ADULT STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EDUCATIONAL

EXPERIENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Leadership and Education in

the Adrian Dominican School of Education of

Barry University

by

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Area of Specialization: Leadership

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ABSTRACT

ADULT STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EDUCATIONAL

EXPERIENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

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Barry University, 2007

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate adult student satisfaction with their educational experience, by campus type (main or external), along the dimensions of the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving adult Learners.

Method

Principally a quantitative study, a mixed methodology approach was used to gain a richer understanding of the issues surrounding adult student satisfaction with their educational experience as it relates to the type of campus they are attending. The adult student sample ($n = 114$) was comprised of students from an external campus ($n = 20$) and a main campus ($n = 94$) at a four-year university located in the southeastern United States. The *Adult Learner Inventory* by Noel-Levitz (2005) was

the primary instrument used to measure student satisfaction along the seven Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners, which include institutional accommodations, career services, financing options, assessment of learning, teaching, support systems, and technology.

Leadership from the university ($n = 8$), holding various positions within the adult education school, participated in one-on-one structured interviews to share their perception of how well the institution is meeting the needs of the adult students. Four of the participants were from the external campus and four were from the main campus.

Major Findings

The findings indicate that adult students on the main campus in this study experience greater levels of satisfaction with career services, their assessment of learning, teaching, support systems, and the use of technology, while the external campus students experience higher levels of satisfaction with their financing options and institutional accommodations. The leadership perspective did not completely align with the students' perception of satisfaction in the area of support systems. What the leadership felt was their greatest strength was actually scored low by the students. These findings point out how important it is for the leadership of adult education programs to have a clear understanding of how well they are meeting the unique needs of their adult students.

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companionship during the writing of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Background

At the dawn of American Higher Education, the landscape was dominated
with colleges established for the advancement of religious ideologies (Rudolph,
1990). Harvard College was founded in 1636 and Yale, Princeton, King's College
(now known as Columbia), and William and Mary soon followed. Students attending
these colleges were males preparing for the clergy or a position of leadership within
the community (Lucas, 1994). By the end of the nineteenth century, these religious
institutions were joined by a variety of other colleges such as city colleges, land grant
colleges, and for-profit colleges. The establishment of these colleges marked the
initial diversification of American Higher Education as women, African Americans,
Native Americans, and older students were attending classes on America's college
campuses. No longer was higher education just for men.

As the institutional curriculum broadened, from being purely for religious
training of the aristocracy and clergy, to include the education of the working class,
providing them with agricultural and mechanical skills, a debate ensued over the
purpose of higher education (Kerr, 1991). In addition to the debate over what should
be taught at colleges and universities, overall institutional purposes became diverse.
Non-profit colleges and universities (institutions exempt from paying income tax)
believed that their purpose for existing was for the social good of American society
(Lucas, 1994). On the other hand, for-profit institutions (institutions taxed like any

other business) maintained a business or economic mission (Berg, 2005a). As the types of colleges and universities diversified, so did the types of students attending them.

At the same time that such changes occurred in colleges' purposes and their student populations, the leadership role within these institutions also changed. The prototypical leader of the seventeenth century colleges was very different from the type of leader found on today's campuses (Bornstein, 2003). The first college presidents were mostly clergymen. In 1860, clergy held 90% of the presidencies whereas by 1933, they held only 12% of the presidential roles (Lucas, 1994). Bornstein (2003), recently retired president of Rollins College, writes that the role of the college president in the twenty-first century is much like a juggler because they must meet the many demands and needs coming from both inside and outside the institution. University presidents find that their biggest challenges are (a) raising funds under today's economic conditions, (b) fierce competition trying to attract students to their institution, and (c) changing student demographics; in particular the large influx of non-traditional or adult students.

Although there is disagreement over the defining characteristics of an adult student, it is widely recognized in the literature that the adult student population is growing both in number and in proportion to the traditional student population (Knowles, 1968; McNair, 1998; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). The campus environment and academic programming of many colleges still caters to the traditional student, leaving college administrators in a quandary as to how adult students should be assimilated into this environment (Sissel, Hansman & Kasworm,

2001). Near the end of the twentieth century, for-profit or non-traditional colleges responded to the increased number of adult students in higher education and began offering academic programs targeted to the adult student (Berg, 2005a; Hagedorn, 2005).

The mission, curricular structure, leadership orientation, and institutional accommodations are very different when comparing the traditional (non-profit) colleges and the non-traditional (for-profit) colleges (Berg, 2005a). Although only 2.5% of the adult student population is enrolled at non-traditional colleges, institutions like the University of Phoenix are experiencing 30% annual growth rates (Berg), while enrollments in adult undergraduate programs at traditional colleges remain flat or are declining (Hoffman, 2000). The mission of non-traditional colleges is focused on the working adult while the mission of the traditional college is focused on the traditional student. The curricular structure of the non-traditional college has shortened class terms and incorporates adult learning and adult teaching methodologies into the curriculum. Traditional colleges focus on teaching the traditional student, who has just graduated from high school. The leadership perspective of non-traditional and traditional colleges is very different. Non-traditional college leaders view their role as that of a manager with a business orientation, while the traditional college leaders are interested more in social good (Berg, 2005a). Institutional accommodations at the traditional colleges fall short in taking into consideration a working adult's schedule and family commitments (Donaldson, 1999; Hagedorn, 2005; Kasworm, 2003b). College catalogs, web pages, campus newspapers, and administrative office hours target the traditional student on

these traditional campuses (Hagedorn, 2005; Mancuso, 2001; Mcnair, 1998).

Conversely, the non-traditional college's service orientation claims to accommodate

the adult student needs (Berg, 2005).

Although many traditional colleges have adult friendly programs, they are not

experiencing the growth rates at the same level as the non-traditional colleges and

both types of colleges struggle with high adult student attrition rates (Hoffman, 2000).

In an effort to attract more adult students, traditional colleges and universities have

explored the use of external campuses as a means to reach out to adults who live a

distance from the main campus and whose lifestyle and work constraints prohibit

them from participating in residential traditional education (Benson, Johnson, Taylor,

Treat, Shinkareva & Duncan, 2005).

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

Declining retention rates of adult students have been a factor that has caused

administrators to look at issues specific to the adult student population (Bean &

Metzner, 1985). Even though studies show that adult students enter college with high

levels of self-efficacy, they are at a higher risk of dropping out before achieving their

educational goals (Rautopuro & Vaisanen, 2001). The National Center for

Educational Statistics (2002) reports that 31% of the nontraditional or adult students

enrolled in a bachelor's degree program in the 1989-1990 academic year had earned

their degree by 1994, while their traditional counterparts had a 54% bachelor's degree

completion rate in the same period. Some studies have linked retention with student

satisfaction with the learning environment and institutional practices, but fall short

because they do not look specifically at the adult student satisfaction with these issues

(Barfield, 2003; Benjamin & Hollings, 1995; Elliott & Shin, 2002; Juillerat & Schreiner, 1999). Based on a constructivist epistemology, Donaldson's (1999) model of college outcomes for adult students notes that satisfaction with the college experience is the key to an adult student's success in college.

In addition to Donaldson's (1999) model of college outcomes, several earlier models of student retention have been advanced as a plausible explanation of retention, persistence, and attrition issues. Spady (1971) is credited with one of the early models of the student drop out process. His model is based on Durkheim's (1966) theory of suicide in which he likened the phenomena of a student making the decision to drop out of school to suicide. Building on Spady's model, Tinto (1975) based his model of student integration on the idea that there must be a match between the student and the institution in order for the student to persist in completing his or her educational goals. Although Tinto's model is one of the most frequently tested models, it was based on studies of traditional students. Bean and Metzner (1985) developed a model that provided a better explanation of the issues surrounding adult student attrition. Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty informal contact and Sandler's (2000) model of career decision-making self-efficacy, perceived stress, and student persistence have all added to the current understanding of student attrition.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The retention rates of adult undergraduate students are much lower than the retention rates of traditionally aged students (Hoffman, 2000). Adult undergraduate students experience varied levels of satisfaction with their educational experience when they perceive their needs and expectations are not being met (Donaldson, 1999;

Mancuso, 2001; Merriam, 2001b). Current models of retention link the institution's ability to meet student expectations with retention (Pascarella, 1980; Sandler, 2000; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975). Adult student needs and expectations can be grouped into seven general categories:

    1. Institutional accommodations,

    2. Achievement of career goals,

    3. Flexible options to pay tuition,

    4. Coursework that is relevant,

    5. Instructors who know how to teach adult students,

    6. Support systems to help with the educational process,

    7. Technologically enhanced learning experiences (Flint, 2005).

Rationale

The phenomena of adult education began appearing in the literature as early as 1920, but even with an 80-year history, there is little research that provides a comprehensive theoretical basis for understanding the unique needs and learning styles of the adult learner within the college environment (Donaldson, 1999; Kasworm, 2003a; Merrill, 2001). Prior research in this field has focused on various aspects of the adult student experience such as motivation (Clayton & Smith, 1987; Graney, 1980; Morstain & Smart, 1977), persistence (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Brown, 2004; Hadfield, 2003; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994; McGivney, 2004; Sandler, 2000), learning styles (Bowden & Merritt, 1995; Cross, 1981; Huang, 2002; Knowles, 1968; Merriam, 2001a, Wlodkowski, 2003), and satisfaction (Barfield, 2003; Benjamin & Hollings, 1995; Elliott & Shin, 2002;

Juillerat & Schreiner, 1999). The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) developed the Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners using this prior research and the models of best practices from 21 colleges and universities (Flint, 2005). They include:

1. Outreach such as making the institutional accommodations that adult students need,

2. Life and career planning, which helps adult learners achieve career goals,

3. Financing options that allow flexibility in paying tuition,

4. Assessment of learning outcomes that are based on adult learning theory,

5. A teaching-learning process that allows adult learner to connect classroom concepts with useful knowledge and skills,

6. Student support systems targeted to adult student needs,

7. Availability of technology that will enhance the learning experience,

8. Strategic agreements with outside partners (Flint).

The first seven principles of effectiveness will be the focus of this study, since strategic agreements have an indirect relationship to the adult student. Adult students typically would not know about partnerships intuitions have made with outside partners therefore, measuring adult student perceptions of strategic partnerships would not provide information salient to this study.

The influence of different types of campus environments (main campus or external campus) on adult student satisfaction is not considered in the current models explaining student attrition (Donaldson 1999; Pascarella, 1980; Sandler, 2000; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975). These models of persistence and attrition have not considered

that college environments vary in how adult friendly they are. Previous models of student attrition and persistence lump the campus environment together as a single component, without considering that different environments are created by how well institutions integrate adult student best practices into institutional policy and procedures on both their main and external campuses. Even though the Bean and Metzner (1985) model looked specifically at the adult student population, it was built on previous research that examined traditional student populations. By focusing solely on the experiences of the adult student, this study responds to challenges for expanding the testing of persistence theories beyond a homogenous population of college students (Bean & Metzner 2005, Sandler, 2000). Through the inclusion of how well institutions adhere to the Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005), this study explores the need to break down the campus environment component of previous persistence and attrition models.

Purpose of the Study

It is important to have a better understanding of how the campus environment affects satisfaction, since satisfaction with the college experience has been linked to retention rates in previous studies (Barfield, 2003; Benjamin & Hollings, 1995; Elliott & Shin, 2002; Juillerat & Schreiner, 1999). The purpose of this study is to compare adult student satisfaction with their educational experience along the dimensions of the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005) by campus type, since institutions create various types of campus environments through varying degrees of implementation of the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005) at their main campus or external campus(es). The question is

raised in the literature as to whether or not external campuses provide an equal

educational experience for students when compared to the students on the

institution's main campus (Ball & Cook, 1994; Freddolino & Sutherland, 2000;

McFall & Freddolino, 2000). Therefore, it is important to consider how different

types of campuses are serving adult students and how an institution's main and

external campus(es) are promoting the satisfaction of the adult student.

Significance of the Study

With the adult undergraduate student population growing and the retention

rates of these students declining, college leaders are looking for ways to improve the

retention rates of the adult undergraduate students. Demographic trends would

indicate that the traditional student population will continue to shrink in size and the

adult student population will continue to grow, as the Baby Boomer generation ages

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). The results of this study may

serve to inform institutional policy and give valuable insight to college leaders as to

how they can improve the educational experience of the adult undergraduate students

on both their main and external campuses.

This study could be useful in identifying the components of the college

environment that adult students perceive as not meeting their expectations and needs.

Intervention methods could be developed to increase retention of the adult student.

The campuses (main or external) under study may meet some of the criteria of the

Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005), but not

others. Institutional leadership can make informed decisions concerning adult student

issues, when they compare their institutional practices to the student perceptions of

satisfaction along the dimensions of the Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving

Adult Learners (Flint, 2005).

<div align="center">Research Methodology</div>

This study is a mixed methodology study. Although principally a quantitative

study, this research uses a mixed methods approach. Creswell (1994) supports the

use of mixed methodology research by observing that researchers often make a false

hypothesis that there is a dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research.

The use of both research methods has the potential to provide a broader

understanding of the phenomena under study.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

RQI. To what extent, if any, do different types of college campuses employ

the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Students and does implementation

of these principles affect adult student satisfaction with their educational experience?

The adult student's educational experience is broken down into seven areas of

investigation.

1. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult
    students' expectations for adult friendly institutional accommodations?

    b) To what extent, if any, does an institution's external campus(es) meet
    adult students' expectations for adult friendly institutional
    accommodations?

2. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult
    students' expectations for adult friendly career services?

b) To what extent, if any does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectations for adult friendly career services?

3. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult students' expectations for flexible financing options?

    b) To what extent, if any does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectations for adult friendly career services?

4. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult students' expectations for adult learning theory based assessments of learning outcomes?

    b) To what extent, if any, does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectation for adult learning theory based assessments of learning outcomes?

5. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult students' expectations for them to connect the classroom teaching-learning process to useful knowledge and skills?

    b) To what extent, if any, does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectations for them to connect the classroom teaching-learning process to useful knowledge and skills?

6. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult students' expectations for student support systems?

    b) To what extent, if any, does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectations for student support systems?

7. a) To what extent, if any, does an institution's main campus meet adult students' expectations for technology availability that will enhance the learning experience?

b) To what extent, if any, does an institution's external campus(es) meet adult students' expectation for technology availability that will enhance the learning experience?

RQ2: What are the practices institutions use to reduce adult student attrition on their main and external campus(es) and how do these practices compare to the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005)?

Null and Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses

H_0 There will be no significant difference in the levels of satisfaction of adult students attending classes at a college or university, regardless of either the type of campus (main or external) they attend or the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated the Principles of Effectiveness of Serving Adult Learners into the campus environment. The seven areas of investigation include:

1. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the institutional accommodations at their college or university, regardless of either the type of campus they attend (main or external) or the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated institutional accommodations into the campus environment.

2. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the career services at their college or university, regardless of

either the type of campus they attend (main or external) or the degree to
which campus leaders have incorporated career services into the campus
environment.

3. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult
   students with the financing options available at their college or university,
   regardless of either the type of campus they attend (main or external) or the
   degree to which campus leaders have incorporated financing options into the
   campus environment.

4. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult
   students with the adult learning based assessments of learning outcomes at
   their college or university, regardless of either the type of campus they attend
   (main or external) or the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated
   adult learning based assessments of learning outcomes into the campus
   environment.

5. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult
   students with their ability to connect the classroom learning with useful
   knowledge and skills at their college or university, regardless of either the
   type of campus they attend (main or external) or the degree to which campus
   leaders have incorporated the connection of the classroom teaching with
   useful knowledge and skills into the campus environment.

6. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult
   students with the student support systems at their college or university,
   regardless of either the type of campus they attend (main or external) or the

degree to which campus leaders have incorporated student support systems into the campus environment.

7. There will be no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the technologically enhanced learning experiences at their college or university, regardless of either the type of campus they attend (main or external) or the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated technology that enhances the learning experience into the campus environment.

H_1 There will be a significant difference in the levels of satisfaction of adult students attending classes at a college or university, in regard to both the type of campus (main or external) they attend and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated the Principles of Effectiveness of Serving Adult Learners into the campus environment. The seven areas of investigation include:

1. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the institutional accommodations at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated institutional accommodations into the campus environment.

2. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the career services at their college or university, in regard to both the type of institution they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated career services into the campus environment.

3. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the financing options available at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated financing options into the campus environment.

4. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the adult learning based assessments of learning outcomes at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated adult learning based assessments of learning outcomes into the campus environment.

5. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with their ability to connect the classroom learning with useful knowledge and skills at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated the connection of the classroom teaching with useful knowledge and skills into the campus environment.

6. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the student support systems at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated student support systems into the campus environment.

7. There will be a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of adult students with the technologically enhanced learning experiences at their college or university, in regard to both the type of campus they attend (main or external) and the degree to which campus leaders have incorporated technology that enhances the learning experience into the campus environment.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study will examine adult student populations attending classes on what would be considered a main and external college campus. Students engaged in on-line programs will not be included because the virtual environment adds a dimension that falls beyond the scope of this study. The study will be limited to those students who are seeking to complete a bachelor's degree and meet the commonly accepted characteristics that define an adult student. The college campuses will be limited only to a regionally accredited institution. Colleges and universities that hold regional accreditation have undergone a rigorous review process in the areas of mission alignment, governance and administration, institutional effectiveness, academic programs, faculty credentials, learning resources, student affairs, student services, and financial viability (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2002).

Definition of Terms

Adult student- For the purposes of this study, an adult student is defined as someone over the age of 25, who is employed full time, has family and community responsibilities, and is motivated to attend college for career reasons or personal reasons (Aslanian, 2001).

Attrition- A student's departure from school without completing the intended course of study would be considered attrition. This departure could be voluntary on the part of the student or involuntary at the request of the institution (Tinto, 1975).

Campus environment- An interwoven web of factors makes up the campus environment. They include the culture of the campus, the faculty's values and professional pursuits, organizational makeup, institutional branding, administrative policies, size of the campus and the physical buildings and grounds (Pascarella, 1980).

Constructivism- The epistemological basis for constructivism is the idea that knowledge is constructed in the mind of the individual. It is a broad theory that combines ideas from philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Piaget, Vygotsky, Gilford, and Bloom provide the basis for the constructivist learning theory (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Much of the literature on satisfaction and adult learning is based on constructivism (Kasworm & Marienau, 1997; Knowles, 1968; Lamport, 1993).

Persistence- The decision a student makes to continue working toward an educational objective. Factors such as satisfactions, academic performance, and the fit between the student and the institution are a few of the factors that can influence a student's decision to persist (Tinto, 1975).

Regional accreditation- Regional accreditation is widely used and a respected form of college accreditation in the United States. Regionally accredited colleges and universities must meet the academic and operational standards of the individual regional accrediting agency. Agencies are divided by geographic region and they

oversee the colleges and universities in that region (Council for Higher Education

Accreditation, 2002). No single regional agency is rated better than another

(Wlodkowski, 2003). The six regional accrediting agencies are:

1. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS)

2. New England Association of Colleges and Schools (NEACS)

3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCAS)

4. Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools (NASC)

5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

6. Western Association of Colleges and Schools (WASC)

Retention- Students who complete a prescribed course of study would be considered

retained students. The opposite of retention is attrition (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Satisfaction- Congruence between the expectations an adult student has for their

educational experience and their perception of how well the institution meets those

expectations is the basis for determining satisfaction (Juillerat & Schreiner, 1999).

Self-Efficacy- Developed from social cognitive theory; self-efficacy is defined as a

belief a person holds in his or her capabilities to implement a plan to a goal. This

belief in ability comes from performance, precise incidents, verbal influence, and

physiological states (Bandura, 1986).

Traditional student- A traditional college student is defined by the National Center for

Educational Statistics (2002) as someone who is attending college full time, is

financially dependent, and has just graduated from high school. These students are

between 18 and 24 years of age.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter II is a review of related literature that will provide the reader with an expanded understanding of the subject area. The methodology, procedures, and data analysis techniques are described in Chapter III. The results of the study are reported in Chapter IV, and Chapter V contains conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate, by campus type, adult student

satisfaction with their educational experience along the dimensions of the Principles

of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005). The review of literature is

divided into four major sections: (a) The background of American Higher Education,

(b) adult student issues, (c) attrition and, (d) implications for leadership. The

background of American Higher Education section reviews the history of higher

education and the historical events that have influenced today's colleges and

universities. These shaping influences have had a profound effect on higher

education leadership as institutions struggle over the conflict of purpose for higher

education and the changing student demographics. A historical review, profiling the

types of students found on a college campus, dates back to Harvard and traces the

changing student demographics to the twenty-first century. This leads to a discussion

of the issues concerning the adult student, who is quickly approaching majority status

on many college campuses. These issues include the differences between traditional

and non-traditional students as it relates to institutional accommodations, student

success, satisfaction, and retention. The attrition section reviews the development of

student retention models currently employed by colleges and universities. Both

traditional and non-traditional student models are reviewed as they relate to the adult

student.

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Background of American Higher Education

American Higher Education began with the founding of Harvard College in 1636 by the Puritans. The intended purpose for founding Harvard was for the religious training of future clergy, schoolmasters, rulers, and the education of the aristocracy of the Massachusetts society (Kerr, 1991; Lucas, 1994; Ruch, 2001; Rudolph, 1990). The vision of Harvard's founding fathers laid the groundwork for the system of higher education operating in America today. Subsequent to the founding of Harvard, other religious schools soon followed with the establishment of William and Mary in 1693 by the Church of England, Yale by the Puritans in 1701, Princeton by the Presbyterians in 1746, and King's College, now known as Columbia, in 1754 by the Anglicans of New York. Colonial America's system of higher education was bigger and wider ranging than Great Britain's, yet these colleges were largely influenced by the British system of higher education (Rudolph, 1990).

During the eighteenth century, the religious colleges were so interwoven into the life of Colonial America that there was a blurring of the lines between private colleges, which were under control of the founding church, and public colleges, which were under control of the local government (Lucas, 1994). The Supreme Court decision of 1819, in The Dartmouth Case, established the guidelines for distinguishing colleges as either private or public entities (Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990). The New Hampshire legislature had violated Dartmouth's founding charter and tried to exercise direct control of the school. The court ruled five to one that Dartmouth was indeed a private institution. It was not until 1850 that Harvard made the decision to remain private (Ruch, 2001).

The state-supported land grant colleges, established by the Morrill Act of 1862, joined private religious institutions and public state schools already established. Under provisions of this Act, each state was offered 30,000 acres for the purpose of establishing an institute to educate the industrial classes (Berg, 2005a; Rudolph, 1990). These land grant colleges taught the practical subjects of agriculture and mechanics (Rudolph). This allowed access to higher education for more than just the elite or prestigious few (Lucas, 1994). On the eve of the Civil War there were over twelve land grant schools admitting students. Religious institutions viewed these land grant colleges as competitors, and they were denounced as godless (Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990).

Land grant colleges had a profound effect on small-town America, largely because rural America in the nineteenth century was an agrarian society and the practical agricultural and mechanical studies, offered at these colleges, had a direct benefit to the communities in which they were established (Lucas, 1994). City colleges had a similar effect on the cities in which they were founded. The Free Academy of New York City, chartered in 1847, was the beginning of what is known today as a vast, expansive college system. Charleston, South Carolina assumed support for a struggling private college and many other cities followed suit either taking over struggling private colleges or establishing new city colleges. The purpose of city colleges was to meet the needs of urban students (Rudolph, 1990).

The city colleges pioneered alternative class schedules such as evening classes and allowed students to attend part time. These colleges became accessible to what would be known today as "non-traditional" students. City colleges organized

themselves to meet the special needs of students who had dropped out of college and later re-enrolled, older students with spouses and families, and many who needed additional training for a new career. Institutions created extension campuses in response to the needs of urban students.

In 1885, the University of Chicago, under the leadership of William Rainey Harper, incorporated a provision for off-campus centers in an effort to offer education to a wider group of students; in particular the adult student (Lucas, 1994). This program started with 82 students enrolled in 39 different courses on extension campuses (Adams, 2006). Upon the death of Harper in 1906 there were 1600 students enrolled in 300 different courses (Adams). Harper pioneered distance education prior to his appointment at the University of Chicago. He headed the Chautauqua University from 1883-92, which was the first major correspondence school in the United States (Scott, 2005). The key ideas embodied in the Chautauquan vision were summer semesters, correspondence courses, extension campuses, and the university press (Scott).   The precursor to extension campuses were correspondence courses. Illinois Wesleyan University is credited with developing the first degree program offered through the mail (Adams, 2006). Correspondence courses offered at both non-profit and for-profit institutions grew at astounding rates. By 1915, 1.75 million students were taking classes through correspondence (Galloway, 1916).

As the history of American Higher Education is reviewed, one frequently unnoticed facet in the story is the contribution made by the for-profit institutions, often serving marginalized students. Since women were not allowed to attend the city

schools in the early nineteenth century, private for-profit schools opened their doors to them (Berg, 2005a; Ruch, 2001). Specialized schools saw the opportunity to serve other marginalized students. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet opened a school for the deaf and blind in 1817. The Brainerd Missions schools, started by the Missionary David Brainerd, served the Native Americans, while clandestine schools served the African Americans. For-profit agricultural schools prospered until the land grand colleges were established. As early as 1660, Dutch settlers held evening schools that taught mathematics, reading, and writing, allowing local clergy to make their living teaching in these schools (Ruch, 2001).

Today, education is the second largest industry in the United States, and the monetary investment in education is twice as much as what is invested in national defense (Ruch, 2001). The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) recently reported that there were 4,300 regionally accredited institutions in the United States (Barbett, 2003). In the last 20 years, for-profit degree granting institutions of higher learning have increased in number by 112% while as many as 200 non-profit colleges have ceased to exist during the same period of time (Ruch, 2001). In the school statistics reported by IPEDS, two-year and four-year for-profit institutions represented 15% of the total number of degree granting colleges and universities. During the same period that for-profit colleges and universities have doubled in number, American Higher Education has observed a dramatic shift in the student demographics on all college campuses. Major contributing factors to this demographic shift were the G.I. Bill passed after WWII, the Civil Rights movement, and the Women's movement (Berg, 2005b; Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990). These

factors paved the way for the entrance of large numbers of older non-traditional learners into undergraduate education.

Leadership

Today's colleges and universities are the most intricate institutions in our society, even more so than corporations, trade unions, government agencies, or foundations (Kerr 1994; Sweet, 2001). University leadership must remain mindful of the fact that their administrative role should not become an obstacle to the academic pursuits of the institution, yet the leadership of these institutions of higher education is getting more difficult (Schaefer, 1990). As the institutions of higher learning have grown, so has the role of the college or university president (Lucas, 1994).

The first college presidents were mostly clergymen. In 1860, clergy held 90% of the presidencies but by 1933, members of the clergy held only 12% of the presidential roles (Lucas, 1994). These clergy presidents took on the role of moral leader, instructor, administrator, and fund-raiser (Bornstein, 2003; Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990). Today, the position of president enjoys less authority and autonomy than the presidential position from previous centuries. Presidents of the twenty-first century have taken on the role of a juggler and are expected to meet the unending stream of needs and demands both within and outside the institution (Bornstein, 2003). University presidents find that their biggest challenges are today's economic conditions, increased competition for students, and changing student demographics; in particular, the large influx of non-traditional or adult students.

Conflict of Purpose

The landscape of higher education in America has experienced great diversity since Harvard's founding by the Puritans. In addition to private colleges founded by religious groups, land grant colleges, city colleges, two-year colleges, research oriented colleges, colleges with extension campuses, and for-profit proprietary colleges have all shared in the American educational process (Ruch, 2001; Rudolph, 1990). Traditional, non-profit private and public institutions have been viewed by the American culture as institutions serving a social good that provide benefits to society (Ehrenberg, 2006). While many for-profit universities claim to have a social mission, they tend to be organized around business principles that focus on meeting the needs of the market place (Berg, 2005a; Ruch, 2002). The tension between social good and economic opportunity is at the root of the conflict of purpose for institutions of higher education. Kerr (1963) admonished American colleges and universities, in his essay on *The Uses of the University,* to discover their complete identity and their theory of purpose in order to remain competitive in our global economy. Some 40 years later American colleges and universities are still in conflict over the purpose of higher education (Berg, 2005a; Kerr, 1991; Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990).

The practical skills taught by land grant colleges and the expanded access of "non-traditional" students to the city colleges, extension campuses, and proprietary schools sparked a debate on the goals and purposes of higher education (Kerr, 1994). A shift away from the classical curriculum of the eighteenth century was a catalyst for changing the American view of the purpose of higher education (Rudolph, 1990). The Yale Report of 1828 came out in support of the classical curriculum, which was

considered, at the time, the definitive statement on the purpose of education. The classical curriculum should serve as the guardian of the culture and protect our heritage, the report admonished (Lucas 1994; Rudolph, 1990). The Wisconsin Idea of 1877 purported that the purpose of the university was to investigate solutions to public problems (Lucas, 1994). Many colleges incorporated the Wisconsin Idea into their own mission in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Differing ideas over the purpose of higher education still drive today's institutional missions, which permeates the entire institutional culture.

Colonial American colleges were defined by teaching a fixed curriculum dominated by classical languages and literature, and they were paternalistic in their view of the students. By contrast, twentieth century colleges wanted to be all things to all people and were more impersonal in their attitude toward students (Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990). Kerr (1991) believes that there are five different approaches to the purpose of higher education. The elite-oriented approach serves the elite of society either by birth or talent. The production-oriented approach concludes that the purpose of education is to train students for specific occupations. The open-access approach believes that higher education should be open to all and responds to outside pressures in the subjects being taught. The horizontal approach embraces homogenization and education would be a tool of conformity. The atomistic approach believes that education can come from many sources, both formal schooling and informally through life experience or on the job.

In conclusion, the conflict over the purpose of higher education may never be resolved. Many views are represented in today's literature. Historically, the major

purposes for founding institutions of higher education were for individual aspirations,

religious convictions, political participation, economic growth, enculturation of

immigrants, or national power (Kerr, 1991; Quigley, 1997). Schaefer (1990) believes

undergraduate education should prepare a student for life through a liberal arts

curriculum and graduate education should prepare one for a profession. Derek Bok,

former president of Harvard, questions whether American colleges are meeting their

responsibility of putting social agendas in place (Berg, 2005b). Many for-profit

colleges have socially conscious motivations but they focus on the student as a

customer (Berg). This business mindset seems to run contrary to the traditional

culture of higher education. While for-profit institutions are focused on the needs of

the market place, non-profit public and private institutions still tend to focus on

responding to the social environment and stakeholder interests (Ruch, 2001). This

conflict of purpose has had the effect of polarizing educators around tightly held

convictions over the purpose of higher education (Berg, 2005b). What most do agree

upon is that the growth of America's public and private colleges and universities is

fundamental to America's social and economic future (Douglass, 2005).

Student Demographics

Today's colleges and universities have adapted not only to social and

economic changes in America but also to the changing demographics of the

individual student (Kasworm, 1990). A twenty-first century traditional college

student is very different from the typical student found at Harvard in 1636. The first

students entering Harvard were men preparing for the clergy or community leadership

(Rudolph, 1990). Almost 200 years later Oberlin College enrolled the first female

students, ushering in coeducational higher education. The Civil War and the Civil

Rights movement opened the way for African American students to have access to

higher education (Kasworm, 2003b). The G.I. Bill has been credited with creating

the most dramatic change in the age composition of the college student by granting

access to college for increasing numbers of older, non-traditional students (Lucas,

1994). The fastest growing enrollment of students in higher education is among these

older non-traditional students (Kerr, 1991).

Just since the beginning of the twentieth century, the growth of non-traditional

student enrollment has been significant. The number of older, non-traditional college

students enrolled in 2000 exceeded the total enrollment of students enrolled in college

in 1968. Enrollment projections for 2010 estimate that 38% of all undergraduate

students enrolled in college will be classified as adult or non-traditional students

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Although the discussion of

increasing numbers of adult students on college campuses began appearing in the

literature in the 1960s, many colleges are still unprepared to handle the escalating

numbers of adult students on their campuses (Rawlins, 1979; Sissel et al., 2001).

Part of the problem lies in the fact that there is some disagreement in the

literature over the definition of an adult student. McNair (1998) argues, since all

students entering college are of voting age, all would be considered adult students.

Senter and Senter (1998) conclude that age should not be the only criteria used to

define adult students. Knowles (1968) distinguishes an adult learner as one who

engages in self-directed learning, possessing life experience that contributes to

learning, has needs that are correlated to a changed social role, has a need to apply

knowledge immediately, and is internally motivated to learn. Between 1969 and 1986 there were 39 major studies attempting to profile the adult student (Kasworm, 1990). They focused on many different variables such as conceptual orientations, psychosocial dimensions, or key life factors to identify this group. These studies provided the basis for the most commonly used definition found in current literature. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) defines a non-traditional or adult student as someone over the age of 25 who has financial independence, attends classes part time, works full time, has dependents, and has delayed college enrollment since graduating from high school.

The terms adult student (Kasworm, 2003a), adult learner (Knowles 1968), and non-traditional student (Justice & Dornan, 2001) are used interchangeably in the literature to describe what will be referred to in this study as the adult student. For the purposes of this study, an adult student is defined as someone over the age of 25, who is employed full time, has family and community responsibilities, and is motivated to attend college for career reasons or personal reasons (Aslanian, 2001).

By contrast, today's traditional college student is defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) as someone who is attending college full time, is financially dependent, and has just graduated from high school. These students are between 18 and 24 years of age and are considered part of the Millennial generation; a generation that outnumbers the Baby Boomer generation and is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in the history of America (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Adult Student Issues

Adult and traditional students sharing the same college campuses have different needs, learning styles, and motivation for attending college. It is important to understand these differences as a basis for discussing adult students. The literature overwhelmingly supports the assumption that the characteristics and needs of the adult student are very different from the traditional student (Donaldson, 1999; Kasworm, 1990; Mancuso, 2001; Merriam, 2001b).

Student Differences

The motivation for earning a bachelor's degree, prior life experience, and unique needs all combine to make the adult student different from their traditional counterparts as they access institutions of higher learning (Kasworm, 2003a). Understanding what motivates adult students to enroll in college is a key to recruiting and retaining them (Aslanian, 2001). Internal motivations for going to college might include returning to college for personal enrichment or achieving a specific goal (Kilgore, 2003). Adult students over the age of 65 rank the desire to acquire general knowledge as the number one reason for going to college (Kim & Merriam, 2004; Laanan, 2003). For most adult students though, interest in advancing their career, improving their study skills, and applying knowledge are examples of some of the motivational factors that would cause an adult to consider returning to college (Graham & Donaldson, 1999). Others are motivated to attend college due to a recent job loss or desire to change career fields completely (Davey, 2003; Kasworm, 1990).

West (1995) suggests that getting a better job or other economic factors are superficial motivations; rather, what motivates adults is more complex when

psychological factors are considered. Through their beliefs of self-efficacy, a college

education has the potential to organize disjointed lives and help adults reach a better

self-understanding (West). When compared to traditional students in a recent study,

adult students have more self-confidence when they begin their degree program

(Rautopuro & Vaisanen, 2001). Those adult students who enter a degree program

with a low level of self-efficacy are at a higher risk of dropping out (Devonport &

Lane, 2006). The choice that an adult makes to participate in higher education is not

just a matter of an individual decision; Jung and Cervero (2002) suggest that the

decision may be conditioned by "social structural threads of the individual adults'

lives" (p. 316).

     Adult students come to college with life experiences and realities that are

markedly different from traditional undergraduate students (Okezie, 2003). These

prior experiences can affect their motivation and capacity to engage in the learning

process required for successfully completing a bachelor's degree (McGivney, 2004;

Verduin, Miller, & Green, 1977). Adults typically have a rigid way of thinking and a

strong belief of how things should work. Their prior experience also influences self-

efficacy or the way they view themselves across a number of societal and

psychological dimensions. This can influence their ability to learn or remain in

college (Donaldson, 1999).

     Juggling multiple roles while in college can influence how an adult student

experiences college. Adult program planners and administrators need to take into

consideration that adult students have many obligations to family, work, and

community while fulfilling their role as a student (Donaldson, 1999). These multiple

roles can cause conflict, overload, and contagion or preoccupation with one role while performing another role (Home, 1998). Compromising their career role in an effort to handle family and academic demands can have both health and financial consequences for adult students (Terrell, 1990).

Institutional Accommodation

Differing needs of adult students may preclude them from being fully engaged in college (Mancuso, 2001). More support services are needed among adult students, which include tutoring services, study skills assistance, and self-confidence building through academic counseling or advising (Bauman et al., 2004; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994; Senter & Senter, 1998; Wilson, 2006). In addition, career planning assistance is also a greater need among adult students when compared to traditional students (Aslanian & Brickell, 1988).

Mancuso (2001) suggests that inflexible school calendars and scheduling, academic programming, classroom instructional methods, and the availability of student services are among the prevailing themes in the literature that keep potential adult students from enrolling in college. In a benchmarking study involving six colleges and universities, Mancuso cites thirteen best practices benchmarks for adult-centered education. The ones related to overcoming the barriers to participation include (a) decision making that is quick and flexible in response to the needs of the adult learner, (b) many different ways of delivering instruction, (c) prior learning assessment credit, (d) curriculum designed for the adult student, (e) admissions procedures that are inclusive, (f) student services that are offered in varied venues, and (g) faculty who are involved in advising not just instruction.

Even with the plethora of research involving adult student issues, it appears that this segment of college students often remains the invisible majority (Kasworm, 1990; McNair, 1998; Sissel et al., 2001). Indications that colleges and universities have the ability to support adult students have been sporadic (Fairchild, 2003; Youngman, 1995). Adult students do require more services and support but the question is raised by Kasworm (1990), who should adapt the college, or the adult student?

Numerous studies support the assumption that the campus environment has an effect on the learning outcomes for both traditional and adult students (Donaldson, 1999; Kuh, 1998; Pascarella, 1991; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). Although the institutional mission is varied among different types of colleges and universities, educating the adult learner has become the focus of many of the reforms in higher education today (Hanna, 1998; Kasworm, 1990; Kilgore & Rice, 2003). Adult student accommodations should include opportunities for frequent student-faculty interaction, reasonably priced education with generous financial aid offerings, course offerings and class times that fit adult student needs, on-campus tutoring and study centers, localized extension campuses, and adult focused career counseling (Bowden & Merritt, 1995; Hagedorn, 2005; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Rosenthal et al., 2000; Rossiter, 1999).

Other institutional accommodations might include alternative admission policies for adult learners such as waiving a minimum SAT score requirement or allowing life experience to count as college credit, but studies reveal that age is a statistically significant predictor of student success when they are admitted through

alternative or non-traditional means (Cantwell, Archer, & Bourke, 2001; Fairchild 2003; Muse & Teal, 1993). When one college under study chose to admit adult students under non-traditional admissions criteria, the resulting logistical problems such as greater demand for limited courses and heavier advising loads for faculty were not perceived negatively when compared to the positive results (Muse & Teal, 1993). More adult students were able to access college through the non-traditional admission policies and achieve degree completion, thus increasing this college's overall enrollment and graduation rate.

In an effort to put the needs of the adult student into a framework that can guide institutional policy, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) has published a report, using best practices from 21 colleges and universities. This report outlines the Eight Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners (Flint, 2005). They include:

1. Outreach such as making the institutional accommodations that adult students need,

2. Life and career planning, which helps adult learners achieve career goals,

3. Financing options that allow flexibility in paying tuition,

4. Assessment of learning outcomes that are based on adult learning theory,

5. Teaching-learning process that enables the adult learner to connect classroom concepts with useful knowledge and skills,

6. Student support structures appropriate for adult students,

7. Availability of technology that will enhance the learning experience,

8. Strategic agreements with outside partners (Flint, 2005).

From this study, the *Adult Learner Inventory* was developed in collaboration with Noel-Levitz in an effort to help institutions assess and meet the needs of adult students (Flint, 2005).

The needs of the adult students have been met by varying degrees through changing the organizational patterns of American universities. The traditional non-profit universities have created semi-autonomous units focused on serving adult students (Hanna, 1998). The for-profit adult-centered universities have developed market driven programs that offer classes in multiple locations (Bash, 2003; Berg, 2005b; Ruch, 2002). Distance education or technology-based universities are focused on a technology based delivery model utilizing the World Wide Web and other virtual classroom enhancements (Huang, 2002). The corporate universities have developed out of a response to the specific education and training needs of the corporation. Other university models include university/industry strategic alliances, degree/certification competency-based organizations, and global multinational universities (Hanna, 1998). Little empirical research has been published on how well these various institutional types are meeting the needs of the adult students but a recent study links institutional type with student success for African-American students when they are measured along the dimensions of good practices for undergraduate education (Seifert, Drummond, & Pascarella, 2006).

Adult Student Success

Providing institutional accommodations and learning opportunities, which meet the needs of the adult student, have been shown to contribute to their overall success in college (Kuh, Kinsie, Schuh, & Whitt 2005). Success is often equated with

grade point average (GPA) and studies have shown that the average GPA of the adult

student tends to be higher than the average GPA of the traditional student (Hegedorn,

2005). Other research suggests that student success involves more than just GPA

measures (Donaldson, 1999). In addition to cognitive growth, often measured by

GPA, studies have shown that adults feel that their view of self has also changed

(Merrill, 2001). Adult students' self-efficacy has been found to be high when they

begin a bachelor's degree, allowing them to overcome personal and institutional

barriers, but upon achieving a bachelor's degree, they report increased self-efficacy or

self-confidence (Bingman, Ebert, & Bell, 2000; Cubeta, Travers, & Sheckley, 2000-

2001; Norman & Hyland, 2003; Rawlins, 1979). In addition, they reported higher

levels of self-awareness and a better outlook on life upon achieving their goals

(Rawlins, 1979).

Program design.

Adult student academic performance is shaped by many factors such as the

design of the program, the learning theory that underlies the curriculum, and the

student's prior life experience (Merrill, 2001). Program planning for adult students

has intrinsic problems. Since adult education curricula are not highly regulated,

decisions about learning objectives, pedagogy or andragogy, and ways of assessment

are largely contextual and individualized by colleges and universities (St. Clair,

2004). Many adult education programs are described as accelerated. Research

suggests that in order for these programs to be successful they should be learner

focused, built on adult learning theory, have a passion for quality, be easily accessible

to the adult student, and provide a number of delivery options such as live instruction

or on-line instruction (Husson & Kennedy, 2003). Some studies point out that many adults do not have the time commitment or associated learning strategies to be successful in an accelerated degree (Kasworm, 2003b).

Distance or on-line learning, while meeting the adult students' need for schedule flexibility, can limit their learning experience to standardized information. Being devoid of human contact, adult students have not responded well to the on-line learning environment in some studies (Kressley & Huebschmann, 2002; Rivera & Rice, 2002). Although no national statistics report retention rates of students in on-line programs, several studies have reported retention as low as 40 to 50 % (Howell, Laws, & Lindsay, 2004). Other research suggests that technology can be viewed as an adult student's academic partner and students are very satisfied with this course delivery format (Allen, Bourhis, Burrell, & Mabry, 2002). From a constructivist point of view, on-line learning helps them express what they know, cause them to reflect on their learning, support internal meaning making, and support higher level thinking (Jonassen, 2000).

Both on-line learning programs and live instruction programs need to include assessment strategies that measure adult student performance against the learning goals in the curriculum (Walvoord, 2003). Student performance can be measured by direct measures such as performance on exams, projects, or papers graded to a specific rubric or indirect measures such as surveys of student satisfaction, employer satisfaction with the student, or student perceptions of their learning experience. Assessment of the overall program requires a comprehensive framework to review student performance and is often required by accrediting agencies (Kilgore, 2003).

Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick's (2005) four level evaluation model is often used to measure the effectiveness of adult learning programs. The first level looks at the adult student's overall satisfaction with the program. This often includes not only the classroom experience, but also how well the college is meeting the adult student service needs. The second level measures the student performance against specific learning outcomes. The third level reviews the behavioral changes; what have they learned that they have transferred to the real world. The fourth level looks at the results after students have graduated from the program (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick). The most successful adult programs are those that are built around adult learning theory.

Learning theory.

Adult learning is so complex that one single theory or model cannot fully explain this phenomenon (Birzer, 2004; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Early research on adult learning questioned whether adults could even learn after a certain age (Merriam, 2001a). Moran (2001) points out that Piaget, a developmental theorist, suggested that humans go through stages of thinking, or cognitive development, and that those stages are hierarchical. Little is known about the particular factors that influence cognitive development, but recent research suggests that adult cognitive development is at least equal to that of their younger counterparts, the traditional students (Graham & Donaldson, 1999). Moran theorizes that adult levels of thought are achieved through both educational and cultural factors rather than through hierarchical stages of cognitive development. Adult students have the need for both academic learning and learning that can be applied directly to their life experience

(Imel, 2001). In studying the differences between traditional and adult student populations, Rautopuro & Vaisanen (2001) found that adult students were more internally oriented and more goal oriented in their academic pursuits. Even with the plethora of literature on adult learning, there are many unresearched questions in this area.

Both scholars and practitioners have wrestled with the question of how adults learn since adult education became a professional field of practice in the early 1920s (Merriam, 2001a). Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton, and Woodyard (1928), some of the first adult learning theorists, viewed learning from a behavioral psychological perspective. In their study, participants were tested on learning and memory tasks that were timed. Under these conditions, the older adults did not perform as well as the younger test participants. Lorge (1944) later theorized that Thorndike's et al. test scores were related to education and not age. Older adults performed poorly on Thorndike's et al. tests because they had not developed the test-taking skills, through higher education, which would have improved their scores. Much of the early research on adult learning was based on the philosophies of behaviorism, and findings from the studies of children were generalized to adults.

Andragogy and self-directed learning are adult-centered learning theories recently explored in the adult education field (Merriam, 2001a). Andragogy is founded on Knowles' (1968) five assumptions about adult learners. The adult learner has an independent self-concept and can direct his/her own learning, has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, is problem centered and interested in

immediate application of knowledge, and is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors.

Knowles introduced the idea of andragogy in the early 1970s, but little empirical research supports Knowles' theories (Hartree, 1984; Shannon, 2003). One of the basic tenants of Knowles' adult learning theory is that adults are self-directed (Merriam, 2001a). Reiter's (2002) research suggests that adults are not innately self-directed and have trouble knowing their own strengths and weaknesses. Hartree (1984) suggests that Knowles' andragogy is more of a model of best practice rather than a theory of adult learning.

Self-directed learning, a learning model developed by Tough (1967), began appearing in the literature about the same time as Knowles' andragogy. Grounded in a humanistic perspective, the goal of self-directed learning is self-actualization (Merriam, 2001b). Brookfield (1986) suggests that another goal of self-directed learning is that of transformation.

Contemporary literature has de-emphasized the self-directed learning model as a way for understanding adult learning. Newer theories of adult learning have a more holistic view of the adult returning to college. The Four-Lens Model of Adult Learning includes the learner, the process, the teacher, and the context (Kiely, Sandmann, & Truluck, 2004). Kasworm and Marienau (1997) identified five key principles of adult learning that should be the foundation for adult focused programs. They fit closely with the Four-Lens Model of Adult Learning and include the premises that learning comes from multiple sources; that learning should engage the whole person; appropriate feedback from the teacher will increase self-direction;

learning takes place in context; and, the learning experience is a meaning-making event that is unique to the individual adult student.

Prior life experience.

Current approaches to adult learning acknowledge that an adult student's learning experience in higher education can be influenced by memories, emotions, cognition, and the context where learning occurs (Merriam, 2001b). How adults view themselves can also influence to what degree they participate in the institutional environment (Cross, 1981). Studies of the context where learning occurs suggest that adult students are engaged in the college environment in much different ways than their traditional counterparts due to their prior life experience (Graham & Donaldson, 1999). Prior life experience can influence the decision to persist or drop out of school, particularly if an adult student had a negative experience at a previous college (Allen, 1993). Additionally, students who expressed greater satisfaction with the academic ethos or college climate had greater gains on outcome measures including cognitive growth (Graham, 1998).

Satisfaction and Retention

Studies show that the campus environment is a web of interrelated events that influence a student's satisfaction with their educational experience (Elliott & Shin, 2002; Kuh et al., 2005). Although the literature abounds with studies on student satisfaction, few focus on satisfaction among adult students (Lamport, 1993; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005). A recent study involving satisfaction found that older or adult students were more likely to be dissatisfied with receiving grades based on a group project (Barfield, 2003). The prevailing themes found in the literature that

influence the overall satisfaction for adult students are faculty-student interaction, social support systems, and student services (Pacarella & Terenzini, 1980).

Faculty-student interaction.

Faculty-student interaction for adult students significantly influenced satisfaction in a recent study comparing traditional and non-traditional students (Rosenthal et al., 2000). Although the definitions of the variables under study in the satisfaction research tend to be vague, faculty-student interaction has been shown to have a positive impact on satisfaction (Astin, 1977; Lamport, 1993; Spady, 1971). One program quality concern that is frequently noted in the research is the extensive use of adjunct faculty who teach in the adult programs (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1993). Adjunct faculty tend not to interact with students as frequently as full-time faculty and this could have an impact on the overall quality of the student-faculty interaction, which has been demonstrated to be a key component in overall satisfaction.

Faculty, adjunct or full time, who meet the learning needs of the adult student are a key factor in motivating adult students to persist. Adult students who perceive their professors as boring or the course material irrelevant are at higher risk for dropping out, especially if they do not have a strong social support system (McGivney, 2004).

Social support systems.

An adult student's social support system is another key factor in measuring adult student satisfaction. Adult students generally do not employ the use of college campus support systems, such as counseling services, but their academic performance

is reported to be better than traditional students, who rely more heavily on campus support systems (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). While traditional students tend to find support among their friends on the college campus, adult students derive support from friends, family, and coworkers who are external to the college campus (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Donaldson, 1999, McGivney, 2004). Three types of social support prevail in the literature: (a) instrumental support, which includes family and friends, (b) informational support, which helps with information and advice that the student needs to deal with personal problems while in school, and (c) appraisal support, which helps bolster self-efficacy (Bauman et al., 2004). The quality of these external support systems has been shown to influence both satisfaction and retention (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002).

Student services.

Most of the satisfaction literature on adult students has focused on the social support systems provided by family, friends, and coworkers but little research exists on satisfying the service needs of the adult student (Bauman et. al, 2004). The service needs of the adult student are different from the traditional student needs. As a result, the adult student expectations also are different. Identifying the student needs and meeting them has been a challenge for institutions of higher education (Fall, 2001). Career service needs were ranked higher by adult students than the need for counseling services in a study done by Bauman et al (2004). This study pointed out that social support systems outside of the college campus replaced the need for counseling services on campus among adult students. Some adult student friendly institutions of higher education have recognized that adult students require different

services such as extended office hours for financial aid and the business office (Howard-Vital, 2006). The satisfaction level of students in this adult friendly environment tends to be high. Treating the adult student as a consumer also increases their satisfaction levels with their overall educational experience (McGivney, 2004).

The student as consumer viewpoint borrows from a business model where the trustees could be considered partners, the professors are the sales representatives, and the students are the consumers (Rudolph, 1990). A consumer model for fulfilling the adult student needs equates satisfaction with meeting expectations (Brocato & Potocki, 1996; Elliott & Shin, 2002). Although satisfying adult student expectations is just one constituency that the college must satisfy, studies show when institutions actively address adult student needs they improve the retention rates of adult students (Brocato & Potocki, 1996; Cheng & Tam, 1997). There is evidence that satisfaction is positively correlated with persistence (Bean & Metzner, 1985) and that it is one of the key variables to consider in studying attrition among adult students (Donohue & Wong, 1997).

<center>Attrition</center>

The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) reports that the graduation rate for adult students is 31% while the graduation rate for traditional students is 54%. Both scholars and practitioners in higher education have concluded that understanding what causes adult students to drop out of school prior to obtaining a bachelor's degree have implications for program design, recruiting practices, and institutional accommodations. High attrition rates among adult students increases higher education costs, therefore leaders charged with the financial oversight for

colleges and universities would be wise to investigate best practices for retaining adult students (Hoffman, 2000; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005; Towles & Spencer, 1993).

Attrition is commonly defined as students who no longer attend school for more than two semesters in a row and do not complete the requirements for their degree program (Resch & Hall, 2002). Studies have identified factors such as being over the age of 24, having a negative experience within the first six to eight weeks of starting classes, and being married as predictors of students who are at risk to drop out (Cantwell et al., 2001; Rautopuro & Vaisanen, 2001; Wylie, 2004). Several models have been developed in an effort to discover all the factors that influence student attrition but relatively few have addressed the factors related to adult students (Andres & Carpenter, 1997; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005). Early models of retention and attrition focused on traditional students (Astin, 1977; Tinto, 1975; Spady, 1971; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1984). Although these models provide some understanding into retention and attrition issues, they do not adequately encompass the specific issues related to the adult student (Andres & Carpenter, 1997). This section reviews the models that have contributed most directly to the current understanding related to adult student persistence.

Spady's (1971) model of undergraduate dropout decision processes focuses on interactions between the student characteristics of family background, academic potential, friendship support, and grade performance and the campus environment, which includes social integration, satisfaction, and institutional commitment. Spade's model is based on Durkheim's (1966) theory of suicide in which he argued that

suicide is the result of a person breaking ties with a social system. Low moral

consciousness and low friendship support create a lack of integration into society.

Spady theorized that these same assumptions can be applied within the higher

education environment. Low integration into the campus environment, which

includes both the college's social and academic systems, will result in a student

dropping out.

Tinto (1975) extended Spady's retention model by combining the exchange

theory with Durkheim's theory of suicide. Exchange theory is based on the

assumption that people avoid unpleasant behavior and seek rewarding behavior such

as relationships, interactions, and emotional states (Nye, 1979). If the student

perceives the benefits of staying in college to achieve their educational goal to

outweigh the costs, the student will remain in school whereas, if the student perceives

the costs of staying in school to be too high and other activities outweigh staying in

school, the student will decide to drop out, according to Tinto's model.

One component of the Tinto model is the student-institution match. The

student-institution match is influenced by several variables such as student family

background, individual attributes such as race and gender, and schooling prior to

entering the university (Tinto, 1975). These student characteristics collectively

influence the student's commitment to the institution of higher education. Successful

academic integration is measured by grade performance and social integration is

measured by the student's positive interaction with peers and faculty, according to the

Tinto model. If the commitment to the university is strong and the academic and

social integration is strong, the student is likely to remain in school (Stoecker,

Pascarella, & Wolfle, 1988). Several studies found that withdrawal patterns among traditional students supported Tinto's model but when they viewed the results by institutional type academic and social integration did not have the same level of influence. Social integration was a more significant factor in influencing persistence at four-year residential institutions, while academic integration was more influential at four-year commuter institutions (Glynn, Sauer, & Miller, 2003; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983).

Tinto's model has been the most empirically tested model of all the attrition and persistence models advanced in the last 30 years (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993). The results from the studies that have tested Tinto's model, as a plausible explanation of why students drop out, have been mixed (Anders & Carpenter, 1997; Brunsden, Davies, Shevlin, & Bracken, 2000; McCubbin, 2003; Sandler, 2000). Some studies found support for the argument that there must be a fit between the individual student and the institution in order to avoid dropout behavior (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Criticisms of Tinto's model include the idea that Tinto's Student Integration Model of persistence is inadequate in modeling student attrition, the model is only applicable to traditional students, and academic integration is not an important predictor of student attrition in adult student populations (McCubbin, 2003). Tinto's (1993) response to these criticisms resulted in a revised model, which included academic integration as a nested element in the social integration component. Testing this revised model where social integration is viewed as part of the academic integration at the classroom level, Ashar and Skenes (1993) found support for the 1993 model, when applied to adult student populations.

Bean and Metzner (1985) developed the first model of non-traditional student attrition. Previous models of student persistence and attrition focused on social and institutional integration. Because adult students interact with the college environment in a much different way than their traditional counterparts, the traditional student models of Spady (1971) and Tinto (1975, 1993) did not adequately describe adult student dropout decisions. Adult student drop out decisions are based on four sets of variables; (a) poor academic performance, (b) intent to leave, (c) student background which includes age, enrollment status, residence, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity, and gender, and (d) environmental variables which include finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, and the opportunity to transfer. Both academic outcomes such as grade point average and psychological outcomes, which include satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress, influence the intent to leave. This model demonstrates a direct link between student satisfaction with their educational experience and the decision to persist or drop out. Some suggest that combining Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean and Metzner's Model of Non-traditional Student attrition will provide a more adequate understanding of the issues related to adult student persistence (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992).

Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty informal contact is based on Katz and Kahn's (1978) theory of social psychology and its link to organizational behavior. This model brings to light the socialization issues that are a part of the attrition and persistence models of Spady (1971), Tinto (1975, 1993), and Bean and Metzner (1985). Pascarella argues that the student's background characteristics

intermingle with institutional factors, which has an effect on student satisfaction with the university, academic success, and persistence. Student background characteristics are similar to those identified by Tinto and Bean and Metzner. They include family background, aptitudes, goals, prior school achievement, college expectations, and openness to change. Institutional factors include faculty culture, organizational structure, institutional structure, institutional image, administrative policies, institutional size, admission standards, and academic standards. This model has application for the adult student in that it emphasizes the fit between the student and institutional accommodation.

Sandler's (2000) path model of career decision-making self-efficacy, perceived stress, and student persistence is the most noteworthy research since Bean and Metzner's 1985 research. His variables of interest were career decision-making self-efficacy, encouragement from the family, perceived stress, attitudes toward the cost of attending school, academic integration, social integration, grade point average, institutional commitment, and persistence. Disputing Tinto's research, Sandler found that institutional commitment and academic integration had a negative effect on persistence decisions. Career decision-making self-efficacy had the largest total effect and the largest influence on all of the other variables in Sandler's study. This path model reflects the highly interactive exchange between the adult student, the environment, and the institution. Persistence is the result of an inter-related system of relationships. For example, a student's satisfaction with financial aid will interact with family encouragement to persist to the goal of graduation. In support of

Sandler's theory, Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) found that adult students who had a managerial or professional career were more likely to persist in attaining a degree.

<div align="center">Outcomes</div>

Using attrition models as a basis for inquiry, Donaldson (1999) has developed a model of college outcomes that takes a holistic view of adult student college outcomes. This model reviews many of the issues that influence attrition but it also addresses the adult student experience on the college campus and outside environmental factors.

Donaldson's (1999) model of college outcomes is a six-component model that attempts to explain the complex nature of an adult student's life and how environmental factors outside the college environment have an influence on college outcomes. His model is based on Astin's (1984) theory of involvement, which attempts to explain the environmental influences on student development. Involvement theory appears to underlie many of the adult educational outcome models proposed in recent literature (Berger & Milem, 1999). Astin's theory of involvement is based on an input-environment-outcomes model. The environment component of the model refers to programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences that the student encounters while at college. Based on this model, Astin proposes that the more the students are involved in the college environment, the better the outcomes (Tam, 2002).

McClanahan (1993) summarizes Astin's theory of involvement as how much physical and psychological involvement students invest in college. Involvement is not a single measure but rather occurs along a continuum. Involvement can be

measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The effectiveness of a program is related to the ability of the program to increase student involvement (Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). Student involvement, according to Astin, is defined as the interactions between students and the college staff or faculty. A deeper study of Donaldson's model can provide guidance for both researchers and practitioners. The six components of the model (a) prior experience, (b) psychosocial and value orientations, (c) adult cognition, (d) the classroom connection, (e) life-world environment, and (f) college outcomes are discussed in further detail in the paragraphs to follow.

Prior Experience

An adult's experience in college is influenced by prior life experience and the varied roles adults assume while in college such as employee, family member, and community member (Kasworm, 1995) These prior experiences also have an influence on the motivation to return to school and set the stage for how adults will achieve in the college environment (Donaldson, 1999).

Psychosocial and Value Orientations

Since adults must balance competing roles, while a student, their commitment to the student role is another dimension to consider when reviewing college outcomes for adults (Cross, 1981). Because they made the decision to return to school, they may experience additional stress balancing these varied roles. In spite of the added stress, in many cases, adult students are more committed to their education than traditional students are. Even though the stress of balancing multiple roles may cause students to be more committed to their education, other elements such as lack of

confidence and the fear of being too old might have a negative influence how well an

adult will achieve in college (Novak & Thacker, 1991). The reduction of these

negative influences has been connected with higher levels of achievement (Chartrand,

1992). Adult students value the quality and cognitive components of their education

while their traditional counterparts value the social aspects of the college experience

(Kasworm & Blowers, 1994).

Adult Cognition

This part of the model considers the knowledge structures or learning

processes that adults use in college. Adults can make the connection to the real world

by finding the context of how their new knowledge can be used theorizes Donaldson

(1999). This portion of the model is based on previous work by Lave and Wenger

(1991). The adult students' social and psychological interactions with their

professors will range from looking to them as authorities on one end of the spectrum

or responding to them as peers at the other end of the spectrum (Kasworm, 1997).

How well adult students make the connection to the real world from a combination of

what they learn in college and the quality of their interactions in the broader college

environment will influence college outcome, theorized Donaldson.

The Classroom Connection

Research suggests that the classroom is the focal point for the adult student

(Imel, 2001; Kasworm, 1997). This might explain why many adults prefer live

classroom instruction to computer based classes (Youngman, 1995). The adult

student uses the classroom to create a distinction between the college experience and

the student's personal life, to illuminate existing knowledge with what is being

learned in the classroom, and to create new meaning from a constructivist's perspective.

Life-world Environment

The life-world component is defined by Donaldson (1999) as the context of the adult student's life such as the varied roles the student fulfills while a college student. Another facet of this component is the psychological and social support adults receive, while in college, from family, work, and the community (Merriam & Heuer, 1996).

College Outcomes

Although traditional outcomes such as grades and overall satisfaction with the college experience are part of this model, Donaldson (1999) has expanded the definition to include adult perceptions of how they integrate college and their life-world environment (Kasworm, 1997). This model suggests that adults' achievement in college is based in part on the prior life experience of the adult student. Although adults engage in the college experience in very different ways than their traditional counterparts, the outcome is equal to that of traditional students (Donaldson, 1999).

Implications for Leadership

The increased number of adults attending colleges and universities over the last two decades has radically changed the face of higher education (Imel, 2001). Although the research on adult student issues reveals a need for college and university leadership to reform their administrative practices, many leaders are reluctant to make the needed changes to accommodate adult students, or they lack a sense of commitment to the success of the adult students found on their campuses

(Bowden & Merritt, 1995). Leaders in higher education often find it difficult to see alignment between the institution's mission and the need for adult specific programs and accommodations. As Bornstein (2003) has pointed out, one of the major issues facing leadership in higher education today is increased competition for students. Enrollment trends indicate that adult students will soon be the majority on most college campuses. These trends would signify that colleges with successful enrollment strategies are those whose leadership is willing to create an adult student friendly environment (Hagedorn, 2005).

Kerr (Munitz & Kerr, 1998) admonishes higher education leadership to set new priorities based on today's trends in higher education, make college campuses more of a human community, and evaluate how resources can be used effectively. From a customer service perspective, Hadfield (2003) suggests that higher education leadership should listen to adult students to find out their specific needs and expectations. They should provide student services that fit an adult student's work and family schedule, find out what adult students need to learn, hire faculty who can teach adult students, and most importantly, walk the talk. If a college or university claims to be adult friendly, they need to communicate that to the adult student through their leadership decisions.

By placing an emphasis on the adult student and creating intervention strategies to increase retention rates of the adult student, higher education leadership increases the chances that the adult student will be satisfied with their educational experience (Hadfield, 2003). Marketing research reveals that a satisfied student is the school's best advertisement, increasing enrollment of future students (Brown, 2004).

Increasing adult student enrollment and retention rates has the potential to increase an institution's net profits by as much as 50% (Bowden & Merritt, 1995). With limited resources and many demands on these limited resources, it would be wise for the leadership in higher education to consider expanding the amount of resources allocated to adult education programs (Hadfield, 2003).

Both traditional and non-traditional colleges have a responsibility to address the diversity issues found on their campuses (Hadfield, 2003). A recent study by Cubeta et al. (2000/2001) found that campuses where a tolerant attitude is expressed toward their diverse student population were more successful in attracting adult students to enroll. There needs to be congruence between what adult students perceive as their needs and expectations and what the leadership perceives as being important to the adult students.

Campus leadership who have the greatest influence on the organization's culture and are responsible for making policy decisions that affect the whole institution tend to have the least amount of contact with students; both traditional and adult students (Hadfield, 2003). The front line employees of an institution are in the best position to influence how an adult student perceives their educational experience. Given these parameters, Hadfield suggests that campus leadership can and must take action that will create a more adult friendly environment. She proposes that leadership should purposefully reinforce the type of organizational culture they wish to create through rewards and praise, delegate some authority to the front line employees so they can satisfy adult needs and expectations, and provide training and resources for the front line employee so they share the vision for having an adult

friendly school. Focusing on the things that will satisfy adult student needs and expectations will help the campus leadership shape the culture of the institution (Elliott & Shin, 2002).

Summary

A review of relevant literature indicates that colleges and universities of today are very different from the colleges founded during America's early history. Various religious groups started the first colleges and their purpose was to train men who would become clergy and community leaders. Land grant and city colleges soon joined the church sponsored colleges but their purpose was to serve the agricultural and urban needs of the local citizens. Today, many different types of campuses share in the educational landscape and each one has a different purpose for existing. They include two and four year private and public non-profit and for-profit institutes of higher learning. The Civil War, the Women's movement, and the G.I. Bill were influential in changing the makeup of the students on the various campuses and today adult students are quickly approaching majority status.

Adult students bring a different set of needs and expectations to college and challenge traditional paradigms concerning institutional accommodations, student success, satisfaction, and retention. Retention rates for adult students lag behind those of traditional students but current models of retention, when tested, do not adequately explain what factors influence an adult student to remain in school or drop out.

Higher education leadership has the potential to create an environment that will increase adult student satisfaction and retention rates. By understanding the

importance of adult student issues, they have the potential to increase net profits, fulfill social obligations, and gain a competitive advantage by increasing student enrollments. They can do this by leading change initiatives and policy formation that will change the campus environment into what adult students perceive as welcoming to them.