College Enrollment Decision for Nontraditional Female Students

Cindy Lorentzen
Marquette University

Follow this and additional works at: http://epublications.marquette.edu/cps_professional

Recommended Citation
COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECISION FOR NONTRADITIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS

By

Cindy Lorentzen

A Professional Project submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2014
ABSTRACT
COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECISION FOR NONTRADITIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS

Cindy Lorentzen
Marquette University, 2014

Increasingly, more women are attending college and earning their degrees than men. This qualitative case study examined the reasons why adult females decide to enroll in college to earn their bachelor’s degree. With multiple roles and responsibilities creating time constraints that stack the odds against the completion of their degree, many women experience delays as well as starts and stops in their educational journey over many years. The findings of this qualitative research study aligned with a review of the literature. With a sense of hopefulness and determination, adult females are resilient and have a strong desire to achieve their goal of earning a college degree to advance their careers, achieve personal fulfillment, and serve as a role model for their families. As a result of their education, adult females are transformed through enhanced confidence as well as broader knowledge and perspective. These nontraditional female students look for nontraditional ways of learning that are designed to fit their busy lifestyles.
I would like to thank my husband Bryan for his patience and support while I spent a great deal of time working on this professional project. I also appreciate the support and encouragement I have received from my project adviser – Eileen Sherman, academic adviser – Felisa Parris, and college administrative assistant – Emily Hernandez, as well as other faculty and staff from Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies. Their input, guidance and feedback is truly valued and appreciated.

In addition, I would like to thank the six undergraduate students from the College of Professional Studies who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in an in-person interview for this research study. Their stories are inspirational and provided relevant information for review and analysis. I wish them great success with their educational and professional journeys.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ......................................................................................................................i
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................................ii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................1

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

   Types of Motivation ..................................................................................................................2

   Summary .................................................................................................................................12

III. METHODOLOGY

   Sample and Data Collection ..................................................................................................14

   Data Analysis ..........................................................................................................................16

IV. FINDINGS ..............................................................................................................................25

V. CONCLUSION

   Research Limitations and Future Studies .............................................................................30

   Concluding Remarks .............................................................................................................31

VI. REFERENCES .........................................................................................................................33

VII. APPENDICES

   Appendix A: Protocol Summary Form ....................................................................................37

   Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter ..........................................................................................38

   Appendix C: Consent Form .....................................................................................................39

   Appendix D: Research Questions ...........................................................................................41

   Appendix E: Email to Potential Participants ........................................................................42
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Interview Responses .................................................................17
Table 2: Career Development or Change .................................................................19
Table 3: Personal Fulfillment/Satisfaction .............................................................20
Table 4: Serve as Role Model ...............................................................................21
Table 5: Broader Knowledge or Perspective .........................................................22
Table 6: Quality Education at Marquette University ..............................................22
Table 7: Confidence ...............................................................................................23
Table 8: Starts and Stops ......................................................................................24
Introduction

Women outnumber men in undergraduate degree enrollment. Since 1970, women’s undergraduate enrollment increased more than three times as fast as men’s and surpassed men’s enrollment in 1978 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). In 2011, 57 percent of total undergraduate students were female and 43 percent were male (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). It is projected that female enrollment will increase by 16 percent between 2011 and 2021, while male enrollment will increase by 7 percent.

In 2011, 45 percent of women older than 25 held a two- or four-year college degree, compared to 40 percent of men (Lumina Foundation, 2013). These students are referred to as “nontraditional” students because they are older than the traditional student and have multiple roles that require them to balance jobs, families, community involvement, and care for aging parents while they strive to complete a college education. According to Deutsch and Schmertz (2011) adult women have been participating in higher education in greater numbers than men in response to changing cultural norms and a greater opportunity for a career with increased earnings. With a different set of adult life experiences than the younger traditional age students, the adult female student’s educational journey can be influenced by her gendered role, including more responsibility for family caregiving and household tasks than men (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011).

Since female students represent the majority of nontraditional students enrolled in undergraduate programs and are the fastest growing segment of adult students in higher education (Lake Howell, 2004), it is important for colleges and professional staff to identify and respond to the main reasons why these women decide to enroll in college and support their unique needs. With my own experience as an adult female student as well as my experience as a
marketing professional within Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies, I have a strong interest in learning more about the growing adult female segment of the undergraduate student population. Consequently, I conducted this qualitative research study in order to better understand the motivations of adult women who decide to attend college to earn their bachelor’s degree. For the purposes of this research study, adult women are defined as females age 23 years or older.

**Literature Review**

While many research studies have been conducted on the adult learner, limited research has been conducted on the growing segment of this market, the adult female learner. Since the intention of this research study is to build on the limited body of research concerning the adult female student, the following relevant studies uncover some critical issues about the adult female undergraduate student’s academic motivations. It is important to note that the results of these studies are limited by the size and nature of the sample used. Studies with participants from other ethnic backgrounds or other geographic areas may have produced somewhat different results (Coker, 2003).

**Types of Motivations**

Shank, Winchell & Myers (2001) identified primary factors that motivated adult females to attend college. The study included personal interviews with 197 non-traditional women and men from a Midwestern university. Female participants rated “improving their general knowledge” as the most important reason to attend college, followed by identifying interests and goals, gaining job-related skills, working toward a job promotion, and preparing for graduate school. Over 60% of the adult female participants wanted to enroll part-time due to concerns about time constraints resulting from work and family responsibilities. Night classes were
preferred by 35% of the female respondents, followed equally by late afternoon (32%) and weekend classes (32%). It is clear that these nontraditional women are motivated to enroll in educational programs offering nontraditional class times designed to fit their busy lifestyles.

Chao and Good (2004) offered a different way of looking at motivators that affect the adult female’s decision about going to college. Their qualitative research involved interviewing 43 nontraditional undergraduate students (23 women and 20 men) from a large public university and a moderate-sized private college in the Midwest area of the United States. A core category of “hopefulness about the future” was identified within this study in connection with the female participants’ decision to enroll in college. This sense of hopefulness motivated the participants’ efforts to actively manage their education, career, family, and interpersonal relationships. Many participants reported that they viewed education as an opportunity to transition to a different occupation.

The motivations and challenges of African American female adult learners were explored through a qualitative study by Coker (2003). The primary data collection method was a series of five bi-monthly focus groups and individual interviews with ten African American female adult learners at a mid-size working-class university in the Midwest. Findings indicate that personal, family, and community development were the primary motivators for these participants’ decision to enroll in college. The participants used education as a vehicle for personal redefinition, empowerment, personal success, and greater financial stability. The research findings confirm that African American women continue to be challenged by discrimination and cultural misunderstandings as they work toward their academic goals. These findings indicate a need to address how gender and race can affect one’s sense of belonging and level of engagement in the learning process.
Focusing on the impact of marital status and family issues in relation to nontraditional female student enrollment, Taniguchi and Kaufman (2007) analyzed data from a National Longitudinal Survey including 1,788 women within the age range of 21-45. Findings indicate that divorce encourages women's nontraditional enrollment in college, due to an economic necessity to obtain education that will help them obtain jobs to support themselves and their families. At the same time, the presence of preschool children can adversely affect the ability of women to attend college due to their primary responsibility for daily care of the children. Mothers of older children are more likely to enroll in college as they may feel less burdened with child care responsibilities and have more time available. The time needs to be right for the adult female to decide to enroll in college.

A study conducted by Miller, Pope and Steinmann (2006) supports the theory of “the right time” to enroll in college for adult females due to their multiple roles and time constraints. The study was conducted to better understand the unique characteristics and behavior of adult female students in comparison to male students. A total of 272 survey responses from students at six community colleges around the United States were included in the data analysis. The research found that women perceived college as an investment to be budgeted for and to be used to make a substantial increase in financial security. In addition, the study revealed some services that attracted adult female students to enroll, such as tutoring and counseling services, computers on campus, and exercise facilities.

To examine why adult women pursue bachelor’s degrees and what value they place on their education, an interview-based study was conducted by Kennedy and Vaughn (2004). This study involved 12 women who earned their bachelor’s degrees when they were in their late 20s to mid-50s. Nearly all of the participants worked full time and attended college part time. The
participants indicated that they decided to go to college due to economic needs, personal unrest, or the desire for career advancement. Seven of the participants had attended a college or university at a traditional age but dropped out after they were wed and remained at home for a time to care for their children and spouse. Progressing through classes and earning a degree helped these women transform their lives by resolving childhood issues, redefining marital relationships, learning how to accept themselves, establishing important connections, and finding new ways to belong and enhance self-esteem. This study identifies how marriage and family responsibilities can delay completion of a college degree for adult women. The study also identifies the value of college through transformational accounts of enhanced confidence and perspective that changed students’ lives.

The importance of individual needs and resources for adult female college students was the focus of research conducted by San Miguel Bauman et al. (2004). This study included a mail survey of 53 nontraditional undergraduates (46 women and 7 men) with ages ranging from 26 to 77 years. Participants reported career, self-improvement, and family issues as the primary reasons for deciding to enroll in college. Career-related reasons included “To be more marketable in a competitive job world” and “career burn-out.” Self-improvement was identified in statements such as “It was the major regret I had about my life which could be corrected” and “Interest in lifetime learning.” Statements related to family issues included “I wanted to break the cycle of not continuing on in education like the rest of my family” and “I want to give an example to my children on the importance and value of higher education.” More than 60% of the respondents reported strong social support from family and friends. With most survey participants indicating that they returned to school due to career concerns, it is not surprising that they reported they would be most likely to use career counseling services on campus. This
finding suggests that colleges can offer career counseling services as an important resource for adult female students.

Vaccaro & Lovell (2010) conducted a qualitative study to determine how older students, especially women, become and remain engaged in their education. A representative sample of 28 adult female students from Mountain Women’s College participated in this study with an overall average age of 42. Findings indicate that although the women in this study consistently faced life challenges, their desire to get a college degree gave them motivation to juggle competing demands from family, work and school. In addition to gaining new skills and knowledge, going to school allowed many of these adult students to “find their voice.” Support and inspiration from family gave them strength and motivation to continue their education. For those who are mothers, going to school was often equated with being a good role model. Another finding from this study is that women were investing in themselves for personal growth and fulfillment of dreams to be someone better and stronger.

Black women have been returning to college in record numbers since the 1990s, and Thomas (2001) suggests this trend will persist. To find out why black women return to college and how this decision influences their daughters’ opinion about higher education, Sealey-Ruiz (2007) conducted a research study including three black women from a small, liberal arts college in the Northeast and their daughters. The Black reentry (returning to college) mothers in this study had left the educational system for five to twenty years or more. Analysis of the interview information revealed that the mothers viewed reentry as a way to make a positive impact on their lives and rise above their current life circumstances. In addition, the mothers used reentry as a way to set an example for their children and influence their daughters to attend college. Across
the board, the daughters felt that their mother’s reentry influenced their thoughts about college and caused them to seriously think about college.

To determine the risks and costs impacting the decision for working class women to enroll in college, Reay (2003) conducted a qualitative study looking at the experiences of 12 working-class women attending an Access course in a large, inner-city further education college in London. Ranging in age from 29 to 49, seven of the women were mothers, five women did not have children, and two women lived with a partner. Findings from in-person and telephone interviews indicate the research participants had a love of learning as their reason for further education. For most of these working-class women their commitment to education was strongly linked to a commitment to make a contribution to society and giving back. Participant stories were characterized by problems, setbacks, and a lack of mobility. All of the women, and especially those with children, were in a constant balancing act between finding time to study, take care of domestic responsibilities, earn money, and volunteer. These working-class women saw themselves as role models for their children.

Bates & Nortan (2002) researched the motivations behind participation in higher education by surveying 61 women in degree completion programs at two private education institutions in Wichita, Kansas – Newman University and Southwestern College. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 60, and 74.2% had children. The following motivations for enrolling in college were identified: financial improvement, personal goals and aspirations, self-fulfillment/self-esteem, and family considerations. Forty-two of the women surveyed (67.7%) stated that improvement of their career status and financial improvement was one of the top reasons to return to school. Nineteen (30.6%) of the women stated reasons dealing with self-
fulfillment and self-esteem. Eleven women (17.7%) indicated that family considerations and being a role model for their children were major considerations.

Kirby et al. (2004) conducted a study that identified family and work support as primary factors related to the nontraditional students’ enrollment motivation. The study included 566 questionnaires completed by students attending a weekend college program at a small Catholic university in the southwest. Out of 530 participants, 64% were women and ages ranged from 22 to 55. Of the 466 participants who provided student status, 210 were graduate students and 256 were undergraduate students. Regression analyses of the completed surveys revealed that satisfaction with school and support from family and the workplace were predictive of lower levels of stress. Content analyses of responses to open-ended questions showed that stress was the result of time constraints, but also highlighted the positive aspects of continuing one’s education. Eleven percent of the participants reported that attending school enriched family life. Setting a good example for family members was mentioned by 7% of the respondents, most frequently by those with children. A surprise finding was only 1.5% overall indicated child care problems, indicating a low level of concern in this area.

To determine the qualities that enable adult female students to develop the resilience to achieve academic success in higher education, Lake Howell (2004) conducted a multi-method research study including 60 undergraduate participants, 25 years or older, who attended a public university in South Dakota. Interviews were held with 11 women and survey responses were received from 54 participants. The major finding was that as the women faced and met challenges, the success they experienced gave them confidence to take on additional challenges. A resulting sense of self-efficacy resulted in their academic achievement and persistence in higher education. Identification of the factors that lead to the development of resilience can help
women recognize and build upon the strengths they have, and give them greater confidence and motivation to enroll in college.

Petersen (2000) conducted interviews with five Caucasian women and five African-American women with ages ranging from 40 to 80 in order to capture their stories of identity development across their lifetimes. Analysis of the results shows how African-American women are able to maintain their self-identify in the face of oppression. Their struggles consisted of race and gender challenges they had to meet in order to succeed in their choices. For both African-American and Caucasian women, education was the most important factor in determining the quality of their lives and a strong self-identify. For Caucasian women, education was used to transform established roles, break from a bad marriage, discover new competencies, and validate a newly expressed identity. For the African-American women, the gain was in the quest for knowledge and the credentials for improved employment.

Wilsey (2013) administered a survey to adult students with children enrolled in a women’s university, primarily in the evening or weekend program. The mothers were between 18 and 59 years of age, and were mainly African American (46%) or non-Hispanic Caucasian (39%). Sixty-eight percent of adult mothers worked full time, compared with 21% of younger mothers who were traditional college-age students. The most common reason for mothers to return to higher education was to improve their working situation, such as changing careers or obtaining better jobs. The second most common reason was to finish the degree they had started. In addition, 17 mothers indicated that they decided to go to school to provide better lives for their families. Adult student mothers emphasized personal and academic goals for completing a degree, while younger mothers focused on increased earning potential for their family. Twenty
adult student mothers thought they could serve as a positive role model for their children by attending college.

A study by Jacobs & Berkowitz King (2002) analyzed a nationally representative sample of 5,142 American women from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) concerning the effects of age and other variables that may affect the likelihood of college completion. It was determined many women enroll part-time due to multiple roles and time constraints, which decreases the chance of completing a college degree. Being married or divorced also affects degree completion by increasing part-time enrollment. Additionally, the delay in enrollment between high school and college sharply reduces the chances of finishing a college degree. Survey results show that the chances of finishing a degree increase until age 22 or 23 and decline thereafter.

For many working women, their return to school is delayed by sacrifices made for family concerns. Sweet & Moen (2007) used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods to determine the impact the return to school had on the lives of adult female students and their families. The data from a cross-sectional analysis of 124 middle-class, dual-earner couples with wives who had returned to school with 866 couples where the wives had not returned to school was combined with interviews with 24 women who returned to school in Upstate New York. The research study found agreement among all participants that the return to school positively impacted their personal satisfaction and enhanced their lives by providing personal growth and fulfillment. It appears that the decision to return to school for these women offered positive outcomes for their sense of self. Within this study there was strong evidence that women who returned to school experienced role conflict, especially when they had dependent children. To address this concern, higher educational institutions need to be structured to meet the needs of
workers and parents, taking into consideration course schedules, credit transfers, financial aid, and the nature of course work.

A study conducted by Hostetler et al. (2007) also revealed that many women return to school in order to catch-up and pursue deferred career goals. Data from a sample of 1,408 employed middle-class men and women in dual-earner couples from the Cornell Ecology of Careers Study in Upstate New York was studied and analyzed. Variables that were significant predictors of women’s return to school were: age, early marriage, a voluntary job change in the last four years, working long hours, having a pre-school or young school-aged children, and personal mastery. For men, the significant predictors of returning to school were age, voluntary job change and personal mastery. The findings reveal that women’s career strategies continue to be tied to family life.

Quimby & O’Brien (2006) conducted a study of 309 nontraditional female students at a large mid-eastern university who were over 25 years old with one or more children living at home. A total of 200 surveys were completed and returned, offering a 70% return rate. As hypothesized, students who perceived that safe and supportive relationships as well as relationships where their skills and competence were recognized, were more motivated to enroll and complete college due to lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of self-esteem. This study shows that perceived social support is associated with the psychological well-being of nontraditional female students with children. Academic counselors can use this information to guide and assist nontraditional female students with children who are experiencing psychological difficulties that may impact their academic success.

To explore the educational pathways, barriers and support of adult female students, Deutsch & Schmertz (2011) conducted focus groups at two all-women colleges, including 11
women at Northeast College and two women at New England. The women in the focus groups talked about their educational journey being influenced by gendered forces including family, economic, and workplace issues. Seven of the women talked about returning to college in a series of starts and stops due to their gendered role including primary caretaking responsibilities. Participants reported conflict over short-term sacrifices versus long-term gain for their families and stress from the demands of family, work, and school roles. Educational pursuit and persistence depended on encouragement and support from family as well as faculty. These women were motivated to go back to school to change and advance their lives and meet the increasing demand for postsecondary degrees in the workforce.

**Summary**

This collection of literature offers various studies and findings that identify the primary reasons why adult females decide to enroll in college as well as their concerns about going back to school and some of the challenges they face. Career and personal development are cited most often as the primary reasons for returning to school by adult female students. Many women reported that they view education as an opportunity to advance their career or transition to a different occupation (Chao & Good, 2004). Women also reported that they view education as an investment in themselves for personal growth and fulfillment (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010).

Financial improvement was also frequently noted as a top reason for adult women to return to school due to economic necessity (Bates & Norton, 2002; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2007) and the opportunity to provide better lives for their families (Wilsey, 2013). Overwhelmingly, one of the top reasons mothers go to college to earn their degree is to serve as a role model for their children. These children were a motivating factor in the mother’s desire
and decision to get a degree (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010). Reasons dealing with self-fulfillment, self-esteem, and self-investment were also noted within the research.

Research findings show the most common factors that influence the college enrollment decision for adult females are time constraints, family-related issues, financial concerns, and life transitions such as job loss, divorce, and children entering school. Due to gendered norms, adult female students are more likely to have greater family responsibilities than men, which can interrupt and delay the completion of the undergraduate degree program (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011). A theory of “the right time” to enroll in college for adult females emerged within the literature (Miller, et al., 2006; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2007).

It is interesting that even though family responsibilities may create delays in degree completion for the adult female, the support received from family helps to motivate and inspire these women to enroll in college and persist due to a lower level of stress and a higher level of self-esteem (Sweet & Moen, 2007). For many women, the role of family is at the core of their educational success (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010). It is clear that all of the women, and especially those with children, were in a constant balancing act between finding time to study, take care of domestic responsibilities, earn money, and volunteer. With a strong drive to get a degree, women are motivated to juggle the competing demands on their time in order to earn their degree (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010). In addition to their determination, adult female students have the capability to develop the resilience needed to achieve academic success in higher education (Lake Howell, 2004).
Methodology

Using qualitative research for this study offered the opportunity to achieve a deep understanding and tell the story from the participant’s viewpoint through descriptive details (Trochim, 2006). The case study was selected as a suitable qualitative research methodology because this approach offers the opportunity for “intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system such as an individual, event, group, intervention, or community” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). The collective case study approach allowed me to address one issue about the college enrollment decision for adult females, but use multiple cases to gain insight into the individual lifestyles, motivation, and behavior (Creswell, 2007).

The strength of the case study approach is that it provided the opportunity to gain in-depth insight into the reasons why adult females decide to enroll in college as well as some of their concerns. Some of the challenges encountered with this case study development were constraints concerning the time and resources involved in collecting and analyzing qualitative data, as well as the limited availability of the very busy adult female undergraduate students.

Sample and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the primary tool for data collection for this research study because it is an optimal way to collect data on the participants’ stories, experiences, and perspectives. This research approach was selected to give the individuals a voice in the research of the enrollment decision of adult female students in undergraduate education. The resulting data provided a human side to this sample population, which is lacking in the literature review conducted for this document.

Semi-structured interviews included open-ended questions that define the research topic with the opportunity for the interviewer to diverge and ask additional follow-up questions in
order to pursue an idea in more detail and to ask probing questions to clarify a response. The following open-ended questions were prepared prior to the interview and were used as the framework to “ensure that the research problem will be thoroughly examined and that each part of the broad topic will be explored” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 135):

1. Why did you decide to go back to school to get your bachelor’s degree?
2. What factors impacted your decision to enroll in college?
3. How did you choose your college and your major?
4. How has your decision to go back to school impacted your personal life?
5. How has your decision to go back to school impacted your professional life?
6. What is the strongest benefit you are realizing as a result of your degree program?
7. What is the most important outcome of your degree for you?
8. Are there any other comments about your college enrollment decision or experience that you would like to share?

The sample selected for this study included six females from Marquette University’s undergraduate program for adult students, majoring in Organization and Leadership. After receiving the names of potential interview candidates from the undergraduate student adviser team within Marquette’s College of Professional Studies, I contacted 12 of these individuals via email to provide a brief description of the research study and to request their participation. Six of the potential study participants responded back sharing their agreement to participate in the research study. Each interview was conducted in person at a time and location that was convenient for the participant. The interview lengths ranged from 30-40 minutes each. For confidentiality purposes, each participant was assigned a number and their name was not used within the research study. Participation was voluntary and the participants had the option not to
answer any questions for any reason. There were no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. And there were no more risks in participating in this research than those associated with daily living activities.

All interviews were recorded, in addition to some handwritten notes I took during the interview as a back-up to ensure accuracy. All interview recordings were transcribed as quickly as possible after the interview in order to be able to tap into my fresh memory of the interview and add any additional thoughts about the interview into the transcription notes. Once the recorded interview was transcribed, it was immediately erased from the recorder. The participants were sent copies of their transcripts for their review and any changes or corrections. The transcription documents are saved on my password protected home computer, and they will be destroyed three years after this study is completed. The end result was a collection of thorough interview transcriptions for review and analysis.

Data Analysis

After reading all of the interview transcriptions, the first step in the data analysis process was to create a clear and complete picture of the characteristics of the interview participant group by summarizing selected demographic information gathered from each participant as follows:

- Average Age: 36
- Job Status: 5 Full-Time, 1 Self-Employed
- Marital Status: 2 Married, 2 Divorced, 2 Single
- Average No. Children: 1
- Race: 4 Caucasian, 1 Mexican/Polish, 1 Hispanic/Oneida Indian
The demographic data describes this sample of adult females as nontraditional age students who have been balancing school and work responsibilities. Three out of the six interview participants were also balancing family responsibilities with their school and work responsibilities. Four out of the six interview participants are Caucasian, which limits the racial diversity of this group.

One way to begin examining the qualitative data is to “work inductively from particulars to more general perspectives” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 43). To assist in sorting the interview data and begin to identify common themes, I proceeded to summarize the responses to each question in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Summary of Interview Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choosing College and Major</strong></td>
<td>Dream to attend MU. Leadership skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongest Benefit</strong></td>
<td>Confidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A review and comparison of the summary of interview responses in Table 1 allowed me to identify common themes that were consistent with the literature review. Overall, interview
participants cited career development or career change as the top reason to earn their bachelor’s degree.

Table 2
*Career Development or Change*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1            | - “I wanted to get a degree to have a Plan B. If my job didn’t work out for some reason, I would have something to go back on.”
|              | - “My husband and I wanted to start a small business, so I thought one of us should go for a degree.” |
| 2            | - “I wanted to have a degree as a back-up.”
|              | - “I eventually want to work for a different department, so it definitely would help me there.” |
| 3            | “As I progress in my career, the positions require a bachelor’s degree. It was a condition of my last promotion.” |
| 4            | - “I own my own business, but say something happens down the road. It’s always good to have a fail-safe college degree.”
|              | - “Once I am done, I am definitely looking into expanding my business.” |
| 5            | “It’s not so much that in my present position I want to go further, but I want to go in a different direction within my company. I want to work in an educational area. I think a part of that will come with my education here and it will flow together.” |
| 6            | “I have been with my organization for 15 years and would like to move up.” |
Five out of six participants cited “personal fulfillment” or “satisfaction” as a secondary reason for wanting to earn a bachelor’s degree.

Table 3

*Personal Fulfillment/Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I’ve always had a job and now I want a career – something that feels fulfilling. I want to give back to the community.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I guess an important factor is personal development, too. I’m working toward a goal and I feel that I’m doing something good for myself by taking classes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I know going through life without an extended education, there were things I was missing. I felt like I wasn’t getting experience for conversations in the same way other people did. I value the teachings and breadth of knowledge I was missing.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5            | - “I felt I may be missing something that the students in school are gaining. I wanted to be able to know what they know.”  
- “I wanted to improve and develop.” |
| 6            | “Personal satisfaction is another important factor.” |

It is also relevant to note that two out of three participants with children stated that one of the reasons they wanted to get a degree was to serve as a role model for their family. In addition, one participant without children feels her education has made her more of a role model to her family and friends.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“It’s made me more of a role model to my family and friends.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I was always preaching about how important an education is and there was always a part of me that felt so terrible that I never fulfilled it myself. I wanted to make sure that I demonstrated what I was telling my children.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>- “Having my boys, I really want them to see that education is important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “I think that as everyone at work sees I am going to college, they will want to do it. One of my associates came to me and told me I had inspired her to go to school at Marquette University.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This theme parallels to the research findings from the study conducted by San Miguel Bauman et al. (2004) where participants reported family issues as one of the primary reasons for deciding to enroll in college and the related statement, “I want to give an example to my children on the importance and value of higher education.”

Another common theme that emerged as an important outcome of a degree is a broader perspective or broader knowledge, which leads to a greater understanding of business, people, and the world around us.
Table 5
*Broader Knowledge or Perspective*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I find more meaning in a lot of things now. Each time I re-read the same articles, I get a different message than the first time because I’ve taken another class that taught me how to look at it differently – taught me what it really means.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“It certainly expanded my knowledge. Now I have a better understanding – more knowledge. It’s to the point where I find so much value in learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>- “I think being able to look at things differently than how I came in is the most important outcome of my degree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “The diversity and how to look at people in a different way and how to manage different types of people has had a strong impact. Before, I wasn’t thinking about things like that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“I look at things more in-depth than before. I understand different cultures better.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, a quality education was noted as an important college selection factor by four out of six interview participants, which is one of the top reasons why they selected Marquette University.

Table 6
*Quality Education at Marquette University*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I always wanted to go to Marquette University since grade school. It was a dream.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2            | “I think it’s because my family has been so involved here, I see Marquette University as more of a family. My Mom went to school here, my Dad works here and went to school here, my Sister got her teaching degree here, my
Grandma got her chemistry degree in 1949, and my Great-Great Uncle used to be the director of the athletic department here.”

3 “I wanted a degree that had some clout. I really wanted a degree that carried a good reputation with it.”

4 “Marquette University really takes the cake. It’s not just the schooling, but also the people and the community aspect of it.”

6 “I started at Marquette University as a traditional student in 1995. After years and years, I came back and was referred to the College of Professional Studies.”

Four out of the six participants indicated they are realizing increased confidence as a result of their education.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I am so afraid to speak in public and I thought to myself this is an opportunity amongst my peers to take part in videos. I’m proud that I had the confidence to get through it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I now have the ability to seek out answers on my own. I don’t have to always look for someone more credible than me. I do have valid input.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I always had this self-imposed lack of confidence in dealing with peers or other people that were in similar or more elevated roles than I am. And I would have to credit having the experience of being able to increase the amount of knowledge I have in different reading and work skills. There’s a sense of confidence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I do feel taller at work. The sense of knowing that you’re in school and it makes you feel that you have a stronger sense of confidence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“The strongest benefit is my own personal growth. I have a lot more confidence and knowledge.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A final common theme that emerged from the interview data is a pattern of starts and stops in attending college for adult female students.

Table 8  
*Starts and Stops*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When she graduated at the age of 16 from high school, she received a full scholarship to college. She went to UWM and didn’t do so well because she was 16 years old and lost on a big campus. Then a family tragedy diverted her attention away from school. After getting a full-time job, she earned an associate’s degree at night school. Then she got married and had kids, and life got busy and comfortable. After going with her sister to an information session, she learned about the College of Professional Studies and realized she could fulfill her dream to attend Marquette University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I would say it was 17 or 18 years since I had been in school. I started at Parkside and stopped. I had fears because I was out of school for so long.” After helping her three step-children develop to a point where her absence would not impact them, the time was right to go back to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>She got her first degree long ago at WCTC as an administrative assistant. After that, she went back to WCTC to earn an associate’s degree. Her WCTC adviser referred her to Marquette University to earn a bachelor’s degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“I started at Marquette University as a traditional student in 1995, but I was not disciplined enough. I went to MATC to earn an associate’s degree and I always wanted to come back to Marquette to finish my degree. After years and years, I came back to Marquette University and was referred to the College of Professional Studies.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A summary of the primary themes identified within this qualitative data analysis include:

- Career development or change;
- Personal fulfillment/satisfaction;
- Serving as role model;
- Broader knowledge or perspective;
- Preference for a quality education;
- Increased confidence; and
- Starts and stops in the educational journey.

**Findings**

A comparison of the literature and the interview data reveal some common themes. It is evident that career development is most often cited as one of the top reasons for returning to school by adult female students. San Miguel Baumann et al. (2004) identified career-related reasons motivating adult women to enroll in college. Other specific career-related reasons cited in the literature are “working toward a job promotion” (Shank Winchell & Myers, 2001), “managing their career” (Chao & Good, 2004), and “desire for career advancement” (Kennedy & Vaughn, 2004). Interview participants provided specific career-related reasons for attending college such as: having a career-related back-up plan, changing careers, career promotion, and starting a business or business expansion.

Another common theme between the literature and the interview data is personal fulfillment or satisfaction as a primary reason for returning to school by adult female students. This common theme was sprinkled throughout the literature using specific
reasons for attending college such as: “self-fulfillment and self-esteem” (Bates & Nortan, 2002), “personal redefinition, empowerment and success” (Coker, 2003), “investing in themselves for personal growth and fulfillment” (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010), and “making a positive impact on their personal lives” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). Interview participants provided specific reasons related to personal fulfillment that led them to go to college, including: “doing something for myself,” “wanting to improve and develop,” “personal satisfaction,” and “gaining the breadth of knowledge I was missing.”

The desire to be a good role model for family members and colleagues is also a common theme in both the literature and the interview data. Within the literature, a study by San Miguel Bauman, et al. (2004) touched on the significance of adult females wanting to set a good example for their children. Other studies also cited “setting an example to my children” (San Miguel Baumann et al., 2004) and being a good role model (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010; Sealey-Ruiz, 2004; Wilsey, 2013). The interview data confirmed this finding and offered more in-depth insight about the reasons why three out of the six participants thought this was one of the important reasons to go to college. Interview participants stated “It’s made me more of a role model to my family and friends,” “I wanted to make sure that I demonstrated what I was telling my children,” and “Having my boys, I really want them to see that education is important.”

In addition, there is an overall common theme of “the right time” to enroll in college for adult females due to their multiple roles and time constraints (Miller, Pope & Steinmann, 2006). As noted by Taniguchi & Kaufman (2007), adult females may have less child care responsibilities and have more time to attend college when their children are older. Consequently, “the time needs to be right for the adult female to decide to
enroll in college” (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2007). A study by Kennedy & Vaughn (2004) identifies how marriage and family responsibilities can delay completion of a college degree for adult women. This leads to starts and stops in the adult female’s educational journey, which is a common thread among the interview participant stories. A study by Deutsch & Schmertz (2011) identified a common theme of adult female students returning to college in a series of starts and stops due to their gendered role including primary caretaking responsibilities. Participants reported conflict over short-term sacrifices versus long-term gain for their families. The adult female interview participants shared stories of their educational journey, which included delays or a series of starts and stops due to multiple roles and family responsibilities. Said participant 3:

I would say it was 17 or 18 years since I had been in school. I had started at Parkside and then stopped for financial reasons. After getting married, I wanted to help raise my three step-children. I waited for a point where they had more obligations and activities that filled their time and my absence wasn’t going to affect things that were structured for them. That was a huge piece of it.

Participant 1 shared her educational journey, which began with graduation from high school in the top percentile of her class at the age of 16 and receiving a full scholarship to college:

I went to UWM and didn’t do so well because I was 16 years old and felt lost on a big campus. After a family tragedy diverted my attention, I stopped going to school and started working full-time. I did want to complete my degree, so I went to Stratton and earned a medical associate’s degree by attending night school. Then I got married and
had a family. After many years lapsed, I attended a college information session and enrolled at Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies.

After interviewing a 23-year old female student in the nontraditional adult degree program at Marquette University, I discovered that this younger adult female student (under age 25) was also seeking nontraditional ways of learning because of her busy lifestyle. As noted by Aslanian & Green Giles (2011), “the distinction between those 25 and older and those under 25 is becoming less relevant.” It appears that the primary distinction for nontraditional students is lifestyle and these younger adult students are seeking nontraditional ways of learning to accommodate their busy lives.

The value of college is identified through the transformational accounts of enhanced confidence and perspective for adult female students (Kennedy & Vaughn, 2004; Sweet & Moen, 2007). Interview participant number 5 remarks:

I do feel taller at work. The sense of knowing that I’m in school makes me feel that I have a stronger sense of confidence. And I do think you gain more respect when people know you are in school because you are willing to put in more time and effort into yourself to create something you haven’t had before.

Some interview participants described being transformed through their education, which resulted in greater confidence. Interview participant number 3 remarks:

I always had this self-imposed lack of confidence in dealing with peers or people that were in similar or more elevated roles than I am. I would have to credit having the experience of being able to increase the amount of knowledge I have to an enhanced sense of confidence.
Other interview participants noted a broader perspective as an important outcome of their education. Interview participant number 4 puts it this way:

The diversity and how to look at people and things in a different way is a strong benefit. I just now came from class and there was a mix of younger people and older people, all with some sort of work experience. It’s just great diversity, which I never had before.

A unique difference between the literature and the interview data is that the literature covers a broader range of adult female students from various educational institutions and geographic locations. Whereas, the interview participants were all current undergraduate students of Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies’ located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a result, the interview participants offered some additional insight about the value of Marquette University’s good reputation for quality education. This factored into their selection of Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies, as well as additional benefits offered by the university that were appealing to the interview participants, including: programs designed for adult students, flexible scheduling, an accelerated eight-week-session format, and support from advisors, faculty, and other adult students.

Another difference concerning the literature review is the identification of unique needs and concerns for African American female students in some of the literature, which was not evident in the interview data since none of the interview participants were African American. The study conducted by Coker (2003) identified one of the concerns and challenges for African American women about going to college is continued discrimination and cultural misunderstandings as they work toward their academic goals.
Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to highlight some research limitations leading to ideas for future studies and offer concluding remarks.

Research Limitations and Future Studies

First, this study included adult female students only. A future study may be conducted with adult male students as well as adult female students in order to compare the results and determine common themes as well as differences based on gender.

Second, the interview participant sample was small and limited to one college and one program – six students from Marquette University’s College of Professional Studies in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These students are all in the adult degree program working toward a bachelor’s degree in leadership and organizations. Expanding future studies to a larger sample size with students from other colleges and universities across the United States from a variety of adult degree majors, may offer broader research findings with greater validity.

Third, and as noted in the literature review, the results of this study lack racial diversity. Four of the six interview participants are Caucasian, one participant is Hispanic/Polish, and one participant is Hispanic/Oneida Indian. Future studies with a larger group of participants and greater racial diversity as well as diverse lifestyles may produce somewhat different results.

Fourth, qualitative research was the single method used for this research study. The use of a mixed methods approach to this research study would offer the opportunity to combine the collection and analysis of hard data obtained through quantitative research with the qualitative data obtained from the views of participants in response to interview
questions using open-ended questions. It offers the opportunity to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand the research problem (Creswell, 2012). This mixed methods approach may offer a greater understanding of the research problem than using only one method by itself.

In addition, there were time constraints due to my work, family, and household responsibilities that limited the amount of time I could spend on this research study. With more time to devote to this type of research study, additional insights, common themes, similarities, and differences may be identified.

**Concluding Remarks**

Since adult women outnumber men in college, this qualitative study sought to better understand the primary reasons why adult females go to college to earn their bachelor’s degree. This research study exemplifies how adult females who are balancing multiple roles and responsibilities are motivated to go to college to earn their degree to help advance their career, achieve personal fulfillment, and serve as a role model for their families. Even though these women have multiple roles and responsibilities that can create starts and stops in their educational journey, the stories of these women demonstrate a strong desire to achieve their goal of earning a college degree, even if it takes many years.

As adult females continue to be a growing segment of the adult student population, it is important for college administrators to understand their primary motivations for deciding to go to college to earn their bachelor’s degree and to be able to support their unique needs. The research shows that even though women continue to have multiple roles and responsibilities that compete for their time, major gains have
been made by adult females deciding to enroll in college. Their sense of hopefulness has motivated their efforts to actively manage their career, family, and interpersonal relationships (Chao & Good, 2004). These nontraditional women accomplish their nontraditional educational goals by enrolling in educational programs offering nontraditional class times designed to fit their busy lifestyles (Shank, Winchell & Myers, 2001).
References


Appendix A: Protocol Summary Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Research</th>
<th>Protocol #:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORSP #:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsor Tracking #:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional Review Board**

**Protocol Summary Form**

**Directions:** Submit this completed Protocol Summary Form with original signature(s) along with any additional materials, including consent forms, information sheets, surveys, interview questions, etc.

**Submit to:** Office of Research Compliance, 560 North 16th Street, Room 102, Milwaukee, WI 53233

**Phone:** 414-288-7570  **Fax:** 414-288-6281  **Web site:** [http://www.mu.edu/researchcompliance](http://www.mu.edu/researchcompliance)

**Type of Review being sought:**
- [ ] Exempt
- [x] Expedited
- [ ] Full Review

**Exempt Review:** Submit original(s) of all materials; 1 copy of grant application.

**Expedited Review:** Submit original(s) AND 1 copy of all materials; 1 copy of grant application.

**Full Review:** Submit original(s) AND 14 copies of all materials; 1 copy of grant application.

**Principal Investigator:** Cindy Lorentzen
**Department:** College of Professional Studies
**Phone:** 414-288-7465  **E-mail:** cindy.lorentzen@marquette.edu

**Project Title:** College Enrollment Decision for Non-Traditional Female Students

**PI Certification**

By signing below or submitting this document electronically, I agree to accept primary responsibility for the scientific and ethical conduct of this project as approved by the IRB. The project cannot begin until I receive documentation of IRB final approval.

[Signature]

Cindy Lorentzen  
Printed Name

12/16/12

**FOR STUDENTS,** a Marquette faculty supervisor's signature is required on this document. By signing below or by submitting this document electronically, I certify that I have reviewed the research plan and this document and I have approved the scientific and ethical aspects of the project. I will supervise the above listed student and ensure compliance with human subjects' guidelines.

[Signature]

Eileen Sherman  
Printed Name

College of Professional Studies

**Human Subjects Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition:</th>
<th>Exempt</th>
<th>Expedited</th>
<th>Full Review</th>
<th>Approved through ___ / ___ / ___</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[Signature of Institutional Review Board Representative]  
Date: ___ / ___ / ___

[Signature of Institutional Review Board Chair]  
Date: ___ / ___ / ___

12/16/2012  3:18PM (GMT-06:00)
Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

January 4, 2013

Ms. Cindy Lorentzen
Professional Studies

Dear Ms. Lorentzen:

Your protocol number HR-2512, titled, “College Enrollment Decision for Non-Traditional Female Students” was expected on December 11, 2012, by a member of the Marquette University Institutional Review Board.

Your IRB approved informed consent form is enclosed with this letter. Use the stamped copies of this form when recruiting research participants. Each research participant should receive a copy of the stamped consent form for their records.

Subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when conducting your research. This study is currently approved for 12 subjects.

If you need to increase the number of subjects, add research personnel, or make any other changes to your protocol you must submit an IRB Protocol Amendment Form, which can be found on the Office of Research Compliance web site: http://www.marquette.edu/researchcompliance/research/irbforms.shtml. All changes must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before being initiated, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the human subjects. Any public advertising of this project requires prior IRB approval. If there are any adverse events, please notify the Marquette University IRB immediately.

Your approval is valid until December 10, 2013. Prior to this date, you will be contacted regarding continuing IRB review.

An IRB Final Report Form must be submitted once this research project is complete. The form should be submitted in a timely fashion, and must be received no later than the protocol expiration date.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Amanda J. Ahnadt, RN, MS, MSN, CIM, CIP
IRB Manager
Appendix C: Consent Form

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
College Enrollment Decision for Non-Traditional Female Students
Cindy Lorentzen
Leadership Studies - College of Professional Studies

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this proposed research study is to better understand the primary reasons why non-traditional female students (age 25 and older) go back to school and earn their undergraduate degree. You will be one of approximately eight participants in this research study.

PROCEDURES: If you give consent you will be asked a series of questions pertaining to your college enrollment decision as well as basic demographic information. If you do not feel comfortable answering specific questions, you may skip questions or end the interview.

With your permission, you may be audio-taped during the interview to ensure accuracy. If the interview is recorded, the recording will be transcribed and destroyed after six years beyond the completion of the research study. For confidentiality purposes, your name will not be recorded.

Also with your permission, this research may be presented using your individual quotation(s), without using your name.

DURATION: Your participation will consist of: Approximately 30 minutes for an in-person interview; approximately 20 minutes for an additional phone conversation to clarify any questions, if needed; and final review of the interview summary via e-mail.

RISKS: There are no more risks in participating in this research than those associated with daily living activities.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to the participants in this research study. Participation may help provide a better understanding of the primary reasons why adult females decide to go to college to earn their bachelor’s degree.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information you reveal in this study will be kept confidential. All your data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your name or other information that could identify you as an individual. When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name. The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents, deleting electronic files and audio-tapes six years after the completion of the study.
Your consent form will be kept by Cindy Lorentzen, the principal investigator, in a locked cabinet at her home. No one else will have access to the consent form.

The data collected during the interview will not be used for future research purposes.

Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study within 30 days of the interview, the data collected about you will be destroyed. After thirty days it may not be possible to remove your data from the research dataset.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Cindy Lorentzen at (414) 525-4773. If you have questions or concerns about rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University’s Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

____________________________________________             __________________________
Participant’s Signature                                                                           Date

____________________________________________
Participant’s Name

____________________________________________               _________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                                                           Date
Appendix D: Research Questions

1. Why did you decide to go back to school to get your bachelor’s degree?

2. What factors impacted your decision to enroll in college?

3. How did you choose your college and your major?

4. How has your decision to go back to school impacted your personal life?

5. How has your decision to go back to school impacted your professional life?

6. What is the strongest benefit you are realizing as a result of your degree program?

7. What is the most important outcome of your degree for you?

8. Are there any other comments about your college enrollment decision or experience that you would like to share?
Appendix E: Email to Potential Participants

Subject: Can I Ask For Your Help? MU College of Professional Studies Graduate Program - Professional Project Interview.

Hi. Could I ask for your help? I’m wondering if you might have 30-minutes to help me with my student project. In addition to being an employee of the College of Professional Studies, I am also a student in the college’s graduate program in Leadership Studies. As part of my final professional project, I have received approval to conduct in-person interviews with undergraduate students from the College of Professional Studies to determine the primary reasons why adult women decide to go back to school to earn their bachelor’s degree and determine what factors are most important when deciding to go back to school – greatest motivations. These 30-minute interviews will be recorded (with your permission), transcribed and then deleted after I summarize the information and look for common themes among the interview participants. This interview will be conducted in a confidential manner and your name will not be used in the study – just the information.

Would you be open to being interviewed sometime next week? I can meet you at a location that is convenient for you - your workplace, a quiet public place, or MU campus – whatever works best for you. Just share some dates/times that are open on your calendar.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Best regards,

Cindy Lorentzen
Marquette University College of Professional Studies
Work Phone: 414-288-7465