

A COMPARISON OF ADULT LEARNERS' ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS AS PERCEIVED BY
ADULT LEARNERS AND FACULTY

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VITA

Kemba Chambers Countryman, daughter of John Douglas Chambers and the late Joann Whittlesey Chambers, was born July 1, 1974, in Columbus, Georgia. She graduated from Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama with an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts in 1994. She received a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Math Education in 1996 from Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. She taught in the Phenix City School District for four years. While serving as a math teacher in the Phenix City School District, she was a member of the Alabama State Department of Education's High School Graduation Task Force and the Alabama Education Association. She received the Master of Science in Education from Troy State University in Phenix City, Alabama in 1998. In 2000, she began working as a mathematics instructor at Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama. She received the Specialist in Educational Leadership in 2001 from Troy State University in Phenix City, Alabama. She entered Auburn University in August 2003. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She is married to Mr. Henry L. Countryman, Jr.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
A COMPARISON OF ADULT LEARNERS' ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND
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Adult learners are returning to college in massive numbers. Community colleges have seen a tremendous increase in enrollment as a result of this population of students (Boggs, 2004; Carlan, 2001; Moore & Piland, 1994). In order to stay abreast of this rapid growth of student population, it is imperative that community colleges continue to identify strategies and methods to strengthen relationships between adult learners and faculty members. The purpose of this study was to identify the academic, social, and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges address the needs of this group. Given the need for

additional research in this area, the following questions were investigated: (1) What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?; (2) What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?; (3) What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

A survey data were based on a convenience sample of 242 adult learners and 106 faculty members in the community college setting. Reliability of the instrument reported Cronbach's alpha of .81. After data collection, three 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA's and qualitative themes were used to determine the significant relationships between part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs.

Quantitative findings indicated that a significant interaction occurred between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs and a significant effect occurred between adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs. Qualitative explanations conferred that significant relationships existed between adult learners' and faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic and environmental needs. Implications for community colleges' administrators and faculty members were identified and areas for further research are presented.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The composition of the adult education student body is changing. As America ages, older adult learners are returning to school in increasing numbers. “Adult learners comprise the fastest growing segment of the college population across the United States” (McCollin, 2000, p. 3). For this reason, community colleges have seen tremendous growth in this population base (Moore & Piland, 1994).

From the beginning, community colleges have embedded in their goals the promise to provide opportunities for higher education to the masses of American people (Cohen & Brawer, 1990; Herring, 1992; Valadez, 1993). Community colleges recognize that the majority of its students have traditionally been excluded from participating in higher education and wish to extend educational opportunity to all persons (Carlan, 2001; Griffith & Conner, 1994). Advocates of community college education signify the needs of the learner (Carlan, 2001). Based on this information, it appears that adult students may well prefer community colleges upon returning to higher education (Carlan, 2001). As a result, community colleges are increasingly paying attention to these adults’ individual needs and aspirations as they design programs. In addition, educators seek to attract and retain this population by addressing their individual needs.

Adult learners place a high level of importance on their student experiences and how satisfied they are that institutions are meeting their expectations (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). Adult learners whose needs are actively addressed by their institutions are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and are more likely to persist and ultimately become the institutions' best ambassadors and future benefactors (NCES, 2003). Consequently, providing an appropriate match between the adult learner and its institution is essential.

“Given the degree of diversity within the community college student population, institutions must have a clear understanding of the challenges that their students face as well as ways to address these issues through programs and policies” (Kim, 2002, p. 74). When adult learners' individual and particular needs are identified and met, they benefit from the substantial amount of additional support colleges are able to provide (Watters, 2003). In order to ensure that adult learners' needs are being recognized and obtained, an understanding of the perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs must be addressed by community colleges. This collaboration of needs should be interwoven into the adult learners' academic preparations.

The non-traditional student with different values, needs, and aspirations offers many challenges to college administrators (Pennington & Harris, 1980). Adult students come to community colleges with a variant set of characteristics (Howell, 2001). “Adult students attending community colleges for the first time are sometimes inadequately prepared, both academically and psychologically” (Howell, 2001, p. 1). Adult students at the community college setting comprise both part-time and full-time student population. Adult students consist primarily of commuter students; with a large percentage of

students attending part-time (Kim, 2002). Forty-six percent of the community college student population is 25 or older, and the average age in the community college is 29 (AACC, 2000). Nontraditional students are usually considered students 25 years of age or older (Butler, 1998; Ely, 1997; Hazzard, 1993; Kim, 2002; Metzner & Bean, 1987; Nora, Kraemer, & Itzen, 1997; O'Keefe, 1993; Sundberg, 1997).

Adult students attend community colleges to pursue a variety of educational objectives, including academic transfer, vocational-technical education, remedial and continuing education, and community service. Adult learners who enroll in transferable degree programs are a distinctive cluster of students within the community colleges' population (Kim, 2002). This group of students has unique characteristics and needs that set them apart from the rest of the population. Meeting their individual needs is often an important part of their success in their academic settings. In order to address their needs, it is important for community colleges to have faculty members that can contribute to adult learners' successes (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990).

Part-time and full-time faculty members have an effect on the daily interactions among adult learners in the community college setting. In keeping with the mission of community colleges to encourage life-long learning, one goal of the faculty should be to lead students to becoming self-directed learners, and to do so means encouraging and supporting adult students' involvement in their own learning (Howell, 2001). In order to accomplish this task, faculty members must understand adult learners' characteristics and needs to contribute to their achievements. Daily encounters with part-time and full-time faculty members have a direct impact on student achievement (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990).

Gaining insight into relationships with faculty members and adult learners can assist community colleges in creating a favorable learning environment for adult students (Carlan, 2001). By evaluating and addressing suitable ties among faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs, educators can better address the needs of the adult learner population in the community colleges' population.

Academic Needs

According to Metzner and Bean (1987), academic variables are indicators of the internal collegiate environment. Academic needs involve study hours, preparation and study skills, academic advising, absenteeism, academic degrees, and course availability. In addition, other academic factors consist of developmental courses, tutoring assistance, instructional delivery, remediation, faculty accessibility, and the overall teaching-learning process. Academic factors contribute to the broad-spectrum of academic success of adult learners. Academic needs are critical and are a major function in determining the persistency of adult learners (Metzner & Bean, 1987).

Social Needs

Metzner and Bean (1987) indicated that social integration variables consist of memberships in clubs or professional organizations, faculty contact, and school friends. Additionally, social needs also involve public services, social engagements and involvements, the ability to serve mankind, preparation for service to the community, and the ability to participate in community work (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Tinto (1989) asserted that faculty interaction with students influences student persistence toward degree completion. According to Astin (1984), students who interact more frequently

with faculty members report significantly greater satisfaction with the college environment.

Environmental Needs

According to Metzner and Bean (1987), environmental variables consist of finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity to transfer. In addition, other environmental factors that are crucial to adult learners include student health services, library services, location of the college, physical impairments/handicaps or accommodations, transportation, job placement, and career development (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998) formulated that adults learn best in informal, comfortable, flexible, non-threatening settings. Nontraditional students interact with the college environment, but they spend considerable time engaging in their individual surroundings while enrolled in college (Metzner & Bean, 1987).

Statement of the Research Problem

As colleges attempt to look for a means to improve the relationships of adult learners and its faculty, it is an appropriate time to investigate the relationships between the stated needs of adult learners at the community college setting and adult learners' needs as perceived by its faculty members. There is a lack of research in this area because the variables, academic, social, and environmental needs as perceived by faculty and adult learners, have not been researched jointly in the community college setting. Evaluating relationships between the stated needs by part-time and full-time adult learners at the community college setting and the perceived needs of part-time and

full-time faculty members in community colleges in reference to their academic, social, and environmental needs will help community colleges gain better insights to the adult learner population.

Additionally, the understanding of whether adult learners and faculty share the same perceptions regarding adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs is important in promoting adult learners' pursuit of academic excellence. This study addressed adult learners' and faculty members' perceptions regarding adult learners' actual academic, social, and environmental needs.

Purpose of the Study

Understanding adult learners' needs are important when providing services among this population in the community college setting. The purpose of this study was to identify the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges address the needs of this group. This study identified specific comparisons between the perceptions of part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members at community colleges. There is a need for this study because the variables, academic, social, and environmental needs as perceived by faculty and adult learners, have not been researched mutually in the community college setting.

This study had three major goals: (1) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting; (2) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs

and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting; and (3) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting.

Significance of the Study

This study focused on the relationship of the stated academic, social, and environmental needs of adult learners to the perceptions of those needs by faculty members. Few studies were found that addressed specific needs of adult learners at community colleges. By addressing the relationship of adult learners and faculty members' perceptions, community colleges can strive in greater efforts to reach and better serve this specific population.

This study is significant in that it determined if a relationship existed in part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting. The study is also significant in that it established whether a relationship existed in part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting. In addition, the study is significant because it revealed if a relationship existed in part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting.

The information from this study can assist community colleges to better recognize the needs of adult learners and to prepare for future program planning and academically

related improvements. Community colleges' faculty members and administrators will find this information useful in order to help them initiate appropriate learning strategies and create learning environments that will promote productivity for adult learners.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?
2. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?
3. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

1. This study represented two community colleges that are geographically located in southeast Alabama; therefore, generalization beyond the two institutions within this study should be undertaken with caution.
2. This study was limited to adult learners that were 25 years old and over and attended community colleges.

3. This study was restricted to faculty members at community colleges.
4. Responses were limited to the adult learners stated needs and faculty members' perceptions of the adult learners' needs at Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama and Wallace Community College in Selma, Alabama.
5. This study was limited to information gained from the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* which was authored by the researcher.

Assumptions

1. The adult learners and faculty will understand the self-report instrument and their responses will be honest.
2. Adult learners' responses to questions about their academic, social, and environmental behaviors reflect their individual experiences of academic, social, and environmental behaviors in the community college setting.
3. Faculty responses to questions about adult learners' academic, social, and environmental behaviors reflect their perceptions regarding academic, social, and academic behaviors in the community college setting.

Definitions of Terms

Academic Needs/Variables. These needs or variables address areas of education that impact learning. They include: developmental courses, class offerings, tutoring assistance, instructional delivery, remediation, faculty accessibility, and the teaching-learning process.

Adult learner: Used interchangeably with “nontraditional student” or “adult student.” A male or a female student who is of the age 25 years or older.

Adult student: Used interchangeably with “nontraditional student” or “adult learner.” A male or a female student who is of the age of 25 years or older.

Community College: An institution dedicated to meeting the higher education needs of the citizens in its community or service area. It offers academic, technical, and community courses that lead to an associates degree or certificate.

Environmental Needs/Variables: These needs or variables incorporate the entire external learning atmosphere. They include: financial aid, student health services, library services, location of college, physical impairments/handicaps or accommodations, transportation, job placement, and career development.

Faculty: Part-time and full-time instructors who are employed at an educational facility.

Full-time faculty: A faculty member that is hired on a full-time status and teaches a full course load as defined by the institution.

Full-time student: A student that enrolls in 12 credit hours or more a semester.

Nontraditional student: Used interchangeably with “adult learner” or “adult student.” A male or a female student who is of the age 25 years or older.

Part-time faculty: A faculty member that teaches a course load of nine credit hours or less a semester.

Part-time student: A student that enrolls in less than 12 credit hours a semester.

Social Needs/Variables: These needs or variables address specific collective interactions within the learning environment. They include: activities,

clubs/organizations, services, social engagements/involvement, form associations and friendships, improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.

Traditional student: A student between the ages of 18 – 24 years.

Transferable Degree Program: A degree program that combines general education as prerequisites for additional education, such as a bachelor's degree.

Examples include: Associate of Arts or Associate of Science.

Chapter Summary

Chapter I provides the introduction of the study, statement of the research problem, purpose, research questions, and definition of terms. Chapter II discusses a review of literature regarding adult learning development, characteristics of adult learners, needs and challenges of adult learners, role of community colleges and its faculty, and adult learners returning to college. Chapter III recalls the procedures used in the study. It includes the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and the data analyses. In Chapter IV, the research findings are indicated. Chapter V reveals the summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and areas for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

For the first time in our society, adults outnumber youth; there are more older adults; the population is better educated than ever before; and, there is more cultural and ethnic diversity (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Because of this pattern, adults are representing larger numbers in the university, community college, and technical arena. In recent years, the populations of these institutions have changed so dramatically that they are now reaching more adult learners than the traditional-age students, such as many community colleges and selected postsecondary institutions (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Each year a large number of adults return to school, with many choosing programs in higher education (Osgood-Treston, 2001). In addition, some educational institutions have been established for the primary purpose of serving adults (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

In order to serve adults more effectively, educational needs must be met to better serve the population. For this reason, colleges are paying more attention to adults' individual needs and aspirations in educational program design. When adult learners' individual and particular needs are identified and met, adults benefit from the substantial

amount of additional support colleges are able to provide (Watters, 2003). In order to ensure that adult learners' needs are being recognized and obtained, an understanding of the perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs must be addressed by community colleges. This collaboration of needs should be interwoven into the adult learners' academic preparations. Adult learners whose needs are actively addressed by their institutions are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and are more likely to persist and ultimately become the institutions' best ambassadors and future benefactors (NCES, 2003).

In order for community colleges to provide and design appropriate services for adult learners, understanding their needs is vital. Identifying specific academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners is important to consider in improving the way community colleges address the needs of this group. This study addressed specific comparisons between the perceptions of part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members at community colleges.

The study had three major goals: (1) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting; (2) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting; and (3) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting.

The study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?
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3. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

This literature review centers around four areas of research relating to adult learners at community colleges. The first section contains information about adult learning development. This segment emphasizes the importance of primarily understanding the learning process and developmental phases of adult students before addressing specific needs. The second section focuses on characteristics of adult learners. It is important to establish the distinctiveness of the group of adult learners in order to meet precise desires of this population. The third area focuses on the needs and challenges of adult learners. The purpose of this section is to address the individual learning needs of adult learners, their academics, social structure, and the environment in which they learn. Additionally, this section focuses on the barriers to learning for adult learners. The literature review also includes the role of community colleges and its faculty because the historical aspect of the community college's role and its faculty members are important in meeting and addressing the learning needs of adult learners.

Adult Learning Development

There has clearly been a broad range of discussion concerning the definition of learning (Knowles, 1996; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Maslow, 1970; Merriam, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Smith, 1982; Truluck & Courtenay, 1999; Vander Zanden, 2000). Various learning theorists assert that defining learning is difficult (Boyd, et al., 1980; Gagne, 1965; Rogers, 1969; Smith, 1982). Yet, other theorists maintain that there is no basic disagreement about the definition of learning between the theories (Knowles, 1996; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Maslow, 1970; Vander Zanden, 2000). Several learning theorists have attempted to define learning (Boyd, et al., 1980; Gagne, 1965; Knowles, 1996; Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1969; Smith, 1982).

Gagne (1965) defined learning as a change in human disposition or capability, which can be retained, and which is not simply ascribable to the process of growth. Learning has also been defined as the act or process by which behavioral change, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are acquired (Boyd, et al., 1980). Smith (1982) asserted that the ability of learning encompasses the mastery of what is already known, clarification of meaning of one's experience, or an intentional process of testing ideas relevant to problems. From the previous definitions, it is somewhat apparent that learning involves a distinct process of gaining knowledge by change and growth.

While several theorists have formulated their own idea about the goal of learning, Maslow (1970) believed that the goal of learning is self-actualization. He asserted that once all previous needs are satisfied, then and only then are the needs for self-actualization set in motion. Maslow described self-actualization as a person's need to be and do that only which the person wants to do.

Carl Rogers (1969) proposed that competency based development must occur in order for learning to take place. He concluded that learning encompasses personal involvement, self-initiation, pervasiveness, evaluation by the learner, and its essence in meaning. These ideas play a critical role in unfolding the learning development of adult students.

Gagne (1965) identified five domains that must exist in order for the learning process to take place. These included motor skills, verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, and attitudes. He affirmed that all of the mentioned domains are crucial for learning to occur in an educational setting.

Vander Zanden (2000) considered that learning takes place throughout a life-time, from infancy to adulthood. With this broad spectrum, there exists different types of learning patterns. Adults indeed learn differently than children. Knowles et al. (1998) formulated that our society knows more about how animals learn than about how children learn; and that we know much more about how children learn than about how adults learn. Consequently, adult students have not been examined and explored enough to know what makes this special group gain knowledge. Some theorists formulated that adults learn knowledge based on behavior (Hull, 1943; Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1953; Thorndike, 1913; Watson, 1912).

Behaviorism was the most influential school of thought in American psychology until the 1960's (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2005). Behaviorists such as Skinner and Watson believed that any kind of learning could be explained without reference to internal mental processes (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2005). According to Vander Zanden

(2000), behavioral theory is concerned with the observable behavior of people in what they actually do and say.

John B. Watson (1912) indicated that people do not go through distinct stages but that they go through a continuous process of behavior changes due to responses to environmental influences (Vander Zanden, 2000). Watson (1912) considered that behavior as observable and measurable and emphasized that the environment is the key role to the determinant of behavior. He believed that society can gain a full understanding of development by studying the stimuli that compose the environment (Watson, 1912).

Edward Thorndike (1913) formulated several laws of learning, the most important being the law of effect. He believed that the consequence, or effect, of a response will determine whether the tendency to respond in the same way in the future will be strengthened or weakened (Thorndike, 1913; Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2005). Thorndike (1898) insisted that it is unnecessary to invoke reasoning to explain how learning takes place.

Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1927) conducted experiments that resulted in the concept of conditioned reflexes. Pavlov believed that the conditioned reflexes were a model of learning in which he referred to as classical conditioning (Pavlov, 1927).

Clark L. Hull (1943) adopted the systematic behavior theory. Hull's theory elaborated on the central notion that there are intervening variables in the organism that influence what response will occur following the onset of a stimulus (Hull, 1943). According to Hull, all living organisms have certain biological needs that must be met if they are to survive (Hull, 1943).

B. F. Skinner (1953) asserted that much of life is structured by arranging reinforcing consequences. He stressed the part that learning processes play in an organism's acquisition of various behaviors. Like Watson, Skinner believed that the causes of behavior are in the environment and are not rooted in inner mental events such as thoughts, feelings, or perceptions (Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2005). Skinner maintained that free will is a myth and that a person's behavior is always shaped and controlled by others such as parents, teachers, peers, advertisers, and television (Skinner, 1971). He argued that rather than leaving the control of human behavior to chance, societies should systematically shape the behavior of their members for the larger good (Skinner, 1971; Wood, Wood, & Boyd, 2005).

Adult developmental theory and research has offered a rich array of material from which numerous implications can be drawn about learning in adulthood (Imel, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Smith, 1999; Vander Zanden, 2000). The label and concept of andragogy greatly enhanced the efforts to create a conceptual framework of adult learning (Knowles et al., 1998). Knowles (1977) defined andragogy as "an emerging technology for adult learning." Initially defined as, "the art and science of helping adults learn," andragogy has come to be understood as an alternative to pedagogy; a learner-focused approach for all ages (Dover, 2005).

The term andragogy has been around for nearly two centuries (Smith, 1999). Andragogy first appeared in the writing of a German teacher named Alexander Kapp, in 1833. He used it to describe elements of Plato's education theory by contrasting andragogy with pedagogy (Smith, 1999). However, this term did not become popular until Malcolm Knowles apparently heard of the term from a Yugoslavian colleague,

Dusan Savicevic (Dover, 2005). Andragogy became particularly popular in North America and Britain as a way of describing adult learning through the work of Malcolm Knowles (Smith, 1999).

In early 1970's when andragogy and the concept that adults and children learn differently was first introduced in the United States by Malcolm Knowles, the idea was groundbreaking and sparked much subsequent research and controversy (Knowles et al., 1998). In the first half of this century, psychologists took the lead in explaining learning behavior; from the 1960's onward, adult educators began formulating their own ideas about adult learning and, in particular, about how it might differ from learning in childhood (Knowles et al., 1998).

Conlan, Grabowski, and Smith (2003) asserted that all styles of learning are applicable to both early childhood and adult learning, with differences presenting themselves in regard to the use of the style based on the learning environment. They further suggested that "there are conflicting perspectives on adult learning as it relates to and separates itself from early childhood development practices and overall approaches to learning" (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003, p. 1).

Andragogy in practice shows that it is a core set of adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 1998). For Knowles, andragogy was grounded on four crucial assumptions regarding the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the assumptions about child learners on which traditional pedagogy is found. A fifth and sixth principle were adopted later. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), the six principles of andragogy consist of the learner's need to know, self-concept of the learner, prior experience of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and

motivation to learn. Knowles used these principles to propose a program for the design, implementation and evaluation of adult learning (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003).

The first principle focused on the learners need to know. The learner's need to know addressed the learner's knowing of why, what and how learning occurs (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Knowles' second principle addressed the self-concept of the learner. It revealed the need for the learner to be self-directed and autonomous (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). The learner has an independent self-concept and is able to direct his or her own learning (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003). The third principle concentrated on prior experience of the learner. This principle highlighted the learner's previous life experiences and knowledge in order to connect this to learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Conlan, Grabowski, and Smith (2003) believed that this principle was important because it provided the basis for adult's learning activities. The fourth principle addressed the readiness to learn. As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Knowles' fifth principle centered around the orientation to learning. Knowles believed that as adults mature, their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Additionally, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). The final principle focused on the motivation to learn. Merriam (2001) asserted that adults are motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. Adults benefited from intrinsic rewards that will lead to personal payoffs (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998).

Jarvis (1985) acknowledged that andragogy helps the learner to move toward independence. He believed that the learner is self-directed with the teacher encouraging and nurturing the task (Jarvis, 1985). Jarvis deems that the learner's experience should consist of discussion, problem-solving, and what the learner needs to know. He contended that learning should be based around life experiences.

During the past decade, the literature on adult development, particularly as it relates to adult learning, has expanded (Imel, 2001). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) expanded on adult development theories. They have been grouped into four models: 1) biological; which is concerned with how physical changes affect development; 2) psychological, defined by life events or a series of transitions or relational; 3) socio-cultural, which focuses on social and cultural aspects of adult lives; and 4) integrative, which examines how the biological, psychological, and socio-cultural aspects of adult development intersect and influence each other (Imel, 2001).

Learners often have clear expectations about what they want to learn and value negotiations with teachers about how their requirements will be met (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002a). Based on many aspects involving the way adults learn, how to teach adult students has become a key topic in many universities and colleges. Because of this reason, adult development and adult education continue to be intertwined (Imel, 2001).

Adult education is a process through which learners become aware of significant experience (Knowles et al., 1998). In conventional education, the student is required to adjust himself to an established curriculum; in adult education, the curriculum is built around the student's needs and interests. In adult education, subject matter is brought

into the situation, is put to work, when needed (Knowles et al., 1998). Texts and teachers play a new and secondary role in this type of education; they must give way to the primary importance of the learners (Lindeman, 1926).

Following the earlier lead of psychologists such as Erik Erikson (1968) Charlotte Bühler and Massarik (1968), Eduard C. Lindeman (1926), Daniel Levinson (1978), and Robert Havighurst (1972), the social science community has come to recognize that adulthood is not a single monolithic stage, not an undifferentiated phase of life between adolescence and old age (Vander Zanden, 2000). According to Vander Zanden (2000), adulthood is now seen as an adventure that involves negotiating ups and downs and changing direction to surmount obstacles.

Erik Erikson (1968) concluded that the personality of individuals continues to develop over the entire life span. He measured that each part of the personality had a particular time in the life span when it must develop (Erikson, 1968). Erikson's eight staged life-cycle extended over the entire life cycle. His stages of development included Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Integrity vs. Despair. "Erikson's portrait of the life cycle allows 'second chances' for opportunities missed and paths not taken" (Vander Zanden, 2000, p. 45). Erikson's stages one through five addresses life development associated with infancy through childhood. The sixth through eighth stages of Erikson's life development focuses on adults.

Erikson's sixth stage, Intimacy vs. Isolation, occurs during young adulthood. Erikson (1968) believed that intimacy with other people occurred only if an identity

transformed from the fifth stage. If an individual did not develop a sense of identity, he or she may retreat into isolation (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) assumed that in the sixth stage, the adult forms close relationships or he or she becomes isolated from society.

Erikson's seventh stage of development, Generativity vs. Stagnation, focused on developing productive lives. At this stage, the adults look to care for others by helping the next generation (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) suggested that if an adult feels as if he or she has not been successful in leading useful lives, then stagnation will ultimately occur.

Erikson's final stage of development, Integrity vs. Despair, occurs in late adulthood. Erikson (1968) believed that at this stage, the adult looks back and evaluates their life with integrity. If the adult feel as if their life was not positive, then they will feel despair.

In addition to Erikson, Bühler and Massarik (1968) asserted that people develop throughout their life span. According to Bühler and Massarik (1968), healthy people face challenges throughout their course of living and attempt to incorporate four basic tendencies within their life span. These four basic tendencies included satisfying one's needs, making self-limiting adaptations, moving toward creative expansion, and upholding and restoring the inner order (Bühler & Massarik, 1968). Within these basic developmental needs, Bühler and Massarik (1968) observed that humans could find personal fulfillment by living purposefully, setting goals, and establishing a personal system of values.

Strongly influenced by the educational philosophy of John Dewey, Eduard C. Lindeman laid the foundation for a systematic theory about adult learning (Knowles et al., 1998). Lindeman (1926) observed that adult education is a social process. He claimed that it is a collaborative interactional process that involves both peers and teachers. Lindeman's key assumptions relating to adult learning involve 1) adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy, 2) adults' orientation to learning is life-centered, 3) experience is the richest source for adults' learning, 4) adults have a deep need to be self-directing, and 5) individual differences among people increase with age.

Yale psychologist Daniel Levinson (1978) developed a comprehensive theory of adult development. Daniel Levinson's (1978, 1986, 1990) theory of adult development is the notion of life course. Levinson proposed that there is an underlying order in the human life course in which everyone goes through the same basic sequence (Levinson, 1986). His theory is based on a universal stages or phases that extend from infancy to adulthood. Levinson's (1978) stage theory goes beyond most theories and continues throughout adult life. His key emphasis was based on the concept of life structure.

According to Levinson's (1978), many significant differences exist among adults throughout various life phases. Levinson suggested that adults pass through a series of stages. The pre-adulthood stage is the first stage. It focuses on young adults leaving home and making occupational and educational decisions. The second stage is referred to as the early adulthood stage. In this stage, the adult is focused on making career choices and starting families. The third stage is described as the middle adult stage. At this stage, adults begin to focus on the finite nature of life. They concentrate on

accomplishments and the real meaning of life. The final stage of Levinson's theory focuses on late adulthood. In this stage, adults relate to coping with physical decline and death. They ultimately come to accept their life's course.

In conservative education, students are obligated to adjust themselves to a traditional curriculum; however, in adult education, the program is constructed around the student's needs and interest (Knowles et al., 1998). In order for adult students to meet their learning expectations, basic needs and tasks must be addressed in the process.

Maslow (1968, 1970) investigated that human beings have certain basic needs that they must meet before they can go on to fulfill their other developmental needs. He identified a pyramid that illustrated the fundamental requirements to satisfy physiological needs. According to Maslow, fundamental needs must be satisfied before an individual is free to progress to psychological needs, which in turn must be met before the person can realize self-actualization needs.

Havighurst (1972) identified the developmental tasks associated with different stages of growth that give rise to a person's readiness to learn different things at different times and create teachable moments. He observed that these teachable moments occur at individual moments according to its learner. These teachable moments transpired at different times for each individual (Havighurst, 1972)

Interest in classifying the diverse reasons for adult participation in learning, Houle (1961) investigated reasons with the publication *The Inquiring Mind* in 1961. With this notion in mind, Houle (1961) engaged in understanding how adults learn. He generated that adults' purposes and values of continuing education for themselves. These consist of: 1) goal-oriented learners, 2) activity-oriented, and 3) learning-oriented.

Goal-oriented learners use education for accomplishing fairly clear-cut objectives. These learners' primary purpose is to use education as a means of achieving some goal. According to Witte, Forbes, and Witte (2002), goal-oriented learners fundamentally respond to a particular individual need and are not usually restricted to a solitary learning setting. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998) believed that goal-oriented learners usually do not start on their continuing education until their middle twenties and after.

Activity-oriented learners take part because they find in the circumstances of the learning a meaning which has no necessary connection with the content or the announced purpose of the activity. Their main reason for learning is to participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These individuals also begin their sustained participation in adult education at the point when their problems or their needs become sufficiently pressing (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Activity-oriented learners may be motivated to participate to overcome solitude or isolation in personal or professional endeavors (Witte, Forbes, & Witte, 2002).

Learning-oriented learners are those who seek knowledge for its own sake (Knowles et al., 1998). According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), learning-oriented learners participate in learning throughout their lifetime. These learners participate in groups and classes for their own beliefs.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Nontraditional students have entered college in record numbers over the past decade and represent a growing population in the shifting terrain of higher education (Kasworm, 2003; Vander Zanden, 2000). According to Hensley and Kinser (2001), adult

learners constitute a significant percentage of all students enrolled in higher education (Hensley & Kinser, 2001). For this reason, it has become evident to understand the characteristics and descriptions of the nontraditional student, often referred to as adult students, re-entry students, returning students, and adult learners. (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992).

There has been extensive research performed that explores adult learner traits (Brookfield, 1986; Bull & Kimball, 2000; Carlan, 2001; Cross, 1980; Dill & Henley, 1998; Galbraith & Shedd, 1990; Hirschorn, 1988; Howell, 2001; Kasworm, 1995; Kinsella, 1998; Knowles, 1978; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Vander Zanden, 2000). According to Vander Zanden (2000), a nontraditional student, often referred to as an adult learner, is defined as a student who has major multiple roles (e.g., spouse, parent, employee, student) and at least a one-year hiatus between high school and college with the average reported absence time is ten years. Howell (2001) describes an adult learner or nontraditional student as being someone who is over the age of 22, usually attends school less than full time, lives off campus, often has a family and works full time.

Additionally, Dill and Henley (1998) cited that adult learners are defined as nontraditional students, who fill multiple roles such as parent worker, and student, and also for whom there is at least one year separating high school and college. Hirschorn (1988) described a nontraditional student as over twenty-four years of age or returning to school after a break in their education. They are often married, work, and have children, so returning to school means making a significant change in their life style (Kinsella, 1998). With this same notion, Cross (1980) characterized the nontraditional student as an

adult who returns to school part-time or full-time time while maintaining responsibilities such as employment, family, and other responsibilities of adult life.

Adult students come to community colleges with a variant set of characteristics (Howell, 2001). They present a different set of challenges to the higher education research community because of their diverse characteristics (Kasworm, 2003). These distinct characteristics differentiate them from other students in higher education.

Knowles (1978) described the adult learner with several traits that focuses around the principles of learner centeredness. These traits consisted of the following:

- The learner has full responsibility for his/her own learning.
- The subject matter has relevance and meaning for the learner.
- Involvement and participation are necessary for learning.
- The relationship between learners shows helping styles and learner self-responsibility.
- The teacher is a facilitator and resource person.
- The learner sees him/herself differently as a result of the learning experience.
- The learner experiences confluences.

These traits are exhibited in preparing the adult learner in their educational experience.

Adults bring extensive experience from their personal and working lives into the classroom (Bull & Kimball, 2000). These adults bring a rich tapestry of past schooling, formal learning through work or community, and experiential learning in various settings (Kasworm & Marienau, 1997). Adult learners are often diverse and have a tremendous affluence of life experience. They vary among ages and background and seek their own individual goal attainment. Many researchers have concluded that older students are

self-directed learners for whom learning is inherently joyful and as such, that they carry more to the classroom in terms of commitment and goals (Bull & Kimball, 2000; Carlan, 2001; Knowles, 1978).

Adult learners tend to be achievement oriented, highly motivated, and relatively independent with special needs for flexible schedules and instruction appropriate for their developmental level (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Cross, 1980). Adults generally prefer more active approaches to learning and value opportunities to integrate academic learning with their life and work experiences (Benshoff, 1991; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992).

Adults enter an education or training program with a high level of motivation to learn (Bull & Kimball, 2000). Many adult learners enrolling in college is a result of a significant life event or of a reevaluation of their life goals (Justice & Dornan, 2001). Although some students enter college at or before age 18, others enter or return in their 30's and beyond seeking career changes and advanced educational opportunities (Haggan, 2000).

Bull and Kimball (2000) stated that adult learners have a lot of life experiences and face learning situations with a very different perspective from that of the novice learner. Adult students tend to relate educational content to their own life experiences. Therefore, many adult students express great support for problem-centered teaching approaches allowing them to use their experiences in the classroom (Ellsworth, 1992). However, they appear to prefer an eclectic teaching model consisting of both lecture and discussion (Imel, 1995; Knowles, 1996).

Adults want to know how what will be taught will benefit them (Bull & Kimball, 2000). They are interested in knowing how new knowledge relates to what they already

know so that they can create a framework within which they can make sense of the new information (Brookfield, 1986; Howell, 2001; Knox, 1977). They ultimately desire to make their learning working knowledge.

Adult students benefit from being able to associate new learning with their previous experiences and accomplishments (Howell, 2001). Consequently, time plays a major factor for adult students. They desire to get a great amount of information in a short span of time and expect the class to start and finish on schedule, and with no wasted time (Bull & Kimball, 2000). They do not wish to encounter unnecessary information that does not relate to the subject being taught.

Usually, adult learners are paying their own money, and they can easily withdraw if they do not like what they are offered (Bull & Kimball, 2000). Hence, adults will make sure that they are getting the appropriate benefits of the collegiate program and become very opinionated when the expectations are not being met.

Over 80% of learners are over 25 years of age and working full-time with a host of personal and professional issues (Lutes, 2004). Many adult learners are part-time students with other responsibilities other than school (Bull & Kimball, 2000). The great majority of adult students enroll part-time and work full-time (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). They have constant demands from work and family which takes priority over academic requirements (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). Many of adult students have full-time jobs and work schedules that only permit them to attend classes at certain hours during the day, night, or weekend. Financial and family concerns are two of the biggest considerations that impact on the adult student experience (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992).

While traditional undergraduates are generally able to direct most of their energy toward their studies, older students, parents (especially single parents), and students who work full time have family and work responsibilities competing with school for their time, energy, and financial resources (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2002a). According to Levine and Cureton (1998), five out of six college students are now part-time, commuting adults who juggle academic commitments with work and family obligations. Hensley and Kinser (2001) indicated that adult learners have experienced at least one of the following: being a parent, working, attending college part-time, being a high school dropout, or delaying college enrollment for at least one year. They may also experience financial obstacles and child care difficulties and may possess poor study skills (Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Kerka, 1998).

There are other qualities associated with adult learners. These include being more serious about their education, goal oriented in their education, widely diverse in their interests, educational goals, individual differences, experiential backgrounds, motives for pursuing learning projects, and patterns of participating in formal classroom programs (Bontenbal, 2000; Ezzo & Perez, 2000). They often hold negative views of college because of prior academic experiences and therefore lack confidence in their abilities to be successful (Hensley & Kinser, 2001).

According to Fidler and Hunter (1989), adult students come to campus terrified of competing with younger students for grades. They fear that younger students with more recent schooling will succeed easily while they themselves will fail miserably. Most adults enter college with poor academic skills (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). Many often need remedial courses to review basic skills. Adult learners usually do not study on a full-time

basis. Rather, they enter or reenter college anywhere and anytime between their mid-twenties and their seventies (Kasworm & Marienau, 1997).

Currently, 75% of current undergraduate students are nontraditional because they are older; they have experienced a gap in their collegiate enrollment; they are part-time learners, they are minorities; or they are financially independent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002b). Many nontraditional students come back to school to complete educational pursuits they began years before as traditional-age students (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992).

According to Helfgot (1995), community college students are apt to be economically disadvantaged and unprepared; from ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in college and university settings; older than traditional students; more likely to be female; first-generation college students receiving little support for college attendance from family, culture, and/or community; and part-time students. Students that attend community colleges are usually older students that are typically women and minority students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community college students are traditionally over 24 years of age and have full time personal and professional commitments outside college (Hazelwood, 1984). They usually receive financial aid, attend part-time, and have to enroll in remediation courses (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

From the stated characteristics of adult learners and community college students, common characteristics are shared by both groups. Both groups are usually older students. They typically attend part-time and are often consumed with outside priorities such as work and family. In addition, both groups typically receive financial assistance and are often enrolled in remediation courses when beginning college.

Because of these particular findings, it appears that adult students may prefer community colleges upon returning to higher education for more than mere accessibility and cost-related concerns (Carlan, 2001). Hence, many adult students choose to enter into a community college setting when desiring to complete their educational needs.

Needs and Challenges of Adult Learners

Adults are overflowing colleges and universities to learn a new trade or profession, to remediate basic skills, to master computer operations, or to simply gain new knowledge (Osgood-Treston, 2001). Higher education is no longer an exclusive facility for the 18-24 year old (Carlan, 2001). Nontraditional students make up almost half of the undergraduate students enrolled in college today (Kinsella, 1998). Making assumptions about needs and concerns, university leaders for years have expressed doubts about their institutions' abilities to meet the needs of adult learners (Campbell, 1984). For this reason, community colleges have created an atmosphere to meet the needs of adult learners.

Proponents of community college education stress the needs of the learner (Carlan, 2001). Because developmental needs, issues, and stressors for adult differ considerably from those faced by younger, traditional-age students, all aspects of the college environment must be reconsidered to respond to this growing student population (Benshoff, 1991). Therefore, community colleges are making amicable strides to create a positive climate that focuses on adult learners' needs.

Adult learners have different needs, goals, and desires from the traditional 18-22 year-old learner (Bull & Kimball, 2000). Their wants and desires have been the focus of

several investigations as colleges nationwide address their diverse needs (Benshoff, 1991; Boggs, 2004; Carlan, 2001; Dougherty, 1994; Eaton, 1994; Galbraith & Shedd, 1990). Often times, adult learners are faced with many needs and challenges in their busy lives. Different circumstances often present challenges and obstacles in the lives of adult students (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). As a result of this, many adult students are often faced with impediments that interfere with their educational success.

The current and future needs of older, nontraditional, working college students are important considerations for both universities and employers (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004). These issues are critical when planning, designing and executing programs. In order to reach those needs and challenges, colleges and universities must understand the needs of those adult learners. Adult learners whose needs are actively addressed by their institutions are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and are more likely to persist and ultimately become the institutions' best ambassadors and future benefactors (NCES, 2003).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002b), almost three-quarters of undergraduates are in some way nontraditional and there are about as many nontraditional students as there are traditional students. For this reason, it is important to address the needs of adult learners.

Addressing the needs of adult learners differ from addressing the needs of traditional college students. In regular education, students are obligated to adjust to a traditional curriculum; however in adult education the curriculum is centered on the adult student's needs and interest (Knowles et al., 1998). In addition, adult students want to make sure that their learning needs are matching their current and past life experiences.

For this reason, basic needs and tasks must be addressed, in order for adult students to meet their learning expectations.

Maslow (1968, 1970) acknowledged that human beings have certain basic needs that they must meet before they can go on to fulfill their other developmental needs. Maslow identified a pyramid that illustrated the fundamental requirements to satisfy physiological needs. According to Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs, before people can achieve certain levels of growth and creativity, they must feel secure in their surroundings. He asserted that fundamental needs must be satisfied before an individual is free to progress to psychological needs, which in turn must be met before the person can realize self-actualization needs.

Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) developed a student retention theory which focused on the interactional view of student departure from higher education. Tinto (1987) argued that institutional climate is as important to student retention as academic or financial factors. The basic principle of Tinto's model is that social and academic integration are essential to student retention. The central idea is that whether a student persists or drops out is quite strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social interactions. This model has provided the foundation for analyzing multiple factors involved with student departure. Key to the interactionalist view is that persistence is contingent on the extent students have become incorporated or integrated into the social and academic communities of the college (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2003)

Tinto's model has helped community colleges understand their diverse representation of the student population. Tinto (1975) considered that an interactive

perspective is needed to better understand the persistency found among community college students.

Adults need reassurance until they are able to grasp academia on their own (Bull & Kimball, 2000). According to Bull and Kimball (2000), adult learners have a high fear of failure and need to be welcomed into the learning setting. Because of this aspect, adult learners need an educational environment that caters to those specific needs. Adult learners need exceptional and alternative ways of achieving and learning.

Adult students have different needs as traditional college students. Thomas (2002) suggested five types of integration: academic, social, economic, support, and democratic. He indicated that these needs can be integrated in order to meet the desired needs of adult students. By addressing these needs, adult learners are offered reassurance that they will be able to succeed among traditional students and their peers. In order for adult learners to be successful in their educational experience, specific needs are to be addressed.

Academic Factors

Adult undergraduate students typically enroll in a college that is readily accessible, relevant to current life needs, cost-effective, flexible in course scheduling, and supportive of adult lifestyle commitments (Kasworm, 2003). They often search for programs that are easily accessible, that have relatively flexible course schedules and are supportive of adult commitments (Hagedorn, 2005). One tremendous challenge in higher education today is meeting the needs of the diverse student populations in classrooms and office hours (Medved & Heisler, 2002). The academic and support service needs of upwardly mobile four-year college graduates are different from the huge population of

the newly emerging non-traditional adult learner (Ast, 1999). Therefore, addressing adult learners' academic needs are an important part of their educational college experience.

Academic variables are indicators of the internal collegiate environment (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Metzner and Bean (1987) described academic needs as study hours, study skills, academic advising absenteeism, academic degrees, and course availability. In addition to these, other academic factors consist of developmental courses and tutoring assistance, instructional delivery, remediation, faculty accessibility, and the overall teaching-learning process.

Adults tend to respond well to a flexible teaching and learning style (Bull & Kimball, 2000). Conlan, Grabowski, and Smith (2003) suggested that adult learners have an independent self-concept and are able to direct their own learning. Often times, adults need to share their life experiences when they are appropriate in the academic setting (Bull & Kimball, 2000). By sharing the learner's previous life experiences, the adult is able to connect it to their knowledge (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Sharing previous life experiences is important because it provides the basis for adult's learning activities (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003).

Another issue with nontraditional students is that they have been out of school for a longer time period than the traditional student (Garcha & Gatten, 1990). Adult students often need help in building their self-confidence as students, in acquiring or refreshing study skills, and in managing their time and other resources while in school (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Frequently, adults report rusty skills, low self-confidence, or fears about returning to college (Shere, 1988). Because of this, many adult students often require remediation in their academics. Deficiencies in learning or intellectual ability may

emerge and be assessed while in college (Haggan, 2000). Therefore, developmental needs must be addressed in the college environment.

Remediation and developmental needs may be addressed through remedial learning, study skills training, or simply by changes in the learning and testing environment (Haggan, 2000). All of these factors contribute to the overall academic success of adult learners. By addressing these needs, adult students are able to improve their learning and revisit previous learning materials (Haggan, 2000). These needs are crucial and play a major role in determining the persistency of adult learners.

Social Factors

One of Piaget's contributions to our understanding of learning processes was to discover that people need time to accommodate new information and skills (Piaget, 1963). Piaget (1963) concluded that individual learning comes with social interactions as an external stimulus to internal development. He emphasized that instructors must stress the critical role that experiences or interactions with the environment play on student learning and that development has a conclusion.

Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning comes from society and peers and is specifically supported as a process. His theoretical framework centered on social interaction and the effect that it played in the development of cognition. He considered that the life process of development was dependent on social interaction. He focused on the connections between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). He assumed that social learning actually led to cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) stipulated that the development process continued from birth until death.

Metzner and Bean (1987) suggested that social integration variables consist of memberships in clubs or professional organizations, faculty contact, and school friends. Additionally, social needs involve social engagements and involvements, the ability to serve mankind, preparation for service to the community, and the ability to participate in community work.

Astin (1996) advocated the importance of the role of the students' involvement in the total college environment. According to Astin (1984, 1993), student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience both out of class and in class educational experiences. In order for students to get the most out of college, they should become meaningfully and psychologically involved in their college experiences (Astin, 1996).

Astin (1996) advocated that the psychological energy a student invests in the academic experience is one of the most significant aspects in determining growth. A highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. On the contrary, a student that is uninvolved neglects studies, spends little time on campus, abstains from extracurricular activities, and has infrequent contact with faculty members or other students (Astin, 1984). Astin's theory of involvement argues that the greater the level of a student's involvement in college, the greater the learning and personal development (Astin, 1996).

Research has suggested that student learning and personal development are significantly influenced by the quality of relationships between student peers and faculty,

and the characteristics of student involvement (Arnold, Kuh, Vesper, & Schuh, 1993; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). Donaldson, Graham, Kasworm, and Dirkx (1999) specified that both student-to-student and faculty-student interactions contribute to the student's level of integration with the academic life of the institution and the social life of the campus. In organizations of higher education, interactions between students and faculty members create and recreate the social order and, arguably the perceived culture at a university for student-parents (Medved & Heisler, 2002).

Higher education research has consistently shown that faculty interaction with students influences student persistence toward degree completion (Tinto, 1989). Students' interpersonal interactions with faculty members can shape and enhance cognitive growth (Graham & Donaldson, 1997). Astin (1993) found that student-faculty interactions were significantly correlated with self-reported increases of intellectual and personal growth. Verbal immediacy and student motivation, for example, were found to be related to particular aspects of student-faculty out-of-class communication (Jaasma & Koper, 1999). Students who interact more frequently with faculty members report significantly greater satisfaction with the college environment (Donaldson, Graham, Kasworm, & Dirkx, 1999; Medved & Heisler, 2002; Tinto, 1989).

In addition, adult students benefit from opportunities to interact with their peers and the need to be actively involved in the educational process through sharing their relevant work and life experience (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Muench, 1987). Students learn from their interactions with peers as well; particularly certain types of activities such as peer tutoring or teaching (Graham & Donaldson, 1997).

Although there is considerable evidence of the benefits of involvement and the value of both the student-student and the faculty-student interactions for traditional-age students, it is often difficult to involve adult learners in the campus environment due to their conflicting life roles (Donaldson, 1999). Adult students spend limited time and have less psychological interactions beyond the scope of the academic classroom (Donaldson, Graham, Kasworm, & Dirkx, 1999). They are more often part-time enrollees, commuters, evening or weekend attendees on the campus, and have limited or no involvement in on-campus student activities (Donaldson, Graham, Kasworm, & Dirkx, 1999). For this reason, adults are less likely to become involved in student activities and social groups, and less likely to spend significant amounts of time on campus (Aslanina & Brickell, 1988; Frost, 1991; Kuh, 1993).

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) described adult students as those who encountered limited social acceptability and a lack of support for their status as students, particularly when the student role took away time necessary for other role responsibilities. Many studies have shown that adult learners were much less involved in extracurricular activities on campus, citing family roles, work, and a lack of time or money as the cause (Cupp, 1991; Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Frost, 1991; Kuh, 1993; Quinnan, 1997). Women were cited to be challenged with employment and child care conflicts that may add to and build on opposition from significant others (Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Kerka, 1998). Donaldson and Graham (1999) emphasized adults' abilities to compensate for their lack of traditional campus involvement.

Despite juggling multiple roles and having little involvement in the campus environment, adult learners report educational outcomes similar to those of traditional-

age students (Bowden & Merrit, 1995; Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Justice & Dornan, 2001; Richardson & King, 1998). Increased adult participation in college represents changing beliefs by adults and our society about the importance of a college credential linked to work stability, financial support, and related life opportunities (Kasworm, 2003).

Environmental Factors

Nontraditional students interact with the college environment, but they spend considerable time in the external environment (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Often times, adult students are faced with unique factors from the external environment that are occasionally challenging. Because of this, it is important to determine environmental needs for this group of students.

Metzner and Bean (1987) referred to environmental variables as finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity to transfer. In addition, other environmental factors that are crucial to adult learners consist of student health services, library services, location of college, physical impairments/handicaps or accommodations, transportation, job placement, and career development.

Adult learners often intermingle within their college setting, but spend a substantial amount of time in their outside surroundings while enrolled in college (Metzner & Bean, 1987). A strong support system will considerably improve an adult learner's ability to successfully complete their educational goals. According to Lewin's (1935) theory, behavior is a function of both person and environment.

Nontraditional students need many different kinds of support and assistance from family, friends, and institutions of higher learning (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Adult

undergraduates value family-supportive collegiate environments because 57 percent of them are married and 53 percent are supporting dependents other than a spouse (Kasworm, 2003).

Adult students are confronted with exceptional challenges from the outside surroundings, especially those of parenthood (Kasworm, 2003). The unique challenges student-parents face outside the classroom become visible to faculty members during the academic year (Medved & Heisler, 2002). As well, family factors, finances, and special needs are a very critical part of adult learners' educational challenges.

Adult learners may also encounter opposition to the completion of academic goals from significant others who feel threatened by their successes (Hensley & Kinser, 2001; Kerka, 1998). This aspect may hinder adult learners from completing their degree (Kerka, 1998). However, if adults have supportive family and friends, adequate study skills, and a clear purpose for participation, they are more likely to do well and to persist in college (Chartrand, 1990; Dill & Henley, 1998).

Finances also play a significant role in the ability of adults to complete their academic goals (Fairchild, 2003). Household income, the number of dependents in the household, and the financial aid received by the student are all variables that determine the persistence rate of adult students (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Many adult students look for financial aid to complete their educational goal (Fairchild, 2003). Financial aid may include grants, loans, and student work programs and financial eligibility is influenced by many factors which varies from institution to institution (Hardin, 2005).

In addition to tuition and related expenses, parents with young children may have to pay for child care while at work and in class (Fairchild, 2003). For this reason, some college campuses have opened childcare centers (Knable, 2005). Campuses often offer day care at a reduced rate for students and some campus daycare facilities take drop-ins on an emergency basis (Hardin, 2005).

Adults often enroll in college to address work or life transitions, reasons that are different than those of traditional-age students (Donaldson, 1999). Many adults are influenced to enroll in college following key life transitions and changes that foster new understandings or perspectives in individuals or present conditions in which college is viewed as necessary (Kasworm, 2003). Aslanian (2001) suggests that most adults enroll in college based on these personal life transitions or catalysts reflecting environmental forces, life changes, or external life-transition events.

Most adult students report that career reasons are their key college enrollment goal (Aslanian, 2001). Others report that they enroll in response to family transitions, leisure needs, artistic interests, and education in the life areas of health, religion, and citizenship (Aslanian, 2001).

Additionally, adult learners' classroom environment is also crucial in helping them succeed (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), adults learn best in informal, comfortable, flexible, and non-threatening environments. If the environment is comfortable, students will ultimately feel more relaxed and are able to achieve greater standards (Kirby et al., 2004).

Transfer credit is an important environmental consideration for adult learners. Adults have strong, positive association with transfer rates (Higgins & Katsinas, 1999).

Adult students are increasingly trying to meet prerequisites in the community college setting for admission to universities (Davidson, Muse, & Matranga, 1989). “Transfer remains one of the most important mission components, offering students opportunities for access to and acquisition of the social and economic benefits that can be obtained through a baccalaureate” (Higgins & Katsinas, 1999, p. 1). Moreover, transfer credit is generally considered the most prestigious function as it serves to position the community college in the graded system of higher education (Cross, 1980).

The number of programs that have been and are being developed to meet the educational needs of older, nontraditional students is growing rapidly (Kirby et al., 2004). Hence, adult students are continuing to stay in those colleges that offer these programs. Metzner and Bean (1987) suggested that students who were more satisfied with their role as a student were less likely to intend to leave the university. Academic, environmental, and background variables contributed to student satisfaction (Metzner & Bean, 1987).

Role of Community Colleges and Its Faculty

In accordance with Cohen and Brawer (2003), the American community college dates from the early years of the twentieth century. Historically, several prominent nineteenth- and early- twentieth-century educators wanted universities to abandon their freshman and sophomore classes and relegate the function of teaching adolescents to a new set of institutions, to be called junior colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The community college has been the nation’s primary site of access to higher education (Eaton, 1994). In the 100 years since their creation, community colleges have spread across United States to become the largest sector of higher education, representing nearly

1,200 regionally accredited institutions within community distance of over 90 percent of the population (Boggs, 2004).

Community colleges have changed the paradigm of higher education in the United States from students going away to college to those having access to affordable higher learning and job training in their local communities (Boggs, 2004). More students have enrolled in community colleges than in any other sector of American higher education (Carlan, 2001; Dougherty, 1994; Eaton, 1994).

Community colleges are one of the few institutions of higher education with the mission of providing exclusively education services (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990). It has been free to focus on the improvement of learning and teaching (Knowles, 1977). Traditionally, community colleges have had the reputation among other types of colleges for being responsive and innovative to the needs of its surrounding community (DuRose, 2003). Community colleges' driven purpose is to meet the needs of its learners by offering open admissions, community involvement, comprehensive curricula, and teaching as its first priority (Cross, 1979).

Community colleges offer an open door enrollment to students. Open admissions community colleges have attempted to deal with their diversity through adapting tools of traditional education to their needs (Cross, 1979). Cross (1979) believed that community colleges emphasize the philosophy that everyone can learn and that society needs to teach all of its citizens whatever they need to know to live a good life. At the institutional level, most community colleges will admit all students for whom they have room; admission is the entry procedure certifying that a student may enroll in courses or programs under certain conditions (Eaton, 1994).

Proponents of community college education stress the needs of the learner (Carlan, 2001; DuRose, 2003; Eaton, 1994; Griffith & Conner, 1994). They recognize that the majority of community college students have traditionally been excluded from participating in higher education and wish to extend educational opportunity to all persons (Griffith & Conner, 1994). Additionally, the community college acknowledges that many of their students are enrolled in order to achieve minimal requirements for workforce (DuRose, 2003).

Community colleges are paying attention to adults' individual needs and aspirations when designing its program (Carlan, 2001; Haggan, 2000). For this reason, it is apparent that adult students may prefer community colleges upon returning to higher education (Carlan, 2001). Meeting adult learners' individual and particular needs are imperative and adults usually benefit from the substantial amount of additional support colleges provide (Watters, 2003). Consequently, the number of programs that have been and are being developed to meet the educational needs of older, nontraditional students is growing rapidly (Kirby et al., 2004).

The two-year college, whether it is called a junior or community college, has always attempted to carry out a multipurpose educational role (Eaton, 1994). Community colleges provide several aspects that are important for its existence. Community colleges provide students the ability to perform in college-level courses and programs that offer terminating and transferable degree programs (Chattahoochee Valley Community College 2004-2005 Catalog, 2004; Wallace Community College Catalog 2005-2007, 2005). Socially, the community college is a pivotal education institution for low-income students, individuals undergoing a major change in life circumstances, and especially

minority students (Eaton, 1994). Geographical convenience and low cost make the community college an attractive educational beginning for most adult students (Dougherty, 1994). Additionally, community colleges sustains its dominance by providing structured, sequential liberal arts and career education offerings, development of college-level competencies, preparation of students for baccalaureate study, and student transfers (Eaton, 1994).

Throughout the years, community colleges have maintained increased enrollment patterns. In the community college setting, student enrollment has grown to over 6.5 million students enrolled for credit and more than 11.5 million students enrolled in non-credit courses (Boggs, 2004). The increase in community college enrollments may be attributed to several conditions in addition to general population expansion: older students' participation; financial aid; part-time attendance; the reclassification of institutions; the redefinition of students and courses; and high attendance by low-ability, women, and minority students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community colleges offer remediation needs to students with moderate remediation needs. They also offer lower costs that benefit many students that can't afford to pay full tuition at the university level. Most community colleges with an open-door policy attract students with various needs, abilities, interests, aptitudes, goals, and motivations (Haggan, 2000).

At the center of the open-door community college is its faculty members (Ast, 1999). As human resource development organizations, open-door colleges' faculty members exist to assist their students in becoming fully functional adults (Ast, 1999). The teacher is the crucial and pivotal reference in the classroom and learning experience (Ast, 1999). Moreover, it has become more important than ever for two-year college

faculty and administrators to do some introspection and reexamine and consider their role as institutions and educators (Ast, 1999).

Community college faculty members are commonly involved in instructing adult learners (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990). Galbraith and Shedd (1990) considered that the community college instructor must possess personality characteristics and interpersonal skills that show encouragements. Effective instructors of adult students must play many roles within the teaching and learning transaction, including role model, counselor, mentor, learning guide, and program developer (Apps, 1981; Brookfield, 1986; Daloz, 1986; Galbraith & Shedd, 1990).

Community college instructors often present themselves as the seeker of outstanding customer service (Eaton, 1994). Designing programs that will promote desired outcomes are essential in the structural setting (Ast, 1999). In designing these programs, colleges usually incorporate programs that are learner-focused (Ast, 1999).

Many community college educators view the collegiate function as a part of what they term the “comprehensive” community college (Eaton, 1994). These educators believe that by supporting comprehensiveness, the collegiate function is supported. The comprehensiveness refers to the community college’s commitment to four purposes: liberal arts and transfer education, occupational education, developmental and remedial education and community service (Eaton, 1994).

Beyond the curriculum, building a dominant collegiate function for nontraditional students depends heavily on the faculty (Eaton, 1994). Eaton (1994) stipulated that community college faculties are the most experienced in operating with under prepared students.

A challenge facing community college instructors is how to best facilitate teaching and learning excellence, and facilitate the individual learning needs of students with broad ability and mastery ranges, from those possessing GED certificates to applicants preparing for advanced degrees such as the MBA (Ast, 1999). Facilitating the appropriate instruction is difficult because all students are not on the same level. Therefore, the faculty makes the collegiate function dominant through leadership in developing college-level course content and academic standards and through their encouragement to students to set long-range educational goals (Eaton, 1994). The primary purpose for these learners is to use education as a means of achieving some goal. By establishing goals, each adult is able to use education for accomplishing fairly clear-cut objectives (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Students are able to respond to a particular individual need and not limited to a single learning venue (Witte, Forbes, & Witte, 2002).

Knowles (1980) ascertained that educators have certain roles. He assumed that learners should feel a need to learn in their environment. He asserted that the learning environment should be characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences. Knowles (1980) concluded that learners must perceive the goals of a learning experience to be their goals. Additionally, he emphasized that the learner should accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating a learning experience, and therefore have a feeling of commitment toward it by participating actively in the learning process.

Additionally, Knowles (1980) maintained that the learning process should relate to and make use of the experience of the learners. Adult learners bring a wealth of

experience into the classroom setting (Bull & Kimball, 2000). They bring a vast amount of previous education, formal learning through work or community, and experiential learning in various settings (Kasworm & Marienau, 1997). Adult students seek their own individual goal attainment and bring more to the classroom in terms of commitment and goals (Bull & Kimball, 2000; Carlan, 2001; Knowles, 1978). As well, the learner should have a sense of progress toward their goals. With these roles of educators, community colleges are able to create a conducive learning environment for its students. Faculty interests in students as demonstrated by time spent in and out of classes, faculty attitudes that value collegiate education and support the baccalaureate degree, and faculty commitment to college-level performance standards all can help the nontraditional student to successfully pursue traditional academic education (Eaton, 1994).

In order to maintain an academic learning community within the community college system, faculty members must be able to create an active learning community that emphasizes a suitable institutional climate. In many institutions, faculty members take on the role as a mentor or counselor. They may serve as mentors and models for students to help students develop programs of study that fit their nontraditional circumstances (Eaton, 1994). These programs may require developmental instructions that do not usually renounce group instruction but rather establishes small, homogeneous groups, with a restricted range of ability (Cross, 1979). Eaton (1994) asserts that integrative counseling and advising services with classroom instruction and flexibly assigning faculty and counselors to teaching, advising, and counseling roles are essential to creating a dominant collegiate function that is effective for these students (Eaton, 1994).

Chapter Summary

Adult learners are an active population in the community college setting. For this reason, community colleges and its faculty members are actively trying to understand this group of students and search for ways to adhere to the individual needs of this group. Thus, it is important that community colleges and its faculty members recognize the learning developmental needs and characteristics for the group of adult learners by understanding their academic, social and environmental needs. The literature suggests that these perceptual determinants are important linkages in developing academic skills and fostering personal development (Astin, 1996; Haggan, 2000; Metzner & Bean, 1987; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Introduction

Adult learners are returning to school in immense numbers. Community colleges have seen an expansion in this population of students (Boggs, 2004; Carlan, 2001; Moore & Piland, 1994). Therefore, community colleges are progressively paying more attention to adults' individual desires and ambitions as they design their curriculums. As community colleges attempt to look for a means to develop relationships of adult learners and faculty, it is a suitable time to investigate the relationships between the stated needs of adult learners at the community college setting and the perceived needs of faculty.

This study assessed relationships between the stated needs of part-time and full-time adult learners at the community college setting and the perceived needs of part-time and full-time faculty members at two selected community colleges. Understanding adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs will assist community colleges create better learning atmospheres for their campuses. The outcome of this study will help cultivate relationships among adult learners and community colleges' faculty members.

There was a need for this study because the variables, academic, social, and environmental needs as they relate to adult learners' and faculty members' perceptions have not been researched jointly in the community college setting. This study

addressed this need by comparing adult learners' and faculty members' perceptions regarding adult learners' actual needs.

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?
2. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?
3. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

Chapter III presents a description of the research process that was used in this study. It describes the research design, the sample selection, description of the sample, data collection procedures, protection of human subjects, development of instrumentation, data coding, and statistical analysis.

Design of the Study

This study used both quantitative and qualitative measures in its design. Quantitative measures were applied using the survey method. The survey, with a convenience sample of adult learners and faculty members, was used to ascertain responses to each research question. The study variables, academic, social, and environmental were used from the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* designed by the

researcher. A 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA was used to answer each research question pertaining to the relationships of adult learners' stated academic, social, and environmental needs to faculty members' perceptions of those needs. The SPSS statistical analysis program was used to analyze the data in this study. Additionally, qualitative measures were used to supplement the quantitative data gathered from the same sources using open-ended questions.

Protection of Human Participants

The purpose and procedures of protections were thoroughly expressed through written directives (see Appendices C and D). The initial proposal, informed consent procedures and letters, survey instruments were carefully reviewed and approved by the researcher's dissertation committee, college presidents and deans of instructions at each participating community college, and Auburn University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendices A, B, D, E, and F). Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma do not have an Institutional Review Board; hence, permission was granted by each college's president (see Appendix B).

All adult learners and faculty members were provided an informed consent letter to participate in the study (see Appendix D). The informed consent letters invited participation in the study, highlighted that results would be anonymous, and clarified the purpose of participating in the study.

Sample Selection

An informational letter was sent to the presidents and deans of instructions of Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma that described the study's purpose and to gain permission in order to conduct the study during Spring 2005 semester. Each president and dean of instruction reviewed all letters and instruments prior to gaining permission to conduct the study. The investigator obtained the approval from each participating college's president (see Appendix B).

The sample in this research study included a convenience sample of part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members at Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma during Spring 2005 semester. Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma, two of twenty-one community colleges located in the state of Alabama, were chosen based on their geographic makeup and similarities in population.

Chattahoochee Valley Community College is located in Phenix City, Alabama. The purpose of Chattahoochee Valley Community College, a member of the Alabama College System, is to meet the higher education needs of the citizens of the Chattahoochee Valley and others who can benefit from the courses, programs, and services of the College (Chattahoochee Valley Community College Catalog 2004-2005, 2004). The college was created to serve the citizens of Russell, Bullock, Lee, Macon, and Barbour counties. In addition, it also serves citizens of Phenix City, Alabama, Fort Benning, Georgia and Columbus, Georgia. Chattahoochee Valley Community College currently enrolls approximately 2,000 students a semester and employs 33 full-time faculty members and 88 part-time faculty members.

Wallace Community College Selma is located in Selma, Alabama. The college was created to provide high-quality educational opportunities and services that are responsive to individual, community and state needs (Wallace Community College Selma Catalog 2005-2007, 2005). Wallace Community College Selma currently enrolls approximately 2,000 students a semester and employs 45 full-time faculty members and 61 part-time faculty members.

The two community colleges were designed to offer two-year associate degree programs that are transferable to four-year institutions, two-year terminal degree programs, and one or two year technical occupational programs. This study only focused on adult learners that were in a transferable degree program. Transferable degree programs were designed for students planning to transfer to a senior institution to pursue a course of study in liberal arts, sciences, or specialized professional field (Chattahoochee Valley Community College Catalog 2004-2005, 2004).

The sample for this study consisted of 242 adult learners that were 25 years old and over and in a transferable degree program and 106 faculty members. The participant sample was selected from Chattahoochee Valley Community College, located in Phenix City, Alabama and Wallace Community College Selma, located in Selma, Alabama.

The sample for this study consisted of two groups: adult learners and faculty members. From these two groups, sub-groups existed. The first sub-group consisted of 99 full-time and 42 part-time adult learners and 30 full-time and 25 part-time faculty members at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. The second sub-group consisted of 64 full-time and 37 part-time adult learners and 29 full-time and 22 part-time faculty members at Wallace Community College Selma. To increase heterogeneity within the

sample, participants were recruited from a variety of classes. The following classes were recruited to participate in the study:

- MTH 090 (Basic Mathematics)
- MTH 098 (Elementary Algebra)
- MTH 112 (Pre-Calculus Algebra)
- MTH 231 or 232 (Math for Elementary Teacher I and II)
- ENG 093 (Basic English)
- ENG 101 (English Composition I)
- ENG 102 (English Composition II)
- ENG 271 or 272 (World Literature I and II)

From each of the above classes, two daytime classes and two evening classes were selected. These classes were based on availability during Spring 2005 semester. Different levels of core classes were used to select the adult learner's sample. This sample consisted of adult students that were 25 years or over and in transferable degree programs of study. Additionally, all part-time and full-time faculty members from Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma were allowed to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving approval from each college's president by letters (see Appendix B), individual meetings were scheduled with the presidents and deans of instructions at both colleges to discuss the study's purpose and procedures for distributing and collecting data. At this meeting, the researcher reviewed expectations of the deans of instruction

regarding the study. The researcher provided both deans of instruction with the information letters, scripts, and surveys and explained the proper procedures to distribute and collect surveys (see Appendices D, E, and F). The deans of instruction were provided a short script that told them about the procedures to recruit adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members (see Appendix E). The researcher provided the deans of instruction with information letters for part-time and full-time faculty members and information letters to adult learners (see Appendix D) regarding the study. The information letters that were given to the deans of instruction provided an invitation to participate in the study and explained the procedures for distributing and collecting the *Adult Learner Needs Survey*.

In addition, an information letter, regarding proper procedures for distributing and collecting surveys, were provided for all selected faculty members that distributed the surveys to their classes in order to ensure proper distribution and collection for the surveys. These letters were distributed to each selected faculty member by the dean of instruction at each institution (see Appendix E). To ensure consistency, scripts (see Appendix E) were given to the deans of instruction that described the proper procedures to the adult learners and faculty.

The deans of instruction were requested to distribute a survey to all part-time and full-time faculty members at each institution. Faculty members were asked to complete the surveys and return the surveys in the sealed envelope that was provided with a turn around period of two weeks. An e-mail reminder to all part-time and full-time faculty members, provided by the deans of instruction, was sent a week after the distribution of

the surveys (see Appendix E). To ensure consistency, a script (see Appendix E) was provided to the deans of instruction regarding faculty surveys.

In addition, the deans of instructions met with the English and Math Department Chairs and selected faculty members to distribute the surveys during class. The selected faculty members were provided an information letter concerning the distribution and collection of surveys (see Appendix E). Selected faculty members were asked to distribute the information letters (see Appendix D) and surveys (see Appendix F) to all students enrolled in the selected classes at each institution by the selected faculty member. To ensure consistency, a script (see Appendix E) was provided for each selected faculty member. Students were asked to complete the surveys in class and return them to their instructor upon completion. Each instructor was asked to return all surveys in a sealed envelope, provided by the researcher, to the dean of instruction's office at his or her institution. The researcher collected all sealed envelopes from the deans of instruction at the end of the two week period.

Instrument Development

Adult Learner Needs Survey

The instrument used for this study was the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* designed by the researcher. The *Adult Learner Needs Survey* assessed adult learners' perceptions of academic, social, and environmental needs. The five-part questionnaire was used to collect data regarding academic and learning needs, social needs, environmental needs, the need for additional services for the adult learner, and background information.

When responding to items on the survey regarding academic, social, and environmental needs, adult learners and faculty members used a four-point Likert-type scale. Each item was scored on an ordinal scale using the following: (1) Very Important, (2) Important, (3) Somewhat Important, (4) Not Important. In addition, adult learners and faculty members were permitted to write open responses on the survey concerning additional needs or services and background information.

The instrument used in this research consisted of a one-page, front to back survey. It was composed of five sections titled: Academic/Learning Needs, Social Needs, Environmental Needs, Additional Needs/Services, and Background Information.

The first section, labeled Academic/Learning Needs, contained information regarding academic and learning needs. It included 19 items that related to learning styles, campus resources, class and faculty availability, remedial labs, and course offerings.

The second section, categorized as Social Needs, consisted of information regarding the social aspects of the college environment. It included 13 statements regarding organizational involvement, social activities, peer and faculty interactions, job opportunities, and community involvement.

The third section, classified as Environmental Needs, incorporated information concerning environmental needs. It consisted of 13 items that included topics such as parking, handicap accommodations, health services, daycare services, financial aid, classroom environment, security and safety, family support, transfer credits, and future employment opportunities.

The fourth section of the survey, labeled Additional Needs/Services, consisted of two questions that inquired about the need for additional services. These questions included: improvement of services and the usefulness of services.

The final section of the survey, classified as Background Information, regarded information related to the participants' backgrounds. It included items such as age, gender, student status, and degree programs.

Pilot Study for Adult Learner Needs Survey

The questions on the survey resulted from current literature review, discussions with adult students and faculty members from Chattahoochee Valley Community College, and collaboration with the researcher's dissertation members. Current validity for the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* was established through a validation panel. A pilot test for the survey was performed which concentrated on issues of clarity, content appropriateness, and clear and accurate directions.

The *Adult Learner Needs Survey* instrument was pilot-tested with a sample of fifteen faculty members and thirty students at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. Results from this pilot conveyed a few more items relating to the value of the learning environment and condensing the number of items in the background information section. In the background information section, five of the items were deleted which resulted in four essential background items remaining. Additionally, the learning environment items were added to include more aspects of the learning atmosphere.

In addition to review by faculty members and students, items on the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* were also developed and pilot tested with the researcher's dissertation committee. Based on their feedback, formatting was changed on the survey.

The survey was altered to look more user-friendly by arranging all questions in regards to academic, social, and environmental needs in the same format and condensing the number of pages. Revisions were made to the survey instrument in order for it to appear concise. Open-ended questions were placed on the survey in order to receive feedback from the adult learners in order to develop a better understanding of their needs.

The validation panel was given a list of objectives for the survey and asked to provide feedback on whether the measure addressed the objectives. Validation panel members responded that each question related to the appropriate domain. The survey questions illustrated criteria for content validity based upon the actual items on the survey reflecting the content being measured. The survey measured what was intended to be measured.

The coefficients of reliability were established using Cronbach's Alpha which is a test regularly used to demonstrate the internal consistency of a survey instrument (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). Internal consistency reliability was shown in the survey based on the measures for the various scales. Furthermore, the survey demonstrated consistency across the individual questions in the measuring instrument and measured the proper content. The alpha coefficients were computed for academic, social, and environmental factors. The Cronbach's alphas for the factors were as follows: Academic (.83), Social (.91), and Environmental (.81). Generally, alpha coefficients were moderately high, indicating acceptable reliability and homogeneity of items (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). The reliability of the measure will be addressed in Chapter IV.

Data Collection and Coding

The surveys were coded by institutions, collected by the researcher and deans of instructions, and returned in a sealed envelope to the researcher to risk breach of confidentiality. Verbal instructions were provided by the researcher to the deans of instructions regarding distributing and collecting surveys for faculty members and students.

Each dean of instruction distributed all faculty members' surveys to all departments' chairpersons. Faculty members were provided an informed consent letter, asked to complete the surveys and return the surveys in the provided sealed envelope to their department chair. Department chairs collected all surveys from part-time and full-time faculty members and returned them to the dean of instruction at their institution. The researcher collected all faculty members' surveys from the deans of instructions.

In addition, the deans of instructions met with the English and Math Department Chairpersons and selected faculty members were requested and they agreed to distribute surveys during their classes. The selected faculty members were given an information letter and script concerning the distribution and collection of surveys (see Appendix E). Student informed consent letters and surveys were distributed and collected by selected faculty members to enrolled students in selected classes at each institution. Students were provided an informed consent letter, asked to complete the survey, and return the surveys to their instructor during class. Selected faculty members collected all surveys from part-time and full-time students and returned them to the dean of instruction at their institution. The researcher collected all students' surveys from the deans of instructions.

The student surveys were collected and sorted based on the students' age. Only students age 25 years or older and in transferable degree programs were used in this study. All faculty members' and students age 25 years or older data were coded and entered into an SPSS database by the researcher.

Three 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA tests and Cronbach's Alphas were the most appropriate forms of statistical methods for this study. According to Green and Salkind (2005), the use of Factorial ANOVA allows for determining the effects of each independent variable separately as the main effects (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). Additionally, Factorial ANOVA allows for the examination of any potential interaction effect on the independent variable. An interaction effect occurs when the effects of one independent variable are dependent upon levels of another independent variable (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). The dependent variables were academic, social and environmental needs. The set of independent variables included adult learners and faculty members. These tests compared adult learners and faculty members, part-time and full-time status, and part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members. Furthermore, it compared the amount of variation between the categories.

In addition, qualitative research techniques were used to analyze the responses to two open-ended questions on the survey relating to improving services for adult learners. Qualitative analysis involves arranging data in manageable units, synthesizing it, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for sharing what the data reveal (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Major themes involving ways to improve services as well as specific services for adult learners were coded and put into categories.

Rossman and Rallis (1998) identified coding as a process of organizing the material into chunks or categories before bringing meaning to those chunks. In order to identify significant categories, results from the open-ended questions were organized into chunks by segmenting the responses to categories and labeling those categories with a description. This process generated a description of themes for analysis. The procedure involved a detailed representation of adult learning services. Additional codes were generated from these categories which resulted in the emergence of a smaller number of themes. This succession led to the formulation of themes.

Chapter Summary

The first section of Chapter III consisted of the introduction, design of study, sample selection, data collection procedures, and protection of human participants. The methods used in this study concentrated on gathering data from part-time and full-time adult learners 25 years and older and part-time and full-time faculty members from Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma. The chapter provided a description of the instrument used in the study, the validation process, and the pilot testing of the *Adult Learner Needs Survey*. In addition, the chapter also described the quantitative and qualitative procedures for collecting data and coding.

Chapter IV presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted in this study. The results include the description of the sample. The results also include internal consistency reliabilities for the instrument and analysis of each research question.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

Understanding adult learners' needs are important when providing services to this population in the community college setting. The purpose of this study was to better identify academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges address the needs of this group. The study had three major goals: (1) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting; (2) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting; and (3) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting. There is a need for this study because the variables, academic, social, and environmental needs as perceived by faculty and adult learners, have not been researched jointly in the community college setting.

Chapter IV presents the results of the data analysis. The chapter begins with the internal consistency reliabilities and validities for the instrument used in the study. The second section provides a description of the sample. In the third section, exploratory quantitative data results are presented. The fourth section reveals the qualitative findings of the study. The chapter concludes with a summation of the findings.

Instrumentation of Reliability and Validity

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess reliability for the *Adult Learner Needs Survey* and to investigate data characteristics that may influence research results. The *Adult Learner Needs Survey* assessed adult learners' actual academic, social, and environmental needs, as well as faculty members' perceptions of those needs. The alpha coefficients were computed for academic, social, and environmental factors. The Cronbach's alphas for the factors were as follows: Academic (.83), Social (.91), and Environmental (.81), which indicated a satisfactory reliability coefficient for the three factors. Furthermore, during the pilot study for the *Adult Learner Needs Survey*, the survey was given to adult students, faculty members, and the researcher's dissertation members to examine clarity, content appropriateness, and clear and accurate directions.

Description of the Sample

The sample in this research study included a convenience sample of part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members at Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) and Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS),

two community colleges located in the state of Alabama. A total of 242 adult learners and 106 faculty members participated in the study.

Faculty Participants

One-hundred and six part-time and full-time faculty members participated in the study from the two institutions. Of those, a total of 59 were full-time faculty members, 30 full-time from Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) and 29 full-time from Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS). Additionally, a total of 47 part-time faculty members participated, 25 part-time from Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) and 22 part-time from Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS). From the 106 faculty members, 42 were male and 64 were female. The sample population of faculty members represented a balance ratio between males and females at Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate employment status from each institution and gender of the part-time and full-time faculty members' respondents.

Table 1

Participating Faculty Members' Employment Status

<u>Status</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>CVCC</u>	<u>WCCS</u>
Full-time	59	30	29
Part-time	47	25	22
Total	106	55	51

N = 106

Table 2

Participating Faculty Members' Genders

<u>Gender</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Male	42	14	28
Female	64	45	19
Total	106	59	47

N = 106

Student Participants

Two hundred and forty-two part-time and full-time adult learners, 25 years or older and in a transferable degree, participated in the study from the two institutions. Of those, a total of 163 were full-time adult learners, 99 full-time from Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) and 64 full-time from Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS). Additionally, a total of 79 part-time adult learners participated, 42 part-time from Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) and 37 part-time from Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS). From the 242 adult learners, 65 were male and 177 were female. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate enrollment status from each institution and gender of the part-time and full-time adult learners' respondents.

In addition, the average age of adult participants was 34.06 years, 34.61 years for part-time and 33.79 years for full-time. Table 5 illustrates the range of ages for adult participants and the range, means and standard deviations of part-time and full-time adult learners' ages are reported in Table 6.

Table 3

Participating Adult Learners' Enrollment Status

<u>Status</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>CVCC</u>	<u>WCCS</u>
Full-time	163	99	64
Part-time	79	42	37
Total	242	141	101

N = 242

Table 4

Participating Adult Learners' Genders

<u>Status</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Male	65	39	26
Female	177	124	53
Total	242	163	79

N = 106

Table 5

Participating Adult Learners' Ages

<u>Age Ranges</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>CVCC</u>	<u>WCCS</u>
25 – 34	146	86	80
35 – 44	67	39	28
45 – 54	26	12	14
55 – 64	3	1	2
65 > over	0	0	0
Total	242	138	104

N = 242

Table 6

Range, Means, and Standard Deviations of Adult Learners' Ages

<u>Status</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>SD</i></u>
Full-Time	25 – 62	33.79	8.32
Part-Time	25 – 54	34.61	8.08
All Adult Students	25 – 62	34.06	8.23

Quantitative Data Findings

In this section, the results of the quantitative data in relation to the research questions are presented. Three 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA tests were conducted to determine the relationship of adult learners' needs (academic, social, and environmental) to the two independent variables, full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty members. In this section, the results of the analysis of the data in relation to the research questions are presented.

Research Question One: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?

Academic Needs

A 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA was tested at the .05 level. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA revealed no significant effect for adult learners and faculty members, $F(1, 344) = 3.49, p = .06$, observed power = .46, a nonsignificant effect for part-time and full-time status, $F(1, 344) = .221, p = .64$, observed power = .08, and no significant interaction part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding academic needs, $F(1, 344) = 1.84, p = .176$, observed power = .27 (see Table 7). Means and standard deviations for academic needs are reported in Table 8.

Table 7

2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA (Between-Subjects) for Academic Needs

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	* <i>p</i>	Observed Power
Adult Learners/Faculty Members	1	3.49	.06	.46
Part-Time and Full-Time Status	1	.22	.64	.08
Part-Time and Full-Time Status/ Adult Learners and Faculty Members	1	1.84	.18	.27

**p* < .05

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of Academic Needs

Status	<u>Adult Learners</u>		<u>Faculty Members</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Part-Time	2.76	.77	2.81	.92
Full-Time	2.67	.74	2.98	.90
Total	2.70	.75	2.91	.91

Research Question 2: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?

Social Needs

A 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA was tested at the .05 level. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA indicated no significant effect for adult learners and faculty members, $F(1, 344) = 1.52, p = .22$, observed power = .23, a nonsignificant effect for part-time and full-time status, $F(1, 344) = .01, p = .93$, observed power = .05, but a significant interaction between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs, $F(1, 344) = 4.25, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, observed power = .54 (see Table 9). Full-time faculty members ($M = 5.23, SD = 1.25$) scored higher on social needs than full-time adult learners ($M = 4.64, SD = 1.56$). There were no differences reported between part-time faculty members and part-time adult learners. Means and standard deviations for social needs are reported in Table 10.

Table 9

2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA (Between-Subjects) for Social Needs

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>*p</i>	η^2	Observed Power
Adult Learners/Faculty Members	1	1.52	.22		.23
Part-Time and Full-Time Status	1	.01	.93		.05
Part-Time and Full-Time Status/ Adult Learners and Faculty Members	1	4.25	.04*	.01	.54

**p* < .05

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations of Social Needs

Status	<u>Adult Learners</u>		<u>Faculty Members</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Part-Time	5.00	1.56	4.85	1.52
Full-Time	4.64	1.56	5.24	1.25
Total	4.76	1.57	5.01	1.38

Research Question 3: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

Environmental Needs

A 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA was tested at the .05 level. The 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA indicated a significant effect for adult learners and faculty members, $F(1, 344) = 8.29, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, observed power = .82, no significant effect for part-time and full-time status, $F(1, 344) = .04, p = .84$, observed power = .06, and no significant interaction between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs, $F(1, 344) = .82, p = .37$, observed power = .15 (see Table 11). Faculty ($M = 3.05, SD = .92$) scored higher on environmental needs than adult learners ($M = 2.71, SD = .93$). Means and standard deviations for environmental needs are reported in Table 12.

Table 11

2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA (Between-Subjects) for Environmental Needs

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>*p</i>	η^2	Observed Power
Adult Learners/Faculty Members	1	8.29	.00*	.02	.82
Part-Time and Full-Time Status	1	.04	.84		.06
Part-Time and Full-Time Status/ Adult Learners and Faculty Members	1	.82	.37		.15

**p* < .05

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations of Environmental Needs

Status	<u>Adult Learners</u>		<u>Faculty Members</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Part-Time	2.76	.95	2.98	.85
Full-Time	2.68	.93	3.10	.98
Total	2.71	.93	3.04	.92

Qualitative Data Findings

Qualitative data from the two open-ended questions on the survey tended to support quantitative results. The following questions were asked:

1. In what way(s) can this community college improve services for adult learners?
2. What specific services would be most useful to you as an adult learner?

In order to analyze these open-ended questions, responses were coded and themes were reviewed. Four themes materialized from the open-ended questions. They consisted of the following: Tutorials/Labs, Optional Class Offerings, Childcare Services, and Safety/Parking. These themes were categorized in accordance with adult learners' needs (academic, social, and environmental). The comments that follow convey academic and environmental factors. Social factors were not reported as responses. For each category, comments were selected to convey a range of responses rather than the norm.

Academic Factors

Theme 1 – Tutorials/Labs

The qualitative data derived during the open-ended questions indicated that adult students need extra tutoring and additional lab offerings. Students indicated that by offering additional tutorial and lab services, they would be able to better understand subjects in which they had a deficiency. The following comments were made on the surveys:

“As an adult, I need extra help in math. Offer extra tutoring.”

“Additional lab hours for math courses at different times during the day”

“Have extra tutors available in math and English and set up additional lab times and availability for students”

Theme 2 – Optional Class Offerings

The qualitative data derived during the open-ended questions indicated that adult students preferred optional class offerings. They indicated that there is a constant need for additional online courses, more night courses, weekend courses, and afternoon courses. Other students indicated that they can retain more information in mini-term classes. These services were very important to the working student. The following comments were made on the surveys:

“Add additional online courses to help students who work at night and can’t come during the day to take courses”

“More online classes for people who work and cannot attend class”

“Offer more weekend courses, hard to work all week and attend school at night”

“Offer more evening courses”

“I think the college does a great job, but could possibly offer a larger variety of night classes.”

“Offer more classes during the afternoon”

“Offer more mini term courses”

Environmental Factors

Theme 3 – Childcare Services

The qualitative data derived from the open-ended questions indicated that adult students required an environmental need of childcare services. Many of these students believed that childcare services would help them attend classes on a regular basis. The following comments were made on the surveys:

“Childcare services would be useful to those students who have children and no one to watch them.”

“Offer an extended daycare service for working parents”

“Daycare services would be great. I have to miss some classes due to not having a sitter for my son.”

Theme 4 – Safety/Parking

The qualitative data derived during the open-ended questions indicated that adult students preferred accessible parking to buildings and additional security features on campus. Students indicated that they would feel safer if parking was close to their classes and additional lighting were added on campuses. The following comments were made on the surveys:

“Offer closer parking to students”

“More lighting in parking lots”

“Better security at night time”

“Better parking accessibility”

Chapter Summary

Reliability analyses were conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument used in the study. These analyses indicated that the instrument had a satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. When three 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA tests were conducted to assess the relationship between part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members’ perceptions of adult learners’ academic, social, and environmental needs, the results indicated a significant interaction occurred between part-time and

full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs and a significant effect occurred between adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs. No other relationships existed.

Qualitative data identified major themes that emerged from the open-ended responses. These factors included tutorials/labs, optional class offerings, childcare services, and safety/parking. Qualitative data revealed that academic and environmental factors had a slight impact on adult learners' needs.

The following chapter represents a discussion of the study, implications for community colleges. Areas for further research and a summary of the study are also presented.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Discussion of Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between the stated needs of part-time and full-time adult learners and the perceived needs of part-time and full-time faculty members at the community college setting. This study attempted to develop a better understanding of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs in order to cultivate a better relationship among adult learners and community colleges' faculty members and create improved learning atmospheres for community college campuses. In addition, based on the findings, implications for community colleges' administrators and faculty members will be discussed and areas for further research suggested.

This research had three major goals: (1) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting; (2) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting; and (3) to determine the relationship of part-time and

full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting.

Participants consisted of two groups: 242 adult learners and 106 faculty members. From these two groups, sub-groups existed. The first sub-group consisted of 99 full-time and 42 part-time adult learners and 30 full-time and 25 part-time faculty members at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. The second sub-group consisted of 64 full-time and 37 part-time adult learners and 29 full-time and 22 part-time faculty members at Wallace Community College Selma. In order to assess adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs, an *Adult Learners Needs Survey* was created.

Adult learners and faculty members were surveyed during Spring semester 2005. Adult learners completed surveys based on their academic, social, and environmental needs and faculty members answered surveys regarding their perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs.

Part I of the survey consisted of academic and learning needs. It included items that related to learning styles, campus resources, class and faculty availability, remedial labs, and course offerings. Part II of the survey consisted of information regarding the social aspects of the college environment. It included statements concerning organizational involvement, social activities, peer and faculty interactions, job opportunities, and community involvement. Part III of the survey incorporated information regarding environmental needs. It included items that related to parking, handicap accommodations, health services, daycare services, financial aid, classroom environment, security and safety, family support, transfer credits, and future employment opportunities. Part IV of the survey consisted of two questions in regards to the need

for additional services. These questions included: improvement of services and the usefulness of services. Part V of the Adult Learner Needs Survey incorporated information related to the participants' backgrounds. It included items such as age, gender, student status, and degree programs.

The quantitative data revealed the following from the three research questions:
Research Question One: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?

The results of the 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test indicated that no significant relationship existed between adult learners and faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic needs. Part-time and full-time adult learners did not score any differently from part-time and full-time faculty members.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?

The results of the 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test indicated that no significant relationship existed between part-time and full-time status. However, a significant interaction was present between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs. Full-time faculty members scored slightly higher on social needs than full-time adult learners. There were no differences reported between part-time faculty members and part-time adult learners. Additionally, no other significant relationships existed between adult learners and faculty members.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

The results of the 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA test no significant relationship between part-time and full-time status. The part-time did not score any differently from the full-time. However, a significant relationship occurred between adult learners and faculty members. Faculty members scored slightly higher on environmental needs than adult learners. No significant interaction existed between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs.

In addition to the quantitative findings, this study was able to identify themes pertinent to adult learners' needs. Qualitative data from the two open-ended questions on the survey tended to support quantitative results. The following questions were asked:

1. In what way(s) can this community college improve services for adult learners?
2. What specific services would be most useful to you as an adult learner?

The data resulting from the qualitative portion of the study provided additional information about the significant themes that emerged and their relationship to adult learners' needs. Academic and environmental themes are detailed in the following paragraphs. Social factors were not reported as responses.

Qualitative: Academic Factors

Theme 1 – Tutorials/Labs: Adult students indicated that they need extra tutoring and additional lab offerings, especially in the areas of mathematics and English. They

specified that additional tutorial and lab services would help them to better understand courses in which they had deficiencies. Additionally, adult learners denoted that the availability of additional lab hours would allow them to attend lab frequently.

Theme 2 – Optional Class Offerings: Adult students indicated that there was a need for optional class offerings, especially for the working student. They stressed that their colleges need to offer additional online courses, night courses, weekend courses, and afternoon courses. Other adult learners indicated that they prefer mini-term classes. They believed that mini-term classes enabled them to retain their course information.

Qualitative: Environmental Factors

Theme 3 – Childcare Services: Adult learners specified that institutions should offer childcare services for their students. Adult students denoted that their class attendance would increase if childcare services were provided on their campuses. Working adult students indicated that an extended evening daycare service on campus would benefit them greatly.

Theme 4 – Safety/Parking: Adult students denoted that they preferred accessible parking to buildings and a need for additional campus security. Students signified that they would feel secure if parking was closer to their classes and additional lighting was added around their campus.

Implications

A growing body of research suggests that community colleges need to pay attention to adult students' individual needs by providing appropriate matches between their needs and their institutional setting (Carlan, 2001; Howell, 2001; Kim, 2002; NCES,

2003; Watters, 2003). Faculty members are key factors when addressing these matches (Howell, 2001). The results from this study specified that part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members show no differences among adult learners and faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic needs. However, significant relationships existed between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs. Additionally, part-time and full-time adult learners indicated that academic and environmental needs are important factors for them in the community college setting.

Several implications may be drawn from the findings of this study which may be helpful to community colleges for future program planning and service implementations for adult learners. The following implications could be considered significant:

Implications for Community College Administrators

The results of the data and literature review may serve as a basis for the role administrators' play in providing services for adult students. Adult learners have distinctive characteristics and needs that set them apart from the rest of the collegiate population. Because adult students have diverse needs, morals, and aspirations, college administrators are faced with many challenges (Pennington & Harris, 1980). Meeting their individual needs is often an important part of their successes in their academic setting.

Higher education administrators can serve as a sounding board and a source of support for adult learners. To reach this goal, community college administrators should examine the environment within the academic setting and provide opportunities to assess

adult learners' perceptions and attitudes related to their needs, goals, and the institution. Establishing services that facilitate positive influences for adult learners should be a central goal of administrators. This alliance of needs should be mingled into the adult learners' academic preparations.

As administrators strive to create programs and services that address adult learners' needs, they must begin by engaging adult learners and faculty members in the creation of a shared and uniformed vision. Encouraging the active involvement of adult learners and faculty members in the formulation of institutional policies and procedures will help construct relationships between adult learners and faculty members. By utilizing discussion panels and surveys, administrators, faculty members and adult learners can actively participate in the creation of additional services, such as tutorial labs and childcare services, in order to better serve this population. Additionally, administrators need to provide the college faculty with appropriate professional development resources and opportunities to better understand the needs of adult learners.

Moreover, administrators must recognize that many adult students work full-time and have additional responsibilities such as parenthood. Thus, the lack of attendance is apparent in the community college classroom. Allowing and encouraging additional services at non-traditional hours will greatly increase adult learners' academic successes. With the creation of childcare services, adult learners would be able to spend more time in their class settings, ultimately increasing retention among this population within the community college. Additionally, creating extra tutorial lab services and optional class offerings would greatly benefit the working student.

Implications for Community College Faculty Members

Meeting adult learners' individual needs is a significant part of their academic success at the community college setting. Thus, it is important for community college faculty members to contribute to adult learners' achievements. Part-time and full-time faculty members' daily interactions with adult learners in the classroom and out of the classroom are essential. Faculty members' daily encounters should have a direct impact on student achievement. In keeping with the mission of community colleges to encourage life-long learning, faculty members must understand adult learners' characteristics and needs to contribute to their successes.

Faculty members should gain insight into adult learners' needs and characteristics by creating a favorable classroom learning environment for adult students. This process can be accomplished by assessing and considering adult students' prior learning experiences in an educational setting. Open classroom discussions can contribute to the understanding of essential needs in the classroom environment. This collaboration of discussions is an opportunity for adult students to bring their life experiences to the college classroom.

Faculty members may need to restructure their curriculum to facilitate a conducive learning environment for adult learners. Providing positive reinforcements and engaging in active learning should be considered in the curriculum. By joining forces with administrators and faculty members, adult students will become actively engaged in their learning environment and ultimately become better life-long learners.

Areas of Further Research

It is recommended that this study be replicated by comparing the variables, administrators, faculty members, and adult learners in the community college setting. Specific comparisons can be measured between community college administrators', faculty members', and adult learners' perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs.

Additional qualitative methods must also be considered to allow for extensive probing into the responses of adult learners and faculty members. Interviewing individual adult learners could investigate whether or not faculty members are unquestionably addressing the adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs. In addition, faculty members are able to examine whether or not they are addressing adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs.

It would be of value to further explore the number of participants. The study examined 242 adult learners and only 106 faculty members. Duplicating the study with a larger number of faculty members might have altered the results.

Further analysis of this study data is imperative. Consideration needs to be given to the geographical location of the community colleges. In this study, participants were geographically located within the same state. Studies should be replicated at community colleges in other geographical locations. By investigating other community colleges, the study may have yielded different results. Additionally, replicating the study at four-year institutions may also yield different outcomes.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environments in order to improve the way community colleges address the needs of this group. The study proposed and addressed three research questions which were:

1. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting?
2. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting?
3. What is the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting?

This study had three major goals: (1) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual academic needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' academic needs in the community college setting; (2) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual social needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' social needs in the community college setting; and (3) to determine the relationship of part-time and full-time adult learners' actual environmental needs and part-time and full-time faculty perceptions of adult learners' environmental needs in the community college setting.

A sample of 242 adult learners that were 25 years of age or older and in a transferable degree program and 106 faculty members was obtained for this study. The participant sample was selected from Chattahoochee Valley Community College, located in Phenix City, Alabama and Wallace Community College Selma, located in Selma, Alabama. Both groups completed the *Adult Learner Needs Survey*.

The literature review revealed that academic, social, and environmental needs were essential for adult learners' academic success. After data collection, three 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA's and qualitative themes were used to determine the significant relationships between part-time and full-time adult learners and part-time and full-time faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic, social, and environmental needs.

The quantitative findings of the study indicated that a significant interaction occurred between part-time and full-time status and adult learners and faculty members regarding social needs and a significant effect occurred between adult learners and faculty members regarding environmental needs. No other relationships existed. However, qualitative explanations conferred that significant relationships existed between adult learners' and faculty members' perceptions of adult learners' academic and environmental needs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTION INFORMATION LETTERS

December 12, 2004

Dear Dr. Mitchell:

Hi my name is Kemba Countryman. I presently serve as a Mathematics Instructor at Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Higher Education at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama.

I am writing this letter to seek permission to conduct a study at your institution for my dissertation project. The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners' academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.

I would like to survey approximately 50 – 75 full-time and part-time adult learners that are over the age of twenty-five and are seeking transfer degrees. I would also like to survey 50 – 75 full-time and part-time faculty members from your institution for the study. Selected adult learners will be asked to complete the survey based on their needs as adult learners. Faculty members will be asked to complete the survey based on their perceptions of the needs of adult learners in the community college setting. The responses from the faculty will reflect their personal knowledge and understanding of the adult learner. After the research is completed, all findings will be reported to your institution.

If permission is granted, I will need a letter from your institution stating permission to conduct the study. If further information is needed or you would like to meet with me in person, please feel free to contact me at 334-291-4968 or countkc@auburn.edu.

Thank you in advanced for your utmost attention to this effort.
Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman
Mathematics Instructor/Higher Education Doctoral Student

December 12, 2004

Dear Dr. Blackwell:

Hi my name is Kemba Countryman. I presently serve as a Mathematics Instructor at Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, Alabama and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Higher Education at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama.

I am writing this letter to seek permission to conduct a study at your institution for my dissertation project. The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners' academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.

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If permission is granted, I will need a letter from your institution stating permission to conduct the study. If further information is needed or you would like to meet with me in person, please feel free to contact me at 334-291-4968 or countkc@auburn.edu.

Thank you in advanced for your utmost attention to this effort.
Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman
Mathematics Instructor/Higher Education Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B
INSTITUTION PERMISSION LETTERS

WALLACE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SELMA

P.O. Box 2530 • Selma, Alabama 36702-2530
3000 Earl Goodwin Parkway • Selma, Alabama 36703-2808
Phone (334) 876-9227 • Fax (334) 872-0158

Dr. James M. Mitchell
President

January 18, 2005

Ms. Kemba Countryman
165 Virginia Highlands
Fayetteville, GA 30215

Dear Ms. Countryman:

I am in receipt and approve your request to conduct a survey of selected students and faculty for your dissertation project. I wish you much success and look forward to reviewing your results and findings.

If there are any further questions or information needed, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. James M. Mitchell
President

JMM/ljh

pc: Dr. Robert McConnell
Dr. Gail May
Mr. Raji Gouridine

WCCS

Chattahoochee
Valley Community College

Laurel M. Blackwell, Ed.D.
President

2602 College Drive
Phenix City, Alabama 36869
1.334.291.4981
1.334.291.4944(fax)

January 25, 2005

Ms. Kemba Countryman
Chattahoochee Valley Community College
2602 College Drive
Phenix City, AL 36869

Dear Ms. Countryman:

You have my authorization to proceed with your dissertation research at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. Please forward to me in advance your proposed timeline and processes.

Please stay in close contact with Dr. James Lowe, Dean of Instruction, and Dr. David Hodge, Dean of Student and Administrative Services, as you proceed with your research. They will need to be informed of your plans.

I wish you well in your research and the completion of your doctoral studies. We will look forward to learning the outcomes of your research.

Sincerely,

Laurel M. Blackwell, Ed.D.
President

LMB/mg

cc: Dr. David Hodge
Dr. James Lowe
Personnel

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Auburn University, Alabama 36849



Office of Human Subjects Research
307 Sanford Hall

Telephone: 334-844-5966
Fax: 334-844-4391

March 4, 2005

MEMORANDUM TO: Kemba Countryman
EFLT

PROTOCOL TITLE: "A Comparison of Adult Learners' Academic, Social, and Environmental Needs as Perceived by Adult Learners and Faculty"

IRB File: #05-034 EX 0502

APPROVAL DATE: February 12, 2005
EXPIRATION DATE: February 11, 2006

The referenced protocol was approved "Exempt" from further review under 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2) by IRB procedure on February 12, 2005. You should retain this letter in your files, along with a copy of the revised protocol and other pertinent information concerning your study. If you should anticipate a change in any of the procedures authorized in protocol #05-034 EX 0502, you must request and receive IRB approval prior to implementation of any revision. Please reference the above IRB File in any correspondence regarding this project.

If you will be unable to file a Final Report on your project before February 11, 2006, you must submit a request for an extension of approval to the IRB no later than January 27, 2006. If your IRB authorization expires and/or you have not received written notice that a request for an extension has been approved prior to February 11, 2006, you must suspend the project immediately and contact the Office of Human Subjects Research for assistance.

A Final Report will be required to close your IRB project file.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Human Subjects Research at 844-5966.

Sincerely,

Niki L. Johnson, JD, MBA, Director
Office of Human Subjects Research
Research Compliance Auburn University

cc: Dr. William Spencer

APPENDIX D
INFORMATION LETTERS

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET
For a Research Study Entitled
“A comparison of adult learners’ academic, social, and environmental needs as perceived by adult learners and faculty.”

You are invited to participate in a research study that compares the perceptions regarding adult learners’ actual needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of the adult learner at the community college setting. The following survey is part of an effort to assist Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma to discover and gain knowledge of adult learners as they maneuver through the community college setting. You were selected because you are currently enrolled in a transferable degree program at Chattahoochee Valley Community College or Wallace Community College Selma.

By participating in this study, you will help community colleges gain better efforts to assist adult learners by providing additional services that will be beneficial for the students. The survey may also be useful to you in order for you to discover different aspects of your learning needs as well. Your responses will be used to compare student and faculty perceptions regarding adult learners’ academic, social, and environmental needs.

The survey does not require a long amount of time and will take about 15 minutes to complete. We appreciate any help that you may be able to give us by completing the survey.

Keep in mind that there is no “right” or “wrong” answers. All responses are strictly confidential. Your name will never be identified when data are reported. Please be honest at all times with your responses.

You will be asked to complete the survey based on your feelings regarding your actual learning needs. After completing the survey, please return your survey to the instructor.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Kemba Countryman at (334) 291-4968 (countk@aubun.edu) or Dr. Maria Witte at (334) 844-4460 (wittemm@auburn.edu).

For additional information regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Office of Research Programs: Executive Director Niki Johnson at (334) 844-5966 (johnsn1@auburn.edu) or IRB Chair, Dr. Peter Grandjean at (334) 844-1462 (grandpw@auburn.edu).

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Investigator's signature

Date

FACULTY INFORMATION SHEET
For a Research Study Entitled
“A comparison of adult learners’ academic, social, and environmental needs as perceived by adult learners and faculty.”

You are invited to participate in a research study that compares the perceptions regarding adult learners’ actual needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of the adult learner at the community college setting. The following survey is part of an effort to assist Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma to discover and gain knowledge of adult learners as they maneuver through the community college setting. You were selected because you are currently a full-time or part-time faculty member at Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Wallace Community College Selma.

By participating in this study, you will help community colleges gain better efforts to assist adult learners by providing additional services that will be beneficial for the students. The survey may also be useful to you in order to gain insight on what constitutes the needs of adult learners in order to create a better learning environment for this particular group. Your responses will be used to compare student and faculty perceptions regarding adult learners’ academic, social, and environmental needs.

The survey does not require a long amount of time and will take about 15 minutes to complete. We appreciate any help that you may be able to give us by completing the survey.

Keep in mind that there is no “right” or “wrong” answers. All responses are strictly confidential. Your name will never be identified when data are reported. Please be honest at all times with your responses.

You will be asked to complete the survey as if you are an adult learner. Use your perceptions of how you believe the adult learner would respond to each question. After completing the survey, please return your survey in the provided sealed envelope to the Dean of Instruction’s office.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Kemba Countryman at (334) 291-4968 (countk@auburn.edu) or Dr. Maria Witte at (334) 844-4460 (wittemm@auburn.edu).

For additional information regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Office of Research Programs: Executive Director Niki Johnson at (334) 844-5966 (johnsn1@auburn.edu) or IRB Chair, Dr. Peter Grandjean at (334) 844-1462 (grandpw@auburn.edu).

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Investigator's signature

Date

APPENDIX E
NOTES TO ADMINISTRATORS

Dear Dr. Robert McConnell:

I would like to first like to thank your institution for participating in my study. I have provided you with important information regarding my study's purpose, participants, and procedures in the distribution and collecting of information sheets and surveys.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners' academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.

Classes to be surveyed

I would like to survey the following classes from Wallace Community College Selma:

MTH 090 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 098 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 112 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 231 or 232 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 093 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 101 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 102 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 271 or 272 (2 day and 2 evening classes)

Faculty to be surveyed

I would like to survey all full-time and part-time faculty members from Wallace Community College Selma.

Faculty members will be asked to complete the survey based on their perceptions of the needs of adult learners in the community college setting. The responses from the faculty will reflect their personal knowledge and understanding of the adult learner.

Procedures for distributing and collecting surveys:

For Faculty

An attached script is provided in order to distribute and collect the surveys from faculty members. Please give the information sheet and a survey to all full-time and part-time faculty members. After the surveys are completed, please have the faculty members return them in the provided sealed envelope to your office within two weeks. Once received, I will collect all returned surveys from your office.

For Students

An attached script is provided in order to distribute and collect the surveys from students. Please select classes from each course on the above list to be surveyed. After the selection of classes has been made, please give the script, information sheets and surveys provided for each instructor whose class is to be surveyed. The survey will only take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Please ask the instructor to distribute and collect the surveys in the provided sealed envelope from the students in the class and return them to your office within two weeks. Once received, I will collect all returned surveys from your office.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Kemba Countryman at 334-291-4968 or countkc@auburn.edu.

Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman
Mathematics Instructor, Chattahoochee Valley Community College
Doctoral Student, Auburn University

Dear Dr. James Lowe:

I would like to first like to thank your institution for participating in my study. I have provided you with important information regarding my study's purpose, participants, and procedures in the distribution and collecting of information sheets and surveys.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners' academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.

Classes to be surveyed

I would like to survey the following classes from Chattahoochee Valley Community College:

MTH 090 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 098 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 112 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 231 or 232 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 093 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 101 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 102 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 271 or 272 (2 day and 2 evening classes)

Faculty to be surveyed

I would like to survey all full-time and part-time faculty members from Chattahoochee Valley Community College.

Faculty members will be asked to complete the survey based on their perceptions of the needs of adult learners in the community college setting. The responses from the faculty will reflect their personal knowledge and understanding of the adult learner.

Procedures for distributing and collecting surveys:

For Faculty

An attached script is provided in order to distribute and collect the surveys from faculty members. Please give the information sheet and a survey to all full-time and part-time faculty members. After the surveys are completed, please have the faculty members return them in the provided sealed envelope to your office within two weeks. Once received, I will collect all returned surveys from your office.

For Students

An attached script is provided in order to distribute and collect the surveys from students. Please select classes from each course on the above list to be surveyed. After the selection of classes has been made, please give the script, information sheets and surveys provided for each instructor whose class is to be surveyed. The survey will only take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Please ask the instructor to distribute and collect the surveys in the provided sealed envelope from the students in the class and return them to your office within two weeks. Once received, I will collect all returned surveys from your office.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Kemba Countryman at 334-291-4968 or countkc@auburn.edu.

Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman
Mathematics Instructor, Chattahoochee Valley Community College
Doctoral Student, Auburn University

Script for Recruiting Students

Students

Listed below are the procedures you are to follow when recruiting students.

Procedures for recruiting students

1. From the following classes:
Classes to be surveyed
MTH 090 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 098 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 112 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
MTH 231 or 232 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 093 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 101 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 102 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
ENG 271 or 272 (2 day and 2 evening classes)
Ask willing faculty members to have their classes participate in a study regarding.
2. Ask all students in the selected class if they would be willing to participate in a study regarding adult learner needs.
3. Say “The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners’ academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.”
4. Say “You will be asked to complete the survey Selected adult learners will be asked to complete the survey based on your perceptions of the needs of adult learners in the community college setting. Your responses will reflect your personal knowledge and understanding of the adult learner. After the research is completed, all findings will be reported to your institution.

Script for Recruiting Faculty Members

Faculty

Listed below are the procedures you are to follow when recruiting faculty and students.

Procedures for recruiting faculty

1. Ask all full time and part time faculty members if they would be willing to participate in a study regarding adult learner needs.
2. Say “The purpose of the study is to better understand the academic, social and environmental needs of adult learners in their learning environment in order to improve the way community colleges are addressing the needs of this group. The study will compare the perceptions regarding adult learners’ academic, social and environmental needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of adult learners at the community college setting. Specific comparisons will be made between the perceptions of full-time and part-time adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, this study will determine if there is a relationship between the expressed academic, social, and environmental needs of adult community college students and their needs as perceived by selected faculty members at two Alabama community colleges.”
3. Say “You will be asked to complete the survey based on your perceptions of the needs of adult learners in the community college setting. Your responses will reflect your personal knowledge and understanding of the adult learner. After the research is completed, all findings will be reported to your institution.

Script for the Distribution of Information Letter and “Adult Learner Needs” Survey to Students

Instructors

Listed below are the procedures you are to follow when distributing the information letters and “Adult Learner Needs” Survey

Procedures for Distribution of Information Letters

1. Pass out the information letter to each student in the class and give them time to read over the letter.
2. Say: “You have been asked to participate in a survey. Keep in mind that this survey is anonymous. That means that no one will be able to trace your answers back to you. However, you must be completely honest. Your answers will affect the results of the study.”

Procedures for Distribution of “Adult Learner Needs” Survey

1. Pass out the survey to each student in the class.
2. Say: “Please answer all questions based on your perceptions regarding each statement. When you have completed the survey, you will return it to your instructor by placing your survey in the envelope.”

Script for the Distribution of Information Letter and “Adult Learner Needs” Survey to Faculty

Dean of Instruction

Listed below are the procedures you are to follow when distributing the information letters and “Adult Learner Needs” Survey

Procedures for Distribution of Information Letters

1. Pass out the information letter to each full-time and part-time faculty member at your institution.
2. Say: “You have been asked to participate in a survey. Keep in mind that this survey is anonymous. That means that no one will be able to trace your answers back to you. However, you must be completely honest. Your answers will affect the results of the study.”

Procedures for Distribution of “Adult Learner Needs” Survey

1. Pass out the survey to each full-time and part-time faculty member at your institution.
2. Say: “You are asked to complete the survey as if you are an adult learner. Use your perceptions of how you believe an adult learner would respond to each question. When you have completed the survey, please return it in the provided sealed envelope to the Dean of Instruction’s office.

Dear Selected Faculty:

This envelope contains:

_____ Letter of Information to students

_____ Script for Faculty Administrator

_____ Surveys

Please distribute the Information Letters to all students. Students are to keep the Information Letter.

Read the Script to the class.

Distribute the Surveys to the class. Ask students to return survey to the faculty administrator once completed.

If there are any questions, please call at (334) 291-4968.

Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman
Mathematics Instructor-Chattahoochee Valley Community College
Doctoral Student-Auburn University

Reminder E-Mail for Faculty

This is a reminder e-mail in reference to the “Adult Learner Needs Survey” that was given to you by your Dean of Instruction last week. If you have not completed your survey, could you please do so and return it to the Dean of Instruction’s Office by Friday. If you have completed your survey, thank you for your time.

Again, thanks for your time and effort in helping with this study.

Sincerely,

Kemba C. Countryman

APPENDIX F
INSTRUMENT

Adult Learner Needs Survey

This is a study to compare the perceptions regarding the adult learner actual needs to what faculty perceive as the needs of the adult learner at the community college setting. By participating in this study, you will assist area community colleges to identify better efforts to assist you as an adult learner and faculty member. The adult learners at your school will be given a survey dealing with their academic, social, and environmental needs. You are asked to complete this survey on adult learner needs.

General Directions: The survey will take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. Try to rate yourself according to how important the statements are for you as an adult learner. Keep in mind that there is no “right” or “wrong” answers. All responses are strictly confidential.

“1” if the statement is VERY IMPORTANT to me.

“2” if the statement is IMPORTANT to me.

“3” if the statement is SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT to me.

“4” if the statement is NOT IMPORTANT to me.

PART I: ACADEMIC/LEARNING NEEDS

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
1. Learning at my own pace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Creating confidence about learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Resources on campus are readily accessible at different times of the day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Availability of on-line resources (admissions, business, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Able to adjust to classes with traditional age students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Class availability/course offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Faculty capable of meeting my learning style	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Faculty enthusiasm for teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Faculty concern for student progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Faculty availability during office hours for extra help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Faculty willingness to listen to student questions/opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Academic advisor concern for you as an individual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. College offerings of developmental education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Accessibility to remediation/tutorial labs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Courses staffed by full-time rather than part-time faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. On-line course offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Weekend course offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Completing your college degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART II: SOCIAL NEEDS

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
1. Involvement in social clubs/organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Attending campus performances/activities/engagements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Involvement in honor clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Involvement in recreational activities (intramural sports)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Social activities on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Peer interactions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Making new friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Participating in community work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Availability of job placement programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Counseling services readily available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Opportunities to meet and interact socially with faculty members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Creating personal relationships with faculty members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Faculty interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART III: ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

1. Parking easily accessible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Handicap accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Elevator accessibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Student health services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Daycare services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Certainty of financial aid services availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Classroom environment conducive to learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Tables in classrooms instead of desk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Campus security availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Campus safety issues (lighting, security, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Encouragement/support from family and friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Transferring credits to a four year institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Gaining future employment opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART IV: ADDITIONAL NEEDS/SERVICES (For additional space, use back of survey.)

1. In what way(s) can this community college improve services for adult learners?

2. What specific services would be most useful to you as an adult learner?

PART V: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: _____
3. Status (Full-time/Part-time) _____
4. Degree Program (Terminating Degree, Transferring Degree, or Certificate) _____

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would have any questions or concerns, you may contact Kemba C. Countryman by e-mail at countkc@auburn.edu or by phone at 334-291-4968.