A comparison of re-entry and traditional students needs and issues

Jacky Linn Patt
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A COMPARISON OF RE-ENTRY AND TRADITIONAL
STUDENTS NEEDS AND ISSUES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Jacky Linn Patt
Gloria Ann Stickler

June 2001
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ABSTRACT

Recent trends in higher education find men and women are returning to the classroom after a break in their formal education. Projections predict that women, in particular, will continue to return to college campuses in record numbers. Publications report that re-entry women have special needs as they are frequently returning to college as wives, mothers, employees, sisters, and friends. This research project investigated the problems faced by traditional students and re-entry men and women while attempting to achieve their undergraduate degree. These problems include role conflicts and issues relevant to time management. The problems faced by surveyed students are compared to that of the general undergraduate student population. This was accomplished by using quantitative and qualitative methods in the form of questionnaires, which were utilized to survey three hundred ninety eight California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) students. Data were analyzed by using SPSS data analysis software program. Results of this study will assist university administrations and the field of social work to better understand the unique and similar needs of the undergraduate student population.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Imagine, if you will, a circus performer balancing and spinning a plate on top of an extended pole. As the performer gets the plate spinning, another plate is added to another pole cautiously balancing and spinning the plate as anxious viewers watch expecting the plates to fall. To the amazement of the viewing audience, the performer continues adding spinning plates to poles, one after another, all the while moving between the poles to keep each plate balanced and spinning on its perspective pole. This analogy of the circus performer balancing and spinning plates is no different than that of the re-entry student, frequently balancing the role of husband, wife, mother, father, employee, sister, brother, friend, and student as their family, friends, employer, faculty, and fellow students observe to see if they can successfully balance the act to accomplish their desired educational goals.

Problem Statement

Advancing your education should be a positive life experience. However, when an individual returns to school after an absence from their education, there are often
obstacles to obtaining their undergraduate degree not experienced by the traditional student populations. Today, the re-entry student constitutes a major population of university students encountering numerous obstacles while attempting to achieve their undergraduate degree.

A close study of previously conducted research has illustrated that re-entry students are indeed a large percent of the student population, with female re-entry students increasing at a rate that surpasses the growth rate of male re-entry students (Appendix A). From 1980-1990, students under the age of twenty-five increased at a rate of 3 percent while those students over the age of twenty-five grew at a rate of 34 percent, ten times the rate for students under the age of twenty-five. Statistics also show that during the same period, females outnumbered males by a factor of two to three. These statistics compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, in the Digest of Education Statistics 1996, clearly show significant growth in enrollment of students over the age of twenty-five, and that the majority of these students are female (NCES, 1996).

Until 1979, men made up the majority of enrolled college students. However, since 1992, men’s enrollment in higher education has declined and males now make up just
44 percent of undergraduate students nationwide. This "Male Minority" is a new concept for many colleges across our nation, and is resulting in an active recruiting process for this population. In addition, statistics are showing that women earning a bachelor's degree have increased by 77 percent between the years of 1970 to 1996 while the number of men earning the same degree has increased only by 19 percent (Berryman, 2000).

However, additional studies indicate that a gender crisis in college enrollment does not really exist. A report made by the American Council on Education states "there is not a generalized educational crisis among men" (Weiger, 2000, p. 3), but do see problems among some specific populations. In particular, the African American and Hispanic male as well as low-income men fall behind their female peers in college enrollment (Weiger, 2000).

A more specific example and detailed study regarding re-entry women can be drawn from statistics compiled for the representative year of 1993. In that year, women undergraduates constituted 55.5 percent of the entire undergraduate population nationwide. Overall, female re-entry students in the year 1993 represented 25 percent of the entire undergraduate enrollment (Appendix A). This
equals an astonishing 1,710,069 female re-entry students nationwide (NCES, 1996).

Females, both traditional and re-entry have made major gains in higher education in the past twenty-five years. The traditional female student is now more likely than the male traditional student to attend college immediately after high school. A study conducted by the Department of Education in 1997, revealed that 70 percent of high school female graduates are heading straight to college while 64 percent of their male peers are making that same decision (Hebel, 2000). Many male high school graduates are choosing to enter the work field earlier, with some being lured to high-tech jobs that do not require a bachelor’s degree (Berryman, 2000).

With statistics and studies showing female re-entry students as a significant portion of the college population, we must also recognize that these women are obtaining their education in a nontraditional manner. Many may have entered college right after high school graduation, but studies show that women tend to take a more indirect route along the road to their higher education. They are exiting and reentering college at various stages throughout their lives because of children, debt, and other economic and personal issues. A study
commissioned by the American Association of University Women in 1998-99, looked at the goals, educational decisions, obstacles and opportunities that female students face in higher education. Telephone survey's on 1,070 respondents as well as on 10 focus groups were conducted with findings that supported the known fact that women will take a more circuitous route then their male counterpart, to complete their education (Weiger, 1999). Re-entry women are frequently employed, have family responsibilities, and are often times single parent heads of households requiring financial assistance and child care services as a condition for returning to school. Why, with so many obstacles, do these women return to the classroom in record numbers?

A woman may choose to return to school for a multitude of reasons. However, studies suggest that women return to school for personal growth and fulfillment (Weiger, 1999), economics, and greater recognition in the work place. According to McKenzie (1969):

Mental stimulation and the broadening of mental horizons may be the goal a woman seeks, and a college education is perceived to be the means to such an end. This goal may be articulated by meaningful guidance to the individual involved. Some women believe that all adult societal members (regardless of age or sex) should be well educated in contemporary America. There is an emphasis on lifelong learning in the
Educational ideology of the University of California as well as in that of other institutions of higher learning. (p. 44)

Economics is a second major reason women return to school (Weiger, 1999). Today, women comprise 47 percent of the work force. Most married women are employed outside the home to assist in the family income. In 1994, the median household income in the United States was $32,264 with 14.5 percent of the nation living below the poverty level (NCES, 1996). In many instances, two earner families are necessary to make ends meet. Because of the current high rate of divorce in America, women often find themselves as head of household with no spouse present. In 1994, 61.6 percent of these women were the head of households with children under age eighteen, 26.1 percent with children under age six, and 13.8 percent with children under age three (NCES, 1996). In recent years, a significant number of women have elected to have children outside of marriage. In 1992, never married female heads of households with dependent children constituted 8.0 percent of such families (Renzetti, 1995).

In the workplace, women often encounter the dual labor market, "a labor market characterized by one set of jobs employing almost exclusively men and another set of jobs, typically viewed as secondary, employing almost
exclusively women" (Renzetti, 1995, p. 26). For example, in the top ten occupations for men and women in 1992, men are concentrated in the skilled crafts such as construction workers, mechanics, and engineers. In contrast, women are found in clerical and service occupations such as secretaries, salespersons, teachers, and nurses (Renzetti, 1995). One major consequence resulting from the dual labor market is that male dominated occupations typically pay significantly higher incomes than do female dominated occupations. For example, the median weekly earnings for females that comprise 99.1 percent of the secretarial work force is $343.00. In comparison, the median weekly earnings for female engineers that comprise 7.3 percent of the male dominated engineer work force is $814.00 (Renzetti, 1995).

As a notable group within the university population of college students, re-entry women must be recognized as a special group with special needs. Many other groups that represent a smaller percentage of the college population often have established organizations and facilities where they can receive financial aid, support services, special scholarships, extracurricular activities, and other special needs met. Re-entry women should have these same privileges to help offset the stressful experience of
college life. Institutions of higher education, such as California State University San Bernardino, are taking note of this growing group of special women and are establishing Re-entry Departments and Women's Resource Centers on university campuses to address the many needs of female re-entry students.

Problem Focus

The objective of this research project was to compare the many problems faced by students while attempting to complete their undergraduate degree. The proposal of potential solutions to help augment the stressful experience of college life for undergraduate students was also sought. Research collected as a result of this project will assist the California State University San Bernardino Re-entry Center, Women's Resource Center, Counseling Center, administration, faculty, students, and society at large, to address the problems faced by traditional and re-entry students. In this report, the re-entry woman's road to higher education will be shown to be paved far differently than that of her sisters of yesteryear, and that of other modern day student populations including the re-entry male.
The term re-entry student creates a problem of its own. The term is used commonly in the educational arena today, yet it is ambiguous and undefined. Before a further discussion of undergraduate student can be addressed, an acceptable definition of the re-entry student must be established. The national average age of a high school graduate is accepted to be seventeen to eighteen years. It is also widely accepted that, following high school graduation, four to six years maximum of higher education are required to obtain an undergraduate degree. Therefore, if a student is over twenty-four years of age at the undergraduate level, it must be assumed that that student experienced a break in their higher education. Based on these criteria, a traditional student can be defined as a student twenty-four years of age or younger, while a re-entry student can be best defined as a student twenty-five years of age or older. For the purposes of clarity, this definition will be used to operationalize traditional and re-entry students for this report.

The findings of this study will be beneficial to the field of social work practice by affording social workers a better understanding of the needs of traditional and re-entry students. In an effort to better assist the traditional and re-entry student, programs might employ
social workers to provide on campus support for the needs of the undergraduate student population. Social workers working in programs such as re-entry programs, family and abuse counseling, and private counseling will then be better able to assist the re-entry student with problems they encounter during the course of continuing their education. In addition, social workers will be able to assist university administration, faculty, students, and family and friends of the re-entry student, in understanding the specific problems faced by these students as well as those problems faced by traditional students. This will result in the ability to better guide all parties to resources and solutions that can help resolve problems and conflicts. For example, if re-entry women fail in their desire to advance themselves, repercussions would impact social service agencies and society in general. Social, emotional, and economic problems, to name a few, are issues that could ensue because of the re-entry woman's failure to obtain her educational goals. If the problems of re-entry women can be anticipated and individuals can be prepared to address the problems before they arise, the re-entry woman will be successful in her quest. This success can only have
positive effects on social service agencies and society at large.

For the purpose of this research project, the research question to be answered has been twofold: what are the problems faced by re-entry students while attempting to achieve their undergraduate degree, and how do these problems compare with the general population of undergraduate students?
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical

For almost two centuries, American education barred females from attending school. Formal education was a right only bestowed to males in preparation for the labor market, which was closed to women. As boys attended school, girls remained in the home learning domestic skills in preparation for their expected role as a wife and mother (Sadker, 1994).

After much debate about the education of women, the Young Ladies Academy, the first school for girls, opened in Philadelphia in 1786. Founded on the belief that women were the first teachers of their children, thus requiring a better education for themselves, society permitted the limited opening of school doors to female students who could afford the costly opportunity. The rationale behind the opening of these school doors was to continue female education in domestic skills thus producing more proficient wives and mothers (Renzetti, 1995).

During the first half of the nineteenth century, resulting from ongoing industrialization in the United States, free public elementary and high schools opened for
boys and girls. However, a college education for the female was still considered unnecessary and any education for women was centered on their preparation for responsible motherhood. The first permanent institution offering women a curriculum similar to that of the contemporary men’s college was the Troy Female Seminary. It was officially opened in 1821 (McClellan, 1988). In 1832, Oberlin College in Ohio opened its doors to women for the first time thus becoming the first coeducational college in the United States. By 1872, ninety-six additional American colleges followed the example set by Oberlin and became coeducational institutions. However, esteemed institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, continued to deny women admission based on a number of beliefs.

The first belief was that women were naturally less intelligent than men were and their admission to these prestigious schools would lower academic standards. A second belief was that women were physically more delicate than men and the pressures of higher education would disturb their natural ability to produce healthy offspring. Further arguments suggested that women would distract men from their studies, or that women would become more like men. Eventually, additional universities
opened their doors to women but Yale and Princeton Universities did not open their doors to women until 1969 (Renzetti, 1995).

Higher education in the form of vocational training was also restricted for women during this period. With the continued growth of industrialization, a large number of women poured into the American labor force between the years of 1880 and 1930. Since one out of four workers were women, vocational training began to include the woman. However, this training was still in home economics with the goal to continue to prepare women for their roles in sustaining the central institution of modern industrial society: the family. It was thought the family should be the true aim of every woman’s work and homemaking the natural vocation for women in the new industrial order. Higher education for women in any other area was not considered necessary. Controversy existed over whether women were really profiting from the openness of the new American society. The fear was if women were working outside of their home, they would lose touch with their roles as homemaker (McClellan, 1988).

As colleges begun to open to men and women, these coeducational institutions provided men and women with different educational experiences. At liberal Oberlin, for
instance, female students were expected to remain silent at public assemblies. In addition, they were required to care not only for themselves, but also for the male students by doing their laundry, cleaning their rooms, and serving them their meals (Renzetti, 1995). Lucy Stone, a graduate of Oberlin and noted speaker for antislavery and women's rights, attended Oberlin College where she was not permitted to speak. "For the graduation ceremony she was awarded the honor of preparing the commencement address. She was elated until she discovered that she was expected to author the speech, not deliver it. A male student would give the oration. She declined the 'honor'" (Sadker, 1994, p. 21).

Coeducational colleges directed men and women into different areas of study. Men specialized in fields such as engineering, the physical and natural sciences, business, law, and medicine. Women studied home economics, nursing, and elementary school teaching (Renzetti, 1995). Frustrated with the fight for women to obtain equal educational opportunities, women, as well as some men, worked towards the creation of colleges exclusively for women (Sadker, 1994).

Wheaton College, the first college for women, opened in 1834. In the 1880's, the Seven Sisters colleges: Mount
Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliffe, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard, were opened exclusively for women. These institutions offered women the traditional men's curriculum in a supportive environment. Inspired by the educational experience they obtained, and motivated to make changes in the traditional domestic lifestyle expected of women, many of these womendeparted these universities and involved themselves in the women's movements of the early 1900's, while others pursued higher education and the professional labor market (Renzetti, 1995).

Today, women are following in the footsteps of their female pioneers that forged the path to female educational opportunities. At times however, higher education for the woman remains to be a mixed blessing. While the education of women has been recognized as a vital and necessary component in social, economic and political change, it has still been difficult to obtain complete acceptance. We continue to live in a society that is still enmeshed in a culture, which can, even today, prescribe a women's proper sphere as outside of the public domain (Thibault, 1987).
Roles and Conflict

Whatever a re-entry woman's reason may be for continuing her education, she often finds herself overwhelmed by her many roles as wife, mother, sister, daughter, employee, friend, and student, to name a few. Because economic and family responsibilities do not diminish when a re-entry woman returns to school, the re-entry woman frequently finds herself performing a balancing act like that of the circus performer as she balances her many, oftentimes, conflicting roles.

As a wife, mother, and homemaker, the re-entry woman feels a responsibility to meet the needs of her family. Traditionally, men have been able to go to school and have a marriage and family with the full support of society. The dilemma between choosing a career and family does not exist for the male. The expectation was that the college education would prepare the man for professional and public leadership roles to ultimately support his family. Higher education for women had traditionally been seen as a finishing school or as an opportunity to learn for the sake of learning rather than as a place to prepare for a rewarding career (Perun, 1982). In the early 1960's, women over thirty-five were more likely than their male counterparts, to have deferred college and career
preparation to fulfill roles as wives and mothers. Today women are becoming more aware that they may have to work outside of their home for a major portion of their adult life. However, family obligations such as domestic chores and childcare can limit or prevent study time and class attendance. Attitudes expressed by members of the family can either support or discourage the re-entry woman affecting her outlook on what she is attempting to accomplish. Spousal support may be encouraging when a woman first returns to school, but some husbands change their attitudes from consent to resentment as a result of the length of time required to complete degree requirements. Other husbands may feel that their wives have outgrown them as a result of their advanced education (CSUSB, 1997; Padula, 1994; McKenzie, 1969).

The younger traditional student also deals with conflict and role confusion at this stage of their life as they are pursuing their educational goals. Many may be struggling with mastering developmental problems of late adolescence and early adulthood. The transition from adolescent dependence upon the parent, to young adulthood independence can be difficult for the young college student. Leaving home, beginning the process of gaining autonomy and relinquishing dependency ties, learning to
balance one's personal needs with those of a new social structure, can also result in conflict within the young traditional student. The desire to remain the child to the care-taking parent often conflicts with the simultaneous desire for freedom and being on their own (Rockwell, 1986).

Young children can be another source of problems or a source of motivation for the re-entry female as explained by E. McKenzie (1969):

The felt obligation to be at home, the inability to find or to afford a babysitter or housekeeper, and the illnesses and personal needs of young children can prevent or limit the older coed's daytime class attendance and home study. On the other hand, when the children are older and are in school most of the day, some mothers are stimulated to attend college to be better-informed mothers and transmitters of knowledge for their children, to better understand what is changing in the world in general and in education in particular, and to prepare themselves for occupational positions that will enable the mothers to help defray the rising cost of living and the expenses for those things which they feel their children need and should have. (p. 75)

Today, the typical woman is working outside the home in the paid labor force. In her book, The Second Shift, Hochschild (1989) writes about what these women encounter as they strive to survive in the paid labor market and at home. Re-entry women commonly work outside of the home while attending school, and yet little has been written
about how these women must strive to survive in the paid labor market while attending school and maintaining a household. Many of these women find it difficult to be recognized or to be promoted if they can't show up early or stay late at work because of conflicting responsibilities at home and at school. At the same time, schoolwork or family life often suffer because of stress in the workplace (CSUSB, 1997; Padula, 1994).

As a student, re-entry women routinely place their coursework at the end of their daily task list. This is not to say that school work is a last priority for these women, but rather, that the expectations of family and employers frequently leave little time in the day for coursework. Many re-entry women find themselves studying after all family and employment responsibilities have been completed for the day, usually into the late night and early morning hours. In addition, many re-entry women routinely have compromised or diminished academic performance because of the time constraints keeping them from their school assignments (CSUSB, 1997). The male re-entry student does not face the same time constraints and in many cases is relieved of some family responsibilities to allow him time to study or prepare for his school assignments (Meade, 1993). The traditional
student also tends to have less family responsibilities, which allows them the opportunity to make their educational experience a higher priority.

On Campus

On university campuses and in the classroom, re-entry women often experience discrimination similar to that of their sisters of yesteryear (Christian, 1985). Micro-inequities, subtle forms of discrimination frequently directed at women occur in the college classroom. These micro-inequities "single out, ignore, or in some way discount individuals and their work or ideas simply on the basis of an ascribed trait, such as sex" (Renzetti, 1995, p. 4). More than thirty-five different kinds of micro-inequities experienced by female undergraduate and graduate students have been documented (Renzetti, 1995). Examples of micro-inequities experienced by female college students include the tone and mannerism in which they are approached by university faculty and administration.

Past successful programs that address some of the above issues for women utilized the group counseling method to help the returning student be more aware of their strong points. These programs helped the older
students learn to assess themselves more realistically. Through self-exploration, these students became more aware of their capabilities, value and aptitudes. These programs and many more like them have helped the older returning female student become more assertive with their college experience (Astin, 1976).

College degree requirements often place re-entry men and women in classes that are redundant as a result of their life experiences. For example, a married, re-entry student that is raising children, may not require a course that teaches the phases of life, which they have already experienced, such as marriage and childbirth. Many re-entry students would welcome the opportunity to substitute electives for such classes (CSUSB, 1997). In addition, required classes are frequently scheduled at times in the day that mothers and fathers of young children must be at home for children returning home from school (CSUSB, 1997; Padula, 1994).

Friendships on the college campus are often difficult for re-entry students to establish. Time constraints generally limit the amount of time re-entry students spend on campus thus limiting time for socializing. When time is available, re-entry students commonly find that their current stage in the life cycle hinders establishing
friendships with younger students who often see them as a parent figure. Student status precludes socialization with faculty on an equitable basis, which might otherwise be appropriate (CSUSB, 1997).

For the traditional student, friendships on campus are looked forward to with great excitement. Dating, relationships, and a social life are all apart of the young students' life. However, issues of sexual identity, re-identifying values, choices of whether to use drugs or alcohol become new problems for the student who must now make choices on their own (Talley, 1986).

Sacrifice and Affects

Re-entry women pay an exceptionally high price emotionally, physically, and socially when returning to school. Stress, guilt, frustration, satisfaction, and pride are but a few of the many emotions experienced as these women persevere towards their personal goals. Identity shifts are typical as women grow in self-awareness, grasping a better understanding of who they are and what they want to become (CSUSB, 1997; Padula, 1994).

Constrained by time, re-entry women often neglect their personal health while being more concerned with the
physical state of their family, particularly young children. Sleep deprivation, irregular check-ups, emotional stress, and poor eating habits, all put these women at greater risk for accidents and illness (CSUSB, 1997).

Re-entry students often have less time for a social life, if at all, whereas, traditional students commonly find time to socialize with their peers. Oftentimes, re-entry student’s telephone calls are not returned, correspondence receives no reply, friendships and relationships such as extended family, suffer in general. What leisure time is occasionally found is often spent meeting the needs of others such as children or other family members (CSUSB, 1997).

Benefits and Rewards

Graduation is the event that all students look forward to as they hurdle the many obstacles along the educational path. Their degree is the reward they receive at the finish line. However, what most students find as the true reward are their personal growth, greater self-esteem, self-confidence, and an overall sense of accomplishment. In their future endeavors in the paid labor market, they look forward to the benefits and
opportunities that possessing a degree will afford them
(CSUSB, 1997; Padula 1994).
CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN AND METHOD

Study Design

All college students face stress as they pursue their degree. However, for the re-entry woman, there is evidence to show their stress level is much higher and their pursuit of their degree is much more difficult because of their added responsibilities. Previous studies utilized for this research have supported this conclusion. However, was the research biased at the very beginning, assuming that female re-entry students had more responsibilities and thus needs? Are the needs of the re-entry male and re-entry female the same or do researchers conclude that only the female re-entry student needs special attention? Are there differences in the stress and needs of the younger student entering college following high school graduation and those of the re-entry student? Are these differences substantial? Does CSUSB need to adjust or develop programs to meet the needs of the re-entry student? These are just a few of the questions this research has attempted to answer. Thus, the purpose of this study has been to explore the needs of the traditional and re-entry student, evaluate, and compare
these needs. For the purpose of this research project, the research question to be answered has been twofold: what are the problems faced by re-entry students while attempting to achieve their undergraduate degree, and how do these problems compare with the general population of undergraduate students?

The research methods included both the quantitative and qualitative approach, with the quantitative approach being the dominant model. In the quantitative approach, the research problem focus has been the undergraduate student and the problems they face as they pursue their degree. One aspect of the previously stated research question, suggests that re-entry students may face more problems than the traditional undergraduate population. A number of variables can affect the experiences of the re-entry student while obtaining their degree. These variables were tested and compared for their significance and correlation as to their affect on traditional and re-entry students' undergraduate experiences. This approach has been used to evaluate the theory that the re-entry student population has significant needs different from traditional university students. The methods used to obtain the information for this research project has been through questionnaire surveys. All data
were collected from undergraduate students attending CSUSB.

Sampling

CSUSB undergraduate students were the population sampled for this study. The problems faced by CSUSB undergraduate students while working to achieve their undergraduate degree were the focus of the study. Data obtained have been analyzed to determine what differences exist in problems encountered by traditional verses re-entry students. Samplings of the undergraduate population were selected from students enrolled in required CSUSB capstone classes. This sample was selected because students in capstone classes represent the entire CSUSB undergraduate student population, as these classes are required of all undergraduate students to meet graduation requirements. Due to the size of the CSUSB undergraduate student population, 10,273 students (CSUSB, 2001), the researchers goal for this project was to sample six hundred undergraduate students. In all, three hundred ninety eight undergraduate students were surveyed for this research project.
Data Collection and Instruments

For the purpose of this study, survey questionnaires were used to obtain data about the college experiences of CSUSB undergraduate students. Questions pertaining to personal demographics, student status, employment and financial issues, utilization of college services, participation in college clubs and organizations, and stress factors, comprise the questionnaire to gain knowledge about the college experience of CSUSB undergraduate students.

The dependent variables for this study were measures of the undergraduate student's college experience. The independent variables include demographic information such as age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, etc. Independent variables were measured by using the nominal level of measurement except in the case of age and grade point average (GPA), which were measured by using a continuous level of measurement. A copy of the survey questionnaire developed for this research project has been included as appendix D.
Weaknesses and Strengths of the Instrument

Weaknesses of self-report inventories (SRI) relate to the potential of misreporting, as the researchers provide specific choices for respondents to answer. Strengths of the instrument used for this survey, such as the option of other as a response choice, together with write-in sections and open-ended questions, provided the respondent with alternative choices and the opportunity to provide personal comments.

Procedures

The researchers obtained approval from CSUSB Institutional Review Board, administration, and faculty to distribute survey questionnaires in CSUSB undergraduate required capstone classes.

Spring quarter was selected for surveying students to better capture undergraduate student experiences over the course of the traditional school year. Twenty-four capstone courses were offered during the spring quarter. Classes were randomly selected from the twenty-four offered courses to determine the order in which students would be surveyed to reach the six hundred student survey goal. Professors for each course were contacted by e-mail to request sampling of enrolled students in their capstone
class. A second e-mail was sent to non-respondent professors. A telephone call was made to professors who did not respond to either e-mail request. In all, fourteen professors connected with the researchers by either e-mail or telephone. From the fourteen professors, eight professors agreed to permit sampling of their students. Reasons given by the six professors who denied sampling of their students included no time for surveying due to time requirements to present course material, non-approval of the questionnaire, and the subject of the survey did not pertain to course material being presented.

Questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of class sessions. Students were informed they had a fifteen-minute time limit to complete the survey, as time limits were set by the professors. Researchers remained in the classroom during surveying and collected surveys at the end of the fifteen-minute time-period.

Protection of Human Subjects
To maintain the anonymity of human subjects, names of participants were not collected on the completed survey questionnaires. Informed consent forms were attached to the front of the survey to describe the purpose and procedure for the study and requested the participant's
mark, as acknowledgment of consent to participate in the study (Appendix B).

A debriefing statement was provided with the survey questionnaire to inform the participants as to how they can obtain information about the study and its results (Appendix C). There were no known risks to human subjects as a result of completing the survey questionnaire.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to answer the twofold research question: what are the problems faced by re-entry students while attempting to achieve their undergraduate degree, and how do these problems compare with the general population of undergraduate students?

Data were analyzed by using SPSS, a data analysis software program designed specifically for research and statistics. SPSS was utilized to complete frequencies of all sample data collected. The chi square statistical test was used to compare categorical data.

Demographic Characteristics

Appendix E provides characteristics of the participants. As can be observed, 38.7 percent of the 398 respondents were male, while 61.3 percent of the respondents were female. Of the three hundred ninety eight respondents, 56.3 percent were defined as traditional students, and 43.7 percent were defined as re-entry students. Further analysis determined 19.8 percent were male traditional students, 36.5 percent were female
traditional students, 18.8 percent were male re-entry students, and 24.9 percent were female re-entry students. The youngest students responding to the survey were eighteen years of age as set by study criteria. The oldest respondent was seventy-six years and nine months of age.

As demonstrated, ethnicity was reflected as follows: 47.2 percent of the respondents were Caucasian, 26.4 percent were Hispanic or Latino, 9.3 percent were African American, 7.5 percent were Asian, 1.3 percent were Native American, 7.8 percent selected other, and 0.5 percent were determined uncertain. Of the 7.8 percent of respondents who selected other as their response, researchers determined by write-in answers that these respondents identified themselves to be of multiple ethnicities, or Italian, Pakistani, Dutch, Indonesian, Egyptian, and Filipino. A response of uncertain reflects a non-response or illegible writing by the respondent.

Analysis of the data reflects marital status of the students surveyed as follows: 64.6 percent were single, 23.6 percent were married, 4.0 percent were divorced, 0.8 percent were widowed, 4.8 percent were living with significant other, 1.5 percent selected other, and 0.8 percent provided no response. Of the 1.5 percent who selected other as their response, researchers reviewed
write-in answers and determined responses were not pertinent to the question asked. Further analysis determined 46.8 percent were single traditional students, 19.3 percent were single re-entry students, 5.7 percent were married traditional students, 18.5 percent were married re-entry students, 0.5 percent were divorced traditional students, 3.6 percent were divorced re-entry students, 0.0 percent were widowed traditional students, 0.8 percent were widowed re-entry students, 3.3 percent were traditional students living with a significant other, and 1.5 percent were a re-entry student living with a significant other.

Survey results reflect 70.6 percent of respondents having no children, 23.3 percent of respondents have one to three children, 3.7 percent of respondents having four or more children, 0.1 percent report being pregnant, and 2.3 percent of respondents did not respond to the question.

From the data, researchers determined 73.9 percent of the respondents were employed, 25.6 percent were unemployed, 0.5 percent did not respond to the question. Of the employed students, 12.06 percent were male traditional students, 22.6 percent were female traditional
students, 11.8 percent were male re-entry students, and 14.6 percent were female re-entry students.

Student status, as demonstrated in the analysis of data, demonstrates 88.2 percent of respondents were full time students enrolled in twelve or more units; 11.8 percent of respondents identified themselves as part time students enrolled in less than twelve units. Of the full time students, 18.1 percent were male traditional students, 33.9 percent were female traditional students, 16.1 percent were male re-entry students, and 20.1 percent were female re-entry students. Of the part time students, 1.7 percent were male traditional students, 2.5 percent were female traditional students, 2.8 percent were male re-entry students, and 2.8 percent were female re-entry students.

Findings

Data reflect 69.8 percent of students surveyed transferred directly from high school to college, while 29.6 percent report taking a break before transferring to college, 0.5 percent of students did not respond to the question. Reasons given for not transferring directly to college include: to seek employment, to have a family,
Students surveyed show 99.2 percent believe they will succeed in achieving their degree. Responses to questions regarding why students are attending college were categorized into three groups: 52.5 percent responded to further their education or for personal achievement, 45.0 percent stated to obtain better employment opportunities, financial gain, and career goals and, 2.5 percent did not respond to the question asked.

Analysis of the data reflects 3.3 percent of students were receiving public assistance such as SSI and welfare, and 53.8 percent of students were receiving student financial aide. Of the students receiving student financial aide, 40.5 percent were receiving student loans, 38.9 percent were receiving student grants, 8.3 percent were receiving a student scholarship, and 9.0 percent indicate receiving other financial assistance such as veteran’s educational benefits. Of the students surveyed, 15 percent indicated they did not know how to apply for student financial aide. Traditional and re-entry students equally reflect 7.5 percent of this 15 percent.

Transportation is not stressful to 78.9 percent of respondents. However, 20.4 percent indicated
transportation issues are stressful. Of the issues noted, gas prices, mileage, and commuting time to campus were reported as factors contributing to stress.

Finding time to study is difficult for 60.1 percent of respondents, while 38.7 percent report no difficulty, and 1.3 percent of respondents did not respond to the question. For those students reporting difficulty in finding time to study, 8.0 percent were male traditional students, 25.4 percent were female traditional students, 10.6 percent were male re-entry students, and 16.1 percent were female re-entry students. Of the students reporting no difficulty, 11.6 percent were male traditional students, 10.8 percent were female traditional students, 7.8 percent were male re-entry students, and 8.5 percent were female re-entry students.

Physical health suffers as a result of attending college according to 22.4 percent of respondents, while 76.4 percent reported their health was not affected by attending college. Percentages not reflected are the result of non-responses to the question. Of the respondents who report their health is suffering as a result of attending college, 2.8 percent were male traditional students, 8.3 percent were female traditional
students, 4.0 percent were male re-entry students, and 7.3 percent were female re-entry students.

Bivariate Analysis

The chi square statistical test was used to compare dependent and independent variables to determine significant associations between traditional and re-entry student experiences. A significant association was determined to exist in only four categories.

A cross tabulation demonstrated that traditional students are significantly more likely to utilize recreational facilities than re-entry students (Chi square = 11.5, df = 1, p < .001).

Stress related to grades was a more significant concern for the traditional student than the re-entry student (Chi square = 7.428, df = 1, p < .01).

Traditional students are more significantly affected by conflicting time demands than re-entry students (Chi square = 4.019, df = 1, p < .05).

A cross tabulation showed that re-entry students are significantly more likely to receive emotional support from their children than traditional students (Chi square = 75.06, df = 1, p < .001).
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The objective of this research project sought to compare the many problems faced by students while attempting to complete their undergraduate degree. The most interesting observation obtained from this project, is that all students, traditional and re-entry, have similar as well as unique experiences while obtaining their undergraduate degree.

Because this research has been comparing re-entry students with the traditional undergraduate population, the data collected has provided information about undergraduate students and the stress they face while furthering their education. The qualitative and quantitative approaches provided information unexpected to the researchers as experiences and emotions expected of re-entry women were found to apply to male and female re-entry students as well as traditional students.

Although the literature demonstrates that re-entry women pay an exceptionally high price emotionally, physically, and socially when returning to school, research conducted found this to be true for all
undergraduate students. The same holds true regarding feelings of stress, frustration, satisfaction, and pride as these were expressed by male and female undergraduate students.

Time management was an issue mentioned by traditional and re-entry students. However, this research found a significant association for stress and conflicting time constraints among traditional students. The researchers expected to find the significance to be among re-entry students because of their many responsibilities and roles such as spouse and parent. However, this research discovered that traditional students also have many responsibilities and roles such as boyfriend, girlfriend, family member, and employee.

Physical health suffering as a result of attending college was expected to be most true among re-entry women. However, findings from this research demonstrate that a greater number of traditional female students associate problems related to health and attending college.

Researchers expected re-entry students to have less time for a social life and relationships, while expecting traditional students to find time to socialize with their peers. However, this research demonstrated this not to be true. In terms of relationships, analysis of the data
demonstrated that both traditional and re-entry students experience relationship issues while attending college. For the traditional student, the most commonly reported relationship issues related to difficulty dating, boyfriend and girlfriend issues, and parental issues. For re-entry students, the most commonly reported relationship issues were reported as role conflicts in being a student, spouse, and parental issues.

Whereas noteworthy data was obtained from conducting this research, several aspects of the study could have contributed to a stronger study. In this study of undergraduate students, the researchers definition of traditional and re-entry students neglected to consider students attending college part time, without a break in their education. Such students could be considered traditional as well as re-entry students because they would still be in school at age twenty-five or greater, yet never having a break in their education. This point lends credence to the difficulty in defining a re-entry student.

Professors limiting time for surveying to fifteen minutes is a factor that most likely contributed to some students not completing their survey or elaborating on answers. If students had more time to complete surveys, or
were permitted to take surveys home, answers may have reflected college experiences more accurately. However, one must consider that students taking home surveys have the potential to not return surveys to the researchers.

Perhaps a larger sample population would have created a more compelling study. Though this study has significantly contributed to a better understanding of the CSUSB undergraduate student's college experiences, a larger sample could have provided a better representation of what traditional and re-entry students are experiencing.

Implications

This study confirmed the belief that all students would benefit from having social workers on campus. A proposal for a potential solution to help alleviate the stressful experience of college life for undergraduate students includes having social workers assisting college students. Social workers can provide valuable on campus and community resources to alleviate stress.

Campus social workers can educate potential students and professionals in local communities about the realities of attending college. By doing so, professionals can assist in promoting confidence and alleviating stress and
apprehension for the potential student as they pursue their educational goals. Clinical social workers can assist undergraduate students and their families with relationship issues, i.e. dating, faculty, employment, and social issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence. Whereas college campuses provide counseling centers, utilizing such centers often results in a student being labeled due to their seeking psychiatric assistance. Therefore, students are often reluctant to request support through these centers.

The CSUSB health care center has implemented the use of social work interns for the benefit of students. Other campuses have staffed Licensed Clinical Social Workers to assist students. CSUSB students would benefit from having experienced, permanently staffed clinical social workers in addition to social work interns. CSUSB students would benefit from having social workers in a variety of settings across the campus to provide access to more students as all students do not access the health care center. By placing clinical social workers across the campus, students would have better access to information about resources and clinical support as needed. Clinical social workers in facilities such as the cross-cultural center, re-entry center, and childcare center would
benefit students and their families in obtaining assistance as needed.
APPENDIX A

FALL UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT
Total Fall Undergraduate Enrollment in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education for 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Total Fall Undergraduate Enrollment</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>7,179,482</td>
<td>3,381,997</td>
<td>3,797,485</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 and 19</td>
<td>2,323,726</td>
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<td>22 to 24</td>
<td>1,304,599</td>
<td>700,230</td>
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<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>564,648</td>
<td>285,851</td>
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<td>30 to 34</td>
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<td>35 to 39</td>
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<td>18 and 19</td>
<td>397,072</td>
<td>180,320</td>
<td>216,752</td>
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<td>20 and 21</td>
<td>534,304</td>
<td>243,943</td>
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<td>819,729</td>
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<td>220,179</td>
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<td>65 &amp; over</td>
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<th>Age Range</th>
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<th>Women</th>
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<td>Full Time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18 and 19</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35 to 39</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 to 64</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65 &amp; over</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age Unknown</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<table>
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<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Under 18</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18 and 19</td>
<td>8.6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22 to 24</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
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<td>30 to 34</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age Unknown</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender for 1993

Chart 1.
1.) Male
2.) Female

1993 Undergraduate Fall Enrollment by Age & Gender

Chart 2.
1.) Men < 25
2.) Men > 25
3.) Women < 25
4.) Women > 25

Data taken from the National Center for Education Statistics-Digest of Education 1996.
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to explore the undergraduate college experience. The study is being conducted by Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler, MSW students, under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, professor of social work. Dr. McCaslin may be contacted at (909) 880-5507, Cal State University San Bernardino, Pfau Library, Room 253, to answer questions regarding participant rights. This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

For this study, you are being asked to complete a survey questionnaire. Questions pertain to demographic information about yourself and information about your undergraduate college experience. Information collected will assist the researchers in understanding issues related to Cal State University San Bernardino students.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. The identity of the participants will remain anonymous. Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researcher(s). You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. All data will be reported in group form only at the conclusion of the study. Results of this study will be published June, 2001, and held on file for public viewing in the California State University San Bernardino, Pfau Library.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age and am a registered, Cal State University San Bernardino undergraduate student (working to achieve Bachelor's Degree), and I have not previously participated in this survey.

Participant Acknowledgment Mark

Date
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Research demonstrates that the undergraduate student's college experience varies among individuals. The purpose of this study is to examine college experiences among traditional and reentry students at Cal State University San Bernardino.

Results of this study will be published and held on file for public viewing in the Cal State University San Bernardino, Pfau Library, June 2001. Please contact Dr. McCaslin at (909) 880-5507, Cal State University San Bernardino, Pfau Library, Room 253, to answer questions regarding participant rights.

To maintain the integrity of this research project, please do not reveal the contents of this study to other potential study participants. Thank you for your time and valuable contribution to this study.
APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE
Please check the appropriate box or write in the correct answer that pertains to you:

A1. Gender: 1 Male 2 Female

A2. Age: _____ years _____ months

A3. Which of the following best represents your ethnicity?
   1 Caucasian 4 Asian
   2 Hispanic or Latino 5 Native American
   3 African American 6 Other:

A4. Current Marital Status:
   1 Single
   2 Married
   3 Divorced
   4 Widowed
   5 Living with significant other
   6 Other:

A5. Number of Children:

A6. Which of the following levels of education best describes the highest level of education achieved by your mother?

Mother
   0 No Response
   1 6th grade or earlier
   2 7th grade through 9th grade
   3 10th grade through 12th grade
   4 Trade School
   5 1 year college education
   6 2 years college education
   7 3 years college education
   8 4 years college education
   9 College Degree of BA or equivalent
   10 Masters Degree
   11 Doctorate
   12 Other: _________
A7. Which of the following levels of education best describes the highest level of education achieved by your father?

Father

0  No Response
1  6th grade or earlier
2  7th grade through 9th grade
3  10th grade through 12th grade
4  Trade School
5  1 year college education
6  2 years college education
7  3 years college education
8  4 years college education
9  College Degree of BA or equivalent
10  Masters Degree
11  Doctorate
12  Other: ____________________
Please check the appropriate box or write in the correct answer that pertains to you:

B1. I am a:

1 Part time student (less than twelve units per quarter)
2 Full time student (twelve units or more per quarter)

B2. Did you immediately transfer from high school to college?

1 Yes  2 No  Reason If No Answer:___________________________

B3. At what age did you begin your college education? ___

B4. Have you ever taken a break from your college education?

1 Yes  Please briefly state number of breaks from undergraduate education and reason(s) for break(s):

___________________________

2 No

B5. Why are you attending college? _________________________

B6. Do you think you will continue working towards your undergraduate degree without future breaks in your education (taking at least one class per quarter)?

1 Yes  2 No  Reason If No Answer:___________________________
B7. Do you believe you will succeed in achieving your undergraduate degree?

1  Yes  2  No

Briefly, state why you believe you will, or will not, achieve your degree: ________________________________

B8. What is your current overall G.P.A.? ________________

B9. What is your major? ________________________________
Employment and Financial Issues

Please check the appropriate box or write in the correct answer that pertains to you:

C1. Are you currently employed?
1 Yes If yes answer, how many hours per week do you work? ________
2 No

C2. What is your personal annual income?
0 Unemployed
1 $0 to $4,999
2 $5,000 to $9,999
3 $10,000 to $14,999
4 $15,000 to $19,999
5 $20,000 to $24,999
6 $25,000 to $29,999
7 $30,000 to $34,999
8 $35,000 to $39,999
9 $40,000 to $44,999
10 $45,000 and above

C3. Are you currently receiving public financial assistance such as SSI, Welfare, etc.?
1 Yes 2 No

C4. Do you currently receive student financial aide to attend college?
1 Yes 2 No

C5. Do you know how to apply for student financial aide?
1 Yes 2 No

C6. Please check all of the following answers that apply to you:
1 I am currently receiving student loans
2 I am currently receiving student grants
3 I am currently receiving student scholarships
4 I am currently receiving other: _______________________
5 None of the above choices apply to me
C7. What are your major sources of funding for your education? Please check all of the following answers that apply to you:

1. Personal Earnings
2. Spousal Earnings
3. Parents
4. Extended Family
5. Personal Loans
6. Investment Dividends
7. Alimony
8. Retirement Benefits
9. Veteran’s Benefits
10. Other: ____________________
College Services and Organizations

Please check the appropriate box or write in the correct answer that pertains to you:

D1. I use the following college services (please check all of the following answers that pertain to you):

1. Library
2. Computer Labs
3. Food Services
4. Recreational facilities
5. Student Health Center
6. Multicultural Center
7. Child Care Center
8. Women's Resource Center
9. Adult Reentry Center
10. Other:
11. I do not use any college services

D2. I am a participant or member of one or more campus clubs, organizations, sororities, fraternities

1. Yes
2. No
Please check the appropriate box or write in the correct answer that pertains to you:

E1. I find attending college to be a stressful experience
   1  Yes  2  No

E2. What aspect of academic work creates pressure or anxiety for you? (please check all answers that pertain to you)
   1  None
   2  Exams
   3  Grades
   4  Homework Assignments
   5  Research Papers
   6  Inadequate Study Skills
   7  Financial Demands
   8  Conflicting time demands
   9  Reading concentration
  10  Reading comprehension
  11  Instructor(s)
  12  Relationships
  13  Physical Condition
  14  Other:

E3. Please briefly explain what causes stress for you while attending college

Cause of stress ____________________________

Not applicable to me as I do not experience stress
E4. I have emotional support and encouragement from the following individuals while attending college (please check all of the following answers that pertain to you):

0 None 6 Grandmother(s)
1 Spouse 7 Grandfather(s)
2 Child(ren) 8 Aunt(s)
3 Mother 9 Uncle(s)
4 Father 10 Others, please state: ____________
5 Friend(s)

E5. I find transportation to college to be a source of stress

1 Yes 2 No

E6. I find it difficult to find time to study

1 Yes If yes answer, please briefly state why you find it difficult to find time to study: ____________

2 No

E7. What time of the day do you generally study? (please check one answer that most pertains to you):

1 Morning
2 Afternoon
3 Evening
4 Late Night (Midnight - 5:00 a.m.)
5 Other, Please Explain: ____________

E8. What days of the week do you generally study? (please check one answer that most pertains to you)

1 Weekends
2 Weekdays
3 Other, Please Explain: ____________
E9. I find relationship and/or family issues to be stressful while attending college

1. Yes 2. No

*If yes answer, please briefly explain what issues are stressful for you: ________________________________

E10. My physical health suffers as a result of my attending college

1. Yes 2. No
Your Comments

F1. Please briefly describe any issues, obstacles, etc., that make going to college a difficult experience for you:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

F2. Please briefly describe what makes going to college a positive experience for you:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

64
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHICS
### Respondents

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### Ethnicity

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<td>1</td>
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APPENDIX F

SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS
### D1 Use of Recreational Facilities

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### E2 Grade Related Stress

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### E4 Emotional Support From Children

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REFERENCES


ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:
   Assigned Leader: Gloria Stickler
   Assisted By: Jacky Patt

2. Data Entry and Analysis:
   Team Effort: Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:
   a. Introduction and Literature
      Team Effort: Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler
   b. Methods
      Team Effort: Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler
   c. Results
      Team Effort: Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler
   d. Discussion
      Team Effort: Jacky Patt and Gloria Stickler