The Relationship Among Family Problems, Individual Adjustments and the Reentry Students’ Perception of Problems

With Reentry

by

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THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG FAMILY PROBLEMS, INDIVIDUAL ADJUSTMENTS AND THE REENTRY STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PROBLEMS WITH REENTRY

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(ABSTRACT)

The composition of the population of undergraduate students in the U. S. has changed dramatically in recent years. A number of factors including societal transformations, a changing economy and demographic trends of the past decade have had particular impact. The cohort of students over age 30 is now the fastest growing segment of students who are entering or returning to colleges and universities. At this age the mature student is generally well established in work, community and family.

While much of the research has focused on individual student needs, it has failed to investigate family and education interactions among older married reentry students. This is despite the reality that family concerns are often cited as the primary reason a reentry student withdraws from school.

In this study, stepwise multiple regression was used to determine the extent to which gender, demographic background, and family issues explain the variance in reentry student perception of reentry student problems. This analysis yielded results which support the thesis that regardless of the student's gender, family problems are the strongest predictor of reentry student problems.
Implications from this study may provide invaluable information to counselors, student service professionals, administrators, educators, and other professionals who work with reentry students and their families. This information can help to dispel myths and to aid reentry student and family adjustments.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The composition of the population of undergraduate students in the United States has changed dramatically in recent years. Of particular interest is the number of older students entering or returning to college. Approximately 45% of the total U. S. undergraduate college student enrollment is now composed of reentry students (i.e., adults 30 or older) (Chartrand, 1990), 60% of whom are enrolled in degree programs (Hirshorn, 1988). The population of older students, both proportionately and in absolute numbers, is projected to continue to increase throughout the next decade (Brazziell, 1989; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Crimmins & Riddler, 1985; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1987). Thus, the cohort of students over age 30 is now the fastest growing segment of students who are entering or returning to college (Wilson, 1990).

A number of factors have influenced this trend. Societal transformations, a changing economy and demographic shifts of the past decade have had particular impact on the composition of this student population. After World War II more Americans from varying socioeconomic and educational backgrounds than ever before began to enter college. The passage of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act in 1944, known as the G.I. Bill, provided economic subsidies for more than two million veterans most of whom were male. In the 1960’s, partly as a result of the feminist movement, society’s definition of sex roles for men and women drastically changed and women began to enroll in post secondary education in greater numbers than ever before (Rice, 1983).

Increased inflation followed by a slow down of economic growth has led to economic uncertainty throughout the past twenty years. This instability as well as advanced technology and a growing need for human services providers have encouraged a
return to school for further education among many non-traditional students (McIlroy, 1984; Puryear, 1988; Puryear & McDaniels, 1990).

In addition to societal and economic shifts, demographic changes have also affected the post secondary school population. Cross (1981) alludes to the changes in demographics by pointing out the fortuitousness to colleges and universities that the “baby boomers” reach their peak just as the baby bust generation become college age. Nationally there has been decreased enrollment among “traditional” students who are between 17 - 24 years old (Long, 1983). Concurrently a growing number of students 30 or older, often referred to as “reentry” students, have entered the educational arena and have become a gradually expanding portion of the college undergraduate population (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Hruby, 1985; Kasworm, 1980 a, b; 1990).

In spite of the rising divorce rate and an increasing number of single parent families, nearly three quarters of the women and approximately 70% of the men over age 30 are married. This marital rate increases as age advances toward 50 (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). Reentry students within this age range are likely to be married and are generally well established in work, community, and family (Wilson, 1990). Many of them are parents of families which include children who are adolescents. They typically retain their previous roles of spouse, parent, and employee when they go back to school.

While the reentry student is already challenged with the demands of multiple roles, the student role may be yet another addition to this list (Gilbert & Holahan, 1982; Gilbert, Manning & Ponder, 1980; Suitor, 1985; 1987; 1988). Often these students find that the performance of some roles has to suffer in the presence of the additional demands. The marital relationship may also be required to adapt to changing role definitions and expectations as one of the partners adds the student role to their portfolio (Huston-Hoberg & Strange, 1986; Suitor, 1985; 1987; 1988). Indeed, research suggests that individuals who
adapt most effectively to the student role, and make a strong commitment to their course
demands, may do so by investing less time in spouse and parent roles (Beutell &
Greenhaus, 1983).

Problems commonly experienced by traditional college students have been well
documented. There is also a body of research which deals with areas such as role strain
(Brandenberg, 1974; Gerson, 1985; Hooper, 1979; Kirk & Dorfman, 1983), demographic
and social factors (Teachman & Paasch, 1989), and marital strength (Firestein, 1984;
Huston-Hoberg & Strange, 1986; Scott & King, 1985; Suitor, 1985; 1987; 1988) as it
impacts the individual student. However, there is a void in the literature dealing with the
interaction that occurs within the family system when a parent returns to school (Kelly,
1985). This is despite the reality that family concerns are often identified as the primary
reason for an older student’s withdrawal from school (Brainard, 1973; Flannery & Apps,
1987; Garrison, 1985; Gorter, 1978; Kowalski & Cangemi, 1983; Malin et al., 1980;
Martin, 1988; Manheimer, 1983; Marlowe, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

Dynamic interactions occurring within the family system contribute to the reentry
student’s individual self-evaluation. Not only is this student being challenged to continue
to deal with the responsibilities of a family, but his/her coping process will be impacted by
his/her perception of how reentry is affecting the family. This study examines the effect
that selected family and individual factors have on the reentry student’s perception of
problems associated with reentry. Specifically, this study considers gender differences as
well as assesses reentry student’s perception of family problems, marital strength, parent-
adolescent relationship changes since reentry, and self-esteem on the student’s perception
of problems related to reentry. The study further controls for status variables including the
reentry student’s time in school, hours per quarter, years out of school before reentry, and number of children living at home.

Rationale

This study is important because it explores a relatively unexamined experience of contemporary American families. It deals directly with the growing population of men and women who have chosen to return to school and who are parents of adolescents.

Hughes (1989) suggests that the demographic profile of the college student has changed so dramatically that the growth and survival of institutions of higher education are dependent upon the ability of these institutions to attract and retain older students. In order to survive the demographic changes (e.g., decrease in the number of “traditional” students and an increase in reentry students) colleges and universities must become more attractive and supportive to both reentry students and their families.

Even though the reentry rate for men and women has become very similar (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1987), persistent gender bias in favor of men has been of concern to educators and feminist scholars for the past two decades. This concern has resulted in a proliferation of studies of reentry women, but there has been no similar advocacy for men. Therefore, gender differentiation will be especially useful in describing and delineating the characteristics of reentry students.

The results of this study could be helpful to prospective students in assessing possible costs and benefits of returning to school at age 30 or older. Information on the difficulties of reentry for students and families could help to create the institutional and familial changes necessary for a more positive transition. Improved adjustment could help decrease the dropout rate which drains individual, family, and school resources.

From a broader perspective, the impact of this study could help state legislatures and other policy making bodies. Institutions which deal with academic financing and
policies should be made more aware of the need for the funding of certain programs which may contribute to the healthy growth of higher education for all students regardless of age and family circumstances.

**Conceptual Framework**

Symbolic interaction assumes that members of a family construct their own realities and engage in interaction with each other because they are capable of sharing meaningful symbols. This theory, which focuses on the central importance of perception, provides a circular view of interaction underscoring the belief that both the individual and the family are products of interpersonal interaction (Leigh & Peterson, 1986; Peterson, 1987; Stryker, 1968).

Complex sets of meanings are conveyed in families through symbols that allow each member to communicate and share experiences (Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979). Events or phenomena that occur can be designated with meaningful symbols by one or more family members. Their concept of social reality can then be shared by others in the family. Through interaction of this kind, common meanings evolve within families, including the significance attached to such concrete objects as money, education, grades, or such abstract phenomena as achievement, responsibility, and relationship satisfaction. Most importantly, however, symbolic capacities provide structure to the interaction occurring within family life as members assign meaning to their own actions and to those of others.

All families are under some degree of stress most of the time (Boss, 1988; Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987). However, there are critical periods of stress and development for the family which are characterized by fundamental, rapid, and dramatic changes in all family members. These periods are crucial because the family system must adjust to new competencies and concerns of its members as well as deal with perceptual changes that
accompany changes of roles and responsibilities (McGoldrick & Carter, 1982). Reentry creates a potentially stressful change in the family system which can cause family members to use their abilities to exchange significant symbols as a means of communicating expectations for their own behavior and that of others within the family. Such a situation may be created when an adult family member returns to school.

Families under stress construct a symbolic reality based on shared meaning and role expectations. The degree of stress caused by an event depends not only on the magnitude of the event but also on the family's perception of that event. The meaning that the family gives to an event is key to their appraisal of the situation. This meaning influences how the family will act and react to what is happening to them (Boss, 1988; McCubbin & Figley, 1983). The meaning that both the reentry student and their family attach to the student's reentry is critical to the increase in the amount of family and individual stress that returning to school creates for the reentry student and the family system.

Each family member may feel the stress that is caused by the shifts in family relations and interactional patterns. As role definition becomes more abstract, the reentry student and family are often forced to define the meaning that they attach to reentry. While to some reentry students and families reentry might be viewed as an opportunity to grow and become more independent, other students and families might see reentry as confusing and threatening to the stability of the family.

To the extent that changing demands pressure members to improvise and to create new role expectations (e. g., how the role is performed, who performs it), family members are engaged in role-making. Role making is the spontaneous reenactment of a role. Reentry families' experiences may lead to more role-making than non-reentry families'. In addition, parents who are reentering school may find themselves in the reevaluation process in regard to who they are and what their roles might now be in relation to their adult
partners, adolescents, and employers. This process can cause a restructuring of former relationships which can create and intensify stress (McCubbin & Figley, 1983).

Reentry is a potential stressor, which may increase family needs for resources to help them cope with the additional stress. Some of these resources might include a strong marital relationship, a satisfying parent-adolescent relationship, and student’s self-esteem which may aid the reentry student and his/her family in coping with the potential stress caused by reentry.

Objectives

The major objective of this study is to examine variables related to the reentry student’s perception of family functioning and how they relate to a positive or negative perceptions of the reentry experience. The effect of demographic variables such as time in school, years out of school before reentry, hours taken per quarter, and number of children living at home on the student’s perception of reentry student problems are also examined. Other objectives include:

1. The examination of gender differences in the reentry students’ perception of marital strength, changes in the parent-adolescent relationship since reentry, self-esteem, and family problems.

2. The examination of gender differences in the reentry students’ in status variables including time in school, years out of school before reentry, hours taken per quarter, and number of children living at home.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Clearly norms and expectations in regard to gender and age have drastically changed over the years and are continuing to do so. Today there is more social credibility for adults to undertake undergraduate education as a means of career mobility, life stage transition or self-fulfillment (Astin, 1984; Astin & Kent, 1983; Chickering & Havinghurst, 1989; Campbell, 1980; Griff, 1987; Holland, 1985; Hooper & Rice, 1987; Hu, 1985; Jacobowitz & Shannon, 1982).

In this research project, reentry student is defined as an undergraduate student, age 30 or older, who has matriculated in an institution of higher education with the intention of pursuing an undergraduate degree. This individual is older than the traditional undergraduate student, and has been out of school for several years. The reentry student may be returning to finish an incomplete college degree, or may be attending college for the first time (Crimmins & Riddler, 1985; Lance, Lourie, & Mayo, 1979, a,b).

Benshoff (1989) and Kasworm (1982) suggest that while reentry students share educational experiences and classroom space with traditional students, they differ appreciably from their counterparts in needs, issues, and life stressors. Many returning students have a spouse, children, and a full time job. The student role is usually an additional one that is added to the repertoire of already existing activities and responsibilities. Young (1984) suggests that multiple and disparate roles often compete with each other for priority within reentry students’ lives and can result in additional stress for both the student and his or her family. While a younger individual may continue in the role of a student as he or she moves from high school to college, Sewell (1984), states that “for most adults, the desire to attend college has been present for a long time, but was delayed because of one or more transitional or situational barriers.” (p.312).
Reentry Women

One of the most noticeable trends in the literature concerning reentry to school is the overwhelming proportion of studies that focus on women. Feminist scholars such as Astin (1984), Christianson and Wilson (1985), Gerson (1985), Kahnweiler & Johnson (1980), Leavitt (1989) and a host of others, have written extensively about the problems and opportunities of women who have returned to school. Other related studies consider the potential uniqueness of reentry women. These studies suggest that reentry women have needs, goals, values, expectations, and fears that are different from other college populations (Adelstein, Sedacek, & Martinez, 1983; Cooper & Maddox, 1983; Etaugh & Spiller, 1989; Felicetti, 1984; Freilino, 1985; Gartland, 1985; Hendel, 1983; Okun, 1984; Roehl & Okun, 1984; 1985).

There is a growing body of research that deals with women's motivation for returning to school. Two decades ago, Brandenberg (1974), indicated that a frequently cited reason for a woman returning to school was the maturing of her family. She studied women who had been out of school for 15 years and identified this as the time when many women resume their education. Brandenberg (1974) described this time frame for women as "middle motherhood." She suggests that it is during this period family responsibilities decrease significantly and women, free from intense parenting obligations, often look beyond the family for continued growth and fulfillment. According to Brandenberg (1974) women, often feel stagnant after this life change, and want a meaningful career or financial independence.

More contemporary studies such as Mohney and Anderson (1988) expand Brandenberg's (1974) life cycle related findings. In their study of women employed full time outside the home, Mohney and Anderson (1988) found that a woman's return to school was influenced significantly by the state of relationships within her family and not solely on her desire to pursue a career and enhance her self-worth. In addition, most
women reported sensing that the “time is now,” that they felt able to take on the additional role of student and wanted to do so for themselves. Most significantly, women reported that they felt they could return to school when they believed that their return would not harm anyone else. This study inferred that a woman’s decision to enter/reenter school was made within the context of family, children and fellow workers/employers. The women in Mohney and Anderson’s (1988) survey cited role demands including family responsibilities as the most important barrier to reentry.

Clayton and Smith (1987) examined the reasons given by women for their return to school and found that self-improvement, self-actualization, vocational, role, family, social, humanitarian, and knowledge, were most often cited as motives for reentry. The age of these women ranged from 26 to 60, with a median age of 32. Reehling (1980), who conducted a longitudinal assessment of women’s motives for reentry, discovered that over time, women reported greater internal motivation such as self-improvement and fewer external motives such as career, job, or financial security for pursuing a degree. Leavitt (1989) studied women between the ages of 28 and 48 who were considered full time students and taking a minimum of 12 credit hours. Based on her sample, she suggested that women pursue a college degree to develop a career, achieve independence, and expand their identity development.

Impact of Reentry on Women

Once the mature woman has made the decision to reenter school, implementation of her plan is not always easy. The characteristics and concerns that are said to make reentry women unique also pose a unique set of problems for her. Reentry women experience both role strain and role satisfaction (Brandenberg, 1974; Hooper, 1979, 1981; Gerson, 1985; Kirk & Dorfman, 1982) in the student role. Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles
faced by women is juggling the many roles incumbent on spouse/parent/worker/student (Glass & Rose, 1987).

In their study, Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) found that married women who participate in multiple roles run the risk of experiencing conflict in those roles. Kirk and Dorfman (1982) looked at the marital status, the number of children living in the home, and the years out of school before reentry of women over 35 years of age to determine the impact of these variables on role strain. They discovered that, while years out of school was positively related to role strain, number of children was not significantly related. Kirk and Dorfman (1982) also found that the principle drawback to reentry in regard to role strain centered on lack of time for preforming multiple roles which is consistent with other literature. Gerson’s (1985) study considered the number of children living in the home and their effect on the role strain felt by the reentry student. In this study she discovered that the women in school who had older children experienced less role conflict.

Leavitt (1989) states that reentry women are “pioneers seeking to combine both traditional and current conceptions of women’s roles” (p.301). These women must make decisions about their continued personal growth within the context of their families. Many women in Leavitt’s (1989) study cited their attempt to combine home and non-home roles as their greatest source of stress. They found it difficult to develop an integrated role which combined their concerns for themselves with their connectedness to their families. Therefore, their stress increased as they added the student role to their existing role portfolio.

The previously mentioned studies imply that women struggle not only with the decision of when to return to school but also with concern over how this decision will impact themselves and their family. These studies further suggest that the primary cause for female reentry is the need to self-actualize or redefine one’s identity as the result of changes in the family, including children going to school or leaving home.
Although this research includes both surveys and structured interviews, it is unclear how the constructs were measured and what safeguards to prevent bias were built into either the survey instruments or the interviews. Social desirability geared toward self improvement and the demand set of the questions may predispose a positive response to questions dealing with self-actualization or identity which may not be the case when answering questions based purely on economic concerns. Although ultimately the return of women to post secondary education could be the result of a combination of factors including the desire for continued growth and change as well as for improved economic status, the literature reviewed clearly points to the former with exclusion of the later.

**Gender Issues**

Little attention has been given to reentry males even though men comprise more than one-third of all reentry students (DeGroot, 1980). In fact, Sewell (1984) and Streeter (1980) suggest that in the past women were overrepresented among reentry students, but now men and women are equally likely to return to school. In order to understand if the differences in the reasons that men and women reenter are gender based differences it is important to consider both men and women in the same study.

In their study of both male and female reentry students, Bauer and Mott (1990) refer to the disharmony in the lives that both men and women stemming from competing commitments to children, spouses, and jobs. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) interviewed approximately 2,000 men and women to determine their reasons for reentry. They discovered that reentry for both men and women was directly related to significant life changes. These changes stemmed from careers, family situations, health, religion, or leisure opportunities. Smart and Pascarella (1987) identified personal, educational, and occupational motivations as reasons that adults tend to resume their education. In both of
these studies getting a college degree was not seen as an end in itself but as a means to change or cope with changes that had already occurred.

Spanard (1990) suggests an exchange perspective of reentry in that adults, tend to determine timing of return by what they perceive as the costs and benefits associated with reentry. If the man or woman perceives the benefits as outweighing the costs of reentry then they will reenter.

In her study of male and female returning students, Rawlins (1979) conducted structured interviews with open-ended questions and suggested that self-fulfillment was the primary reason for reentry. Two of the reasons for the delay of return to school were family concerns and the impact of increasing role demands. Lance et al., (1979, a) determined from their study of reentry men and women that both have the same concerns about reentry and that “a large proportion of reentry students have common needs” (p. 483). In a study conducted by Kinnier and Townley (1986) dealing with the major value conflicts of reentry male and female graduate students, they concluded that women are more torn between their family and career roles than are men. However, men are also affected by the impact of reentry on the family.

Sewell (1984) in a sample of 906 students comprised of 62% female and 38% males, studied the events that trigger adult enrollment in a college degree program. His study was undertaken to determine their reasons for returning to college, the barriers that prevented them from returning to college, and the specific triggers that led to their decision to return. More than 50% of the subjects in Sewell’s (1984) sample cited career oriented objectives as the most important reason for returning to school, while 42% cited personal growth objectives such as learning, achieving independence and developing a sense of identity. Men’s and women’s reasons for returning to school were not different.

Early studies dealing with women only suggest that men and women have different motives for reentry. These studies further suggest that men and women are differently
impacted by reentry. There are few studies that deal with both men and women reentry students. However, this literature suggests that men and women both have the same basic motives for reentry and that they are equally effected by reentry. Therefore it is hypothesized that there will be no difference between male and female reentry students in regard to their perception of marital strength, parent-adolescent relationship changes since reentry, their self-esteem, and their perception of family problems.

**Stress Associated with Reentry**

“Stress or crises is defined as the interaction of a particular type of event with its perceptions” (McCubbin et al., 1980, p. 855). The clustering of normative and non-normative events (e.g., continuing family and individual development, role changes due to student reentry, work, and school demands, family role changes) may lead to “pile up” of stressors, and a heightening of stress and strain on the family and student coping ability (Boss, 1988; Olson et al., 1983).

Rice (1979) states that “a return to school or work is a role increment that impacts upon the whole family system” (p. 215). Theorists have posited that a change in any one member, in this case the reentry student, results in reciprocal changes for each family member and for the family as a whole (Hoffman, 1980; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Walsh, 1982). Okun (1984) suggests that when needs and goals of one system (e.g., personal system) change then other systems of the individual’s life system are composed (e.g., family system, and career system) are effected.

Individual, family, and career development are interrelated (Okun, 1984); consequently stress in one area will result in strain in another area. Most individual problems have an impact, first on one member and then other family members before becoming a family concern (Olson et al., 1983).
Flannery and Apps (1987) identify stress as one of the difficult things for a returning student. The balancing of spouse, family, and worker roles with the addition of the student role is the greatest cause of stress. For instance, reentry student stress in the academic arena may lead to family disruption due to the perceptions of all the family members who become aware of the problems. At the same time these family members are dealing with their own normative concerns. Empirical evidence suggests that less competent reentry students might punish themselves for academic failure, causing interpersonal problems that would place a burden on family coping (Kjerluff and Wiggins, 1976). On the other hand, findings about competent students indicated these students experienced generalized anxiety, but could more easily channel this into constructive activity, which illustrates individual coping which eases strain on family coping (Kjerluff and Wiggins, 1976). The interaction of the event with its perception clearly determines the amount of stress that will occur in the family.

“Families can often cope with stress more effectively if they develop explanations for how the event could be rearranged to overcome the undesirable situation” (Olson et al., 1983). For the reentry-student family, this may include such activities as focusing on the desired outcome of the experience, down playing temporary distress, finding alternative sources for accustomed family and individual activities and pleasure, and determining to take advantage of the possibilities for individual and group growth in the new situation. Reframing, to fit the stress into a more positive and manageable mode, may allow the individual and family system to function more smoothly.

Although there is no research on reentry student family coping based on family organization, there is some research based on how roles are viewed within the family (e.g., egalitarian vs. traditional) and how these affect reentry women students. Hooper (1979) found that in egalitarian families reentry women were generally willing to drop out of school if a real emergency occurred, but indicated that they would return as soon as
possible. In traditionally oriented families, women indicated they would stop their education if their family objected, even if the objection was not crises based. These two major types of coping styles were reflected in the general literature, indicating women have to make hard choices in order to access off-time transition into education. No similar findings were available for men, though there is no reason to think that differing family orientations might not affect their educational choices as well.

Reentry students’ greatest concerns involve family issues (Flannery & Apps, 1987; Gerson, 1985; Mishler, 1983). Current research indicates that it is the reentry student’s perception of how the quality of family relationships are effected as a result of reentry that causes a great number of students to drop-out (Bauer & Mott, 1990; Flannery & Apps, 1987, Rands & Schiavo, 1984).

While the dynamic interactions of family systems and academic performance by school age children has been understood empirically for some time, the interactions between family systems and students in higher education has not been explored (Gilbert, 1982). Gilbert (1982) suggests that ignoring the family influence and interactions with the reentry student, from a systems point of view, is a serious oversight. The family as a unit is subjected to various stresses and potentially threatening events. The reentry family is being challenged to adjust to the stress created by a variety of social and emotional pressures that result directly from the parent’s decision to reenter the educational arena. At the same time such families are being asked to readjust their perceptions of what living within the family structure includes.

In order for the reentry student and family to be able to cope effectively with this off-time transition, both the individual and family must have resources. Marital strength, the reentry students self-esteem, and the reentry student’s perception of the positive changes in his/her relationship with his/her adolescent are among the resources available to help the student and family through this transitional period.
Marital Strength

Spouse relationships are important to the reentry student (Berkove, 1979; Gilbert, 1982; Hooper, 1979; Katz, 1976; Mendelson, 1980; Rice, 1982; Suitor, 1988). Adults play many roles, and being a student is only one of them, albeit a very consuming role for a limited time. The intensity and high demand role of student creates a need for spouse support. Several studies have addressed the effect of a woman’s reentry on marital strength. Kelly (1982), Katz (1976), and Hendel (1983) found that reentry had a somewhat positive effect on marital happiness.

In her study of 44 married mothers who were reentry students and 33 of their husbands, Suitor (1987) discovered that marital strength was dependent upon the amount of time (i.e., full-time or part-time) the student was in school. She determined that marital strength declined over the year among couples in which wives were enrolled as full-time students and changed little among couples in which the wives were part-time students. It was noted that marital strength changed substantially more for husbands than wives. This decline in marital strength between full-time students and their husbands appears to have been related to changes in the women’s performance of family roles over the year, and to the husband’s response to those changes. Leavitt (1989) noted that women reentry students were reluctant to place additional burdens on their husbands, even though they could relieve some of the pressures and stresses associated with being a reentry student. Consequently, these reentry students continued to fulfill their former role as well as the additional student role.

One of the possible negative effects on marital strength that Ballmer and Cozby (1981) describe in their study suggests that when a woman demonstrates her ability to perform in the academic arena this may provide a threatening situation for both marriage partners. Husbands of returning women appear to feel ambivalence about their wife’s new
role. They are proud of their wives’ accomplishments, but may feel uncomfortable about their spouses’ new autonomy (Ballmer & Cozby, 1981).

Various forms of spouse support have been identified as important to the adjustment and matriculation of reentry students (Berkove, 1979; Hooper, 1979). These include emotional, instrumental, and functional support (Suitor, 1988).

In studies which include both male and female reentry students, McLaughlin (1985) noted as students, married men get more emotional, instrumental, and functional support than do married women. Gilbert (1982) in a study of graduate students, found more stress among those less traditionally oriented male graduate students who attempt to share more family responsibility than among more traditional males.

DeGroot (1981) suggests that female students’ marital happiness appears to be dependent on the amount of support the student perceives her spouse to be giving her. In her study, male students reported receiving more spousal support than the female students. The wives of male students also reported giving more spousal support than the husbands of female students. For male students in this sample, marital happiness depended primarily on the amount of support perceived by the student (DeGroot, 1981).

In their study, Huston-Hoberg and Strange (1986) found significant differences between the men and women in the degree of attitudinal, emotional, and functional support students experienced from their spouses. Wives seemed to be more supportive of their husbands’ return to formal education than husbands’ of wives who were reentry students. Gilbert (1982), in a review article discussing findings about graduate students, reported high levels of marital satisfaction among adult students.

Flannery & Apps (1987) and Suitor (1987, 1988) suggest that spousal disapproval can be devastating to the reentry student’s educational endeavors. Conversely, spouse support and spousal attitude become crucial for married reentry students (McLaughlin, 1985: Rice, 1983) and can be come a powerful resource for the reentry student.
While there are few studies that deal with the effect of reentry on marital strength, the literature that is available suggests that there is a relationship between reentry and the effect that returning to school has on the marital relationship. Therefore it is hypothesized that there is a relationship between marital strength and the reentry student’s perception of reentry student problems.

**Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change**

Other relationships within the family can also be considered resources for the reentry student. The parent-adolescent relationship and the degree of satisfaction both members of the dyad derive from the relationship can be a buffer against outside stressors.

Although there is little research that deals with reentry families, the studies available suggest an improved relationship between women who reenter and their children (Hendel, 1983; Katz, 1976). Kelly (1982) reported that women and their spouses believed that the father became more involved with the children and consequently spent more time with them after the mother returned to school. Her study supported the idea that fathers tended to have a better father-child relationship with older children because fathers may be more capable of interacting with the adolescent on a more adult level.

Katz (1976) noted that as the result of reentry “many wives and husbands reported that the family had drawn closer together and the affects on children were positive; including greater independence, responsibility, and interest in school” (p.103). Spreadbury (1983) supported Katz’s findings and also reported that from the reentry mother’s perspective, one of the greatest benefits of reentry is that her children have had to become more independent and self-sufficient.

Kirk and Dorfman (1982) found that psychological support from children was strongly related to satisfaction in the student role. The median age of the respondents was 40 years with a range of 35 to 67 years. Almost all had at least one child living in the
home; the median number was 2.6. The mean age of the youngest child in this study was 13.7 years. They posit that a possible explanation for these findings is that the women in this study were older reentry students with adolescent children living in the home. "These older children were themselves in school and could appreciate what it meant for their mothers to return to school" (p. 23).

Although there is no literature available that deals specifically with the impact of reentry on the relationship between the father and an adolescent there is no reason to believe that the same benefits would not apply albeit to possibly a lesser degree. Logic suggests that besides the possibility of adding stress to the parent-adolescent relationship reentry could, in fact, enhance the father-adolescent relationship because with the addition of the student role, the reentry father might become more aware of the academic and time pressures that his adolescent is facing. Because one of the tasks of adolescence includes increased differentiation from parents, the parent who is involved in handling a variety of roles and enhancing his/her own life for whatever reason might provide the adolescent with more space for their own growth.

The parent and adolescent each view interactions from the meaning that they attach to their own perceptions of what is taking place. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, parents and adolescents share meanings from their interaction with each other. This allows for communication of the shared experience while maintaining and possibly enhancing the relationship (Leigh & Peterson, 1986; Peterson, 1987).

Parents and adolescents perform roles to the extent that sets of socially defined expectations provide meaning to each situation and guide or constrain their behavior within the parent-adolescent relationship (Peterson, 1987). Adolescents continually redefine who they are by responding to the expectations of new and more diverse sets of others as development proceeds (Leigh, 1986; Steinberg, 1983). The reentry family that includes an adolescent, is being further challenged to deal with the continual shifting and modification
of the role that the adolescent plays in the family. Parental college reentry may further exacerbate such role changes. Therefore, the roles of both the reentry parent and the adolescent are undergoing transitions simultaneously which can create increased stress within the family.

As roles change and expectations are modified, relationship satisfaction between parent and adolescent may change, too. If both the reentry parent and the adolescent perceive the changes to be beneficial, the relationship can continue to grow and relationship satisfaction might increase. In this case, both the reentry student and the adolescent will benefit from the reentry student’s expanding roles. Alternatively, if both the parent and adolescent do not perceive the changes to be profitable, the relationship will become more estranged and relationship satisfaction might decrease, perhaps leading to more perceived stress due to school obligations. In this case, both the reentry student and the adolescent will suffer from the reentry student’s increased roles.

Although there is not a specific literature that deals with the interactional effects of a parent’s reentry on their relationship with their adolescent, symbolic interaction suggests that the relationship will be effected by this event based on the meaning that both the parent and the adolescent attach to the parent’s reentry. Therefore, it is hypothesized that there is a relationship between the parent’s perception of changes in the relationship with his/her adolescent as a result of his/her reentry and the degree to which the parent perceives problems associated with reentry.

Reentry Student Self-Esteem

Rosenberg (1965), has defined self-esteem as “the evaluation the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to him(her)self: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval” (p. 5). Self-esteem can be a resource for dealing with stress. It can
provide the reentry student the necessary coping mechanism to handle new situations and roles brought about by reentry.

Simpkins and Ray (1983) and Wheaton and Robinson (1983) found that for reentry women, the return to the academic arena can heighten self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Researchers who have studied women see reentry as having a positive effect on self-esteem (Astin & Kent, 1983; Mishler, 1983; Prager, 1983). Hooper (1973) found that the length of time in school as a successful student was found to be positively correlated with higher self-esteem. Pirnot (1983) looked at the correlates of persistence for reentry women and found that those with higher self-esteem were more likely to persist in the student role until graduation than those with lower self-esteem scores.

While it is generally assumed that performing several roles may contribute to overload, Pietromonaco, Manis, and Frohardt-Lane (1986) suggest that performing several roles may enhance feelings of self-worth. From their study of 500 women they concluded that with relation to women, managing many tasks may generate a sense of increased competence and worth. They suggest that having multiple roles may contribute to self-esteem because performing a variety of tasks and interacting with more partners can increase one’s sense of competence and can facilitate the development of a richer more complex view of self. Baruch and Barnett (1980) and Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering, (1989) also proposed that women with more complex lives and multiple roles have more opportunity to gain competence, and therefore they do well in educational reentry.

Although the research dealing with self-esteem as it relates to both male and female reentry students is scarce, there are some studies that do address this issue. Rawlins (1979), in her study of both male and female reentry students, noted that respondents expressed positive feelings about themselves and that reentry resulted in increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness for those who participated in her study.
Muench (1988) studied a group of 62 male and 34 female reentry students. She identified the importance of self-esteem in relation to degree completion for both men and women reentry students.

Another facet of self-esteem as it relates to reentry students is in the area of academics. Low self-confidence about the ability to succeed in academia reappears in a number of studies. Lance et al., (1979, b) found, in an examination of 583 returning students, that the fear of not being smart enough, fear of failing, concern over the ability to study and learn, and fear of a dulled memory were mentioned as hurdles that the reentry student must often face. Those with higher self-esteem tend to be more able to conquer their fears about possible abilities and to successfully complete the degree process (Austin & Kent, 1983; Pirnot, 1983).

The literature thus suggests that there is a relationship between reentry student self-esteem and the ability to persist and achieve in the academic setting. Consequently it is hypothesized that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and the reentry students' perception of problems related to reentry.

Family Problems

Although family relationships can be viewed as resources for coping with the potential stress of reentry, problems within the family such as difficulty managing children, a spouse who resents outside demands on the reentry student’s time, or family or personal illness can be seen as creating additional stressors.

Adult students are likely to have families of their own and to be involved with the responsibilities for physical, emotional, and financial support of other family members. Hence, these students are not only committed to the role of student but must also deal with prior interpersonal relational commitments involved with being a spouse and a parent. The logistics of scheduling changes conflicting expectations, and role overload may challenge
the traditional parental roles, consequently the balance of role expectations and mutuality of support in the marital relationship may shift.

Leavitt (1989) stated that the women in her study reported feeling guilty about not having enough time for their children. Rand and Schiavo (1984) reported that for 80% of those who had dropped out of school family complications were the primary cause. Berkove (1979) noted that older female married students with at least one child living at home who had dropped out reported a significantly greater amount of stress from family problems than those who continued to pursue their education.

Other studies that dealt with the attrition of older students, both male and female also supported the thesis that family problems were the major reason for the reentry student’s withdrawal (Brainard, 1973; Gorter, 1978; Martin, 1988). Flannery and Apps (1987) suggest that balancing school and family time was the only significant variable in their study that became a more severe problem over time for the reentry student. In a study by Apps (1986), one woman student explained, “I’m not sure I can get everything done,” another said, “I won’t have any time until the end of the semester” (pp. 8-9).

Apps (1986) theorized that the actual returning to school has an impact on all aspects of a person’s life but the student gradually adjusts to student life and stress is mitigated. However, he found this not to be true in his study of 19 males and 24 females. What Apps found was that time in school was positively related to the amount of perceived stress.

Although there is a paucity of research that deals with the effect of family problems on the reentry man and woman, the studies available clearly point to the fact that family problems are instrumental in determining the reentry students decision to remain in or withdraw from school. Therefore based on both previous research and the theoretical basis provided by the symbolic interaction conceptual framework, it is hypothesized that
there is a positive relationship between family problems and the reentry student's perception of reentry student problems.

Reentry Student Problems

The fewer resources the reentry student has and the more family problems encountered, the more difficult the student role may become. Adult returning students cite lack of time, cost, home and job responsibilities, classroom settings, psychological reasons, and illness as reasons for dropping out once they return to school (Flannery & Apps, 1987; Long, 1983).

Chartrand (1990) suggests that positive self-evaluation and commitment to the student role are pivotal to the success of the reentry student. She further implies that low self-confidence in academic settings may cause distress and that the reentry student must have supports to help him/her deal with the possible role strain that adding the student role causes.

Depending on the reentry students age, Richter-Antion (1986) suggests that lack of an age cohort and self-consciousness about age difference may be very real problems for the reentry student. If the student has been out of school for sometime, lack of self-confidence and ability to perform academic tasks may be obstacles. Depending on the distance to the university from the home, commuting too might create added difficulty.

Summary

As a result of the review of the literature several status variables seem to be associated with reentry student problems. The difficulty of the student role would logically be directly effected by the number of credits the student takes (Leavitt, 1898; Suito, 1987, 1988). Previous research suggests that the years out of school creates a difference in reentry difficulties (Flannery & Apps, 1987). Further, the length of time in school since
reentry would also be important to control for because of inconsistent results demonstrated in previous literature (Apps, 1986). The number of children living at home, too, seems to impact the reentry student’s adjustment (Gerson, 1985; Kirk & Dorfman, 1983).

Although marital strength and the reentry student’s self-esteem have been studied, albeit insufficiently, there is a definite void in the literature dealing with the effects of reentry on family relationships. It is these relationships that Flannery and Apps (1987) suggest are most often the cause of reentry student withdrawal. On the other hand, they imply it is also these relationships that might prove to be the most powerful resources for the reentry student.

Consequently, an empirical examination of reentry student gender as well as the affect of marital strength, parent-adolescent relationship change, self-esteem, and family problems on the reentry student’s perception of problems associated with reentry might contribute to knowledge about the reentry/family interface. Figure 1 graphically depicts this model.
Figure 1: Variable Influence Model
Chapter 3

Methods

The present study was a secondary data analysis of an extant data set constructed with a sample drawn from a major southeastern university. At that university, researchers were primarily interested in gathering empirical data about adult students’ personal and family interactions as they participated in higher education. This study was primarily descriptive in nature (Wilson, 1990).

Specifically, these researchers focused on establishing a reentry student profile in the realms of gender, family influences, prior educational attainment, and employment. They also looked at problems encountered by the student and reasons for reentry as well as the unique potential contributions that reentry student family life has on the decision and experience of reentry.

Sample

The original sample involved 500 currently married reentry students, age 30-50 years old at a major southeastern university. They were selected by computer randomization to receive a survey. Each survey consisted of a questionnaire on which the student’s name was not included. A mail survey method was used (i.e., complete mailing, post card reminder, complete remailing to those who did not reply). From this number, 218 useable surveys were collected. The 218 respondents represented currently enrolled (i.e., both full-time and part-time) married men and women undergraduate students who were between the ages of 30-50. No restrictions were placed on length of time in school, the presence or number of children, race, income level, employment, academic class level or other considerations. The sample was comprised of 70% women and 30% men.
From the larger sample, a subsample of married reentry men and women students ages 30-50 who had adolescent boys and girls, ages 10-19, living full-time in their home was drawn. This included 102 reentry student respondents including 71 women and 31 men. Of this group 97 were planning to obtain a degree. The student was taking an average of 10 hours per quarter with a range from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 20 (M= 10.29, SD=4.35). For this subsample, the amount of time in school since reentry ranged from those who had just returned and were involved in their first quarter of academics, to those who had attained senior status and had been in school for a maximum of 20 quarters (M = 7.48, SD = 4.98). The number of years out of school before reentry ranged from 2-25 years (M = 14.38, SD = 6.52). The number of adolescents in the family ranged from 1 to 4 adolescents (M= 1.82, SD = .73). Over 50% were Caucasian and reported having a household income over $30,000 indicating that most families who participated in this study were white and in the middle income bracket.

**Procedures**

Demographic background was assessed in terms of age, race, marital status, number of children living in the home, highest level of education attained by mother and father, current student status, level at which the student reentered, students’ intentions with regard to completing degrees, number of hours usually taken quarterly, approximate grade point average, major, length of time in school since reentry, years out of school before reentry, spouse’s student status, hours per week of employment, hours per week of spouse employment, whether or not student commutes, or was a veteran, family income, approximate high school size, size of community in which the student lived before reentry, what part of the state the student was from. Questions that addressed various issues from the parent’s perspective were incorporated into the questionnaire. This instrument was
designed to provide information from the parents’ perception of the change in family functioning since reentry as well as their perception of reentry student problems.

The survey instrument for this project was a self-report questionnaire. The survey instrument was mailed to each subject with a cover letter explaining the purposes of the research, explaining the informed consent, and requesting participation by filling out the questionnaire and signing the informed consent form. The cover letter also asked the subjects if they had a child between the ages of 10-19 living in their home full-time. The instrument was to be completed and returned in an enclosed postage paid envelope in order to assure privacy.

The first contact included the questionnaire, cover letter, consent form, and a return envelope. This mailing was followed by a postcard reminder to those who had not responded within 10 days. A follow up letter including a copy of the questionnaire and return envelopes was mailed to those who had not responded within one week after having mailed the post card.

Assurances of confidentiality were provided to participants by indicating that there was no way of identifying any of the returned questionnaires with any particular respondent. The only identifying mark was a case code. This code in order to track returned questionnaires and to conduct follow up mailings. Each participant was given instructions on how to contact the investigator for more information if he or she wished to do so. Respondents were also told that they could obtain results of the analyses by way of a University publication which would be made available to them on request.

Of the original 500 questionnaires mailed 44% were returned providing information from 218 married reentry students.

Approximately 45% of the respondents indicated that they had at least one adolescent child (i.e., 102 reentry student homes with adolescents).
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Data Reduction and Transformation

The data collected from this study was transferred to code sheets, entered into the mainframe computer at the university, and transferred to computer tapes for backup purposes. The information is stored at this university and has been available to consultants at Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Central Michigan University, the University of Tennessee, and the University of Kentucky.

Instrumentation

Family Problems

The variable Family Problems was operationalized by using a 12 question scale to measure the respondents' perceived level of family problems. Participants were asked to respond to 12 items dealing with perceived changes in family problems since reentry. The items began with the statement: “Did your stress increase, stay the same, or decrease when you went back to school?“ in reference to things such as difficulty in managing children and fulfilling your role as parent. The response choices range from 1 for “strongly disagree,” to 5 for “strongly agree.” Cronbach alpha was used to measure the internal consistency; reliability was found to be .78 for this sample (See Table 2).

Reentry Student’s Self-Esteem

Global self-esteem was assessed by the Rosenberg Scale (1965). This frequently used, reliable, and valid scale includes 10 statements that assess both positive and negative assessments of self such as: “I am satisfied with myself on the whole,” and “I certainly feel useless at times.”

For each statement the reentry student responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree,” to 5 “strongly agree.” Mean scores were used in the analysis to
determine subjects’ relative level of self-esteem. Chronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency; reliability was found to be .83 for this sample (See Table 2).

**Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change**

The variable Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change was assessed by summing 13 items pertaining to reentry students’ perception of change in their relationships with their adolescents since reentry. For each statement the reentry student responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree,” to 5 “strongly agree.” Participants were asked to respond to questions such as: “Since I reentered school the child I have in mind,” “complains that we have too little time together,” and “treats me with respect.” Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency; reliability was found to be .88 for this sample (See Table 2).

**Marital Strength**

The variable Marital Strength was operationalized by summing 13 items pertaining to reentry students’ perception of the strength of their marital relationship. For each statement, the reentry student responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 for “strongly disagree,” to 5 for “strongly agree.” Participants were asked to respond to 13 items dealing with their perceived level of spousal support since reentry which included items such as: “Gives me emotional support,” and “discusses ideas and interests with me.” Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency; reliability was found to be .91 for this sample (See Table 2).
Time in School

Time in school was measured by one item asking the respondent to fill in a blank for the number of quarters in school since reentry.

Hours Per Quarter

Hours per quarter was measured by the respondent filling in a blank which asks for the number of hours usually taken each quarter.

Years Out of School

Years out of school was measured by response to an item asking the respondent to fill in a blank with the number of years out of school before reentering.

Number of Children

This variable was measured by response to the item, “Number of children living in the home.”

Reentry Student Problems

The dependent variable, Reentry Student Problems, was assessed by summing 11 items pertaining to the reentry student’s perception of the degree to which the reentry student identifies problems that are typically related to reentry. For each statement, the reentry student responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 for “strongly disagree,” to 5 for “strongly agree.”

The items were introduced with the statement: “Please rate the following items from the most problematic (5) to the least problematic (1). Circle the number that corresponds with your estimation of the seriousness of the problems.” Example items included: “Distance of University from home;” “Self-conscious about age;” “and lack of employer
support.” Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency; reliability was found to be .76 for this sample (See Table 2).

**Analysis**

Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and other descriptive measures were calculated. Correlational tests were used in order to examine the relationship of certain variables and their effect on the reentry parent’s perception of school problems.

T-tests were performed in order to ascertain if there were significant differences between the genders.

To help understand the regression results, Pearson correlations assessed the strength of the relationship among the variables. Only those correlations significant at the .05 level are noted.

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to determine the extent to which demographic background, family problems, the reentry student’s perception of change in the parent-adolescent relationship, marital strength, and self-esteem scores statistically explain the variance in the reentry parent’s perception of student problems. Finally, a backward procedure was used to obtain the strongest predictors in the proposed model.
Chapter 4

Results

Gender Differences

Initially, it was of interest to examine the differences between male and female reentry students for all variables. It was hypothesized that gender would influence the student’s perception of reentry student problems. Means, standard deviations, and ranges for all variables as well as the reliabilities for all scales are shown in Table 2. T-tests were performed to examine differences in scale means for males and females (see Table 3). Hours per quarter was the only variable that had significant difference means between the sexes. Females (M=11.15) had a greater number of hours per quarter than males (M=8.1) (t=3.22; p=.002). This implies that female reentry students are enrolled in more classes per quarter than are male reentry students.

This analysis further demonstrates that for this sample, 30% of which were male, there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in their perceptions of reentry student problems, their view of the strength of their marriages, their level of self-esteem, their perception of change in their relationship with their adolescents, the amount of time that they have been in school since reentry, years out of school before reentry, or for the number of children living in their home.

Correlations

It was of interest, at first, to look at the simple relationships between the variables to see if they were at all related and also to assess multicollinearity. The Pearson correlations for the variables used in this study are shown in Table 4. An examination of the bivariate relationships in this table indicates that several of the Pearson correlation coefficients are statistically significant. Specifically, reentry student self-esteem and marital strength are highly correlated suggesting a positive relationship between these two variables.
Table 2:  Means, Ranges, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients for Variables in Study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>8-33</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Parent’s Self-Esteem</td>
<td>32.11</td>
<td>19-40</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Problems</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>4-19</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Strength</td>
<td>46.43</td>
<td>18-62</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Student Problems</td>
<td>28.98</td>
<td>13-52</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in School Since Reentry</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per Quarter</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Out of School</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>2-25</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Student’s Gender</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=102

*p< .05

**p< .01

***p< .001
Table 3: Paired t-Tests Comparing Gender with Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Means  SD</td>
<td>Means  SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Adolescent Relationship</td>
<td>15.85  5.24</td>
<td>16.93  6.22</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Parent's</td>
<td>32.46  4.28</td>
<td>31.91  4.48</td>
<td>-.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Problems</td>
<td>5.25  3.53</td>
<td>6.42  4.89</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Strength</td>
<td>48.55  7.45</td>
<td>45.55  9.97</td>
<td>-1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Student Problems</td>
<td>27.70  6.84</td>
<td>29.40  8.61</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in School Since Reentry</td>
<td>8.70  5.68</td>
<td>7.02  4.61</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per Quarter</td>
<td>8.17  4.24</td>
<td>11.15  4.11</td>
<td>3.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Out of School</td>
<td>14.06  2.25</td>
<td>14.63  6.43</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>1.82  .71</td>
<td>1.81  .74</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N=102
*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
There is also a positive relationship between self-esteem and length of time since the reentry student’s return to school \( r = 0.21, p < 0.05 \). The length of time that the reentry student has been in school since his/her return and the total number of children living in the home are also significantly correlated \( r = -0.23, p < 0.01 \). This would indicate that the longer the reentry student has been in school since reentry the fewer the number of children living at home. Years out of school and family problems are negatively related \( r = -0.26, p < 0.01 \) suggesting that the longer the reentry student has been out of school before returning, the fewer family problems the student perceives. Hours per quarter and reentry student problems are correlated at \( r = 0.23, p < 0.01 \). This implies that the more hours per quarter the student is taking the greater the possibility that they perceive problems with such things as distance from the university, financial concerns or other reentry student problems. The student’s perception of change in the parent-adolescent relationship since reentry was highly correlated with family problems \( r = 0.42, p < 0.001 \) suggesting a positive relationship between these two variables. As was hypothesized, family problems and the reentry student’s perception of reentry student problems are highly related \( r = 0.53, p < 0.001 \). This would indicate, as expected, that the more family problems, the more the reentry student perceives problems associated with reentry.

**Multiple Regression Results**

Multiple regression can be used to evaluate the overall contribution of the independent variables to the variation of the dependent variable or as a method of evaluating the contribution of a single independent variable controlling for other independent variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). In this study, multiple regression procedures were used to examine the contribution of reentry student’s perception of parent-adolescent relationship change since reentry, the student’s self-esteem, perception of family problems, marital strength, time in school, hours per quarter, years out of school, number of children, and
gender to the reentry student’s perception of reentry student problems. Table 5 presents the results for the full regression model which includes both the forced and the backward procedure. Multiple regression was selected in order to examine the hypothesis because this method is valuable both descriptively and inferentially. The regression procedure used included a hierarchical procedure in which gender, demographics, family and individual variables were entered consecutively as blocks, followed by a backward procedure which selected out variables that did not add significantly to the amount of variance accounted for from the complete set.

In the hierarchical regression procedure, gender was the first variable entered. This was done in order to determine the amount of variance explained by gender (i.e., to control for gender). Gender proved not to be a significant contributor. The next set entered were the demographic variables which included number of children living at home, years out of school prior to reentry, time in school since reentry and hours per quarter taken. The addition of this set of variables resulted in a non-significant increase in explained variance. The final set of variables entered included family problems, changes in the parent-adolescent relationship since reentry, the student’s self-esteem, and marital strength. This addition resulted in an R² Change of .25 which was significant (p=.002). With all variables entered, 31% of the variance was accounted for [F (1, 73)=3.31; p < .05]. The only independent variable that had a significant beta in the full equation was family problems (B=.47)

With the backward procedure, the final model accounted for 23% of the variance in reentry student’s perception of reentry school problems (F(1, 73)=23.09; p<.001) with the reentry student’s perception of family problems being the only variable remaining in the regression equation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-03</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>2. Reentry Parents Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. Family Problems</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.53***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marital Strength</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Reentry Student Problems</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>6. Time in School Since Reentry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hours per Quarter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Years Out of School</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of Children</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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N=102
*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Table 5: Multiple Regression Results for Full Model and Stepwise Procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>$R^2$ Change</th>
<th>B*</th>
<th>Stepwise F</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reentry Students</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Years Out of School</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours Per Quarter</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in School</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Strength</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Problems</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>14.88***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>23.09***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry Parent</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Self-Esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent-Adolescent</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.25</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Relationship Change</td>
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</table>

$R^2 = .31$
F(9,65) = 3.31; p<.002
*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

$R^2 = .24$
F(1,73) = 23.09; p<.001
N=102
Chapter 5

Discussion

Reentering academia as an adult is not a simple matter, but is driven by the context within which the student is living (Okun, 1984). This research examined the situation in which a returning student who has a family including an adolescent finds himself or herself. It looked at the relationship among family problems, individual adjustments, and the reentry students perception of problems with reentry in a sample of reentry men and women.

The findings from this study indicate that for this sample there were no significant differences between male and female reentry students for self-esteem, marital strength, parent adolescent relationship change due to reentry, or family problems. The only significant difference between males and females in this study was number of hours per quarter; women were enrolled in more hours per quarter than were men. This might indicate that whereas married men generally work full-time and take courses part-time, married women tend to work part-time (or not at all) and take courses full-time. The fact that gender proved not to be significant in relation to the other reentry and family variables tested is important. Non findings for gender suggests that gender does not account for the way that returning students view reentry school problems. This finding is supported by the literature that deals with men and women reentry students within the same study (Kinnier & Townley, 1986; Sewell, 1984; Smart & Pascarella, 1987).

For both men and women, self-esteem was highly correlated with marital strength and the length of time in school. While length of time in school has been identified as a potential stressor (Flannery & Apps, 1987) it appears here that self-esteem increases as one gets more used to the reentry role. This is consistent with the literature that suggests that
increased competency in a variety of roles can result in enhanced self-esteem (Pietromonaco et al., 1986). This study supports previous research which suggests that marital strength has an effect on self-esteem.

Other findings included a significant correlation between hours per quarter and reentry student problems. Logic suggests that this is because the more hours that the student is involved in school the greater the time demands and role juggling that one must negotiate. In this case, more hours in school places greater requirements upon the student (e.g., more travel to and from school, parking, and an increased workload). Since more classes are being taken, rusty academic skills may also come into play and all of these factors are a part of what is referred to as reentry student problems.

Years out of school and family problems are negatively correlated suggesting that the longer one has been out of school the fewer the family problems that the reentry student perceives. The literature on reentry women clearly supports this finding. Brandenberg (1974), for example, strongly suggests that women are so grounded in their connectedness to their family that they will put off reentry until the timing is such that it will not negatively affect family members. Studies of both men and women reentry students confirm the importance of the family when a prospective student is contemplating reentry (Apps, 1986; Brainard, 1973; Flannery & Apps, 1987; Gorter, 1978; Martin, 1988).

The student’s perception of changes in the parent-adolescent relationship since reentry and family problems were highly correlated. Symbolic interaction provides a framework to explain that if the reentry student perceived a more positive relationship with his/her adolescent then the student might perceive fewer family problems. If, on-the-other-hand, the student perceived negative changes in the parent-adolescent relationship, the student might perceive more family problems. From a symbolic interactionist perspective the reverse could also be true. That is, if the reentry student perceives fewer family problems this perception could have a positive effect on the parent-adolescent relationship,
whereas, if the student perceives more family problems this could have a negative effect on the reentry student’s perception of the changes in the parent-adolescent relationship since reentry.

Family problems and the reentry student’s perception of problems in school were also highly correlated; and, family problems was the only significant variable remaining in the regression equation after the stepwise procedure. This is consistent with the literature which indicates that family problems are the major cause for reentry student withdrawal from post secondary education (Apps, 1986; Berkove, 1979; Flannery & Apps, 1987; Leavitt, 1989).

**Limitations**

Although the research population was chosen to guarantee that both genders would be represented, that each individual was a participant in multiple roles including spouse and parent, and that each have a family configuration including an adolescent child living in the home, the sample was limited in size, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic area. A second limitation deals with the instrument that was used. The instrument was developed for a larger study of which this project was a subset. As a result, this instrument has unknown validity and reliability of repeated testing.

**Future Research**

Future research should include both male and female reentry students in order to determine motives for reentry and the impact of those motives on the family. Research is needed to understand how the gender of the adolescent impacts the relationship between the reentry parent and the adolescent as well as how the gender of the parent who is returning
impacts that relationship. Most especially, future research should focus on the interactional patterns that occur within the family as the result of an adult returning to post secondary education.

**Implications**

Reentry students greatest concerns involve family issues (Flannery & Apps, 1987; Gerson, 1985; Mishler, 1983). Current research indicates that it is the reentry student’s perception of the negative affect on the quality of family relationships as a result of reentry that causes the greatest number of students to withdraw (Bauer & Mott, 1990; Flannery & Apps, 1987).

Most current programs for reentry students tend to focus only on problems related to being a student such as parking, and problems related to reentry such as scheduling of classes and how to study or write seminars. It appears from this research that problems within the family setting tend to be crucial in determining the reentry students ability to continue with school and their perception of problems related to reentry. These findings suggest that this off-time event may become an unanticipated stressor during a period of normative multiple stressors (i.e., adolescence). This additional stress may add to the pile-up of existing stressors and cause a crises which may result in the reentry student dropping-out (Flannery & Apps, 1987).

Practitioners working with reentry students and their families should be cognizant of the need to normalize the stress associated with reentry for both the individual and the family. In order to keep the reentry family from becoming over stressed, psychoeducational support for reentry families should be aimed at providing the family with improved problem solving and communication skills. Increased facility in problem solving and communication can enhance family relationships. Those relationships can then in turn provide a buffer to the stressors associated with returning to school.
Self-esteem is often cited as a variable that promotes intimacy and effective communication. Consequently reentry students with high self-esteem are better able to renegotiate roles and are better able to communicate with other family members. Thus, clinical interventions which promote the enhancement of self-esteem in the reentry student and the family should be employed. These might include helping the family to become aware of improved competence in areas such as flexibility in role performance or improved time management skills. In order for the reentry student to deal with issues such as the adjustment into the academic environment, it may be important to provide space for reentry students where they can meet formally and informally. Such a situation could create the opportunity for the reentry students to obtain peer support to deal with academic adjustments and help normalize the other experiences that both reentry students and their families face.

This study suggests that state legislatures, trustee boards, university administrators, and other policy making bodies who deal with the funding of academic institutions and programs need to be aware of the implications for the individual and family that reentry involves. With this awareness consideration should be given to funding programs which encourage the accessibility of services and supports to both reentry students and their families.

In order to improve student retention rates among the population of reentry students, institutions of higher education must begin to provide improved supports for this unique population and their families. One practical opportunity that these institutions might provide is a separate orientation program for reentry students which includes other family members. In this setting, reentry families could begin to see themselves as more normal and less isolated. Other networking opportunities for reentry students and families might include one or two informal social gatherings per quarter. The inclusion of the student and family in a relaxed setting might provide the occasion for a less stressful view of what
reentry includes. Academia must also begin to be aware of the unique contributions that reentry students can make. Research indicates that returning students tend to be more goal oriented and achieve higher grade point averages than traditional students. Thus, the reentry student can serve as a role model or be available to share practical experience and possibly provide direction for the traditional student. This student genuinely demonstrates what the academic setting suggests which is that formal education can be an ongoing and lifelong process and is not restricted by age or gender. The reentry student has the opportunity to bring outside experience to the classroom as well as taking the knowledge gained and immediately applying it to multiple life settings including the home, work, and social environments. Also, because of a wealth of past experience, the reentry student can challenge and stimulate the faculty and traditional students to look at things from a new or different perspective.

Conclusions

The model proposed (Figure 1) at the outset of this research suggested three major areas that affect reentry students’ perception of reentry student problems. These included the reentry students’ gender, status variables including time in school since reentry, hours taken per quarter, years out of school before reentry, and number of children between 10-19 years of age living in the home, and reentry students’ self-esteem, marital strength, parent-adolescent relationship change, and family problems. Further these groups of variables were compared in blocks to examine how each relates to reentry students’ perception of reentry student problems.

As a result of empirical testing, this research helps to move thinking about reentry students beyond the stereotypes in that it addresses gender differences and introduces a new dimension to the literature by exploring relationships in the reentry family that have not been previously looked at empirically. It contradicts expectations of sex bias assumptions
suggested by earlier studies by clearly demonstrating that there were no significant difference between men and women on any of the variables tested.

This study also goes beyond the scope of other research in that it includes the empirical testing of relationships such as the parent-adolescent relationship and its effect on reentry students’ perceptions of reentry student problems. Further, this research integrates higher education and family concerns.

The most significant outcome of this study was that reentry students’ perception of family problems is the best predictor of reentry students’ perception of reentry student problems. Consequently in order to help reentry students remain in school greater supports must be provided for both students and their families.

The decision to return to the educational arena is a formidable one that impacts not only a reentry student but also the other family members. This study strongly suggests that the success and satisfaction of the reentry student is due, in large part to reentry student perception of the success of the interpersonal relationships between the student and his or her family. Therefore, it is critical that those involved with these individuals and their families provide the supports necessary to increase the possibility of positive relational perceptions thus allowing for the successful completion of the degree process for the reentry student and enhanced relationship within the reentry family.
REFERENCES


Appendix A:

Instrumentation
FAMILY PROBLEMS

Did your stress increase, stay the same or decrease when you went back to school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in managing children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children doing poorly in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children not satisfied with school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse resents outside demands on your time.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children resent helping with housework or child care</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling your role as a parent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling your role as a spouse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family illness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks or chores that do not get done</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting time demands</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with relatives or other immediate family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROSENBERG'S SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

How much do you agree with the following statements as they apply to yourself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with myself on the whole</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that I am no good at all times</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plan with others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am inclined to feel I am a failure, all in all</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a positive attitude toward myself</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARENT-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP CHANGE

Since I reentered school the child I have in mind:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complains that we have too little time together</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs more household tasks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is willing to postpone some pleasures and gifts until I finish school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in more conflict with me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatens to run away</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatens to commit suicide</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands more attention</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats me with respect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes a more adult role in life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses resentment of my student status</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says he/she “wants our family to be like other families in which parents are not in school”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brags about me to his/her friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MARITAL STRENGTH

Please circle the number which most nearly expresses your agreement with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives me emotional support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brags about me to friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes a fair share of family work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes a fair share of child care</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discusses ideas and interests with me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confides in me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses thoughts and feelings freely</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is openly affectionate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse's attitude has a positive effect on my academic success</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can count on my spouse for direct help such as tutoring, typing, research assistance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our marital relationship has become stronger as a result of this experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REENTRY STUDENT PROBLEMS

Circle the number that corresponds with your estimation of the seriousness of the problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance from the University</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper work for reentry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class schedules</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Rusty” academic skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self conscious about age</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate assignments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of employer support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough credit for experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaying purchases and pleasures</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age (Fill in years (       )

2. Gender (Circle one) 1. Female 2. Male

3. Marital Status (Circle Most recent)
   1. Never married 4. Remarried
   2. Intact first marriage 5. Widowed
   3. Divorced 6. Not married, living with significant other

4. Number of children living in home (fill in the blanks)
   1. Males: Number _________ Ages: _______
   2. Females: Number _________ Ages: _______

5. Race: (Circle one)
   1. Asian 4. Native American
   2. Black 5. Spanish
   3. Caucasian 6. Other

6. Do you plan to earn a degree? (Circle one)
   1. Yes 2. No

7. Number of hours usually taken each quarter _________

8. Length of time in school since reentry? _________ Quarters

9. Years out of school before reentering? _________

10. Just prior to returning to college what was your family income? (Circle one)
    1. Under $10,000
    2. Between $10,000 and $19,000
    3. Between $20,000 and $29,000.
    4. Between $30,000 and $39,000
    5. Over $40,000
Appendix B:

Vita
VITA

Virginia Fijak Fry

6202 Gooding Pond Ct.                      Home: (703) 250-1725
Burke, VA., 22015                      Work: (703) 792-4948

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

FAMILY THERAPIST INTERN, Center for Family Services, Falls Church, VA., May ‘90-Feb. ‘91. Provide counseling to families, couples, and individuals with a variety of mental health and substance abuse problems, using family systems approach utilizing live, group and individual supervision of cases.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES INTERN, Prince William Country Community Services Board, Substance Abuse Services, Woodbridge VA., Sept., ‘91-May ‘92. Provide outpatient care and case management for inpatient treatment in with a variety of substance abuse and mental health problems. Serve families, couples, individuals, and groups using a brief solution-oriented family systems approach with live supervision and regular teamwork.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT to Dr. Stephan Wilson, VA. Tech Dept. of Family and Child Development, Sept. ‘90-May, ‘91. Conduct literature searches, write drafts and help prepare papers for publication and presentations specifically in areas of family stress and student reentry. Involved in writing grants particularly in the area of substance abuse.
ASSISTANT CLINIC COORDINATOR, Center for Family Services, Sept ’90-May ’91. Assist in operation and administration of family therapy clinic, including marketing, intakes, developing forms and procedures for clinicians. Provided administrative support for the preparation of the American Association of Family Therapy accreditation reports and sight visit.

EDUCATION

Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Falls Church, Master’s Program in Marriage and Family Therapy. Will be awarded a degree on May 10, 1992. Coursework has included family systems theory and therapy, families under stress, assessment, abnormal behavior, ethics, group counseling, human sexuality, parent-child interaction, adolescent’s in families, substance abuse in families, gestalt therapy, and couple’s therapy. Successfully passed comprehensive exams in field, May, 1991, with adolescent sexual orientation as special area of interest.

Mount Saint Mary’s College, Los Angeles, CA., Bachelor of Arts. degree earned in June, 1969. Attained a degree in the area of Home Economics, from a program that provided a well-rounded liberal arts education.

OTHER TRAINING

In service training has included areas such as strategic family therapy, social detoxification, medication management, solution-orientated therapy, couples therapy, and an integrated approach to substance abuse treatment.
Participation in seminars on basic counseling skills, substance abuse, suicide, sexual and physical abuse, crises intervention, and working with the chronically mentally ill. Youth Ministry training included workshops on sexuality, communication techniques, listening skills, and substance abuse.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS: (Attended)

—VAMFT, Ma ‘92 Arnold Woodruff, Kitty MontieDavid Treadway, and others, 12 hrs.
—Family Therapy Network Symposium, May ‘92, attendee, 12 hrs.
—NCFR, Nov., ‘91. attendee and presenter.
—Working With Troubled Adolescents,
  Michael Durrant, May ‘91, 6 hrs.
—VAMFT, Mar. ‘91 Christine Courtois and others 12 hrs.
—Family Therapy Newtork Symposium, Mar. ‘91, attendee, 12 hrs.
—AAMFT, Oct. ‘90, volunteer and attendee
—VAMFT, Mar. ‘90, Paul Dell, Gus Napier and others, 12 hrs.

Family Therapy Network Symposium, Mar. ‘90, volunteer and attendee, 12 hrs.

Family Therapy Networker Symposium, Mar. ‘89, volunter and attendee, 12hrs.

PRESENTATIONS GIVEN

“Adolescent Sexual Identity Formation”, taught 3hr. class session for family studies graduate course Hood College, Maryland

“Predicting the Quality of Parent-Adolescent Relationship Sufficiency Among Reentry Families”, NCFR Conference, Denver, CO. Nov., ‘91.

Virginia F. Fry