

**Table 14**

**Factor: Good Study Habits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Label</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over fifty percent (50%) of the respondents indicated no opinion on the role of tutorials in their academic adjustment; 19.5 percent agreed and 28.3 disagreed. To some extent, the high percentage with no opinion may indicate that these students were not aware of the tutorial services available to them.

**TABLE 15**

**Factor: Tutorials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 59 percent (58.7) of the re-entry agreed that counseling facilitated their academic adjustment. A small percent (15.2) disagreed and 26.1 percent had no opinion. As indicated in the Review of Literature, counseling of this special population is an institutional and a personal priority.

**TABLE 16**

**Factor: Counseling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost 48 percent of the respondents had no opinion on their advisors' help in their making the adjustment academically. Over thirty-four percent (34.7%) disagreed and over 17 percent (17.4%) agreed that help from an advisor enabled them to adjust academically again. The added factor of time and availability may be significant in the assistance received from the advisor.

**TABLE 17**

**Factor: Help From Advisor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Label</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the responses, one may assume that these re-entry woman returned to higher education for the intellectual challenge rather than for employment opportunities. There were 30.4 percent who disagreed that career goals were a motivating factor, and almost 48 percent (47.8) had no opinion. This large percentage could suggest that this educational experience presented an opportunity to explore many options of which career goals were not a priority.
TABLE 18

Factor: Career Goals as a Motivating Factor for Re-entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors Affecting Re-entry Women's Social Adjustment

Younger classmates (those younger than 25 years old) enhanced the social adjustment of the re-entry women as indicated by 41.3 percent of the responses. Thirty seven percent (37%) had no opinion and 21.7 percent disagreed.

TABLE 19

Factor: Younger Classmates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost three-fourths of the respondents (34 out of 46) agreed that older classmates their age or older enhanced their social adjustment at the University. A support group of peers with similar responsibilities, problems, concerns and social interests obviously was a significant factor in these women's social adjustment at Urban State University.
TABLE 20

Factor: Classmates Over Age Twenty-five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses were almost evenly divided on the role of friends who do not attend college in their social adjustment: Disagree, 37.0 percent; no opinion, 36.6; and agree, 30.4 percent. Time constraints of being a student, friends, varied interests, and assuming multiple roles limit social opportunities for re-entry women and their families.

TABLE 21

Factor: Friends Who Did Not Attend College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family members enhanced re-entry women's opportunities and abilities to adjust socially to the university environment perhaps by providing babysitting and other services that would provide them with more time to take advantage of.
social activities, thereby enhancing their social adjustment to university life.

TABLE 22
Factor: Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents attribute their ability to adjust socially to their husbands or mates. Those who received this support may be married; however, those who may be divorced or separated may still receive the moral support from an estranged or former spouse. Over 30 percent had no opinion. (They may be divorced or widowed re-entry women.) Fewer than 18 percent (17.4) disagreed.

TABLE 23
Factor: Husband/Mate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over thirty percent (30%) disagreed that campus organizations enhanced their social adjustment. Over 45 percent had no opinion and almost 24 percent agreed. Time constraints and perceived limited importance of campus affiliations of older students may be an important consideration for this factor. Because there are few organizations designed exclusively for this population at Urban State University, re-entry women's participation in campus organizations other than departmental organizations may be limited in participation and interest by re-entry women.

TABLE 24
Factor: Campus Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over fifty percent (50.2%) had no opinion on the cultural activities sponsored by the University and their role in their social adjustment. Over 28 percent disagreed and over 19 percent agreed. Time, convenience, employment and other responsibilities may prevent re-entry women from taking advantage.

TABLE 25
Factor: University-Sponsored Cultural Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
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<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost 50 percent of the respondents agreed that employment was a factor in their social adjustment. Those who had no opinion and those who disagreed were 26.2 percent and 15.2 percent, respectively. Employment responsibilities minimized re-entry women's time for socializing, membership and participation in social clubs and activities.

**TABLE 26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost 48 percent had no opinion in the role of childcare in their social adjustment at the University. This large percentage (almost one-half of the responses) indicates that many of their children are school age and are latch key children; they are older children; or they are not living at home.

Many of these women have "empty-nests" or no children living at home. (See Table 4: Number of Children Living at Home.)
TABLE 27

Factor: Childcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 58 percent (58.7) of the respondents indicated that transportation minimized their social adjustment. Twenty-six percent (26.1%) had no opinion and 15.2 percent disagreed. Personal transportation is a factor in returning to campus for cultural, athletic and social events. Serving an urban population as a large part of its constituents, the University is accessible to those students who use mass transit as their main means of transportation.

TABLE 28

Factor: Transportation To Campus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE LABEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO OPINION</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Summary

The academic and social success of re-entry women is a significant educational challenge to higher education; however, it is not an easy one to accept, for many accommodations and provisions must be made in order for a smooth transition from one lifestyle to another very different one to occur. Because of women's assumption of traditional secondary roles in society, her emergence into this environment does not usually occur without many problems.

Her emergence demands the reallocation of resources and priorities--both hers and the institution's--in order for her to succeed. The many problems that she faces in her attempt to resume her education and in her attempt to become an educated individual with more viable options may overwhelm her without adequate financial and moral support from her family, the institution and the community.

Conclusions

According to the data collected and analyzed for this study on the academic and social adjustment of re-entry women at Urban State University, the following conclusions may be made:

1. No appreciable difference has been shown in the academic and social adjustment according to the ages of the re-entry women's population who responded to the survey.

2. Of the academic factors surveyed, Orientation to the academic environment was the most significant factor in the re-entry women's academic
adjustment. Of this population, other academic adjustment factors in rank order are as follows:

- class attendance
- counseling
- problems completing assignments
- prior education
- instructors' help
- good study habits
- career goals as a motivator
- tutorial assistance
- advisors' help

These factors are consistent with those cited in the literature. Those listed in the tables are the prevalent academic adjustment factors that affect re-entry women's persistence to graduation.

3. Since over fifty percent of the women had no opinion on the role of tutorials in their academic adjustment, one may infer that they did not avail themselves of opportunities for such assistance. The reasons may be numerous; however, one speculation is that a lack of knowledge about their availability may have prevented their participation in tutorial sessions or that their reluctance to indicate that they needed help may have prevented their receiving any.

4. Over 47 percent had no opinion on their advisors' help and the advisors' role in helping them to make adequate academic adjustments. Seeking and getting assistance from advisors takes time, the interest, and an acknowledgment that help is needed. The re-entry woman may be lacking in these factors.
5. Of the social adjustment factors surveyed, the re-entry woman's classmates over age twenty-five was the most significant social adjustment factor of this population. Of this population, other social adjustment factors in rank order are as follows:

- family members
- employment and transportation
- husband/mate
- younger classmates
- friends who did not attend college
- campus organizations
- university-sponsored cultural activities
- childcare

These factors are consistent with those cited in the literature. Those listed in the tables are the prevalent social adjustment factors that affect re-entry women's persistence to graduation.

6. The re-entry woman needs a support group of significant others that includes women and, perhaps, re-entry men, and other students who are older. They may share common experiences: multiple role assumption; insecurities; other circumstances, problems, and accomplishments associated with re-entry. Supportive family members also play an important role in their making this adjustment.

7. The inconvenience of limited or no transportation and employment responsibilities consume a re-entry woman's already limited time and minimize the opportunities for making the social adjustment to the university setting.

8. Childcare for this population is not a significant factor which is contrary to the related literature for re-entry women. Because many of these
women have school aged children, independent children, or older children, the need for childcare is not a problem for them.

9. Since over fifty percent of the women had no opinion on the role of tutorials in their academic adjustment, one may infer that they did not avail themselves of opportunities for such assistance. The reasons may be numerous; however, one speculation is that a lack of knowledge about their availability may have prevented their participation in tutorial sessions or that their reluctance to indicate that they needed help may have prevented their receiving any.

10. Over 47 percent had no opinion on their advisors' help and the advisors' role in helping them to make adequate academic adjustments. Seeking and getting assistance from advisors takes time, the interest, and an acknowledgment that help is needed. The re-entry woman may be lacking in these factors.

11. Over 45 percent indicated "no opinion" on the role of campus organizations in their social adjustment. Over 50 percent had no opinions on the role of university-sponsored cultural activities. Their multiple role assumption, limited time for additional commitments, and, perhaps, a lack of interest are some of the probable factors in their social adjustment.

12. The motivation to succeed was, perhaps, the most significant factor in the re-entry woman's persistence.

13. Faculty members who provide moral as well as academic support are, perhaps, another significant factor in the re-entry woman's persistence.

Recommendations

After reviewing the literature and research on the status and problems and related circumstances of re-entry women, and after analyzing the data
collected from this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the academic and social adjustment of re-entry women over twenty-five years old as a means of increasing their potential for persistence:

1. Include the institution's commitment for re-entry women in the institution's mission statement. A review and an update of the mission statement should include all special populations that the institution hopes to enroll. The inclusion of this population would assure these students of the institution's commitment to their success.

2. Increase institutional awareness of the characteristics, problems, and needs of the re-entry female population. The entire university--faculty, administrators, staff, and younger students--should be provided information that will make them aware of the differences in the needs of the traditional student and the needs of the re-entry student. This may be done through workshops and information sharing opportunities to sensitize instructors and others who will work with re-entry women to enable them to provide more efficient services.

3. Provide an advocate for these students. Many options exist for this recommendation. Among them are the provision for an office and or an administrative position that will address their concerns, problems, and needs. This person could serve as a liaison with other faculty, staff, and administrators with regard to the concerns of the re-entry woman student.

4. Provide a set of guidelines with information on the interests, needs, and concerns that re-entry students need to know. The print and electronic media may be utilized to provide information that a re-entry student needs to know. This information should be focused in places and on occasions where re-entry women are a large audience. This information should be available for the re-entry population before she begins her classes or orientation.
5. Upgrade career counseling and placement services for re-entry women students. Since these services exist, special services for this population would focus specifically on their re-entry employment circumstances. Designating a counselor to serve this clientele and to provide peer support and other counseling services would give these students access to services that were not strictly academic.

6. Improve the curriculum for the orientation classes or services. Separate orientation programs should be conducted for the traditional students and the re-entry because of the differences in their needs. Re-entry women students should be given an option to attend the regular sections of orientation if they desire.

7. Involve older students in the provision of student services. They could provide the services of paraprofessionals at a lower cost in administrative offices on campus, especially those that meet the needs of this population.

8. Provide opportunities for families to have social activities and to participate in social activities on campus to increase their understanding of the re-entry woman's responsibilities and her academic environment.

9. Provide receptions and open houses that introduce re-entry women to women's networks, career opportunities, and re-entry peers.

10. Provide opportunities for younger and older students to interact.

11. Include lifelong learning in the goals of student services.

12. Provide an award structure for re-entry women students as an incentive for their achievement. This may include tuition incentive programs with opportunities for funds to be set aside for family members who may enroll. It may also include special recognition for membership in honor societies.
making the honor roll or dean's list or other outstanding academic participation in departmental activities on campus or in the community.

13. Match departmental advisors for re-entry women with faculty who are sensitive to their academic and social needs.

14. Provide administrative services at convenient times for re-entry students who may be employed.

15. Encourage re-entry women's participation in social functions on campus and in their major departments.

16. Actively recruit re-entry women by providing full scholarships, funds for books, childcare, transportation, and other essentials that may enhance their persistence.

17. Establish a registration procedure that will assure re-entry women of the classes they need for each semester.

18. Solicit funds from private sources to provide scholarship aid for re-entry women who do not qualify for financial aid.

19. Provide designated places for re-entry women to congregate during the school day.

20. Provide flexible and varied evaluation options for classes that will encourage participation.

21. Provide realistic assessment for re-entry women that may take into consideration their age, physical condition, and other circumstances.

22. Review administrative forms and applications and eliminate those requests that are biased against mature women, e.g., reference to parents or guardians.

23. Provide transportation to centrally located communities at convenient times for re-entry women and their children who may accompany them to libraries or cultural functions on campus.
24. Develop support services that help alleviate the stress that re-entry women may experience in her fulfillment of her multiple roles.

25. Organize conferences for re-entry women that feature re-entry women speakers or consultants who have been successful role models.

The success of the implementation of these recommendations depends on frequent evaluation and assessment of the services needed and provided for this special population. In order for them to be effective, they must, of course, receive the sanction of chief administrative officers and other administrators who are responsible for student services. Evaluations of successful programs for re-entry women suggest that women's re-entry is facilitated by programs that receive encouragement and support from top level administrators. Programs and services that are perceived as not receiving administrative support are guaranteed to fail. Institutional efforts should convey the message that re-entry women are valued students with legitimate academic and social needs that must to be met.

Implications For Further Study

As indicated in the literature, many variables may affect re-entry women's persistence. Further studies could examine the affect that spousal support has on academic achievement and persistence to determine if re-entry women with husbands/mates who support their re-entry wives' academic pursuits are persisters with average or better than average academic achievement.

The employment circumstances that precipitated a re-entry woman's return and the employment opportunities she prepares for with the expectation of gainful employment are also areas of study because many re-entry women's participation in higher education is for employment reasons principally rather than intellectual reasons.
The role of the community and significant others may also be factors that have a significant influence on re-entry women's participation in higher education. The role models in the community may have an influence on women who may be gainfully employed in an upwardly mobile career to return to higher education for the mere intellectual challenge and the personal satisfaction of receiving a baccalaureate degree. Women's studies centers and special programs for women (institutional or community-based) could be studied as a factor in re-entry women's persistence is another area for further study.

Longitudinal studies on this population in any of the prevalent persistence factors (academic, social psychological, and others) and combinations thereof would benefit those institutions and agencies that are concerned about their academic and social well-being.
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These consist of pages:

80-81
INTERVIEWS

Interviews are not included in the methodology for the research; however, on the survey one respondent wrote comments about her re-entry experiences and provided a contact number to elaborate on her experiences. Several other respondents called the researcher's numbers provided in the cover letter to inquire about the study and to volunteer to discuss their experiences. Since by definition they are "persisters," their insight on their experiences was pertinent.

Interview Number One

A re-entry woman with prior experience in higher education at a small Catholic college and a military off-campus university extension, her matriculation at Urban State University has been primarily in the evening college. Her persistence may be attributed to key University administrators and faculty in the Department of Continuing and General Education and faculty in that and other departments who served as advocates and as inspirations for her continued success.

At Urban State, she found that she was "a person not a number" where the "Evening School office is one of the University's best kept secrets" with regard to a source of help and a refuge when she needed it. Finding the registration procedure especially frustrating for re-entry, women (and men) students, she recommended a special registration station for evening college students exclusively. She even suggested that she and other re-entry women students could serve as facilitators for others who typically have "limited patience and are less tolerant than the
traditional age students with inflexible registration procedures and computer failures."

Stating that her primary reason for re-entry was career motivated because of her need for a better paying job, she said that, "At age 38, where one gets the degree doesn’t matter because this is just a piece of paper and it doesn’t matter too much in the Government where I get it from. Because my motivations are strictly monetary, I’ll put up with a lot."

A single parent employed as a secretary with two children at home, her immediate family also serves as a viable support system. They, along with faculty who challenged her intellectually, have enhanced her educational experience. One professor in the English and Foreign Languages Department enrolled her in an independent study that enabled her to conduct research on a women in management. This experience has motivated her plans to continue her education in a master’s program in management psychology upon her graduation with honors in May, 1989.

An Interdisciplinary Studies major, she chose this major because of the assistance she received when she re-entered from a professor who provided assistance after she explained that she simply wanted a degree in a major that would provide numerous career options. This department head simplified some of the anguish of registration by registering her because of her work schedule. This meaningful gesture minimized some of her frustrations and endeared this professor to her. Active in family and community activities, she is resourceful. However, she discourages re-entry students’ "biting off more than they can chew" upon their re-entry.
QUESTION: Did your prior enrollment improve your academic adjustment upon your re-entry?

ANSWER: The few courses that I had when I came the first time, with the time between the first time I was here and the time I came back, I don't feel like that really helped me, but the things that I did for myself in between [did]. For example, I had Dr.______ for 000 which was a night class and one of the classes I took when I came back in 1981. I knew some things about it because I've always made it a point to try to read and be up on things that I feel are classic things that I am supposed to know. So those things helped me that way.

QUESTION: Would you have done these things anyway? Would you have done these things if you were not an English major.

ANSWER: No, because when I came back to school I was not an English major, I was a business major. But I've always been an English major at heart. Those were the things I was interested in so when I came back to school in 1981, I wasn't majoring in anything really; I was just taking some courses.

QUESTION: Did you have Dr.______ the first time?

ANSWER: No, I had him in 1981; In 1970 I had Dr.______.

QUESTION: You were here in 1970?

ANSWER: Right, that's when I started. I had Dr.______ and Mrs. _____. I must have been here three semesters because I remember I had...
another English teacher, but I can't remember what her name was. So it must have been three semesters with English classes. It was when I came back in 1981 at night that I had Dr. _____ and I was only taking one class. So I guess, maybe it did influence me, but I just didn't feel that what I did when I first came here influenced me more than what I did when I came back.

QUESTION: Do you feel that re-entry students need a different bond between student and teacher than the traditional students need?

ANSWER: Yes, I do because the teachers need to understand that you can't just pop-up and do everything. You can't just go and sit in the Library for hours at a time the way students who only have to go to school can do. I have been very fortunate that the teachers that I've had have been very good to me as far as that is concerned. I've always tried to keep up. I haven't really ever been behind on things; however, I do think teachers need to realize that most of the time people who come back are doing the very best they can. They came back because they really wanted to do it. And if they don't have something on time it is usually because some other commitment that they had conflicted, not because they just didn't do it. I think that they really do need a different understanding for the re-entry student.

QUESTION: What are some of the problems?

ANSWER: For instance, last spring I had an 8 AM class and sometimes I didn't get off work until 2 AM, and I would have to get up and get my daughter ready and out to school and get myself ready in time to be in class at 8 AM. It was hard to do at times and I would be late.
My teacher was not a stickler for being on time. Dr. _____ wanted you to be on time but it's not as if he wouldn't let us in class or anything. It is hard when someone is sick and you have to go to class anyway. Sometimes my work schedule would conflict with the time I had to be in class and I would have to run around at work trying to get someone to trade times with me so that I could get to class on time. Most of the time my teachers were understanding. I could tell my teachers I couldn't be in class because I had to go to work, but I couldn't miss work because I had to go to class. For people with children much younger than mine, it is really hard. You can't, for instance, when they have a fever say 'I will call and check back later and see how you are feeling,' which is exactly what I have done on some occasions. My daughter would be sick and I would keep calling back to see if she was ok.

QUESTION: Did you ever have the need for academic and/or personal counseling during your matriculation as a re-entry student?

ANSWER: Not academic counseling, if you mean as far as failing or borderline...

QUESTION: Yes, or making some decision with regard to your course work. I notice you said that you changed your major. Do you think that might have had some consequence of wanting to make a career change or something of that nature.

ANSWER: Academically, when I changed my major from math to English it was really hard for me because everybody told me, even some people in the English Department told me it was a bad decision to change from math to English. Some people on the other hand said, 'If it is really what you want to do, you have to take a chance and do it.'
As far as personal counseling, in the last few years I have really been through some crazy stuff. I remember I was in my French class with Dr.____, and at one point I was the only student in the class. Dr.______ was giving me my assignment in French and I was so upset at what was happening at home that I could not understand what she was saying. I couldn't understand what I had written down, and I just started crying and she started crying. She didn't know what to do because I couldn't stop crying. So some days in class we would just talk. We did the work, too. She really helped me get myself together that semester when I didn't think I would be able to come back to school because I didn't have the money. She went around trying to get information on where I could get the money to come back to school. Other teachers helped too just in talking to them about certain things, not necessarily personal problems, but in general. Dr._______ was not officially counseling me, but she did really help me a lot. That day in class, I felt that I was really getting crazy; I just couldn't think.

QUESTION: Can you name any other people who might have made a difference, professors with whom you've come in contact or other administrators?

ANSWER: One of my major counselors is still in the History Department. Dr.____ has been my friend ever since I was in his class in 1983. We also go to the same church. He has helped me. He really does it with all his students. People come and lay all this stuff on him because he is a real calm person and you can really talk to him. Not that he always knows the answer, but you feel better because
you’ve talked to him about it.

Dr.____ has really been beneficial to me. I always tell people, 'Try to get in Dr. ____ class.' I just love her. I love the way she encourages her students. There is just something about her that I really love. She is really inspirational and I would like to be the kind of teacher that she is one day.

Mrs.____ was also helpful. I really liked her class. I like the way she teaches. She and Dr.____ seem to know what they are talking about and the way they present it makes you want to go out and find out more. At least that's the way I see it. I just love everybody in the English Department. All of my teachers in their own way have been inspirational.

QUESTION: Did they influence you career objectives?

ANSWER: Ultimately, I want to teach at the college level, so I know that I would have to have at least a masters degree or far beyond that.

As far as the other students are concerned, most of them are technically young enough to be my children. They influence me to talk to them to try to tell them to do what they have to do. The influence they have on me is sort of a reversal, not that they could influence me to go on or anything but that I should influence them to do what they need to do, that they should do it now while that's all that they have to do. They should not wait until they have to go home and cook dinner, etc. I have enjoyed the younger people in my class, I don't feel a big difference socially between us. I talk to them at school, but I don't see them socially outside of the
school setting. I don’t feel that I can’t talk to them because they are so much younger than I am. It is sometimes more of a mother-child advice than friend to friend advice. My classmates over 25 and I have more in common as far as talking about the problems of getting to school. How can I get there today? They have the same kinds of problems that I have. They can understand if I call up and say 'Let me see your notes for class today, because I couldn’t come because my child was sick.' They can understand a lot better.

Friends who have not attended college have influenced my life because they always tell me how wonderful I am because I am going. So they are an incentive to keep going. They always ask me, 'How are you doing now; how much longer do you have to do?' The day my picture was in the paper,* everyone was calling to say that they saw it. That makes me feel really good. A lot of my friends who have never attended college or who came and did not finish are really supportive.

Family members are the same, really supportive. My husband, even though we were separated, he is really supportive. He helped with the children, staying with them if I had to do something for school. He would try to help out as long as I didn’t ask him too often. My whole family has helped in the re-adjustment.

I have not really been a part of any of the campus organizations except a national English honor society. Really my social life is at school. I don’t know what I am going to do when I’m not going to
school. All I do when I'm not in school is go to work and go back home. I don't entertain in my home. What I do at school is really my social life. Most of my friends are at work when I am home and vice versa, so it makes it hard to do anything.

In regard to employment and social adjustment at school, my job made it hard to adjust socially. For instance, if there is a function going on at school at night, I would have to work. So having to work and come to school cuts out a lot of the functions that I would otherwise take part in, like a concert by the choir or a speaker, etc. I just had go give up on things like that. My only option is to be able to plan in advance to try to get that particular night off from work.

My children were never in day-care when I was in school. That was never a conflict. My youngest was in the first grade in 1983 when I came back to school. I tried to schedule my classes to coincide with when she was in school so I wouldn't have to worry about it. I was home when she got home from school so there was no problem there.

Transportation to campus was never a problem because I always drove my car, so I didn't have to worry about taking a bus or anything. I don't live near a bus route anyway.

I've always loved school, even before I started. I used to stand and look in the window of the classroom when I was four years old. I hated not being able to attend college right out of high school.
and it has really meant a lot to me to be able to go to college. I feel that now that I'm at the end, I've really accomplished my lifetime goal, getting a degree. I think my success is due to determination. I felt that no matter what happened I was going to college anyway. Even if I only took one class, I was going to keep going until I got through. There were times that I really felt terrible, could not move, coughing, really sick. I felt that I just couldn't make it anymore. Dr. _____ told me, 'No, Little Sister, just keep putting one foot in front of the other; you can do it.' I knew she was right. I would feel worse if I didn't come. With all my problems, if I didn't come to school I would be worse off emotionally. So I found a way to keep coming no matter how bad things got. There were times when it took a lot of determination to keep on coming and not give up.

QUESTION: Suppose you had never met anyone here who was as supportive as Dr.____, would you have done it anyway?

ANSWER: Yes, I would have done it anyway. I like school and I like learning. There is always something that I would like to know. I never feel that I would be through learning. To have this degree means a lot but also coming to class, the discussions we get into and just having someone to talk to on an intellectual level. I really love it. I guess I will always be in school in one way or another because I really like it. I feel that is what I have to do. Eventually, I am going to get my Ph.D. and teach at the college level. I may be 65, but I'll do it. That's what I want to do.
Interview Number Three

QUESTION: Did you have prior college experience.

ANSWER: No. This is my first college experience.

QUESTION: Was orientation to the University helpful?

ANSWER: Yes. It made me aware of a lot of places where I could go for help; it was very beneficial.

QUESTION: Was class attendance a problem?

ANSWER: I had the unfortunate experience of having an advice who scheduled me for seventeen hours my first semester her. I never ate, never drank, never went to the restroom. I was a constantly trying to be on time for class. It was a horrible experience for a while.

QUESTION: What suggestions do you have for remedying situations such as those?

ANSWER: Advisors must consider the advisee--young or older. I was in my early thirties when I first entered. Advisors should give choices. Everything they said, I thought was right. I was angry a lot because I didn’t get the consideration I needed until my Spanish instructor advised me to drop her class because she realized that I was under a lot of pressure. She acknowledged that I had the ability but knew that I could not do well under the pressure of a seventeen hour course load. She helped me to withdraw without penalty because she knew that I couldn’t function and she invited me to return to the class to sit in when I had the time; however, I never had the time. I learned the hard way, and I didn’t think that was fun. I think older students should take fewer classes.

QUESTION: Did you have problems completing assignments?

ANSWER: I still have problems completing assignments. As the breadwinner. I have a lot of responsibilities. I do chores for a relative; I do the children. Honestly, I had little time for homework. My ability
to read and speak well and ask questions helped me to do well in my classes. I would end up getting the homework done one way or the other, but there's never enough time. I know being in college means you're supposed to be responsible, but if you have homework to do and a kid who's got a fever of 103 degrees, you don't do much homework. If you go to the hospital, you don't do homework. Then the next day's assignment is added to that. By the time you have finished taking care of that kid, the other one and yourself, you are really far behind in assignments. If you have a professor who doesn't accept late assignments, you are out of it.

QUESTION: Do you have good study habits?

ANSWER: Studying with a classmate or friend immediately after class helped me a lot. I know how to study, but there's no time and sometimes I get the time and then I fall to sleep. Studying with others helps a lot. My friends tell me that I must not have a problem because I always raise my hand and respond in class.

QUESTION: Did you attend tutorial sessions?

ANSWER: I found out about them later. I stumbled onto them. Mrs. _______ in Special Services invited me to come by her office to get help. I didn't know I could have withdrawn. A lot of things slipped by me because didn't know. I learned a lot by accident.

QUESTION: Did you get counseling?

ANSWER: Mr. _______ helped me on several occasions in many areas. He wanted me to take the CLEP, but I never had the time to do so. It is always run her and run there. He is still helpful.

My advisor's inadequacy encouraged me to change my major. Her
ineptness made me do something better for myself. So, in a way I am thankful that she was not good.

QUESTION: Was your career your main reason for returning?

ANSWER: My degree is to further myself careerwise and educationally. I want to go on and get an M.A. and my doctorate in the future.

QUESTION: Did younger classmates help you adjust socially?

ANSWER: Yes! However, they were never a problem. We got along well. Some call me their 'Mom'. I would invite kids over for food and to study.

QUESTION: Did you engage in social activities with classmates your age?

ANSWER: They were standoffish; didn't want me to get into their personal lives. Younger people need someone to relate to. I was a parent figure, a motivator. Older students had a tendency to not want to band together. We have now become close friends, but younger students study more than older students.

QUESTION: Did your family enhance your social adjustment?

ANSWER: My family is not close knit.

QUESTION: Did you attend social activities on campus?

ANSWER: I never went to parties or dances. I went to athletic events. If there were social activities for adults, more than likely, I would have attended.

QUESTION: Did you attend cultural events?

ANSWER: As a social work major, I attended most of the cultural activities because I saw them as a part of my field. My children and I attended many of the cultural events on campus, and we have been inspired by many of them.
QUESTION: Do you have any regrets about your experience?

ANSWER: I am graduating this May, 1989, and my only regret is that I am not graduating magna cum laude. I am thankful for having had this experience.
Interview Number Four

One of the re-entry women who received and returned the questionnaire, called and asked if she could share with me her relationship with someone in her department with whom she had established a close advisor-advisee relationship.

Welcoming the opportunity, the researcher invited her visit and the re-entry woman student discussed at length how she was positively affected by the help from Mrs.__________, a faculty member in her department who served as an advocate for her, and more importantly became her significant other in her department.

The friendship started when the faculty member came to console her after the loss of her father who had been the main force behind her re-entry. As an older student in her thirties, with two children, no husband, and few other relatives, she welcomed the attention she received from this woman who has continued to encourage and motivate her to maintain her usual standard of academic excellence.

After getting notification of her receiving a departmental award during a college recognition ceremony, she was happy to announce that Mrs.__________ had told her she would be there for her at the ceremony.

Her re-entry was motivated by the need for credentials in an area that she has been employed in for many years. She has done well academically; however, the social life on campus has not interested her. She has developed a little intolerance for younger students who do not apply themselves to doing their work to the best of their ability. Her overall experience has, for the most part, been rewarding.

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Title or topic of proposed dissertation: FACTORS AFFECTING PERSISTENCE OF RE-ENTRY WOMEN AT

Name and address of student presenting this proposal:

Name: CAROLYN SHERIFF MAUFIELD
Street Address: 1342 CHEROKEE CT.
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We have studied this proposal and certify that the topic is appropriate for a doctoral dissertation and that the research design is developed sufficiently for beginning the implementation of the study.

Chairman

Date of Approval
March 27, 1989

Dear Student,

Urban State University is experiencing growth in the enrollment of re-entry women over the age of twenty-five. When women decide to return to college they may encounter problems which concern them and other members of the academic community: administrators, faculty, and staff. The factors that relate to your academic success are significant. You are kindly asked to complete and return the enclosed survey on re-entry women's academic and social adjustment. This information will help the University assess and address the needs of your special population. Your responses will be significant in creating an environment that is conducive to re-entry women's academic success.

The information you provide us in the context of this study will be strictly confidential and viewed only by the investigators listed below. All data gathered will be kept under lock and key in the Office of Institutional Research at Urban State University. Data will be reported in group profile form only.

Your decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary without prejudicing your status as a student at Urban State University now or in the future. If you have any questions now or at any time during the study, you may contact Carolyn S. Mayfield at one of these numbers: (deleted) or (deleted). You may also contact the investigator's dissertation advisor, Dr. James Yankovich at (deleted).

Your cooperation and prompt response are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Carolyn S. Mayfield

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University
Section One—Demographic Information
Directions: Please respond to all items.
5. Major _____________________________ 6. Check Marital Status ( ) Widowed ( ) Divorced

Directions: Please circle the responses below that closely express your opinion on your academic and social adjustment as a re-entry woman student.
KEY: SD—Strongly Disagree; D—Disagree; N—No Opinion; A—Agree; SA—Strongly Agree

Section Two—Academic Adjustment: Indicate the extent that these factors influenced your academic adjustment.
1. Educational experiences prior to my re-entry helped my academic adjustment.
   SD D N A SA
2. Orientation to the academic environment was helpful.
   SD D N A SA
3. Instructors were helpful in my academic adjustment.
   SD D N A SA
4. I had problems attending classes.
   SD D N A SA
5. I had problems completing assignments.
   SD D N A SA
6. I had difficulty adjusting academically because I needed to develop good study habits.
   SD D N A SA
7. Tutoring helped my academic adjustment.
   SD D N A SA
8. Counseling was helpful to my academic adjustment.
   SD D N A SA
9. I had difficulty adjusting because of insufficient help from my advisor.
   SD D N A SA
10. My intended career plans necessitate that I earn a baccalaureate degree.

Section Three—Social Adjustment: Indicate the extent that these factors influenced your social adjustment.
1. Younger classmates (age 18-25)
   SD D N A SA
2. Classmates my age (over 25)
   SD D N A SA
3. Friends who did not attend college
   SD D N A SA
4. Family members
   SD D N A SA
5. My husband/mate
   SD D N A SA
6. Campus organizations
   SD D N A SA
7. University-sponsored cultural activities
   SD D N A SA
8. Employment
   SD D N A SA
9. Day care for my children
   SD D N A SA
10. Transportation to campus
    SD D N A SA
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VITA

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS AFFECTING PERSISTENCE OF RE-ENTRY WOMEN
OF
RE-ENTRY WOMEN AT URBAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Carolyn Sheriff Mayfield, Ed.D.
The College of William and Mary in Virginia
May, 1989
Chairman: Professor James M. Yankovich

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that affect the persistence of re-entry women over age twenty-five at an urban state university using Vincent Tinto's academic-social fit theory of retention and persistence which posits that once this fit is achieved, persistence and retention will be positively affected.

The re-entry women's population at Urban State University, an historically black university, was studied. It was chosen because of its mission of serving special populations, its size, its historical prominence, and its location in an urban community.

Urban State University had an available pool of eighty-eight women over age twenty-five who were academically classified as "seniors" for the 1988 fall semester. They were sent surveys containing academic and social adjustment factors found in the literature that may affect persistence. Forty-six re-entry women responded to the survey.

The survey contained demographic data, academic factors (prior educational experiences, orientation, class attendance, class assignments, study habits, tutorials, counseling, advising and career plans), and social factors (younger classmates, classmates their ages, family members, husband/mate, campus organizations, university-sponsored cultural activities, employment, day care and transportation.)

Based on the data, it was concluded that the academic and social factors had no effect on the population of re-entry women who responded to the survey; however, orientation and classmates twenty-five years and older were the responses with the highest percentages in the academic and social adjustment factors. Data were inconclusive as to what factors other than perhaps self-motivation and determination positively affects persistence. Further study is needed to evaluate what specific factors positively affect re-entry women's persistence.