Adult Undergraduates in Higher Education: A Review of Past Research Perspectives

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This review examines past research on adult undergraduates in American higher education. Due to varied beliefs regarding adult students and past higher educational practice, this study utilizes qualitative content analysis to identify key perceptual assumptions and orientations as well as descriptive groupings. Five inductive thematic categories, domains of reality framed by the researchers, are identified. These include: the Image of Implied Deficiency, Image of Student Entry and Adaptation, Image of Description and Characterization, Image of Psychosocial Development, and Image of Equity and Outcome. A discussion of these key perspectives as well as a critical review of past research in the study of adult undergraduate students is presented.

Research on undergraduate higher education has been predominantly based in historical perspectives and beliefs of a traditional student profile—that of a person who was 17–22 years old—and of a traditional undergraduate higher education as defined by an institutional culture and curriculum focused on the 17–22-year-old undergraduate student. This past research has often represented the undergraduate as an on-campus residential student who was solely focused upon academic pursuits related to future career and life goals and primarily concerned with the key developmental tasks of identity and intimacy formation (Astin, 1978; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Sanford, 1962). With this undergraduate profile, many researchers suggested that higher education was both a foundation for developing adult identity and competence in the world of ideas and beliefs and a developmental bridge between the family circle and the future adult world of family, work, and societal decision making. However, contemporary undergraduate higher education reflects increasing diversity from this traditional student profile and experience (Chickering & Associates, 1981).

In the past twenty years, the demographics of the undergraduate student population have changed dramatically. In particular, adult learners now comprise approximately 40% of the current undergraduate population (Fact file: Fall 1987 Enrollment in U.S. Colleges and Universities, 1989). Commuter students (adult students as a major subset) represent 70% of the undergraduate student population. In addition to this change of demographics and of a dominating off-campus lifestyle for undergraduates, there have been concomitant changes in the students’ academic and psychological life commitments. As a major undergraduate grouping, adults (age 25 and older) exhibit significant differences in their academic and life involvements from the traditional young undergraduate student (Apps, 1981; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; Weathersby & Tarule, 1980).

Given these differences, many faculty and administrators in the higher education
community assume that adult students are best served and do participate predomi-
nantly in specialized or age-segregated academic programs. There are numbers of
studies and essays regarding adult undergraduates in nontraditional, age-defined or
life experience-defined access and instructional alternatives, and adult-focused
program structures or institutions (e.g., external degrees, night schools, correspond-
ence and adult degree programs; DeCrow, 1959; Eldred & Marienau, 1979).

However, recent statistics suggest that the majority of adult undergraduates
participate in the traditional undergraduate environment of higher education
(Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Fact file: Fall 1987 Enrollment in U.S. Colleges
and Universities, 1989). These statistics have heightened the contradictory assump-
tions and realities of adults in undergraduate education. Such disparate perspectives
are not only reflected in the general literature of the undergraduate experience;
they are also reflected in a growing stream of research in the area.

Specifically, research on the adult undergraduate has been highly diverse in its
assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives of adults within the academic tradition of
undergraduate education. Further, the scope and substance of the research also has
reflected this formative exploration to provide definition and characterization.
There is clear evidence that the researchers have been struggling with three primary
concerns. How does one define the adult learner within the context of the under-
graduate student role? What is the relationship of the adult learner to the traditional
undergraduate student environment? What should be the relationship between the
adult student and the undergraduate higher educational environment?

This study was undertaken to both delineate and to critically examine the past
research regarding the adult undergraduate in traditional American higher educa-
tion. The investigation reflected a two dimensional effort. This study examined the
literature for descriptive themes or characterizations of the adult in the undergrad-
uate experience. Secondly, the study conducted a qualitative meta-analysis to
delineate the researchers' expressed frame of reference, their perspectives, and their
beliefs concerning adult undergraduate experience. It was believed that this review
would provide an important foundation for both the design of future research in
the area and for the identification of critical issues concerning past and future
research of adult undergraduates in traditional higher education. As stated by
Claude Levi-Strauss (see "Titan," 1978), the scholarly purpose of a theoretician is
to introduce some order into a field where knowledge is very chaotic.

Methodological Framework for the Study

This review of literature was based in a qualitative meta-analysis methodology—
an examination of a body of research utilizing comparative analysis to induce
categories across research studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holsti, 1969). Each study,
as well as categories of studies, were assessed for the character of the data (Selltiz,
Jahoda, Deutsch, & Cook, 1959). As noted by Altheide (1987),

Ethnographic content analysis is used to document and understand the commu-
nication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive
characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator,
concepts, data collection and analysis... The aim is to be systematic and analytic
but not rigid. (p. 68)
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It was believed that to best understand the past traditions of this research area qualitative analysis of content would best identify each study's descriptive elements and the assumptions and interpretations of the researchers regarding the adult student in undergraduate higher education.

Identification and Screening of Research

The first phase of the research was the collection of retrievable research literature, including over 345 articles, papers, books, and research reports on adult undergraduate learners in higher education from 1940–1986. The primary sources for this review came from extensive collection and examination of studies identified through ERIC, Higher Education Abstracts (formerly College Student Personnel Abstracts) and Psychological Abstracts. The author also conducted a hand review of Adult Education Quarterly (formerly Adult Education), Journal of Higher Education, Journal of College Student Development (formerly Journal of College Student Personnel), Educational Gerontology, Lifelong Learning, Research in Higher Education, Innovative Higher Education (formerly Alternative Higher Education), and Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice. In addition to these primary sources, identification of additional research came from hand review branching of the bibliographic references in these sources as well as collateral readings in higher education and adult education.

Each written document was screened for key criteria in the study. These criteria included:

A. Adult learners were defined as undergraduate students, who were 25 years of age or older, enrolled in a credit academic program (note Kasworm, 1982).

B. Substantive research process was defined as (a) research activity which was systematic, structured, purposeful, and generalizable and (b) research which presented sufficient background information to identify the conceptual framework, the research design, methodology, and sample in the discussion of the study (Good, 1973; Merriam & Simpson, 1984).

C. American undergraduate education was defined as that set of credit-seeking learning experiences obtained by on-campus classroom enrollment in a community college, four year college, or university in a nonage-exclusive academic undergraduate program.

The final pool of screened studies consisted of 96 documents including articles, chapters, reports, books, and unpublished papers. (For further discussion regarding the methodology and the impact of criteria for exclusion of studies, refer to Kasworm, 1989.)

Content Analysis Procedures

The second phase of the research was the examination of descriptive and inductive themes and units of meaning. These analyses reflected the methodological stance, that

although categories and 'variables' initially guide the study, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study. ... Thus, ethnographic content analysis (ECA) is embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances. (Altheide, 1987, p. 68)
The final goal of the inductive comparative analyses was the development of conceptual categories/subcategories and their reflective conceptual properties. Each of these major conceptual categories from the body of literature was a domain of reality. As noted by Sztompka, each of these categories reflected "a complex construct made up of assumptions...referring to some selected domain of reality and characterizing it in a simplified or idealized manner" (1974, p. 31). Each of these domains of reality represented the nature of the inquiry, the researchers' selected focus, beliefs, and research orientation towards the adult student and the student's relation to the undergraduate collegiate environment. This procedure is discussed more fully elsewhere (Kasworm, 1989).

Qualitative meta-analysis methodology provides an important critical perspective in illuminating the past perceptual frameworks of researchers in this area. The identified domains of reality could suggest the researcher's sense of relationship and contextual history regarding adult undergraduates vis-a-vis the undergraduate experience. These domains could reflect ways in which researchers have perceived and defined the adult undergraduate and in which the manner of research investigation substantiates or tests those perceptions.

This effort to consider past research on adult undergraduates through a qualitative meta-analysis does have its limitations. As with any review of literature, there are limitations in the ability to identify and access all relevant studies. Additionally, this study considered varied forms of inquiry [descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental, philosophical (critical analysis), historical and conceptual model development]. Critics could well argue that the written style of expression for these varied forms does influence the expression of the researcher and therefore may impact the inductive analysis of the study. As with any meta-analysis, this study did not consider the quality of the research studies under consideration. There was an established procedure to screen studies which would reflect common standards of a research study; however, the scholarship of the individual studies was not part of this screening procedure. Lastly, qualitative investigations are particularly concerned with the reliability of the study. This study did establish an elaborate coding and category structure of analysis; care was taken through several levels of analysis to establish and test categories. However, these efforts to work with both descriptive and inferential data may have been influenced by the written presentation of the specific research studies or by the researcher's perceptual framework.

Analysis of the Research Studies

Five major domains of reality were identified from this review of past research on adult undergraduate students in traditional higher education. Each of these domains of reality were described as an image, a perceptual framework which was descriptively and inferentially expressed in the studies of that category. The domains included:

- Image of Implied Deficiency,
- Image of Student Entry and Adaptation,
- Image of Description and Characterization,
- Image of Psychosocial Development, and
- Image of Equity and Outcome.

The following discussion presents each of the domains, including inferred image, identification of major subcategories within each domain, and a discussion of all
research studies within each domain. In addition, each domain has an accompanying table (Tables 1-5) which lists each of the relevant studies, year of publication, conceptual framework, research design, and sample size of study.

**Image of Implied Deficiency**

This domain (see Table 1) reflects the earliest studies of adult undergraduates in traditional undergraduate programs. It also incorporates more contemporary studies concerning the capabilities of adult students in a formal entry assessment process. This domain is grounded in the perceptions of society, higher education, and research literature that suggests implied deficiency of performance by adult undergraduates. Each of the delineated studies in this domain is concerned with the implied inferior academic performance of adult students. Many of the studies also are examining the potential age-limiting capabilities, the age decrements in cognitive performance as measured in assessment processes vis-a-vis adult learners when compared to young college students in the collegiate environment.

**Age-Based Comparable Performance**

A dominant part of the early research investigated issues of adult students’ academic abilities and their comparable performance within undergraduate academic environments. Several research inquiries were clearly focused upon efforts to “demythologize” opinions regarding adult learners. For example, DeCrow (1959, p. 3) noted concern about beliefs “that adults simply do not have the mental agility to equal learning performance of younger people.” Many of the studies in this category examined issues not only about the abilities of adults as undergraduates but also about the “appropriateness and value” of adult access to higher education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Image of Implied Deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosman &amp; Gustav</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeCrow</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doty</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fagin</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fincher</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick, Mishler, Hogan</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garmezy &amp; Crose</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunneborg, Olch, deWolf</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waters</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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As one study noted:

The academic success of veterans in college was early recognized as an important subject for investigation. ... It was clear that the performance of veterans had an important bearing on two major issues in higher education: who should go to college? and at what age should the typical student enter college? It was also clear that the performance of veterans in college was relevant to the problems of predicting college success, a matter which has received considerable attention from psychologists, especially during the past thirty years. (Frederiksen & Schrader, 1951, p. 2)

Embedded in many of the early articles was the key focus on age of the undergraduate as the major criterion of predicting academic success. This age criterion was often reflected by research examinations of specific comparisons of younger college students with adult student subgroups, such as veterans versus nonveterans, mature women versus younger women, evening school students (adult/older students) versus daytime students (young adult students). However, with increased sophistication of statistical analyses and of inferred multiple causality between variables, later studies questioned the confounding effects of age when used as a sole variable. More recent studies have considered matched samples, predictive indexes, and other more comprehensive research designs and sampling procedures. In summary, the early studies supported the academic achievement of adult students; adults can perform in an academic manner comparable to younger students. In addition, a few studies reported higher grades and aptitude/content test scores or performance by adult students when compared to younger adult students (Crosman & Gustav, 1966; DeCrow, 1959; Doty, 1967; Fagin, 1971; Garmezy & Crose, 1948; Hull, 1970; Pierson, 1948).

Adult Intellectual Performance

This subcategory of studies was grounded in past research of adult learning and adult intellectual performance. Early studies focused on research which suggested age-related decrements of intelligence and intellectual capacities (Doty, 1967; Lunneborg, Olch, & deWolf, 1974). These studies examined the relationship between adult student performance and purported impact of age-related decrements in cognitive functioning. Two studies, Lunneborg et al. (1974) and Fagin (1971), also noted more contemporary research, which suggested a positive relationship between involvement in educative activities and the retardation of intellectual decline. The studies in this subcategory attempted to grapple with research which had suggested a negative impact of aging upon cognitive performance and its concomitant implications for adult undergraduates. Again, these studies presented research findings to support the cognitive capabilities and academic performance of adults, when compared to younger adults, in undergraduate settings.

Entry Assessment and Screening

Lastly, there were several studies in this domain which focused upon the nature of assessment and related admissions screening procedures for adult students. One study considered the “youth” context of higher education. It noted the potential difficulties of adult students to gain admission and to excel academically when “young adult criteria” were institutionally structured (Waters, 1971). Other studies examined assessment of adult students when using aptitude measurements which
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were originally designed for young adult populations. In two of these studies, Fincher (1983) and Lunneborg et al. (1974) conducted investigations concerning the predictive validity of aptitude tests in relation to adult undergraduate students. These studies examined aptitude measurement as well as other mechanisms for assessing the strengths and the deficiencies of entry-level adult undergraduates. Both noted the limited utility of test scores as predictive performance indexes. Fincher reported "the best single predictor of college grades continues to be the student's previous academic record" (p. 45), and Lunneborg et al. suggested that "high school grades, in spite of their age, are as good predictor as any recent test score" (p. 220). Another study (Fredrick, Mishler, & Hogan, 1984) focused upon mathematics achievement of entering younger freshman in comparison to adult freshman. This study, as well as the previous studies of Fincher and Lunneborg et al., reported the lower performance by entering adults on mathematical and quantitative measures in comparison to entering younger undergraduates. The Fincher and Lunneborg et al. studies also reported a somewhat higher performance of entering adults, in comparison to younger college students, on verbal tests of the SAT-Verbal or on tests of English and vocabulary.

Image of Student Entry and Adaptation

Research studies in this domain (see Table 2) focused on the nature of the adult student's relationship to the collegiate environment or, in other words, on the nature of an image of student entry and adaptation to the undergraduate world. Throughout these studies, researchers were concerned with identifying specific factors which influenced adult learners in their entry and successful adaptation in the collegiate environment. There was an implicit belief that this knowledge base could provide awareness and guidance to faculty, staff, and, in some cases, public policy agencies in developing effective collegiate structures, processes, and interventions with adult students. As noted by one study,

A major change in higher education today is the increasing number of adults enrolling in regular programs of college and universities. As the pool of younger students grows smaller, it is more important for colleges and universities to accommodate to older students, and to help them adjust to their multiple responsibilities as students, workers and family members. (Malin, Bray, Dougherty, & Skinner, 1980, p. 115)

Influencers and Motivators for Student Entry/Reentry

A major subtheme in this domain was the examination of factors which influenced adult learners' initial entry/reentry into a collegiate learning environment. These particular studies were characterized by a demarcation of focus between identification of key demographic descriptors and of student motivation orientations. Both of these research areas attempted to identify variables which significantly influenced adult entry/reentry into college.

There were several studies which focused upon demographic determinants of adult participation. These studies statistically analyzed national surveys, or the U.S. Census database, and presented findings of primary relevance to future public policy formulation (Bishop & Van Dyk, 1977; Grane, 1980). Analyzing institu-
Image of Student Entry and Adaptation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conceptual framework</th>
<th>Research type</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anolik</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Self-concept</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bean &amp; Metzner</td>
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<td>Conceptual model dev</td>
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<td>Public policy and adult participation</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>Correlational</td>
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<td>Chandler, &amp; Galerstein</td>
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<td>Perception of classroom environment</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
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<td>Clarke</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Boshier's model</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>261</td>
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<td>Clayton &amp; Smith</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Adult motivation</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
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<td>Dellmann-Jenkins, Fruit, &amp;</td>
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<td>Age-segregated instruction</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirk &amp; Dorfman</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Satisfaction and role strain</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kostka &amp; Wilson</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Math anxiety reduction</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Malin, Bray, Dougherty, &amp;</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Influence of college and noncollege factors</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
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<td>Skinner</td>
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<td>Mangano &amp; Corrado</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Assess educational needs</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>617</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohney &amp; Anderson</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Gilligan’s perspective</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>Morstain &amp; Smart</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Typology of motive patterns</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
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<td>Rebok &amp; Offermann</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Bandura efficacy theory</td>
<td>Conceptual model dev</td>
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<td>Reehling</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Persistence and attrition</td>
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<td>Richter &amp; Witten</td>
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<td>Anticipation and experience of barriers</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
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<td>1984</td>
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<td>Sewall</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Triggering events</td>
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<td>Werring</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>College education attitudes</td>
<td>Correlational</td>
<td>441</td>
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and individual determinants of adult enrollment patterns, Bishop and Van Dyk suggested that either lowering tuition or establishing a new two-year college in a city without a current two-year institution would double two-year college adult attendance rates. They also reported the past influence of the GI bill, which had significantly enhanced participation rates by Vietnam veterans. They found no key factors which significantly affected adult enrollments in local public four-year colleges. The other major national study focused upon older adults, age 65 or older, who participated in higher education (Graney, 1980). This study reported that older adults who entered undergraduate environments were more likely to be “young-old,” better educated, urban, healthy, financially secure, and generally active people with youthful self-concepts” (p. 85).

The other major area in this subtheme focused upon efforts to identify key motivation patterns for adults in their entry/reentry to college. Many of these
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studies reported no distinctive motive patterns for adult undergraduates. Given a lack of common patterns of motives in adult undergraduates, these studies often suggested that researchers should attempt to identify key motivational forces for each setting and each adult student grouping. The most active area in this subcategory focused upon Boshier's research on adult learner motivational patterns and his Educational Participation Scale (EPS) (Dellmann-Jenkins, Fruit, & Lambert, 1984; Governanti & Clowes, 1982; Morstain & Smart, 1977). The leading conceptual article by Morstain and Smart reported that the largest grouping in a four-year college sample responded with a "somewhat undifferentiated pattern of motivational orientations" (p. 671) while Governanti and Clowes reported similar findings for adults in two-year colleges. Dellmann-Jenkins et al. in a comparative study of adult and younger students' motivations on an adapted EPS, reported both groupings having high scores in Cognitive Interest. However, there was a significant discrepancy between adult students and younger students on Life Adjustment Interests. Younger students viewed learning life adjustment skills as a more powerful motivator for pursuing advanced education than did adult students.

The Sewall study (1982, 1984) examined the concept of triggering events as a key motivator, suggesting that there was a moderate to strong relationship between an adult's entry into college and a reported individual triggering life event. This concept of a transition life event as a motivator for collegiate enrollment was premised in earlier work by Aslanian and Brickell (1980) and in other adult development research. However, Sewall reported no distinctive entry motive which acted as a catalyst for an adult student entering higher education. "For most adults, the desire to attend college had been present for a long period of time, but was delayed because of one or more transitory or situational barriers" (p. 196).

Other related studies considered the potential uniqueness of reentry women's motivations. These examinations considered Maslin's motive patterns (Clayton & Smith, 1987), Gilligan's reformulations (1982) regarding reentry women's connectedness to relationships and life events (Mohney & Anderson, 1988), and a longitudinal assessment of self-reported involvement and continuance (Reehling, 1980). Again, all three studies reported the lack of one definitive motive pattern in their reentry women's samples. In addition, the Mohney and Anderson study noted that women's entry into college was significantly influenced by the state of relationships and major life events in their lives, rather than by personal motives. This study suggested that a woman's decision to enter/reenter college was made within a relationship context of family, children, and fellow workers/employers. Reehling, in her longitudinal study of community college reentry women, noted changes across time in self-reported motives for involvement and continuance. These women reported increasing statements of internal motives (self-improvement) and decreasing statements of external motives (career, job, financial security) in relation to their continuation in undergraduate work.

Adaptation Influences

Another significant subtheme in this domain was the broad area of "adaptation" between the adult student and the undergraduate collegiate context. This subtheme was somewhat broad in scope, reflecting research which considered satisfaction, persistence, and influencers of performance and attrition. This grouping of studies, when examined as a whole, does not suggest generalizable characteristics or rela-
tionships concerning adaptation of adult students. Often contradictory findings were presented across these studies due to the use of specific subsample groupings, the nature of defined variables or instrumentation, and the specific period of research investigation. However, these studies do reflect formative efforts to design and conduct research on the relationship between adult students and undergraduate environments. These efforts reflected a much broader base of early discussions premised upon observational, self-reported belief or institutional research studies. The following discussion will present the diversity of these findings.

Several studies considered adult student satisfaction as a key variable in understanding adult student adaptation. Malin et al. (1980) examined aspects of adult student satisfaction in relation to academic performance and adjustment. This study found significant differences between men and women, with men reporting lesser academic success and satisfaction in their undergraduate student status than women. However, when considering the aggregate of adult students, there was no overall pattern of predictive influence of adjustment variables upon academic performance, satisfaction with college, or affective changes resulting from college attendance. Anolik (1980), in a comparative examination of younger and older college students, found adult students reported higher satisfaction with their academic performance (study habits and coursework), "which was more highly correlated to their self concepts" (p. 196).

In studies focused solely upon adult women students, two investigations (Kirk & Dorfman, 1983; Sands & Richardson, 1984) examined the influence of psychological constructs (mental health factors or role strain) for predictors of satisfaction. These studies suggested that there were a number of key influencers in women students' satisfaction. These influencers included the lack of conflict in academic involvement; positive faculty-student relations; more advanced academic standing; helpful collegiate services and supports; supportive family, friends, and co-workers; moderate work involvement; and positive public attitudes about midlife women reentering college.

Three studies developed conceptual models or typologies of adult student adaptation to the undergraduate environment. Drawing upon ecological concepts of student-environment interactions, Campbell, Wilson, and Hanson (1980) used a two stage approach. They examined students through (a) a descriptive four-stage model of transition (balance, conflict, transition, outcome) as a context for examining adult student adjustment, and (b) a multivariate defined typology of adult learners in relationship to the difficulty of their entry into college and the kinds of problems faced since enrollment. Drawing upon past research regarding attrition in undergraduate populations and the central construct of environmental press, Bean & Metzner (1985) present a conceptual model of proposed influential factors impacting adult student (nontraditional student) attrition and a synthesis of past research studies discussing these factors. Lastly, Rebok and Offerman (1983) suggested the use of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy as a guiding theoretical model to examine behavioral competencies of older college students and to predict educational behaviors in this setting.

Influence of Academic Skills and Perceptions of the Instructional Environment

The last major subtheme in this domain focused specifically upon adult learners in relation to their academic skills and their perceptions of the instructional
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environment. These studies were concerned with adult students’ adaptation to the undergraduate academic enterprise. The three areas examined were (a) the potential differences between younger and older students in their perceptions of an instructional environment, (b) adult students’ perceptions of needs/difficulties in the undergraduate educational environment, and (c) identification of academic deficiencies and remediation interventions for successful adaptation to the academic environment.

Several studies examined potential differences that age and the related factors of maturity might bring to the instructional environment. Two studies conducted comparative examinations of adult and younger students regarding age-integrated instruction. They questioned whether younger adults and middle-aged adults would have comparable satisfaction in current classroom instruction and related aspects of undergraduate academic involvement. Both studies (Chandler & Galerstein, 1982; Dellmann-Jenkins, Fruit, & Lambert, 1984) supported current age-integrated instruction, given certain instructional preferences by the students. Werring (1987) and Mangano and Corrado (1980) found evidence of different perceptions of adult students, in contrast to young college students, concerning the instructional academic environment. In the Werring study, adult students reported significantly higher preference for collegiate studies as a means to new knowledge and competence in skills (as opposed to career goals), were less oriented towards formal structured teaching-learning assignments, and preferred less formal student/faculty association roles. The Mangano and Corrado study suggested that adult students had higher preference for evening, weekend, and summer classes; preregistration; credit for out-of-college experiences; and independent study courses. Potential academic barriers and needs were an additional focus of concern in several studies. Mangano and Corrado (1980) developed a Taxonomy of Adult Student Needs based upon their findings while Richter & Witten (1984) identified anticipated and experienced barriers to learning of 2-year and 4-year adult college students. These studies of adult student perceptions of the academic environment were premised in the belief that it was important to identify those key factors which would influence effective involvement of adult students in the academic instructional environment.

Lastly, two studies considered deficit entry skills by adult students and the potential impact of collegiate intervention. Clarke (1980) found that adults, in contrast to younger college students, did see positive value in remediation, and in receiving feedback on inadequate academic skills at entry/reentry to college. Noting previous research on the inadequate entry level of mathematics skills by many adult students, Kostka and Wilson (1986) presented research on an effective intervention for reduction of mathematics anxiety in adult women students.

Image of Description and Characterization

This domain (see Table 3) represents the largest area of studies, premised in the belief that the understanding of the adult student begins at a descriptive level. Unlike the other domains, there was an effort to cast a broad “net” to develop “baseline” descriptors. These studies focused either upon the identification of definitive characteristics of adult undergraduate students, or upon the student definition of their needs or desires for programs and services.
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Profile of Adult Students

One of the major subthemes was the development of a profile (according to Webster—a short, vivid biography, briefly outlining the most outstanding characteristics of the subject). These profile research activities reflected either an effort to utilize a particular conceptual orientation, a particular psychosocial dimension, or selected key life factors to characterize this group. In addition, several studies utilized a large demographic database to distill key characteristics or trends of this

TABLE 3
Image of Description and Definers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
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<th>Research design</th>
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<td>Influence of past experience</td>
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<td>1981</td>
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continued on p. 357
TABLE 3 (continued)

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<td>Zatlin, Storandt, Botwinick</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Psychosocial characteristics</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
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Another perspective presented profiles in relation to specific characteristics of adult students. Studies that presented a particular dimension of a profile considered academic performance (Von der Embse & Childs, 1979), economic conservatism (DePuy, 1978), mathematical competencies (Lyon, 1981), or progress towards graduation (Mishler, Fredrick, Hogan, & Woody, 1982). Another grouping of focused studies considered older adults, defined as individuals age 62 and older, in credit courses. These three studies (Hooper, 1981; Kingston, 1982; Stone, 1979) presented descriptive profiles of these older student samples. There was also a
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grouping of studies which focused solely upon characteristics of women adult students. These studies considered descriptions of women students in relation to work and career (McCrea, 1979) or in relation to family support and employment expectations (Hildreth, Dilworth-Anderson, & Rabe, 1983).

A number of descriptive studies utilized a comparative profile design across age groupings of undergraduates. These comparative examinations considered differential characteristics between and within the study samples. Two of these major studies drew upon extensive data. Lenning & Hanson (1977) presented a longitudinal study (from first enrollment to three years after graduation) of characteristics and needs of 17 thousand students in four age groupings from 100 two-year colleges. The other study (Frederiksen & Schrader, 1951) examined characteristics of 10,000 veterans and nonveterans in sixteen colleges. Other comparative studies of limited sample size considered adult student samples in relation to study habits (Hogan & Hendrickson, 1984), learning preferences (Ommen, Brainard, & Canfield, 1979), value priorities (Pirnot & Dunn, 1983), differential college student satisfaction (Sturtz, 1971), perceptions of university environments (Kuh & Sturgis, 1980), or psychosocial and intellectual orientations (Kasworm, 1980a, 1982). Two studies focused solely upon comparative examination of women adult students and nonstudents (Doty, 1967; Zatlin, Storandt, & Botwinick, 1973).

In examining this subtheme, most of these studies were premised in the assumption that chronological age and age related-psychocultural circumstances would impact upon the adult student characteristics in significant ways. There was a belief that these groupings could be dichotomized by age and that these age differences were the key discriminator for significant psychosocial differences between the age groupings. However, many of the studies found that adult students reported highly differential intragroup characteristics as well as significantly similar characteristics to their younger student colleagues. The sole criterion of age presented limited utility to uncovering key definers of unique adult student characteristics.

Adult Student Needs, Concerns, and Difficulties

Identification of adult students' needs, concerns, or difficulties was another major subtheme in this domain. Unlike the previous research which considered adaptation between the adult student and the collegiate environment, these researchers assumed that the adult student would not be readily able to adapt to the undergraduate collegiate environment. The key assumption in this category was that adults were entering a "youth-oriented culture" and that the adult student would inherently have difficulties. Some of the studies presumed that there was a covert, if not overt, prejudice towards the adult student. Other studies implied that there was a lack of awareness by collegiate personnel; thus the findings of these studies would redirect the collegiate environment in meeting the identified needs of the adult student. It was assumed that collegiate institutions did not recognize the unique difficulties and needs of the adult student. These researchers presumed that (a) they could define needs or concerns for categories of adult students, (b) these findings reflected the global categories of adult students, and (c) these identified needs, concerns, and difficulties could be readily translated into intervention services in the collegiate environment.

In this examination, there were comparisons between younger college and adult students (Johnson, Wallace, & Seldacek, 1979; Warchal & Southern, 1986), com-
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comparison of men and women adult students (Lance, Lourie, Mayo, 1979; Weissberg, Copas, Scholz, & Werring, 1986), and consideration of speciality subgroupings of women (Smallwood, 1980) and of older college students (Hildreth, Dilworth-Anderson, & Rabe, 1983). Again, the underlying belief was that by defining the adult student's needs or difficulties, collegiate personnel could come to understand these difficulties and could design intervention programs for successful adult student entry and adjustment. As noted by Mangano and Corrado,

This challenge...is not simply to absorb adult students into extant academic programs, but (through the identification of adult needs) to recast the total institutional effort to facilitate adults' successful return to, participation in, and completion of formal studies. (1980, p. 5)

Intergenerational Attitudes

The studies in this subtheme were premised in past research regarding ageist attitudes. They examined the attitudes of younger students towards older adult students (Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982; Tindall & McCarter, 1980) and of faculty and administrators' attitudes towards older adults (Nidiffer & Moore, 1985). In addition, this area considered specific influences of intergenerational classroom interactions on ageist attitudes (Auerbach & Levenson, 1977; Mishler & Fredrick, 1985). In these studies, two differing concerns were suggested. The first concern was a similar concern to those researchers examining adult student needs. Several of these studies speculated that ageist attitudes suggested rejection and potential discrimination of older adult students. Thus, the identification of current age-related attitudes and beliefs of the younger students or faculty would suggest future intervention toward attitude change in the collegiate environment. The second area examined the impact of intergenerational classes upon young student ageist attitudes, finding a positive change of attitude towards adult students. Although several of these studies were concerned with elderly adult student's (62 years and older), at least two of the studies examined attitudes in relation to the full age-range of adult students (25 years and older).

Status of Programs and Services for Adult Students

This last subtheme focused upon descriptive studies concerning programs and services in relation to the adult student. One grouping of studies focused upon the level of current services on the college campus in the belief that undergraduate environments should provide adult-oriented services or programs. In these research efforts, broad survey efforts examined the current status of college and university services to adult students and to older adults (Atelsek & Gomberg, 1977; Thon, 1984). The second grouping of studies examined current adult student perceptions and usage of student services in traditional undergraduate environments (Kasworm, 1980b; Mardoyan, Alleman, & Cochran, 1983; Okun, Taub, & Witten, 1986). These studies attempted to identify the current status of adult students' involvement with specific supportive services. These studies raised questions concerning the appropriateness or responsiveness of these services in relation to the needs of the adult student.
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Image of Psychosocial Development

This fourth domain (see Table 4) in the research reflected researchers' beliefs of the efficacy and explanatory power of the psychosocial dimension of adult students. Drawing upon theoretical interdisciplinary frameworks, these studies defined facets of a psychological orientation of adult students and examined the specific influences of role commitments and conflicts (personal, family, and professional) upon the adult student role. In addition, they considered program interventions which could influence psychosocial development of these adult students. This domain recognized changing gender roles and the dramatic influx of women reentry students into undergraduate collegiate education and predominantly examined women's psychosocial characteristics. In particular, these studies often focused upon the student role in relation to traditional feminine roles of the wife and mother and in relation to the emerging professional woman's role. Underlying these research

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
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<th>Research design</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<td>Family environment</td>
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studies was the assumption that the student role was a major transition for adult students and for their spouse and family. Thus, these research studies often were concerned with identification of key adult life issues and of the nature of conflict and support in the student role.

Psychosocial Dimensions of Adult Students

The first subtheme in this domain was drawn from a foundation in human development theories as applied to adult students. These studies considered either specific adult and lifespan development theoretical constructs in relation to reentering students (Amstey & Whitbourne, 1981; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Ross, 1988; Weathersby & Tarule, 1980) or comparative studies concerning key psychosocial characteristics between women students and their peer group homemakers or young adult women students (Erdwins, Tyer, & Mellinger, 1980; Schofield & Caple, 1971). Each of these studies suggested theoretical perspectives for investigating the characteristics of reentering adult students as well as testing the validity of these theories in relation to a supposed key adult transition of school entry/reentry. In general, the findings suggested that reentry women saw involvement in a student role from a broader life context and that adult students had specific developmental needs. However, these reentry women were similar to younger women students on dimensions of achievement motivation and self-concept. Contradictory evidence is presented regarding the centrality of an identity crisis as a stimulus or as a reaction to the entry/reentry into college.

Adult Role Expectations and Role Support

The second major subtheme focused upon the interaction between the adult student, his/her role expectations, and the changing role expectations for the spouse and family. A major concern was the nature of role adjustment or support from spouse and family in both reentry women (Ballmer & Cozby, 1981; Berkove, 1979; Spreadbury, 1983) and reentry men and women samples (DeGroot, 1980; Huston-Hoburg & Strange, 1986). All of the researchers assumed that reentering adult students would experience significant role interactions between themselves and their families/significant others as they assumed student roles. A variety of psychosocial dimensions were examined. These studies noted the moderately positive support of spouse and family for women students and also noted differences between male and female reentry students with regard to spousal support. Significant life events and the use of social support systems by reentry women were also examined (Roehl & Okun, 1985).

Role Conflict

This third subtheme was closely related to the above, but it assumed the inevitability of role conflict for the reentering student. These studies attempted to gain greater insights into the specific dynamics of role conflicts as they might influence the adult in a student role. Differences in role conflict were examined for women reentry students and their families (Hooper, 1979), between male and female reentry students (Gilbert, Manning, & Ponder, 1980; Gilbert & Holahan, 1982), and between professional and nonprofessional women groupings (Beutell & O'Hare, 1987). Studies reported more significant role conflict among female reentry students than among male reentry students. There were also differing role conflicts.
when comparing professional and nonprofessional women in student roles and when comparing family coping styles in relation to the wife/mother’s student role involvement.

Program Intervention

The fourth subtheme reflects the foundations of the previous work in this domain and specifically focuses upon programmatic interventions for the successful reentry of the adult student. As with the other subthemes in this domain, these research studies focus upon women’s reentry programs and supposed difficulties of women’s adjustment in identity, inclusion, and involvement. There is the strongly implied expectation that the educational environment could and should provide intervention and support for entering women undergraduate students. These program interventions could have a positive influence by fostering development of self-concept, self-assertiveness, and career/life planning and by supporting personal commitment to life change within the context of undergraduate education. These program interventions would aid the adult student to assume a more mature, active, insightful, balanced, confident, goal-oriented, or critically aware perspective.

Mezirow in his study of community college reentry programs identified perspective transformation as a central process in defining the personal development of women who participated in reentry programs (1978). Hetherington and Hudson (1981) and Berman, Gelso, Greenfeig, and Hirsch (1977) noted the impact of program interventions in development of decision-making skills. However, they also reported a lack of significant impact upon assertiveness skill development of women reentry students. In a follow-up study of entering adults who participated in life transition counseling, Hooper and Rice (1978) found that these adults made personally satisfying attitudinal and behavioral changes. However, these adults did not attribute these behavioral and attitudinal changes directly to the counseling experience. From a different perspective, Weathersby and Tarule (1980) considered theories of adult development as they could be applied to higher education and to programmatic interventions serving adult students.

Researchers, in this subtheme, believed that higher education should be committed to fostering and enhancing adult development within the higher education context. These studies attempt to advocate this belief either by identifying key psychosocial characteristics or processes or by examining specific programmatic interventions directed to successful adult transition into the undergraduate environment.

Image of Equity and Outcome

This domain (see Table 5) considered the issues of equity and of outcomes of an undergraduate education for adults. In considering this domain, researchers were attempting to ascertain the relationship between adults as mature human beings, as undergraduate students, and as representatives of a collegiate undergraduate experience. Although the research in this area is very sparse and somewhat divergent, these studies raise fundamental questions regarding the value and impact of adult learners engaging in higher education.

One of the major concerns in this domain reflected a highly critical stance regarding the incongruity of the adult learner in age and gender in relation to the
TABLE 5
Image of Equity and Outcome

<table>
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<td>Speer &amp; Dorfman</td>
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Current structural elements of undergraduate institutions. Drawing upon sociological and educational theory, these researchers (Rice, 1975; Parelius, 1979) advocated a focus upon human liberation and adult development-oriented paradigms to guide the restructuring and innovation of higher education outreach to adult learners. A second area examined the impact of the undergraduate experience upon adults. Two of the studies (Mishler, 1983a, 1983b) considered the descriptive status of adult undergraduates upon completion of their academic studies, their perceptions of personal growth, and their retrospective beliefs about effective and ineffective collegiate experiences. The other studies considered potential impact of the college experience upon personal and professional development. These studies included an examination of persistence of values (Pirnot, 1987) and the perceptions of key collegiate factors which influenced the student's development (Speer & Dorfman, 1986).

Critical Analysis of Research Perspectives

Past research literature on adult students in traditional undergraduate education has been highly divergent in form and substance. Often the studies have suggested conflicting perspectives, value assumptions, and beliefs concerning the adult undergraduate within the higher education context. Given this variability, the current study utilized qualitative content meta-analysis to delineate key categories and domains of reality of researcher perspectives concerning the adult undergraduate. These five domains included: Image of Implied Deficiency, Image of Student Entry and Adaptation, Image of Description and Characterization, Image of Psychosocial Development, and Image of Equity and Outcomes. Each of these domains suggested the researcher's sense of relationship and contextual history regarding adult undergraduates vis-a-vis the undergraduate experience. In addition, these domains also reflected the ways in which researchers have perceived and defined the adult undergraduate and have conducted research to substantiate or test those perceptions.

The majority of early research and an ongoing stream of more contemporary research has focused upon the issue of "Who is the adult student?" This question was reflected in all of the identified domains. These efforts often assumed somewhat simplistic distinctions between adult students and young adult students. For example, many of the studies developed dichotomous comparative samples by age, by age and gender, or by age and specialized grouping (reentry women, veterans, senior adult students). Most of these studies usually categorized the sample by age.
academic profiles, life circumstances/involvements, academic performance, or psychosocial characteristics. There was an implicit stance in many of these research inquiries that adult students were categorically different from young adult students. A subset of these studies focused upon the documentation and hypothesis testing of the comparative value and academic worth of adult participation when compared to young adult participation in the undergraduate context. Lastly, there was an extensive grouping of literature focused in the "Livingston effect"—articles which chronicled the findings of researchers roaming the "jungles" of young adult undergraduate life to identify the "uniqueness of the adult student."

This literature base as well as the current evolution of adult developmental theory, higher education theory, and adult education theory suggests that the study of adult undergraduates should reflect a continuum as opposed to a dichotomy of categories or characteristics. Chronological age is not the key variable. Rather, age reflects certain life experiences, educational experiences (both formal and informal), sociocultural contexts, psychological beliefs, perceptual expectations, and a probable historical-generational effect. As one considers the question of "Who is the adult student?", researchers should question the assumptions and frameworks which have operationally defined the adult student. Recent research within adult development suggests multivariant interactions and multiple gradations within key variables. Although the usage of "discrete age-related categories" may have utility in exploratory research, these categorizations appear to confound and mislead the more specialized and sensitive probing for variations, patterns, and categories of actions across the spectrum of undergraduate population. There are several promising areas of new research investigation in this area. These research activities are considering adult undergraduates from lifespan perspectives, from theoretical frameworks based in adult development or related psychosocial theories, or from a critical science theory role concerning human agency.

There has been an equally problematic representation of the student role of the adult learner. The majority of past research draws upon definitions, categorizations and frameworks developed from young adult undergraduate research. Although there are similarities between an 18 year old and a 50 year old undergraduate, researchers should be cognizant of the assumptions of a student role which may be implicit in definitions, conceptual frameworks, and specific forms of research inquiry. For example, several of the research studies assumed that the adult undergraduate was based within the academic community and that his/her orientation to life, learning, and self-development should emanate from this academic base. Does the definition of an undergraduate student role dictate this anchoring of current life solely within the academic community? Several of the studies assumed that the adult should be highly involved in student activities, collegiate programs, and out-of-class student-faculty events. Is it mandated by academic community expectation that all undergraduates should value and utilize collegiate support services or participate in extracurricular experiences? Several studies suggested that adult learners should be measured against the standards established by the young adult undergraduate experience. Should one expect adults to have the same test-taking skills and cognitive abilities as young adults? Should we ignore adult students' life and work experiences, community leadership and service, and other adult accomplishments while only considering assessment by test scores? Should we expect adults to display the same "learning outcomes" as young adults?
upon graduation from a four-year collegiate program? Should we expect the undergraduate experience to have the same impact upon the adult student’s cognitive and affective development, as suggested by research on the young adult undergraduate? These questions focus upon the assumptions of the nature of the student as an individual when embedded within an undergraduate role. In this review of research as well as the general literature on adult undergraduate higher education, there are no definitive studies which have dealt with these issues. There is great need to examine alternative notions of student role definition, expectations, and standards in relation to the adult undergraduate.

The second key area of research inquiry has focused upon the question, “What is the relationship of the adult learner to the traditional undergraduate student environment?” Although this area does reflect a concern of the student role, it is grounded in the contextual relationship between the adult and the undergraduate environment. Although all of the domains of reality considered this general area, the domains of the Image of Student Entry and Adaptation, of the Image of Definition and Characterization, and of the Image of Equity and Outcome most closely mirrored this contextual focus. The majority of past research assumed that the relationship between student and higher education must be one of either accommodation or assimilation. But who should adapt? Either the institution modifies its environment to be more congruent with the student, or the student modifies his/her sense of involvement and self-definition to be more congruent with the institution. Many of the studies assumed that there can be change from only one or the other; either the student must adapt to the “given” undergraduate environment or the undergraduate environment must change to fit the characteristics of the adult. This either/or framework has valued utility because of its simplicity. However, theories of adult development and adult learning suggest that adults do adapt and change in relation to environmental influences; adult socialization to the student role and to the academic environment does occur. Also, the tradition of American higher education has been its responsiveness, its adaptability, its attempts (albeit sometimes in limited ways) to accommodate new diversity in its environment. Higher education does modify its structures, its interactions, and its processes in relation to varied influencers. As noted earlier, there is a long tradition of specialized strategies, policies, and programs oriented to undergraduate adults. Thus, the question of change should be reframed. How can we adequately capture the reality of a transactional relationship between adult students and the undergraduate institution? There are two promising lines of investigation which consider the realities of interrelationships between students and higher education environments. The first considers adult developmental theories and adult education theories in relation to the student learner context. The second considers ecological or person-environment theories which examine adult students and their interrelationships with the undergraduate experience and other key life roles.

The third area of concern grapples with the conceptual standard of an ideal relationship between the adult student and the undergraduate environment. Although researchers have examined the adult student experience from a concern of future action towards improvement, these studies have focused upon “what is” as opposed to a “what should be” perspective. Those studies which do suggest a different perspective do so with theoretical frameworks and critical theories arguing the inappropriate stance and action of higher education. This oppositional perspec-
tive is often paradoxical, given the current significant representation of adult undergraduates in traditional collegiate environments.

To develop a perspective on the "ideal" relationship between adult students and the undergraduate environment, researchers must grapple with the fundamental issues of ambiguity, legitimacy, and marginality. Adult students are not the same creatures as young adult undergraduates. They do represent some individuals who are attempting for the first time to gain a college education. However, the majority of adult students reenter higher education to complete a degree program begun in earlier young adult years. These adult students value the undergraduate experience as a personal priority in their lives. They are seeking not only an institutional credential but also new careers or job promotions, enhanced life competence, or simply to continue their love of learning. They enter higher education at different points in their lives, present highly unique backgrounds and expectations for themselves as learners, and exit into very different life existences. This nexus between the adult student, the adult life, and the undergraduate institution is extremely ambiguous. There are also serious questions raised regarding the legitimacy of adults to participate in undergraduate studies. This perspective is perhaps best stated by Boyer, who argues that higher education has perceived adult students as "misfits in a strange and foreign land, viewed as retreads in a kind of salvage operation, sadly out of step with the learning cycle and even with the life cycle itself" (1974, p. 6). There are those leaders in higher education who would argue that adults had their chance to gain an undergraduate education in earlier years. Undergraduate education should first serve the young, the mentally agile, and the future creators of new scholarship. What then are the purposes of an undergraduate education? Are those purposes premised in specific age and life experiences? Lastly, adult students participate in a marginal status (part-time, evening school, nonresidential) in higher education. Adult students, with some exceptions, have limited involvement. This involvement could be reflected by the part-time enrollment each semester, the limited physical presence on the college campus, or the limited out-of-class interactions within the academic community. Adult students are often "invisible and silent" members of the undergraduate community. Past research and theory on the undergraduate experiences suggests a notion of centripetal growth in the undergraduate academic experience. The most significant undergraduate experiences are those which feature a student's commitment and involvement to full-time academic pursuits, which integrate living and learning experiences within the academic context. Undergraduates are expected to focus upon inward intellectual and identity development, to be molded in the image of the "educated person," and to be developed by the unique forces of the collegiate experience. The adult undergraduate experience is not an easy fit with these notions of an inward focus in the academic collegiate experience. Rather, adult students are examples of centrifugal growth, of academic growth towards outward roles and experiences. Adults do experience the inward journey of intellectual and personal development, but they also have an outward journey of self-efficacy. They significantly impact the daily lives of their children, their families, their fellow workers, and their communities. These individuals can translate and apply the knowledge and skill of the undergraduate experience to their daily world of adult life. The undergraduate classroom, the family gathering, and the workplace staff meeting are all of equal importance in a teaching-learning exchange. As adults, they value and wish to learn
expertise from the undergraduate experience, but they also view themselves as experts in their own domains of life. Adults do not live apart; rather, they are a part of the world.

Conclusions

These five domains have identified a variety of issues for researchers regarding the key assumptions and past practices in the study of adult undergraduates. The future development of quality theory and research is dependent upon a stream of research activity placed within a coherent theoretical base. We, as members of the research community, need to create these frameworks and research agendas concerning adult undergraduates in higher education. This agenda should address the theoretical understanding of the adult's relationship to an undergraduate experience as well as key questions about the adult student as learner, adult student as worker/homemaker, and adult student as family/community leader. It should bring organizational and ecological perspectives to the understanding of undergraduate structures and processes in relation to the adult student's involvement. Of equal importance, this agenda should develop ecological frameworks and research which consider the undergraduate student at any age—whether 18, 35, or 72—and in any life situation. These areas of concern offer a major challenge for this new agenda.

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